

Office of Bilingual Education and World Languages

New York State Education Department

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May 2025 Newsletter



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Dear Colleagues and Educational Leaders,

In this season of celebration and reflection, we pause to honor a special group among us—mothers. May is a month that reminds us of the deep strength, boundless compassion, and unwavering commitment embodied by those who nurture life, hold families together, and place the needs of their children above all else. In many ways, these are the very same traits required of today’s educators.



Every day, whether in classrooms, offices, or virtual spaces, educators and administrators dedicate themselves to our children with the love of a mother—fiercely protective, deeply patient, and endlessly hopeful. You advocate when others doubt. You listen when others dismiss. You give, often without recognition, and serve not for reward, but for the quiet knowledge that a child’s future is unfolding because of your care.

As we confront the rising biases against English Language Learners and immigrant students, we are reminded that our work is not just instructional—it is maternal. We are guardians of hope. In addition to the studies of their English dominant peers, our multilingual learners are navigating new languages, cultures, and systems. These students need us to see their brilliance, to defend their rights, and to cultivate spaces where their identities are affirmed, not erased.

This moment calls for leaders and educators who serve with heart, courage, and relentless love—just as mothers always have. You are those leaders. Together, we carry the legacy of transformational figures like Justice Sonia Sotomayor, who reminds us: *“The Latina in me is an ember that blazes forever.”* So too, the educator in each of you is a light for those who have yet to find their voice.

As we uplift all educators, let us offer a special tribute to those who are mothers, and to those who mother through mentorship, advocacy, and service. As author Washington Irving once wrote,

“A mother is the truest friend we have... when trials heavy and sudden fall upon us... she clings to us, and endeavors by her kind precepts and counsels to dissipate the clouds of darkness.”

Let that spirit guide us. Let it unite us. And let it renew our shared mission: to ensure every child—regardless of language, origin, or circumstance—knows they belong, they are valued, and they are loved.

With admiration and gratitude,

Elisa Alvarez

Board of Regents Highlights English Language Learners

At its most recent [meeting](#), the New York State Board of Regents focused on the needs and supports for English Language Learners (ELLs). The presentation, “[Comprehensive Update on Responses to English Language Learners](#),” was led by Deputy Commissioner of P12 Instruction, Angelique Johnson-Dingle, and Associate Commissioner of the Office of Bilingual Education and World Languages (OBEWL), Elisa Alvarez. Additional presenters included Dr. Gladys Cruz, District Superintendent for Questar III BOCES; Dr. Jasmin Varela, District Superintendent for Eastern Suffolk BOCES; Dr. Brenda Garcia, Chief of the New York City Public Schools (NYCPS) Office of Multilingual Learners; and Dr. Sagrario Rudecindo-O'Neill, Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Student Support at the Beacon City School District. Together these speakers highlighted programs that contribute to the academic success for ELLs throughout the state.

Ms. Alvarez discussed key aspects of OBEWL’s work including the significant contribution of the [Regional Bilingual Education Resource Networks \(RBERNs\)](#); support for Dual Language Immersion (DLI), which was featured in the [DLI Playbooks](#) resource published by the US Department of Education Office of English Language Acquisition; programs addressing the shortage of English as a New Language and Bilingual Education teachers including the [Clinically Rich-Intensive Teacher Institutes](#) sponsored by OBEWL; actions to help [immigrant students](#), including the work of the [CUNY Initiative on Immigration and Education](#); support for world language programs, including those teaching Indigenous languages; and the [New York State Seal of Biliteracy](#) (NYSSB).

Other presenters addressed work being conducted in their regions and districts. Beacon City School District featured its caregiver support and engagement, its K-3 student literacy program, and its partnership with OBEWL- sponsored programs including the Hudson Valley RBERN, the [Multilingual SIFE Screener](#), and [BRIDGES for Academic Success](#), which provides instructional materials to support Students with Interrupted Formal Education. Eastern Suffolk BOCES addressed its support for migrant and rural communities, for the local Indigenous nations, and for the rural communities of Eastern Suffolk Long Island. Questar III spoke to its support of DLI and Heritage Language Learning, its regional support as the seat of the Capital District RBERN, and its role as main facilitator of the [Puerto Rican/Hispanic Youth Leadership Institute](#). Finally, NYCPS discussed its work to ensure that all 45 of the city’s superintendents have the capacity to support ELLs within their schools and the development of the city’s new [Dream Squad](#) educator teams who serve as multilingual and immigrant advocates and work together to create and sustain a welcoming and inclusive environment.

The Regents were appreciative of all that is being done, noting that the increase of ELLs in districts across the state requires an array of programs to address the specific needs of different students in different regions. The presentation closed with Chancellor Young requesting that this topic be addressed again soon at a future meeting to learn more and ensure that NYSED maintains focus on ELLs as a key student population in New York.



State, regional, and district leaders updating the Board of Regents on responses to English Language Learners.

Celebrating Language and Community: The 19th Annual Illinois State Summit for Bilingual Parents

On Saturday, May 3, 2025, the Illinois State Board of Education hosted its 19th Annual Statewide Summit for Bilingual Parents—a vibrant and inspiring event that brought together more than 1,100 parents, families, educators, and advocates from across the state. The summit reflects the agency’s mission to support the whole child, the whole school, and the whole community. Held in Oak Brook Hills, a suburb of Chicago, the event had a festive atmosphere. School buses filled the venue's parking lot, and many groups proudly wore matching t-shirts representing their schools and Bilingual Parent Advisory Councils.



Student groups performing traditional dance for the parents in attendance.

The summit celebrated Illinois' rich linguistic diversity. The keynote address was delivered in Spanish by Irma López, author of *Today's Inspired Latina* and two other books. López shared her immigration journey from Mexico to Chicago, where she raised three children. She is a passionate advocate for bilingual education, and has worked in Chicago public schools for 23 years. More than 30 languages were represented at the event. To ensure full participation, interpretation services were provided through headsets. A relay translation system enabled the keynote speech to be translated from Spanish to English and then into other languages as needed.

Attendees chose from a wide range of workshops offered in Spanish, Arabic, Mongolian, and English—with translation support available. Topics covered every stage of family and student development, including the importance of play for young children to navigating the college financial aid process. A highlight of the day was the luncheon reception, featuring live performances by the Arabic Afterschool Program Students and *México en la Piel*, both showcasing traditional dances that brought joy and cultural pride to the audience. We extend our heartfelt thanks to Joanne Clyde, Director of the Language Development Department, for the invitation to this impactful and memorable event. It was a beautiful celebration of language, culture, and the power of education.

OBEWL Associates Attend “Exploration and Resonance: Chinese Music in the West” Concert

On May 1st, OBEWL had the privilege of attending *Exploration and Resonance: Chinese Music in the West*, an inspiring concert held at the China Institute in America. Co-presented with the US-China Music Institute of the Bard College Conservatory of Music, the event featured a powerful performance by the Bard East/West Ensemble. This



Bard College Conservatory of Music East/West Ensemble

unforgettable cross-cultural experience deepened our connection to and appreciation for the richness of Chinese musical traditions. We extend our sincere thanks to the US-China Music Institute for their continued support of our work and for fostering meaningful cultural dialogue through music. Watch a short clip of "[Silk Road](#)" (丝绸之路) performed at the concert (picture and video provided by the Chinese Institute in America).

Hudson Valley Learning Exchange Visits: Strengthening Dual Language Immersion Programs Through Collaboration

During the 2024-2025 school year, the Hudson Valley Learning Exchange Visits initiative —a district intervisitation program launched by the Hudson Valley RBERN —has provided a dynamic platform for districts across the region to connect, share best practices, and enhance their Dual Language Immersion (DLI) programs. These inter-district visits bring together educators, administrators, and program leaders to observe, discuss, and refine their approaches to bilingual education, ensuring that students receive the highest quality instruction in both English and their partner language.

Each visit centers on a specific topic, allowing districts to engage in meaningful discussions, provide constructive feedback, and deepen their understanding of effective DLI program models. Some of the topics explored during these visits have included:

- One-Way vs. Two-Way DLI Programs – examining the benefits and challenges of each model
- One-Teacher vs. Side-by-Side Models – exploring different instructional structures and their impact on student learning
- Language Allocation Plans – discussing how districts determine the distribution of English and the partner language across grade levels and content areas
- DLI Curriculum Choice and Implementation – evaluating the selection and adaptation of curricular materials to meet program goals
- Community and School Board Support – strategies for building buy-in from families, stakeholders, and district leadership
- Launching and Sustaining Programs – from building programs from scratch to continuously improving well-established models, some of which have been in place for over 20 years

The visits included stops at several high-functioning DLI programs across the region, with host districts such as Bedford CSD, White Plains CSD, Port Chester Public Schools, North Rockland CSD, Ossining UFSD, and Brewster Central School District. Participants represented a diverse range of districts from the Hudson Valley, as well as the New York City and Capital Regions, fostering a broad exchange of ideas and best practices. Looking ahead, the Hudson Valley RBERN aims to expand both the number of host districts and the reach of participating schools in the coming year, further strengthening the collaborative network supporting Dual Language Immersion.

A key strength of this initiative has been the opportunity for visiting districts to observe high-functioning programs across the Hudson Valley, gaining valuable insights that they can bring back to their own schools. At the same time, host districts receive valuable feedback from peers regarding both the strengths of their programs and areas for continued growth. This reciprocal process has helped to foster a regional culture of collaboration and shared learning.

The visits have included classroom observations across all grade levels, from early elementary to high school, providing a comprehensive look at how DLI programs evolve over time. Whether districts were examining early bilingual literacy development in a Kindergarten Two-Way program, discussing language support strategies and DLI scheduling for middle school students, or exploring ways to expand Bilingual pathways at the high school level, every visit has offered rich learning experiences.

To ensure that the learning continues beyond the in-person visits, each session is followed by a post-visit debrief via Zoom. During these virtual meetings, participants review feedback summaries from the visit, reflect on key takeaways and share how they might apply new insights to their own programs, and ask additional questions of the host district, creating an open dialogue for continued learning.

This structured reflection process ensures that every visit has a lasting impact, providing districts with concrete ideas and action steps to strengthen their own Dual Language Immersion programs. The response from districts has been overwhelmingly positive, with educators noting that these visits provide a rare and valuable opportunity to step outside their own schools and gain fresh perspectives. Many participants have left feeling inspired to implement new strategies and enhance their own programs. We invite more districts to participate in future visits, whether as hosts or visitors.

My Brother's Keeper Inducts Largest Class of Fellows Since Founding

The My Brother's Keeper (MBK) initiative in New York State is a bold and necessary response to the persistent inequities facing boys and young men of color—Black, Brown, Latino, and Indigenous youth whose potential has been historically underserved and systemically denied. Born from President Barack Obama's national call to action in 2014 and formally enacted into New York State law in 2016, MBK stands as a beacon of hope and justice. With a \$20 million commitment, New York was the first state to codify this movement, a testament to its belief that our children's dreams should not be determined by race, zip code, or background. Rooted in civil rights, equity, and humanity, MBK's work is anchored in six milestones that guide young people from early childhood to career readiness, ensuring they are seen, supported, and uplifted.

MBK is championed by NYSED's very own Chancellor Dr. Lester Young Jr. and led by Assistant Commissioner Dr. Anael Alston. The program represents a powerful coalition of over 50 communities across the state, united in dismantling barriers and building bridges of opportunity. MBK's Fellows program nurtures leadership in high school students of color, diversifies our educator workforce through the Teacher Opportunity Corps II, and creates spaces where our children are affirmed, not marginalized and where their culture is a source of strength, not stigma. It is not just an initiative; it is a moral commitment to elevate our children, our communities, and our collective future.

On May 1, 2025, this commitment came alive at the annual MBK Symposium in Albany—a day filled with celebration of power, purpose, and promise. Over 1,000 students, educators, and advocates gathered not for an event, but for a movement. The energy in the room was electric as speakers like Brian Favors, Jordan Pierre, and Principal Baruti Kafele ignited hearts with messages of purpose, resilience, and earnest love for our children. These were not just speeches, they were affirmations that our young men of color matter, and that their brilliance cannot be contained.

A defining moment of the day was the induction of the MBK Fellows class of 124 young men, it's largest class yet. These emerging leaders' presence on that stage became a statement against refusing to be invisible. As these scholars stepped into leadership, surrounded by mentors and allies, they reminded us that when we invest in our youth, we invest in justice. Author, journalist, and commentator, Cheryl Wills graced the stage to share her deep personal journey of uncovering the legacy of her ancestor Sandy Wills. Her testimony marked the hearts of all young scholars, that their history is sacred, powerful and worthy of remembrance and honor.

The event was co-hosted by Associate Commissioner Elisa Alvarez, who states "I was honored to co-host and witness all speakers light the path forward and remind the young men to take their place in history with pride and most importantly by becoming educated and a contributor to society. From workshops on college pathways to community action projects, the symposium affirmed what we know to be true: when our children are seen and supported, they soar. MBK is not just a program—it is our promise to never give up on any child, to fight for their future with everything we have, and to ensure that every student of color in New York is free to dream, to thrive, and to lead.

Great appreciation to Assistant Commissioner Dr. Alston for inviting me to help facilitate this remarkable moment."

More information about the event is available on the [MBK website](#).



Chancellor Young, Commissioner Rosa, and Assistant Commissioner Alston welcome the 2025 MBK Fellows



Elisa Alvarez co-hosted this year's MBK Symposium in Albany


Save the Date: Voices United Conference

OBEWL is proud to announce that we will host the third annual Voices United Conference for ELL educators and administrators on October 23, 2025. This year's theme, "Sounds to Stories: Advancing Linguistic Diversity and Cultural Landscapes," celebrates the power of language in shaping identity and community.

This year's conference will be held at the Empire State Plaza Convention Center in Albany, NY. We are currently developing a schedule of presentations, small group workshops, highlights of student achievements, and information on resources helpful to all teachers and administrators who work with linguistically diverse students.

We will post more information, including instructions on how to register, to our [website](#) in the coming weeks.


We hope to see you there!



SAVE THE DATE

THIRD ANNUAL
**VOICES UNITED
CONFERENCE**

PRESENTED BY THE OFFICE OF
BILINGUAL EDUCATION AND
WORLD LANGUAGES



SOUNDS TO STORIES
ADVANCING LINGUISTIC DIVERSITY AND
CULTURAL LANDSCAPES

THE EMPIRE STATE PLAZA CONVENTION CENTER, ALBANY, NY
THURSDAY, OCTOBER 23RD, 2025

Strengthening Language Learning and Intercultural Competence: OBEWL at Chinese Language Day Celebration

On April 25, representatives from the Office of Bilingual Education and World Languages (OBEWL) and the New York State Language RBERN at New York State University attended the Chinese Consulate Open House and Chinese Language Day Celebration.

The event highlighted meaningful exchanges between New York State school district administrators and students with their counterparts in China. Attendees shared insights from recent educational tours, focusing on school partnerships, professional development, culturally responsive curricula, student leadership, intercultural competence, language acquisition, and global learning in the digital age. Students from five high schools captivated the audience with dynamic performances—including cross talk, short skits, music, dance, and traditional instruments—demonstrating their growing language proficiency and cultural appreciation. Interactive cultural stations offered hands-on experiences with traditional Chinese medicine, crafts, sugar painting, Hanfu attire, and calligraphy.

OBEWL representatives engaged in conversations with officials from the Chinese Consulate and community organizations to explore expanded collaboration opportunities. Discussions centered on teacher preparation, professional development, cultural exchange programs, and the creation of culturally responsive educational resources. These efforts aim to enhance instructional practices and support the development of multilingualism, multicultural understanding, and global competence among English Language Learners and Multilingual Learners.



Attendees at Chinese Consulate Open House and Chinese Language Day Celebration

From "AI to Z": Tools for Planning ELL Instruction

By Bernadette McHugh-Schreiber, Technology Resource Specialist, Long Island RBERN

In today's rapidly evolving educational landscape, Artificial Intelligence (AI) is emerging as a powerful ally for English Language Learner (ELL) educators in their lesson planning and preparation. These innovative tools can help teachers streamline administrative tasks and create more engaging materials for students from diverse linguistic backgrounds. It's important to note that this article addresses teacher use of AI for planning and preparation, not student interaction with AI platforms.

Important Guidelines for Educational AI Use

Before exploring AI's potential, educators must follow essential guidelines for safe and appropriate use. Always check and comply with your district's policies regarding AI use. Never input any Personally Identifiable Information into AI platforms. Use a personal email address or create a separate email specifically for AI interactions, and avoid using district email addresses with AI platforms. Refrain from connecting AI tools to any district or educational platforms unless explicitly approved by district officials, and never upload any student work, data, or identifying information to AI platforms.

When implementing AI in your planning, follow the 80/20 approach: Use AI to create initial drafts (80%), but spend significant time (20%) reviewing and customizing content to ensure it meets your students' specific needs. Always review all AI-generated content for bias and accuracy before classroom use.

Understanding AI in ELL Education: Practical Applications

While AI tools generally fall into three key categories (reactive, predictive, and generative), the real value comes from strategic integration into planning ELL instruction. Let's explore how Claude AI and Canva, two of these technologies, translate into tangible classroom support.

Lesson Planning with Claude AI

Claude AI is a powerful large language model chatbot that can be utilized to help with lesson planning, curriculum development, and creating teaching resources while maintaining appropriate privacy and security measures. Its sophisticated conversational abilities help with explanation of language concepts, translation support, and cultural context.

Harnessing the power of AI tools such as Claude for lesson planning is all about "prompt engineering". Be sure to give Claude enough context and engineer your prompt by being precise about your needs. Begin by identifying clear learning objectives and include components you would like included in the output such as, developing academic vocabulary related to the topic, creating context-rich language practice activities, and designing culturally responsive learning materials. Add additional details that will help you reach your learners. In the example below, note the context given to Claude to help customize the lesson output.

Prompt to Claude AI: "Create a lesson plan *aligned with NYS learning standards for transitioning level ELL* students focusing on environmental science vocabulary, including academic terms, conversation prompts, and *cultural context for Spanish-speaking learners from Guatemala and Ecuador.*"

This prompt yielded a 5-day unit plan that included NYS learning standards, lesson objectives, Tier 2 and Tier 3 vocabulary, ideas for assessment and differentiation, a list of materials and resources, and ideas for extensions and connections. All of the suggestions provided by Claude can be adapted, adjusted, and personalized for your needs and students. For example, an initial lesson outline from Claude can be customized by adding local environmental examples relevant to students' backgrounds, scaffolded vocabulary activities, and culturally specific language learning strategies. In this case, Claude has provided some contextual links to the cultures of the students in the class. However, before implementing this lesson, be sure verify vocabulary accuracy, adapt language complexity to match student proficiency levels, ensure cultural relevance, and align content with specific proficiency level needs.

(continued on next page)

Cultural Considerations

- Incorporate examples from Guatemalan cloud forests and highland regions
- Include references to Ecuador's unique biodiversity (Galápagos Islands, Amazon rainforest)
- Draw connections between indigenous knowledge of environmental conservation and scientific concepts
- Use culturally relevant examples of flora and fauna

Excerpt from a lesson plan derived from Claude AI

From "AI to Z": Tools for Planning ELL Instruction (cont)

Cultural and Linguistic Contextualization with Canva

Canva combines AI-powered design capabilities with educational templates to create visually engaging materials. Features include AI-generated images, multilingual translation support, and a vast library of education-specific templates that can be customized for ELL instruction. Canva's AI capabilities can significantly enhance the process of creating engaging, culturally responsive visual learning materials so essential to effective ELL instruction.

Practical Example: When teaching idiomatic expressions through visual storytelling, use Canva AI to:

- Generate images representing idiomatic expressions like "under the weather" or "piece of cake"
- Create multilingual presentation templates that include both English and students' home languages
- Design infographics explaining language nuances and cultural contexts
- Develop visual vocabulary builders that connect concepts across languages

For instance, when teaching the idiom "hit the books," Canva can help you create a visual sequence showing what this phrase literally means versus its figurative meaning, with culturally diverse student characters and multilingual explanations that honor your students' backgrounds.



Canva-generated image of "Hit the Books"

Key Benefits for ELL Teachers

AI's ability to help teachers prepare comprehensive, contextual language support materials is invaluable. Teachers can use AI to generate authentic conversation scenarios about relevant topics like school routines or community events, which can then be used in future lessons as speaking practice. For complex grammar concepts like conditional statements, AI can create clear explanations with specific examples relevant to students' lives.

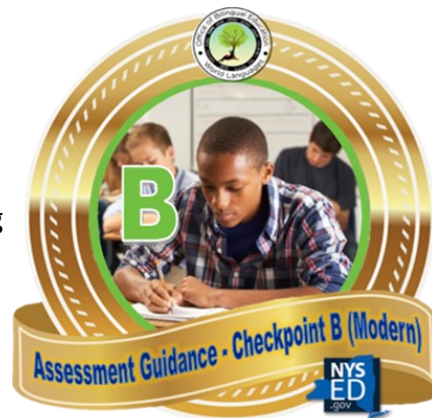
For instance, when teaching conditional statements, you might prompt Claude: "Provide examples of conditional statements related to school routines that would be relevant for middle school ELLs." The resulting examples can be reviewed, modified, and incorporated into your instruction to provide meaningful context for grammar learning. Claude even provides question forms as conversation starters to reinforce the language.

Looking Forward: AI as an Instructional Ally

As AI technology continues to evolve, its potential to support ELL education grows. These tools enhance teacher efficiency in planning and preparation but remain supplements to, not replacements for, skilled educators. The focus remains on empowering teachers to create more meaningful classroom interactions and inclusive learning environments where every language learner can thrive.

Checkpoint B Webinar for World Language Educators

The Office of Bilingual Education and World Languages (OBEWL) of the New York State Education Department (NYSED) presents this next webinar in its 2025 Professional Learning Series: **Principles and Guidelines for Adopting or Creating Locally Developed Benchmark Assessments for Checkpoint B (Modern Languages other than American Sign Language)**. This webinar is offered free of charge for world language educators and administrators working and studying in New York State educational institutions. 1 hour of CTLE credit offered.



Presenters: Dr. Joanne O'Toole, Bill Heller, Dr. Lori Langer de Ramirez

Webinar date & time: Tuesday, June 10th, 2025, 4:00-5:00 pm via Zoom

Webinar description: In this session, the presenters will explain the general principles and protocols outlined in the NYSED-OBEWL document, *Principles and Guidelines for Adopting or Creating Locally Developed Benchmark Assessments for Checkpoint B (Modern Languages other than American Sign Language)*. This document provides guidance to Local Educational Agencies and regional and statewide consortia for the creation of Checkpoint B Benchmark Assessments for Modern Languages aligned to the revised NYS Learning Standards for World Languages. Successful performance on a Checkpoint B Benchmark Assessment in tandem with passing the Checkpoint B course sequence fulfills the world language requirement of the Regents Diploma with Advanced Designation.

Click [here](#) to register.

World Language Leadership Council



The World Language Leadership Council was formed in 2021 as a means of creating an open channel of communication between NYSED and world language educators and administrators. With more than 680 registered members, the Council meets once a month after school from September to June. During our meetings, educators discuss and share their questions, concerns, and suggestions with NYSED on a variety of topics from curriculum, unit, and lesson design to developing local assessments aligned to the NYS Learning Standards for World Languages (2021). The Council also serves as an additional means of communicating information and initiatives regarding world language programs to the field, complementing our professional learning offerings, website, and newsletter.

Attendance at meetings is completely voluntary and CTLE credit is awarded for meetings attended.

In 2024-25, the Council's focus has been on supporting teaching in the second year of implementation of the NYS Learning Standards for World Languages in 8th grade, completing the first Checkpoint A sequence aligned to the new standards, and priming teachers and administrators on preparing to implement the new standards for the first year of Checkpoint B starting in September of 2025.

If you are interested in becoming a member, please complete this [brief registration form](#) with your name and contact information. Following this submission, you will receive a confirmation of registration and all future communication, including meeting links.

New York State Seal of Biliteracy Culminating Project Presentations

Every year, thousands of students conduct research on a topic of interest and present a Culminating Project in English and/or a world language as part of their New York State Seal of Biliteracy (NYSSB) program. This project requires students to demonstrate a high level of proficiency in the language in all three modes of communication aligned with the NYS Learning Standards for World Languages (Modern and Classical) (2021): interpretive, interpersonal, and presentational. The students present their projects to a panel of speakers of the language, who then interview the students and evaluate their performance to determine if they have met the requirements to earn points toward the NYSSB for the project. About 75% of students who earn the NYSSB complete a Culminating Project in English. More than 90% of students also complete a Culminating Project in their world language, as well.

Every year, NYSED visits about thirty-five schools throughout New York State during these Culminating Project presentations to provide support and feedback to the school on their process. In April, several NYSED representatives had the privilege of visiting Syracuse CSD's World Language Presentation Day, during which many of the district's NYSSB candidates presented their Culminating Projects. Held on a Saturday at Henninger High School, participants entered the school to find a sign reading "Welcome!" in many languages and were presented with name tags, a program, and even some NYSSB swag. There was even an activity center for family members and younger siblings centering on Earth Day. One of the event organizers, Ms. Ingrid Paredes, is the Assistant Director for World Languages in the Office of English as New Language (ENL), World Languages, Bilingual Education and Native American Education Program. While most Syracuse CSD high schools have offered the NYSSB for seven to eight years, "this was the first time the district has held a World Language Presentation Day," explained Ms. Paredes.

While students from Corcoran, Henninger, Nottingham, and the Public Service Leadership Academy at Fowler high schools waited for their turn to present in the library, panelists in six different rooms prepared for presentations in Arabic, Bengali, Chin, French, Kare, Karen, Kinyarwanda, Spanish, and Vietnamese. Many of the panelists were world language teachers from Syracuse CSD, but others were staff members, college professors, and community members, all coming together to support this celebration of biliteracy. When all was said and done, faculty, staff and panelists lined the hallways and applauded as the NYSSB Class of 2025 from Syracuse CSD paraded out the door. Congratulations to these students and to the wonderful educators at Syracuse who supported them to earn the NYS Seal of Biliteracy.



NYSSB candidates from Syracuse CSD celebrate at the end of the 2025.

New York State Seal of Biliteracy Task Force

The New York State Seal of Biliteracy (NYSSB) Task Force was formed in 2019 in order to advise NYSED on the implementation of the NYSSB, with special emphasis on supporting English Language Learners (ELLs) and multilingual learners (ML) to achieve this distinction. Members of the Task Force were selected for their experience with the NYSSB and their leadership in supporting students and educators in the field of English and world languages. In its selection process, NYSED was sure to include educators from all regions of NYS and to ensure representation from a variety of school types including the BIG 5, urban, suburban, rural schools, charter schools, and independent and religious schools. Each Regional Bilingual Education Resource Network (RBERN) has a representative that serves on this task force, as they are our partners that support NYSSB schools at the local level. The NYSSB Task Force meets once a month virtually and conducts three in-person meetings in Albany per year. During these meetings, members discuss challenges faced by NYS Seal of Biliteracy schools and consider how NYSED can be support and encourage these schools to grow their programs and support every student who can demonstrate a high level of proficiency in English and another world language to pursue the NYS Seal of Biliteracy. In 2024-25, the NYSSB Task Force has taken a deep dive in the criteria to earn this award with the purpose of identifying any barriers to participation in the NYS Seal of Biliteracy, especially for our ELLs and heritage language learners. The task force has identified recommendations for adjusting these criteria that it will present to the Office of Bilingual Education and World Languages for their consideration.



Members of the 2024-25 NYSSB Task Force

Trinidad Arizmendi, PNW BOCES
David Balsamo, Syosset UFSD
Christopher Bethmann, Mid-West RBERN
Sarah Cioffi, Siena College
Miriam Eisenstein Ebsworth, New York University
Ricardo Estremera, Capital District RBERN
Maria Fielteau, Utica CSD
Francisco Garcia-Quezada, NYC RBERN
Emily Gargiulo, PRHYLI – Questar III
Jordan González, Long Island RBERN
Madelyn Guzman, Yonkers PS
Leslie Hall, Webster CSD
Anne Henry, RBERN West
Chastity Martinez-Morales, Newburgh CSD

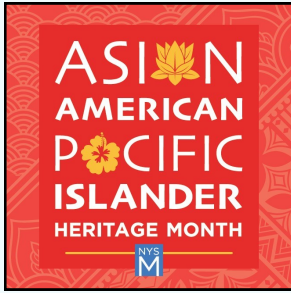
Melissa Melkonian, American Dream Charter
Pietro Mendola, Buffalo PS
David Mumper, Hudson Valley RBERN
Sabrina Nudo, Mid-State RBERN
Ingrid Paredes, Syracuse CSD
Juanita Reyes, Capital District RBERN
Cristina Santiago-Campbell, Brooklyn Technical HS
Jill Schimmel, NYCPS
Shawna Sweet, Greece CSD
Diane Tyminski, West Genesee CSD
Guy Vaccaro, Wyandanch UFSD
Ron Woo, NYS Language RBERN
Madeline Wright, Shenendehowa CSD



2024-25 NYSSB Task Force

NEWS

FROM other DEPARTMENTS

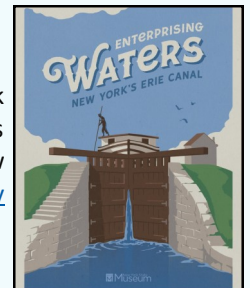


Happy Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) Heritage Month! NYSED's Office of Cultural Education is proud to commemorate AAPI Heritage Month with a series of free public programs celebrating the rich history, enduring legacy, and extraordinary contributions of AAPI communities in New York State. These events honor the rich and resilient journey of AAPI individuals and communities, recognizing not only the challenges they've overcome but also their remarkable achievements, vibrant cultures, and enduring contributions that continue to shape and enrich our state.



The Office of Cultural Education (OCE) proudly supports P-12 teaching and learning across New York State through a variety of programs, services, and resources. This includes expanded learning opportunities, professional development, and online resources -- for both educators and learners! OCE publishes a quarterly newsletter for educators that highlights classroom-ready materials, events, and more. [Sign up here for the OCE Education Newsletter](#) and view the [Spring 2025 issue](#).

"[Enterprising Waters: New York's Erie Canal](#)" is an eight-panel exhibition carefully curated by the New York State Museum to bring the astonishing story of the canal to life, celebrating its visionary inception, ambitious construction, and bicentennial commemoration. Anyone interested in displaying "Enterprising Waters: New York's Erie Canal" is asked to e-mail the New York State Museum at nysmhistory@nysed.gov



The New York State Library presents [Oy Vey, King George! The Secrets of the Jewish Patriots in the American Revolution](#). Jews fought in the Revolution. They built American synagogues in wartime, and in an era where all men were declared equal, they fought to make it a reality. Discover how American Jews joined the patriot cause and were welcomed by the patriots. How did American Jews fare differently than Jews elsewhere, and how did that make American Judaism and American rights distinct?

Would you like to get away from it all, even temporarily? Thanks to NOVELNY, a free suite of databases available to all New Yorkers, you now can! In addition to tons of educational content, Gale databases have virtual escape rooms and plans for creating your own! Be prepared to dazzle your friends and family at the next gathering with an adventure! [Video: Build Your Own Escape Room Using Gale Resources!](#)

NOVELNY

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](#)

Office of Bilingual Education and World Languages

New York State Education Department

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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 Home Page](#)

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[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.

