

# Office of Bilingual Education and World Languages

New York State Education Department

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May 2023 Newsletter



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## Greetings from Associate Commissioner Elisa Alvarez



Dear Colleagues,

Like many other states, New York’s English Language Learners (ELLs) are one of the largest growing populations entering our schools. New York State has almost 2.5 million students enrolled, with 10% identified as ELLs. Our associates and specialists use the latest proven research to support successful practices for teaching ELLs in your classroom. One of the most essential of these practices is Bilingual Education.

Bilingual Education programs were designed to support instruction in both English and a student’s home language. Although our ELLs speak almost 200 various languages, Spanish continues to be the most predominant second language of our scholars. Back in 1967, Senator Ralph Yarborough of Texas advocated for creating bilingual-bicultural programs with the intent to help second language learners maintain their first language, strengthen their cultural identity, and learn English to become a bilingual melting pot. Almost 60 years later, despite existing federal and civil rights laws to help protect English Language Learners, we still find ourselves continuing to speak to the points raised by the former senator.

As we continue our campaign in support of Bilingual Education, we have a few suggestions to share. Establish and build on your relationships with the children and their caregivers that promote cultural acceptance. Ensure that teaching language development is present in every facet of the student’s experience, as isolated only teaching of language would limit students’ ability to increase their academic repertoire. Maintain high expectations for each student and promote their opportunity to use home and second language intentionally. As the teacher, provide the student with enough wait time and scaffolds that allow them to access their language knowledge. Differentiate instruction for access to content, and provide individualized guided practice or conferencing with students to ensure that they understand what they are doing well and what additional opportunities they need to seek in order to gain mastery. Most importantly, allow your students the opportunity to speak, sing, and dance to the love of all languages.

In unity,

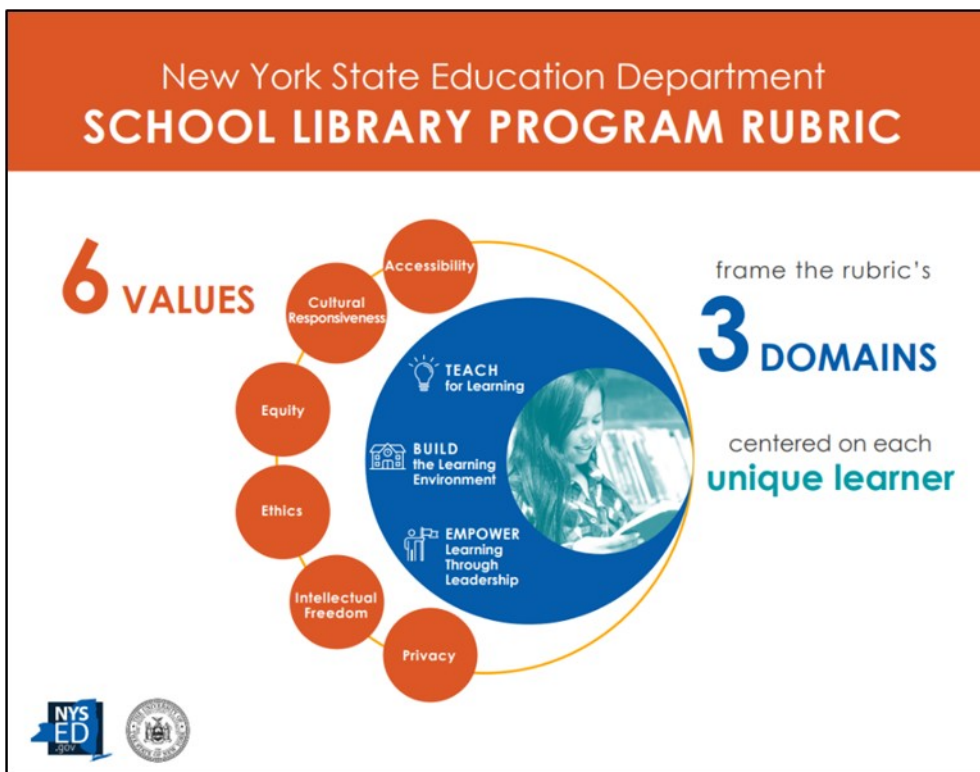
*Elisa Alvarez*

# Library Partnerships: Achieving Educational and Digital Equity for ELLs

by Heather L. Rubin

Have you collaborated with your school's Library Media Specialist lately? If not, you are missing out on an incredibly rich opportunity to create a teaching partnership that can truly make a difference in the education of your English Language Learners (ELLs) and Multilingual Learners (MLs). As teachers of information literacy, these experts can help you design inquiry-based learning experiences that support linguistically diverse learners while also developing advanced literacy skills for the digital-age we now live in.

The NYSED School Library Program is built upon six foundational values: Accessibility, Cultural Responsiveness, Equity, Ethics, Intellectual Freedom, and Privacy. Library Media Specialists work at the frontline to achieve educational and digital equity for all students and their families. This includes ensuring access to computing devices, high-speed internet, and digital learning resources both in school and at home and also ensuring that all students' rights to privacy and intellectual freedom are protected and preserved.



Library Media Specialists can work with you to curate books in multiple languages and ensure that the materials you select together are culturally responsive. They can recommend digital learning resources that are age appropriate and have accessibility features to support ELLs. You can collaborate with your Library Media Specialist to design learning experiences that guide students as they identify and research essential questions for project and performance based learning. Moreover, they can work directly with your students and help them develop a love of reading through activities like after-school book clubs and library scavenger hunts.

For ideas on how to get started and sample activities for students, take a look at [this website](#) designed by Kimberly McCalla, a Library Media Specialist and Amanda Noyes, an ESOL teacher. They formed a partnership and share their success story along with resources.

Lastly, let's not forget one of the most important reasons for creating this powerful collaboration. Partnering with your school's Library Media Specialist will not only help to address the digital divide and identify resources that target the needs of ELLs, but ultimately, a partnership like this helps ELLs to develop language and literacy skills through authentic social interaction and community building within a welcoming and affirming learning space.

## **RESOURCES**

[NYSED NYS Library: Achieving Digital Equity in NY](#)

[Building Language and Literacy: A Partnership Between ESL and the Library](#)

[Digital Age Teaching for English Learners, 2ed.](#)

[FCC Affordable Connectivity Program](#)

[How Technology Affects Instruction for English Learners](#)

[NYS Digital Equity Portal](#)

[NYSED Office of Educational Design & Technology: Digital Equity Survey Data](#)

[NYSED OBEWL: Advanced Literacies for Academic Success Topic Briefs](#)

[NYSED Office of Standards and Instruction: School Library Program Rubric](#)

**Heather Rubin** is the Administrative Coordinator for the NYSED Long Island Regional Bilingual Education Resource Network (LIRBERN) at Eastern Suffolk BOCES. She has over 20 years of experience supporting academic achievement and equity for English Language Learners in K-12 and higher education settings. She presents at regional, national and international conferences such as ISTE, TESOL, WIDA, NYSABE, and NYSTESOL. She is the lead author of *Digital Age Teaching for English Learners: A Guide to Equitable Learning for All Students*, 2ed (Corwin 2022).

# **NYSED Blue Ribbon Commission on Graduation Measures: Addressing the ELL Graduation Rate**

*By Dr. Jordan González, Long Island RBERN*

The NYSED Blue-Ribbon Commission on Graduation Measures is an initiative that was established in the Fall of 2022 to examine how New York State evaluates students for graduation and to determine if additional measures would help to more accurately represent what our students know and are able to achieve. One specific area of focus for the commission is addressing the graduation rate of English Language Learners (ELLs). To inform this work, Associate Commissioner Elisa Alvarez recently presented the findings and recommendations from the ELL Graduation Rate Improvement Strategic Planning Group to the commission.

The Strategic Planning Group, which includes representatives from the Office of Bilingual Education and World Languages (OBEWL), Regional Bilingual Education Resource Network (RBERN) Executive Directors, RBERN Resource Specialists, and School District administrators, conducted a comprehensive study using three types of analysis. These included quantitative analysis of ELL achievement data, qualitative analysis through a case study approach in one of the Big 5 School districts, and a review of research literature on factors that contribute to or hinder improved graduation rates for ELLs.

Based on this analysis, the Strategic Planning Group identified several barriers and mitigating factors that affect the ELL graduation rate. One significant challenge is the difficulty ELL students face in passing standardized examinations, especially for newcomers with limited English proficiency (Rodriguez et al, 2020). To address this, the Strategic Planning Group recommends providing multiple options and pathways for all students, including ELLs, to demonstrate mastery of content area standards. Examples of these options could include alternative assessments such as oral presentations and written essays in the student's home language and/or English, culminating projects that allow for interactive and engaging demonstrations of understanding, and project-based learning and assessments (Murphy, 2017). Additionally, the group emphasizes the need for targeted professional learning programs for teachers of ELLs. These programs should address different teaching modalities and technologies to meet the specific needs of ELLs. By equipping teachers with the necessary knowledge and tools, our schools can better support ELL students in their academic trajectory (González, 2022).

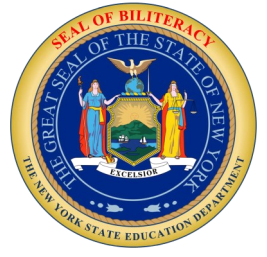
The Blue-Ribbon Commission on Graduation Measures aims to ensure educational excellence and equity for all New York State children, including ELLs and students with disabilities. By addressing the challenges, identifying promising practices, and making recommendations for improvement, the commission seeks to enhance the graduation measures and policies to support ELLs in achieving a high school diploma.

## **References**

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## New York State Seal of Biliteracy (NYSSB) Culminating Project Visits and Best Practices

Each year, the Office of Bilingual Education and World Languages (OBEWL) will schedule visits with a small sample of schools offering the NYSSB for two purposes: (1) to observe and participate in Culminating Project Presentations and (2) to provide feedback and support to schools in this process. The [Culminating Project Notification form](#) is used to notify the New York State Education Department (NYSED) of the date(s), time(s), location(s), and language(s) of these presentations so that a visit may be scheduled. Click [here](#) to access the form that will be used to provide feedback and support to schools following the visit. Notification of selection will take place no later than September 30th. This form can be submitted as soon as a school is notified of their selection for a visit, but must be submitted at least four weeks prior to dates of the student presentations.



Through these school visits conducted by OBEWL staff and our partners at the various Regional Bilingual Education Resource Networks (RBERNs), we have identified the following best practices for all NYSSB schools to consider as they plan out their Culminating Project Presentations:

- Embed the Culminating Project into regular coursework so that students have the natural and consistent support of the classroom teacher through the academic year as they work on their projects.
- Provide ample opportunities for students to practice their presentations, capitalizing on the various technological tools that allow students to record and submit practice presentations for feedback from their teachers, project advisors, and fellow Seal candidates.
- Provide ample opportunities for students to practice their interpersonal skills with others in spontaneous exchanges that enable students to negotiate meaning.
- Work with the panel of reviewers prior to the student presentations to ensure that each panelist is familiar with how to use the student rubric.

OBEWL recently partnered with the New York State Association of Supervision and Curriculum Development (NYSASCD) to offer a series of webinars related to the Seal of Biliteracy on starting a new NYSSB program and expanding a current program. Both webinars are available on our NYSSB website for viewing. Educators who wish to receive CTLE credit or an attendance certificate may do so by scoring at least 7 out of 10 on an online post assessment based on the recording.

For more information on the NYS Seal of Biliteracy, please visit our [website](#) or contact [nysb@nysed.gov](mailto:nysb@nysed.gov).

### 4+1 Pathway Assessment Approved in Modern Greek

NYSED continues to receive and review applications for multiple pathway to graduation assessments. In May, the Certificate of Attainment in Greek (Ellinomatheia) was added as an approved 4+1 Pathway Assessment in World Languages (modern Greek). The Ellinomatheia assessment exam was created by the Center of Greek Language Learning to provide any user of Greek with an expert and objective opinion regarding the level of their knowledge and language skills and serves as proof of the successful candidate's level of attainment in Greek. In addition to serving as a locally developed Checkpoint B exam, this assessment, when passed, can be used graduate in addition to the four required Regents Exams (English, mathematics, science, and social studies). For more information on these 4+1 Pathway Assessments, please visit the [Multiple Pathways website](#). A full list of all Department-Approved Pathway Assessments in World Languages can be found [here](#).



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## **Best Practice for Family and Community Engagement**

Family engagement should encourage and empower families to be their own champions. As a community, we need to work toward goals that focus on specific family strengths, resources, and needs.

Educators must use best practices for family engagement to provide emotional and technical support, compassion, and encouragement as they partner in facilitating learning and engagement of all students. These include:

1. Acknowledge, honor and leverage the community cultural wealth; all families and neighborhoods contribute to student learning.
2. Educators are finding a variety of ways to maintain communication with their students and families. Communication should not be a one time thing. Provide families with various access points and entry points to ensure that communication flows, including, but not limited to, WhatsApp, Google Meets, Google Forms, WeChat, Remind, WebEx, phone calls, video calls, text messages, and email.
3. Rather than expecting/anticipating that families will always be able to come meet with schools and educators, we should meet families where they are by learning and finding out what their needs and ideas are via multilingual surveys and other communications.
4. Families need messaging and interactions from educators that are supportive, positive, compassionate, and encouraging in order to effectively facilitate this learning.

*Note: The technologies in this post are not an endorsement or a promotion. Check with your technology director to ensure student privacy compliance.*

## **Immigrant Student Strategic Planning Workgroup**

Today, over 11.4 million undocumented immigrants are living and working in communities across the United States. On average, they have lived in this country for 16 years and are parents, grandparents, and siblings to another 10.2 million family members.

U.S. Customs and Border Protection released data showing agents encountered nearly 16,182 migrants a day in January 2023. Among them, the number of children and families seeking to enter the U.S. more than doubled. As we move forward in the work in identifying the best ways to support our students and families, we must ensure that at the forefront, there is compassion.

Members of Immigrant Student Strategic Planning Workgroup, comprised of OBEWL and RBERN staff, have focused on developing and providing professional development focused on the needs of their regions. The goal of these professional development opportunities is to provide insight into the needs of our immigrant populations and also provide those directly serving this population with insight into the support and resources available to their students and families.

The team is working on a statewide professional development that is entitled “An Introduction to Education in the United States: Supporting Our Immigrant Students with Resources, Supports, & Guides.” This professional development will be housed on the New York State RBERN On Demand website at [www.nysrbernondemand.org](http://www.nysrbernondemand.org). It will be a hub providing educators, families, and communities, with information and resources pertaining to this demographic and will be accessible statewide.

## World Language Unit Design Workshops Offered in Nine Regions in the Summer of 2023

OBEWL will host unit design workshops in nine regions throughout New York State to help educators prepare for the implementation of the NYS Learning Standards for World Languages this coming September. *Although the examples given will be for Checkpoint B, these workshops are open to teachers of any level (Checkpoints A through C).* The events will run from 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. (with a one-hour lunch on your own) on two consecutive days. To participate, educators must register in advance using this [online registration form](#). Registrations will be accepted on a first-come, first-served basis until the venue capacity has been reached. These sessions are offered free of charge, are in-person only, and will not be recorded for future viewing. Below are the list of dates and locations by region.

- **Capital:** July 13th - July 14th - Questar III BOCES
- **Hudson Valley:** July 18th - July 19th - Ulster BOCES
- **Long Island:** July 11th - July 12th - Western Suffolk BOCES
- **Mid-State:** July 27th - July 28th - OCM BOCES
- **Mid-West:** June 26th - June 27th - Monroe 2-Orleans BOCES
- **New York City:** July 20th (9am-2pm) - July 21st (10am-3pm) - Fordham University, Bronx Campus
- **Northern NY:** August 8th - August 9th - Franklin-Essex-Hamilton BOCES
- **Southern Tier:** July 25th - July 26th - BT BOCES, Johnson City Learning Center
- **West:** July 6th - July 7th - Erie 1 BOCES

## American Sign Language Recategorized as a Category 3-4 Language

NYSED delineates two (2) categories of modern languages based on the time needed for English speakers to develop proficiency, as informed by the Foreign Service Institute’s language learning timelines. As part of the adoption of the NYS Learning Standards for World Languages (2021) and the resources to support educators as they begin preparing for and implementing these revised standards, the Office of Bilingual Education and World Languages has conducted research on the classification of American Sign Language (ASL). Based on that research, and in collaboration with the World Language Content Advisory Panel and the World Language Leadership Council, NYSED has recategorized ASL as a category 3-4 language. As a result of this recategorization, the proficiency ranges for Category 3-4 languages will now apply to learners of ASL (see table below).

Performance indicators for modern languages are identified for each Standard at each checkpoint and aligned with the target proficiency level of that checkpoint. These NYS World Language Performance Indicators are adapted from the 2017 NCSSFL-ACTFL Can-Do Statements, the result of collaboration between the National Council of State Supervisors for Languages (NCSSFL) and the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL), and aligned to ACTFL proficiency sublevels as indicated in the chart above. More specifically, the performance indicators are aligned with the proficiency target range identified for each checkpoint, so all learners are appropriately challenged. These performance indicators are written as instructional targets in order to accommodate the range of abilities represented in classes of learners at each checkpoint. They target the upper level of the range of proficiency that point to success at the end of each checkpoint. In planning instruction, teachers can differentiate both instructional tasks and evaluation criteria to accommodate the range of abilities and achievement in any given group of learners. Successful growth is represented within a range of proficiency levels for each checkpoint. The goal is that all learners make continuous progress through each checkpoint and experience success that is only made possible in an extended sequence of learning opportunities. These proficiency ranges can be found on our Standards and Guidelines [website](#).

Check-point	Proficiency Ranges for Modern Languages (Category 3-4)
A	Novice Mid—Novice High
B	Novice High—Intermediate Low
C	Intermediate Low—Intermediate Mid

## **2023 Professional Learning Series for World Language Educators**

The Office of Bilingual Education and World Languages offers a monthly series of webinars for world language educators from 4:00-5:00 p.m. via Zoom on a variety of topics relative to the NYS Learning Standards for World Languages and high-leverage teaching practices. These webinars are recorded for educators to access on-demand following the original events. Educators can earn CTLE credit by attending the live webinar or by viewing the recording and scoring at least a 7 out of 10 on a multiple-choice post assessment.

- [Discover Authentic Resource Gems in the World Language Wakelet](#) - 6/8/23

A reminder that there are 24 webinars on the NYS Learning Standards for World Languages available for educators to view on-demand. For more information on professional learning for world language educators, please visit our [website](#).

## **News from Other NYSED Offices**

To find out about our state's many cultural resources, check out the newly launched newsletter from our [Office of Cultural Education](#).

"Let's Learn," is an instructional learning series for children ages 3-8 from PBS THIRTEEN. New episodes are airing on all public television stations and you can find supplemental resources on the [Let's Learn web page](#).

[FindNYCulture.org](#) is a free, easy-to-search database of New York State cultural education organizations.

The Board of Regents has received [updates on New York State's Graduation Measures Review Initiative](#) a bold undertaking to thoughtfully and inclusively review State high school graduation measures.

The Board of Regents was recently presented recommendations on the [Performance-Based Learning and Assessment Networks \(PLAN\) Pilot](#) and an update on the work of the [Graduation Measures Blue Ribbon Commission](#).

The Blue Ribbon Commission on [#NYSGradMeasures](#) would like to know: What are the barriers, including the unseen barriers, to student achievement that are not reflected in current graduation requirements? How can we address those? Click [here](#) to review previous Thought Exchange Questions.

The online [FAFSA Tracker](#) has data on New York high schools' FAFSA completion rates, providing valuable insight schools can use to encourage students to fill out their [#FAFSA](#).

NYSED and [@NYSCFSS](#) are conducting a FREE, two-day, in-person school safety summit from May 31-June 1 in Albany, NY. Register for the School Safety Summit [here](#).

### **Join the Conversation!**

If your school or community would like to share a story to include in a future edition of this newsletter, please email photos and news items to [OBEWL@nysed.gov](mailto:OBEWL@nysed.gov).



## 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.

