

# Office of Bilingual Education and World Languages

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## July 2020 Newsletter

### In this issue:

- Letter from the Associate Commissioner..... 1
- Supporting our Districts and Schools ..... 2
- COVID-19 Guidance ..... 2
- Best Remote Teaching Practices for SIFE during COVID-19 ..... 3
- NYS Seal of Biliteracy: Interim Report ..... 4-5
- World Languages Standards Revision ..... 6
- Professional Learning Opportunities & Resources ..... 7

### Greetings from Associate Commissioner Elisa Alvarez

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

As educators, we have spent our lives dedicated to ensuring that all students and their families receive the absolute best we can offer as professionals in the New York State educational system. We understand that providing an education of excellence is an obligation and a right that our students deserve.

During school closures as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, we continued to advocate and support the best educational opportunities possible for our students. We saw essential workers, and in particular medical personnel, rise to face daily unknown risks to treat those who have fallen ill, as well as to bring comfort and relief for patients and their loved ones.

We rallied as good neighbors to focus on helping others and extend kindness to all who needed a helping hand. The best of humanity shines as a bright light in our battle to fight the pandemic that engulfed our communities.



How then, do we simultaneously face the inconceivable death of George Floyd? As the Associate Commissioner of the New York State Education Department’s Office of Bilingual Education and World Languages, I reflect upon the educational opportunities we have created over the years. We have made great strides in creating culturally responsive engagement opportunities in support of social justice movements to promote civil rights, civic equity, multiculturalism – and ultimately, the power of knowledge and inclusion. Let us use our gift of education to inform, advocate, and raise young adults of all backgrounds in learning about the beauty in cultural heritage differences. Dr. Betty Rosa, Chancellor of the New York State Board of Regents, has identified various investments and programs enacted by the Board of Regents to continue addressing inequities in our educational system. For example, among some essential programs and initiatives, the My Brother’s Keeper Initiative and the Culturally Responsive-Sustaining Education Framework seek to empower all our scholars and eliminate persistent opportunity gaps.

As a voice for English Language Learners and Multilingual Learners, who are among our most vulnerable students, we stand firm with you to ensure that we continue to promote high quality civic education, equal opportunities, and understanding of our history with the goal of moving forward together into our shared future. I look forward to a day when we educate all students in the understanding that diversity is as beautiful as the sun when it rises and as necessary as the moon when it covers us in the late hours of the night.

In unity,

*Elisa Alvarez*

## **Supporting Our Districts and Schools**

This spring, schools throughout New York State shifted their classes to a distance learning format with little warning and preparation. This has been especially difficult for teachers and administrators serving English Language Learners (ELLs), whose best practices rely on the ability to individually evaluate students and provide differentiated instruction that supports both students' development of English language proficiency and their advancement of content knowledge and skills. Teacher interaction with students has significantly decreased when delivering their courses online, and in cases where schools have only been able to provide instructional materials without the benefit of online learning tools, teachers may not have been able to communicate directly with their students at all.

Throughout the COVID-19 related schools closures, the New York State Education Department (NYSED or "The Department") Office of Bilingual Education and World Languages (OBEWL) has engaged in multiple efforts to reach out to our districts and schools to support this crucial work on behalf of our ELLs:

### **ELL Leadership Council**

The ELL Leadership Council has met regularly for the past five years to provide a direct line of communication between OBEWL and ELL administrators from the districts with the highest enrollment of ELLs in New York State. In the past, this group served as a means for OBEWL to periodically inform districts about NYSED policies and activities. Since the COVID-19 related closures, OBEWL has partnered with the ELL Leadership Council, providing districts the opportunity for regular and open communication to identify and address problems that have been noted in the field, to advise OBEWL on policy changes and guidance needed to help schools improve their distance learning for ELLs, and to ensure that districts are informed about actions being taken by NYSED in a consistent and timely manner.

OBEWL and the ELL Leadership Council are also working to develop new resources and guidance to support ELL educators in the following areas:

- Scaffolds and Strategies
- Feedback and Engagement
- Social-Emotional Learning
- Compliance
- Strengthening ELL Instruction

### **Regional Bilingual Education Resource Networks (RBERNs)**

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 the Department'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 English Language Learners and Multilingual Learners, including World Language Students.

Links to Regional Bilingual Education Resource Networks (RBERNs):

- [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](#)

## **COVID-19 Guidance & Resources**

On May 13, 2020, NYSED released guidance entitled "[Provisions of Services to English Language Learners and World Languages Students During Statewide School Closures Due to the Novel Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) Outbreak in New York State](#)." Please continue to monitor our [website](#) to see the Departments' additional guidance for the summer and fall of 2020 as it becomes available.

## **Best Remote Teaching Practices for SIFE during COVID-19**

*by Bridges to Academic Success, CUNY Graduate Center*

During school closings due to COVID-19, Bridges teachers across New York State worked to adapt their instruction to teach their SIFE students remotely with the support of Bridges instructional coaches. One teacher from our cohort expressed it best when she shared her reaction to remote learning and the importance of maintaining contacts with her students throughout this process: *“I was dumbfounded when we started remote learning, so I returned to one of the things that works best for me in a real classroom: personal connections.”*

We have seen multiple examples of teachers incorporating websites and apps in their lessons, such as *Quizlet*, *Kahoot*, *Flipgrid*, and *BrainPOP* to promote student interaction and to provide students opportunities to show their learning verbally and in writing. Student engagement was maintained during distance learning using these apps to both deliver content and to assess student learning. Several teachers use online flashcards for students to self-assess their sight word recognition as well as vocabulary definitions. The Bridges team created *Quizlet* flashcards for all sight words in *Standalone* with audio support and one teacher created a screencast for other teachers to learn how to use *Flippity*.

Bridges teachers adapted Group Reading and Writing lessons and recorded screencasts to promote student remote access to books through their laptops or smartphones. Several teachers created their own audio recordings with embedded activities using *Pear Deck* and *Nearpod*. In addition, teachers designed reading comprehension activities from additional free resources from the American Reading Company and Unite for Literacy.

Embedding their screencasts and audio books in teaching platforms such as Google Classrooms or Microsoft Teams, teachers adapted student-facing materials to make them accessible to classrooms with multiple reading levels. Some teachers used these virtual classroom platforms to provide students with assignments and assessments. In both cases, teachers used Google or Microsoft Forms, a format that seemed the most user-friendly to collect student responses.

In Bridges classrooms taught through Zoom and other online conferencing platforms, students have been able to practice English by talking to the teacher and the rest of the students in the class, typing in the chat or writing on a paper and holding up their answers into the camera. Some teachers used remote chats to differentiate for small group instruction and kept an accountability chart to track student progress. In addition, teachers supported student interaction in remote meetings where students are encouraged to use home language.





# Who are the recipients of the NYS Seal of Biliteracy (NYSSB)? (Interim Report 6/30/20)



The NYSSB is an award given to a student who has demonstrated a high level of proficiency in English and one or more world languages.



Total # of students who earned the NYSSB in 2019-20 (so far): **4,404**



3,107  
(71%)



1297  
(29%)



80 students have earned the Seal in TWO world languages in addition to English!



3 students have earned the Seal in THREE world languages in addition to English!



English Language Learners (ELLs): **171 (4%)**



Former/Ever ELLs: **941 (21%)**



Never ELLs: **3,292 (75%)**



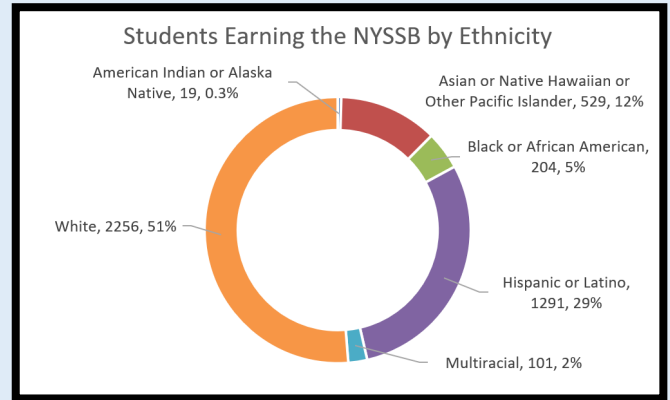
Total # of schools reporting data on the NYSSB in 2019-20 (so far):

**281**



Total # of languages in which students have earned the NYSSB in 2019-20 (so far):

**60**



Albanian, American Sign Language, Arabic, Bengali, Bosnian, Burmese, Cantonese, Chin, Chinese, Czech, Danish, Dari, Dutch, Finnish, French, German, Greek, Gujarati, Haitian Creole, Hausa, Hebrew, Hindi, Hungarian, Italian, Japanese, Karen, Kinyarwanda, Kirundi, Kiswahili, Khmer, Korean, Kurdish, Latin, Latvian, Lithuanian, Macedonian, Malay, Malayalam, Mandarin, Mongolian, Nepali, Persian/Farsi, Polish, Portuguese, Punjabi, Romanian, Russian, Serbo-Croatian, Somali, Spanish, Swahili, Tagalog, Thai, Tibetan, Tigrinya, Turkish, Tuscarora, Ukrainian, Urdu, and Vietnamese



Office of Bilingual Education & World Languages  
Elisa Alvarez, Associate Commissioner  
Candace Black, World Language Associate

For more information on the New York State Seal of Biliteracy, please visit our [website](#).



## **National Merit Scholar from Clarence CSD Earns NYS Seal of Biliteracy in Two World Languages**

Grant GianGrasso loves to learn. He loves the written and spoken word, serving as Editor of his school literary magazine, and winning awards as captain of his Model U.N. team. At Clarence High School in western NY, Grant studied French and Spanish and earned the NYS Seal of Biliteracy in both languages. Grant loves music, playing as Principal Trumpet of New York's All-State Band. He loves his community, assisting his church as an altar server, volunteering in hospitals, and having designed an audio/visual tour of a nature preserve for his

Eagle Scout project. Grant swims for his high school team and, living close to Lake Erie, loves to sail and SCUBA dive during the summers. He lives with his parents, little brother Reed, and little sister Ava, and has a new Goldendoodle named Hazel. This year he'll graduate as Valedictorian of the 2020 Class of Clarence High School. He is a National Merit Scholar and will attend the University of Virginia as a Jefferson Scholar. In the future, he hopes to become a doctor. In the 2018-19 school year, there were 23 students in all of New York State that earned the Seal of Biliteracy in two world languages in addition to English. In 2019-20, that number more than tripled to 80 students. Congratulations to all of these outstanding scholars!

## **East Williston School District Graduate Earns NYS Seal of Biliteracy in Three World Languages**

Pádraig Brady is a true linguist who has shown an outstanding passion for languages, cultures and people. The Wheatley school, where Pádraig is a senior, had to create a new award for their academic awards ceremony because they had never had a student who attained such a high level of fluency in three languages. Pádraig earned the Seal of Biliteracy in French, Italian, and Spanish and is the second student in New York State to do so since the Seal was first offered in 2016. As of the publication of this newsletter, there are only 4 students to ever achieve this honor in our state. He is an incredible language student who began studying Italian as a sixth grader in middle school. By ninth grade, he had taught himself the beginning level of Spanish. Over the years, he taught himself French and enrolled in the AP course this year.



Outside of the classroom, Pádraig participated in the Wheatley-San José de Monterrico Exchange Program, opening his home and sharing his community with his partner and, in turn, visiting his partner's family and school in Lima, Peru. He also participated in a school trip to Italy during which his teacher noted Pádraig's fascination for the changes of dialects as they visited the various regions. He has won numerous medals for excellence on the National French, Spanish, and Italian Exams, as well as in poetry competitions. In addition, the American Association of Teachers of Italian awarded him a travel/study opportunity to Italy for his perfect score on the National Italian Exam. As an active member of the Intercultural Unity Club, Pádraig participated in a wide variety of activities. One of the most memorable was an act he created for the annual ICU Assembly in which he had faculty, staff, and students come together across the stage, each delivering a message in a different language. He was always present as a student ambassador at the district's Cultural Initiatives Dinners where adults of the community came together to learn more about their neighbors and the many diverse cultures represented within our community.

Pádraig plans to attend Trinity College in Dublin where he will major in the Irish language. He plans to be a translator working in education policy in Ireland. His linguistic aspirations have no bounds.

## **Revision of the NYS Learning Standards for Languages Other Than English (LOTE)**

The LOTE Standards were last revised more than 24 years ago in 1996 as part of the NYS Compact for Learning initiative. As with any set of learning standards, it is best practice for the Department to conduct a periodic review to ensure the standards are rigorous, appropriate, and represent what a student should know and be able to do. Our goal in revising these standards is to provide an update that is informed by the national standards developed in conjunction



with the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages to advance world language education in our state and to better prepare students who are college, career, civic, and world ready.

Starting in 2018, OBEWL embarked on a mission to revise these standards informed by the World-Readiness Standards for Language Learning. In order to ensure that the revised learning standards reflect the views of educators and stakeholders throughout New York State, the Department convened a team of 19 leaders in the field of world languages from across the state, and assembled ten (10) Standards Review Committees including seven (7) regional committees and three (3) Language-Specific Committees (American Sign Language, Classical Languages, and Indigenous Languages). The rosters of these committees included over 200 people, representing world language teachers from elementary through post-secondary schools, building and district administrators, BOCES and Regional Bilingual Education Resource Network (RBERN) representatives, and one high school student. The committees met six times between May of 2019 and February of 2020 to draft recommended revisions to the LOTE Standards, including the recommendation to rename them the NYS Learning Standards for World Languages. From December 2019 through February 2020, the proposed revisions to the NYS Learning Standards for World Languages were released to the public along with a survey that received 1,120 individual responses from stakeholders across New York State. The vast majority of respondent feedback expressed strong support for all proposed revisions to the standards. Survey responses also included suggestions related to the need for professional learning, resources, and guidance documents to prepare for the implementation of the proposed standards.

The next step is an initial presentation of the proposed revisions to the NYS Board of Regents in the early fall of 2020. This will be followed by a 60-day public comment period, the results of which will be presented to the Board of Regents as part of their consideration for final approval of the revised standards. If the Board of Regents adopts these revisions, the Department will provide professional development and information to districts and schools to prepare for a phased implementation beginning in 2023. For more information on the standards revision process, please visit our [website](#).



Bilingual Education website: [www.nysed.gov/bilingual-ed](http://www.nysed.gov/bilingual-ed)

World Languages website: <http://www.nysed.gov/world-languages>

NYS Seal of Biliteracy website: <http://www.nysed.gov/world-languages/new-york-state-seal-biliteracy-nyssb>

## **Professional Learning Opportunities**

World Languages Virtual Workshop: Curating Authentic Resources for the World Language Classroom

- Presenter: Leslie Grahn
- Date & Time: Election Day—November 3, 2020, 8:00 a.m.—12:00 p.m.
- Maximum capacity: 500 attendees
- 4 hour of CTLE credit offered
- The live webinar will be recorded and uploaded to the OBEWL site for on-demand viewing by teachers who are unable to attend virtually.
- Registration will be available starting in August 2020 via an online form. Please visit our [website](#) for the link later in the summer.

## **Professional Learning Calendar for ELL Educators**

The Office of Bilingual Education and World Languages at the New York State Education Department is regularly updating a [Calendar of Professional Learning events](#) organized by the Regional Bilingual Education Resource Networks around the state. These professional learning events will be helpful for teachers and administrators who work with English Language Learners.

## **Resource Collection for ELLs and World Languages Students**

In response to New York State school closings due to the COVID-19 public health emergency, the Office of Bilingual Education and World Languages at the New York State Education Department has collected resources for educators to provide continuity of instruction for English Language Learners and World Language students. We are also providing educational resources for students and parents to continue moving ELLs toward English proficiency in the absence of face-to face classroom instruction, and to support their remote learning of core content areas.

[Resource Collection for ELLs](#)

[Resource Collection for World Languages](#)

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 students, including English Language Learners / Multilingual Learners, attain the highest level of academic success and language proficiency. We strive to ensure that all students' individual educational paths and socio-emotional needs are met in multiple languages leading them to college and career readiness. NYSED believes that all teachers are teachers of ELLs/MLLs.

