



# New York State Education Department Office of Bilingual Education and World Languages (OBEWL)

## News from the Associate Commissioner

Welcome back to a new school year! I hope you had a restful and engaging summer. As we begin the new school year, we are reminded that this is a time full of many new possibilities and beginnings for English Language Learners (ELLs)/Multilingual Learners (MLLs) and World Language students! With the implementation of Part



*Associate Commissioner of Bilingual  
Education Angelica Infante-Green*

154 of the Regulations of the Commissioner, we are ensuring that the programs and services are in place to support New York's growing multilingual population. Let's reflect on how our students have moved from being thought of as Limited English Proficient students to English Language Learners, and now Multilingual Learners. Thanks to Regent Dr. Betty Rosa, who noted that referring to our students as ELLs is very limiting - our students are multilingual and multicultural – valuable skills to have in the 21<sup>st</sup> century! ELLs/MLLs have always been and continue to be a priority for the New York State Board of Regents and are at the forefront of their agenda.

Here at OBEWL we have been hard at work all year to have materials in place to support you as Part 154 of the Regulations of the Commissioner is implemented. Some of the material that is available at the start of this new academic year include:

- District Proposal for Former ELL Services
- Former ELLs Guidance
- Parent NYSESLAT & NYSITELL Guides
- A Parent Orientation Video
- **Professional Development Requirements Chart**
- **Professional Development Waiver Form (for districts)**
- SIFE Oral Interview Questionnaires (translated)
- SIFE Oral Interview Questionnaire
- SIFE Reading Comprehension Screening Tool
- SIFE Writing Skills Screening Tool (translated)
- Parent Notification Letters: Exiting ELL Status and Continuation of ELL Status (translated)

The OBEWL Newsletter is packed with important information that will ultimately support our students. The implementation of Part 154-3 includes new regulations for ELLs/MLLs with disabilities. Dr. Alexia Thompson discusses the importance of correctly identifying ELLs/MLLs with disabilities and how schools and districts can find answers to their technical assistance questions.

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How we support Students with Inconsistent/Interrupted Formal Education (SIFE) is also an area we have been developing resources for. The film *I Learn America* follows five SIFE students throughout a year in high school. This powerful film shows the challenges and successes of the students as they learn to navigate school in America. A conversation with Dr. Robin Finnan-Jones from NYS Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages and Dr. Tatyana Kleyn from NYS Association for Bilingual Education looks at their vision for ELLs/MLLs and World Language students. For our World Language students, we are preparing for the Seal of Biliteracy, more dual language programs, and new World Language Assessments.

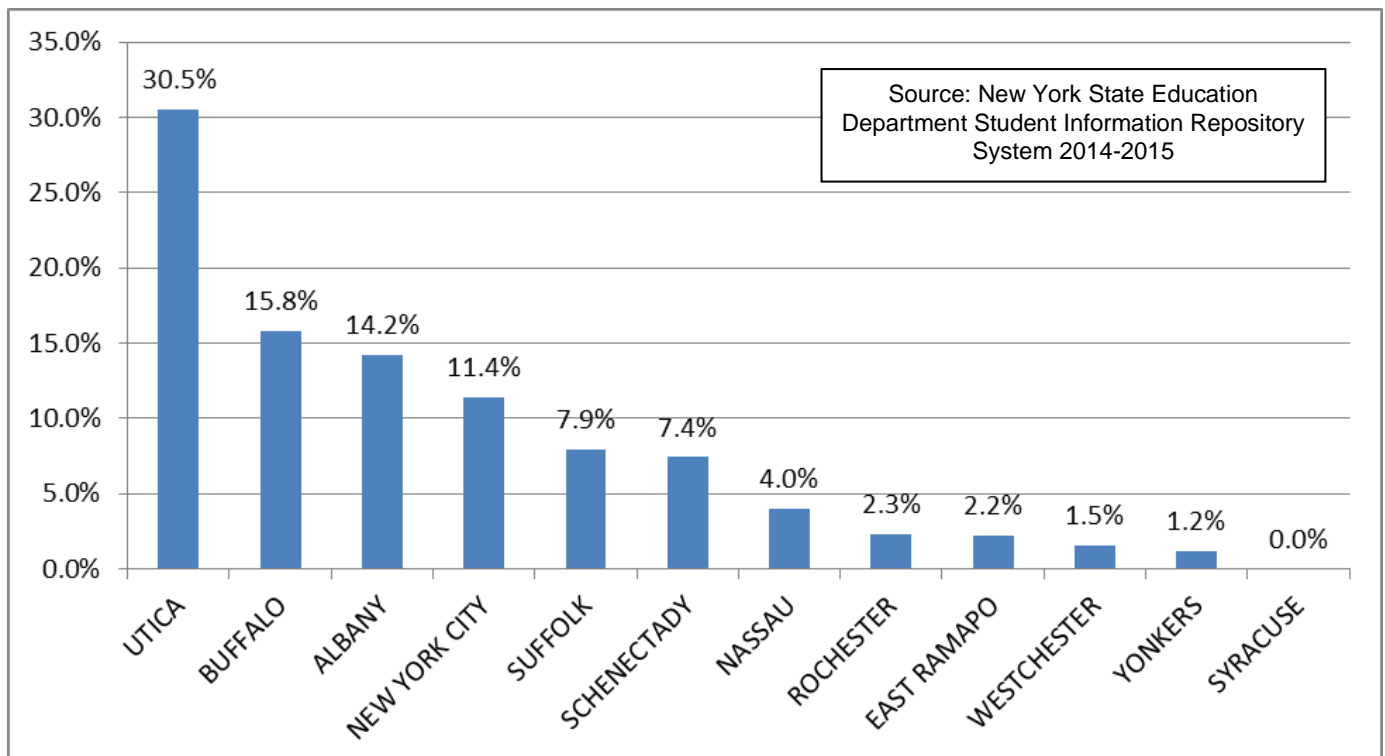
I also want to take this opportunity to remind you of a powerful resource guide that is available on the Engage<sup>ny</sup> website. OBEWL worked with Diane August to create these guides, [Scaffolding Instruction for English Language Learners: Resource Guides for English Language Arts and Mathematics](#). Our October issue of the OBEWL Newsletter will feature an interview with Diane August, Managing Researcher in the Education Program at the American Institute for Research. We will also include information about upcoming modules and webinars that will be available in the next few months.

As you can see, here in New York State we are moving forward to provide our students with 21<sup>st</sup> century skills in preparation for living and following their dreams in a global society. As we implement these changes throughout the school year, we may face various challenges/opportunities that require us to make difficult choices. As we confront these challenges/opportunities, we must always remember to keep the best interest of our students at the forefront as we have always done. Your Regional Bilingual Education Resource Network is available to support you in your efforts and can always be consulted for guidance and professional development.

I want to take this opportunity to personally thank you for your hard work and commitment to our students. Each and every one of us who work with these students feels a sense of passion and responsibility that is difficult to describe. Let’s continue to move forward as a team as we strive to promote success for ELLs/MLLs and all of our students! Have a wonderful start to a new school year!

## Need to Know at a Glance

### Percentage of SIFE as a Share of the Total ELL Population in the District 2013-14



## A Profile of Regent Betty Rosa



Starting down a path towards law school and then changing direction on another path towards education, Regent Betty Rosa has now merged the two paths and is moving ahead down the road of education policy. Serving her second five year term in the New York State Board of Regents, she now represents the district in the Bronx she grew up in and taught in.

Regent Rosa is a true educator and lifelong learner. She has earned the following degrees:

- B.A. in psychology from City College of New York
- M.S. Ed in Administration and Supervision from City College of New York
- M.S. Ed. In Bilingual Education from Lehman College
- Ed. M and Ed. D. in Administration, Planning, and Social Policy from Harvard University

While living in the Bronx, Regent Rosa was recruited to teach at a time when there was a teacher shortage. She became a bilingual teacher with a focus on reading in New York City's District 9 and fell in love with teaching and the school she was assigned to – Community School 42. This devotion is partly the result of the support she received as a teacher from her mentor, from the faculty, and from the community.

It was at Harvard that she developed an interest in special education and became passionate about working with students who had socio-emotional needs. Having met Tom Hehir, who eventually became the Director of the Office of Special Education at the U.S. Department of Education (1993-1999), Regent Rosa developed an interest in special education. Her dissertation focused on inclusion which at the time was just becoming a model for teaching special education. Ultimately, she became a principal in **District 75**, which, “provides citywide educational, vocational, and behavior support programs for students who are on the autism spectrum, have significant cognitive delays, are severely emotionally challenged, sensory impaired and/or multiply disabled” (NYC DOE website). She feels she has been involved in the most interesting parts of education, having been a principal for a residential program and having worked with students who were incarcerated: “I’ve worked with all students. Name it and I think I’ve been there.”

As a Regent, Dr. Rosa has seen changes in the Board, not just in people, but in the Board’s receptiveness to the needs and growth of ELLs. Parental involvement is key, according to Regent Rosa: “Having the material in the language of the parents and using the native language will help parents connect to the schools. Encourage parent leaders to visit the parents on a Saturday and use parent leaders to get networks of parents to support each other. Have them share their journeys and frustrations.”

One concern she does have is the distractions of the political climate and of individual issues that detract from looking at education in a comprehensive way. She compares it to someone being sick and taking an x-ray: “The x-ray only gives a small part of the picture. It tells us a little slice. We haven’t gotten to the root cause. We’re not addressing the complexity of schools and where they are in the context of society and the community. We need to do an MRI, but fundamentally that becomes so expensive. We tend to isolate an issue or we get stuck on issues like the opt-out movement or assessment. Everything becomes a quick fix, but this is complicated, and we don’t fix it with a simple solution. Children come to school with issues and different needs (hearing difficulties, illness, etc.). If you focus on just one thing (i.e., Common Core) then we aren’t addressing the real issues. Schools live and breathe in the context of the community.”

One organization Regent Rosa cited as one that is addressing the real issue is the **South Bronx Rising Together** group: “They are not just addressing the issue of education; they are working on issues of mental health. They are an example of an organization committed to the community.” With her unwavering commitment, we look forward to seeing what future paths Regent Rosa continues to wander down.

# OBEWL Collaborates with FLACS and Queens College to Put World Language Assessments on the Map

by Dr. Elaine Margarita

*NYSED is very pleased to be collaborating with FLACS on a variety of initiatives. By sponsoring the Memorandum of Understanding through Queens College, NYSED will pay for the validation of the FLACS examinations to be used for Pathway credit by examination and the Checkpoint A and B examination requirements. In addition, NYSED is very excited to introduce the New York State Seal of Biliteracy later this year. Through a menu of options which include assessments, coursework, projects and portfolios, students will have the opportunity to demonstrate their proficiency in English and one or more other languages in a multitude of ways.*



Left to right: Peter Swerdzewski, Lissette Colón-Collins, Jennifer Sattern, Juliette Lyons-Thomas, Joan Anderson, Angelica Infante-Green, Dr. Elaine Margarita, Dr. Jennifer Eddy

For the past five years the leadership of the Foreign Language Association of Chairpersons and Supervisors (FLACS) has met with officials and representatives from the New York State Education Department (NYSED) to address the concerns and issues that have arisen since NYSED made the tough decision to discontinue the Checkpoint A and B exams in world languages.

Our conversations have been fruitful, and our collaboration has resulted in positive outcomes for both organizations and for world language programs across the state. This past August, representatives from OBEWL, FLACS, and Queens College met to continue these efforts. Present at the meeting were: Associate Commissioner Angelica Infante-Green, Regents Fellows Lissette Colón-Collins, Peter Swerdzewski, Jennifer Sattern, Juliette Lyons-Thomas, FLACS President Dr. Elaine Margarita, Chief Operating Officer Joan Anderson, and Dr. Jennifer Eddy from Queens College. The goals for the meeting were to discuss:

1. The Seal of Biliteracy and eligibility requirements for World Language students
2. The status of FLACS Exams becoming state approved assessments
3. The importance of developing a consistent nomenclature and procedure for posting World Language Assessment scores on transcripts
4. The posting of World Language Assessment dates on the NYSED calendar of June assessments
5. The Pathways and World Languages

At the meeting we discussed ways to advance the Seal of Biliteracy (the Seal). For example, NYSED will provide criteria and a point system to award students with a Seal of Biliteracy on their transcripts. There may be options for schools to develop their own criteria, providing that they meet the general criteria outlined in the NYSED document. We shared ideas regarding acceptable assessments and the importance of awarding the Seal at graduation (as opposed to delaying them for AP scores).

We also discussed the FLACS exams and the efforts to have the exams placed on the NYSED list of approved assessments. Working together with the Office of Bilingual Education and World Languages, Dr. Eddy will implement and oversee the process required to submit the exams for approval, and we hope to see this come to fruition by next year. Once the exams are approved, they can be used in several ways: for validation of student performance on state and national standards in world languages, for Pathway credit by examination, and for data collection on student performance for Student Learning Objectives (SLOs).



## 5 OBEWL Collaborates with FLACS and Queens College

With over 200 districts throughout New York administering FLACS exams, the exams must be administered at the same time across the state. For that reason, the date for the exams will be clearly posted as **World Language Assessments** on the SED June calendar of assessments. For the 2015-16 academic year, it is recommended that FLACS exam grades be posted as **FL-A** or **FL-B** on student transcripts (abbreviations for languages can also be added).

FLACS and Queens College have partnered to develop a new syllabus and curriculum guide to enhance world language programs and to define student performance using language from the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) National Standards and Performance Descriptors. For several years now, they have also partnered to provide professional development for world language teachers through an annual conference. This academic year's conference will be held on April 1<sup>st</sup> at Queens College.



Left to right: Dr. Elaine Margarita, Angelica Infante-Green, Joan Anderson

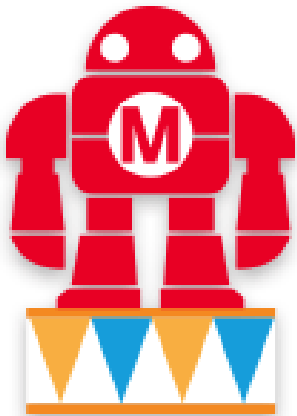
In addition to administering FLACS Exams, FLACS remains committed to providing professional development opportunities for both supervisors of world language programs and for their teachers. FLACS conducts three informational workshops for their membership (supervisors of world language programs) each year. Topics include changes and updates regarding NYSED regulations, current trends in world language education, application of technology in world language classes, Student Learning Objectives, and changes in the FLACS Exams. Since many teachers do not come to the profession with sufficient training in quality test development, the organization also provides training for teachers in writing items for the FLACS Exams, an area that the association feels is extremely important, not only for the development of the FLACS Exams but also for thematic or unit tests.

This October's Item Writing Workshops will be offered in five locations throughout New York State. Teachers of French, German, Italian, Mandarin, and Spanish will come together to learn/review the techniques of creating quality listening and reading multiple choice questions and answers. Over the past few years, FLACS has been rolling out more Common Core based questions and writing tasks on their exams. Section 2c of the FLACS Checkpoint A exams will no longer include four picture choices based on a listening stimulus. Instead, Common Core type questions based on a picture and a listening stimulus have been included in the exams for June 2016. The goal of the organization is to share this information early in the school year in order to support teachers in using this type of Common Core task with their students all year.

When the World Language Proficiency and Regents exams were discontinued several years ago, FLACS met the need for developing and administering regional exams to ensure that language programs are aligned across the state. That new role has spurred the organization to work collaboratively with NYSED and Queens College to continue to move language and language instruction in a positive direction.

NYSED has also collaborated with other world language organizations, including the New York State Association of Foreign Languages (NYS AFLT), to ensure the needs of teachers are being heard and met. One of the most important recent events was the hiring of a new Associate for the World Languages, Ricardo Constantino, who will now be a liaison for our world language programs throughout New York State.

*Elaine Margarita is the President of FLACS and a Curriculum Associate for World Languages, K-12 at Jericho Schools in Jericho, New York.*



### **New York Hall of Science – 15% Discount for Teachers at the World Maker Faire, September 26 & 27, 2015**

Join the **New York Hall of Science** in Queens for the sixth annual **World Maker Faire**. You will meet over 800 designers, artists, inventors, and performers for a celebration of the do-it-yourself movement.

**Educators can receive 15% off tickets by going to <http://makerfaire.com/>. Enter the code 15NYSCI15 and receive a 15% discount. This offer is valid through September 24.**

Maker Faire is part science fair, part county fair, and part something entirely new! As a celebration of the Maker Movement, it's a family-friendly showcase of invention, creativity, and resourcefulness. Faire gathers together tech enthusiasts, crafters, educators, tinkerers, food artisans, hobbyists, engineers, science clubs, artists, students, and commercial exhibitors. Makers come to show their creations and share their learnings. Attendees flock to Maker Faire to glimpse the future and find the inspiration to become Makers themselves.

## Human Rights Forum to be Held in Utica



UNSPOKEN is an annual human rights forum that combines film, art, and a conference into one festival. Held in Utica, NY in October of each year, this multi-faceted forum seeks not only to give a voice to human rights violations from around the globe, but also to offer practical solutions in order to shape a better tomorrow and give hope to the future. The intention of the festival is to provide a wide range of artistic and cultural experiences for the community members, and provide a forum for the many diverse cultures to celebrate their experiences and talents

with others. Unspoken fulfills the core values of the Mohawk Valley Resource Center for Refugees: community, diversity, knowledge, and compassion.

The 2015 festival is scheduled for October 1st- 3rd and will involve a conference held on October 1st at SUNY Polytechnic Institute that will provide an understanding of refugee resettlement issues. The film festival will include a wide range of films that will offer rare insight, perspective, and solutions to a diverse range of topics including refugees, and filmmakers. Films will be shown at Munson-Williams-Proctor Art Institute on Friday and at Mohawk Valley Community College on Saturday. The festival will also include a Utica Firefly Storytelling session at Tramontane Cafe that will allow individuals to share their own experiences with the community. For a complete schedule visit: <http://www.iamunspoken.com>.

### **OBEWL Newsletter**

As September gets into high gear, we want to remind you of the information and resources in the [previous issues of the OBEWL Newsletter](#).

The OBEWL newsletter invites submissions from ELL and world language educators and school administrators throughout New York State. If you have a story you would like to share or know of a good story, please contact Carol Corrody or Paula Orlando at: [carol.corrody@nysed.gov](mailto:carol.corrody@nysed.gov) or [paula.orlando@nysed.gov](mailto:paula.orlando@nysed.gov)

by Juliette Lyons-Thomas

## The New NYSESLAT: Weighting the Modalities

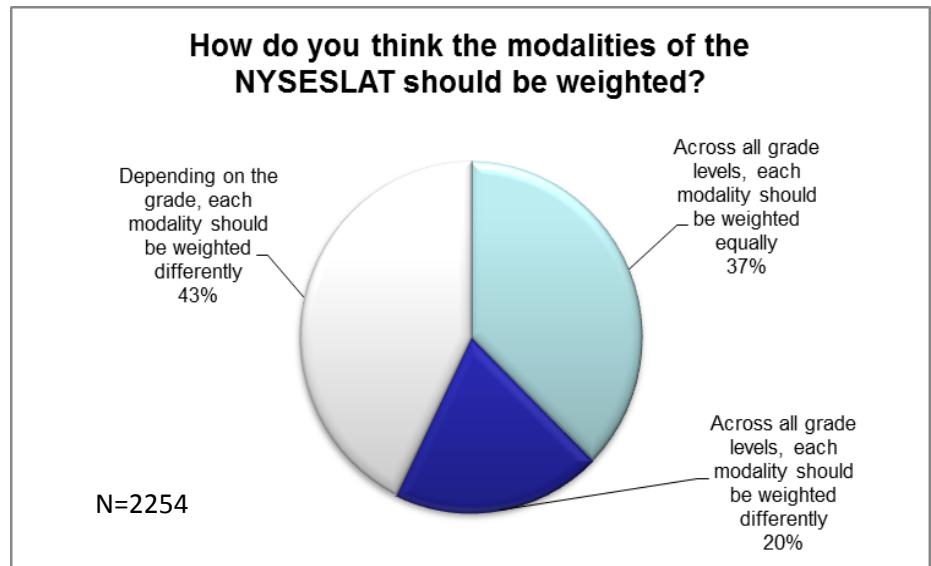
In Spring 2015, a new version of the New York State English as a Second Language Achievement Test (NYSESLAT) was administered to students in New York State. With this new iteration came a number of decisions that needed to be made about the scoring of the new assessment and one of these critical decisions was how much each modality would count toward a student's score. The new NYSESLAT continues to consist of four separate modalities: Listening, Reading, Writing, and Speaking. The amount that each modality counts toward the total score is referred to

as the *weight* of the modality. In some states, each modality is weighted equally, that is, all modalities contribute the same amount to the total score. Other states weight modalities differently so that one modality may count more than others toward the total score. Some states use differential weighting depending on grade.

In June 2015, NYSED released a survey in order to collect feedback on the weighting of the NYSESLAT modalities. Eighty-one percent of respondents were ESOL teachers. The first question in the survey asked if modalities should be (a) equally weighted; (b) weighted differently, and this model should be the same across grades K-12; or (c) weighted differently depending on modality AND grade (for instance, the weightings for Kindergarten should be different than the weightings for Grade 3). While it appeared that the largest proportion of respondents chose option (c), there was great disagreement among those who chose option (c) in how weightings of modalities should vary across grades (measured through a follow-up question). For example, some thought that Kindergarten should be different from all other grades, some thought that Kindergarten through Grade 2 should be different from all other grades, while some said that Kindergarten through Grade 6 should differ from Grades 7 through 12. Furthermore, respondents were divided on which modalities should be weighted more heavily. Some said that Speaking should be more heavily weighted for young students, while others said that Speaking should count for less for these students. Some respondents said that Writing should be the most important modality for older students, while others said that it shouldn't be counted at all.

Almost 40 percent of respondents said that the modalities should be weighted equally for all grades. Given the division of respondents to option (c), option (a) turned out to be the most popular position among those who took the survey. When asked for their rationale, respondents reported that the modalities are equally important for academic success, and therefore should be weighted equally. As a result of this feedback, in conjunction with a research-based recommendation from the vendor of the assessment, it was decided that NYSESLAT modalities will be weighted equally.

*Juliette Lyons-Thomas is a Regents Research Fund Fellow and is currently working with NYSED's Office of State Assessment.*



## Q & A with NYS ELL Leaders (NYS TESOL and NYSABE)

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This school year marks a new beginning for English Language Learners (ELLs). Part 154 of the Regulations of the Commissioner of Education (CR Part 154) will be implemented this year, and will bring about change in many districts to ensure ELLs are receiving the services they require and that students are supported in the classroom as they strive to become bilingual. OBEWL spoke with leaders of two New York State (NYS) organizations who support ELL students and bilingual education: Dr. Robin Finnan-Jones from NYS Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (NYS TESOL) and Dr. Tatyana Kleyn from NYS Association for Bilingual Education (NYSABE). They shared their vision for the upcoming school year in light of all of the changes that will take place.

### What do you envision for the upcoming school year?

**Dr. Finnan-Jones:** One positive change is changing the way we refer to English Language Learners as Multilingual Learners. This is a positive concept, and we think of the students as having a plus when they have a second language. Research shows that knowing a second language is a positive. I envision that one day all students in New York State will be called Multilingual Learners, including students whose first language is English. Also, I am glad to see so many materials for the parents – information about programs and services that are available in the parents' language. Time is also allotted for teachers to meet with parents often to review student accomplishments and challenges.

**Dr. Kleyn:** I envision a seamless approach to bilingual education where we start with pre-kindergarten and continue through high school. Pre-k is where it must begin to get students off on the right foot. Many bilingual programs start and end in the elementary school, but should continue beyond 5<sup>th</sup> grade. We need to ensure bilingual programs start from day one and go through high school so that we graduate bilingual and biliterate students.

### What challenges do you see as we begin a new school year?

**Dr. Finnan-Jones:** One challenge is supporting students that are coming across the border at the high school level. Some of the students went through a great deal to get here, and their education may have been interrupted. How do we support these students both academically and emotionally? I visited an International High School in the Bronx and saw great things going on in the school. There were great teachers who care about the students and give them the support they need. The students told me that they were challenged in the class and that is what made them want to come to class each day.

**Dr. Kleyn:** One of the big challenges we need to address is the implementation of CR Part 154. Everyone needs to be on the same page to make sure we are properly enacting the new changes. Another challenge is the evaluation of ELL/bilingual learners, especially when it comes to testing them after just one year in our schools. We must do a better job of connecting our practices to the research.

## Training Workshops for Teachers of Spanish as a Second Language

SCHOLARSHIPS FOR IN-PERSON AND ONLINE COURSES AT EL INSTITUTO CERVANTES

Are you a teacher of Spanish as a Foreign Language in a public school in New York State? Would you like to participate in some teacher-training activities at the Instituto Cervantes in New York City to continue your professional development?

REGISTER ONLINE AT:

<https://apm.activecommunities.com/institutocervantes/Home>



Formación de profesores de español como lengua extranjera





# How Does CR Part 154 Impact ELLs with Disabilities?

## Q&A with Alexia Thompson

*Alexia Thompson is an Associate in Bilingual Education in NYSED's Office of Special Education.*

**Your position involves providing guidance and technical assistance to the professionals who work with students who are ELLs with suspected or identified disabilities. How did your career trajectory lead you to work with those who provide services to ELLs with disabilities?**

I was a bilingual general education teacher for a few years and wasn't sure how to address the needs of students with disabilities in my classes or how to help my own children be more successful in the elementary grades. My master's studies and doctoral research focused on parents' participation in decisions about their children's needs and services, including meetings of the Committee on Special Education (CSE), and how bilingual parents, teachers, and speech-language providers decided what young children should be able to do, how they learn, and who should be helping them learn.

After teaching bilingual special education and conducting bilingual evaluations for several years, I taught graduate courses in bilingual special education at Buffalo State College. I had the opportunity to observe teachers and speech-language service providers in settings that ranged from preschool through high school.

**What is one of the most important things that educators need to understand about the needs of ELLs with suspected or identified disabilities?**

All ELLs, including those identified as having disabilities, need high-quality, evidence-based instruction and consistent programs that build on their linguistic and cultural strengths and address their language acquisition needs while helping them progress in academic content areas and social skills. ELLs and ELLs who have disabilities must receive instruction aligned to the State standards. To accomplish this, ELLs need culturally and linguistically responsive schools in which they and their parents are valued members of the school "community" or "family."

If an ELL is identified as having a disability, he or she does not cease being a bilingual, bicultural individual. It is even more important to continue to build on the student's strengths in the native/home language and ensure that English language acquisition needs are considered when developing the student's individualized education program (IEP).

**Are there any specific initiatives in your office that you would like to highlight?**

The Office of Special Education has three contracts that address shortages of special education teachers and related service providers who have bilingual extensions or certification in teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL).

- The Intensive Teacher Institute in Bilingual Special Education (ITI-BSE) provides tuition assistance for fifteen credits of specialized coursework leading to a bilingual extension or certification in ESOL and facilitates the certification process for professionals who are currently working in NYS public schools or approved preschools. Colleges and universities throughout the state offer ITI-BSE programs, a few of which are online.
- The Speech-Language and Bilingual Speech-Language Personnel Development Center provides coursework and clinical supervision for people who are interested in obtaining certification, licensure, and a bilingual extension so they can provide speech-language services in New York City (NYC) Public Schools.
- The NYC Preschool Provider Bilingual/English as a New Language Technical Assistance Center provides in-service training to preschool providers so preschools can offer Interim Alternate Bilingual Placements when they have not been able to hire a special education teacher with a bilingual extension

**What do you see as one of the most significant changes for ELLs with disabilities as a result of CR Part 154? What is the most exciting change, or what is the change that you most wanted to see?**

The recent amendments to Part 154 emphasize that all ELLs in public schools are entitled to Part 154 services. The

## ELLs with Disabilities (continued)

previous version of Part 154 was sometimes misinterpreted in such a way that ELLs no longer received bilingual or ENL instruction once they were identified as having disabilities. The addition of screening by a Language Proficiency Team (LPT), which has members with expertise in second language acquisition, disabilities, and bilingual/ENL program requirements, in Subpart 154-3 should alleviate the misidentification of a small number of students with disabilities as ELLs when they have had little exposure to a language other than English. Districts will have to closely monitor recommendations of LPTs so that students with significant exposure to other languages receive the bilingual and ENL instruction they need to access the curriculum and benefit from special education services.

Another welcome change is section 154-2.3(a)(9)(i) which clarifies the requirements in section 200.3 of the Regulations, that the CSE for ELLs must include at least one member with a bilingual extension or ESOL certification who is knowledgeable about the student's English and home language development needs. The inclusion of one or more members with these types of expertise and experience should lead to improved identification processes and better Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) for ELLs who are identified as having disabilities.

Although it will be challenging for many districts to design programs, develop schedules that include integrated ENL, and hire sufficient certified personnel to provide this instruction, I think integrated ENL will help ELLs with and without disabilities receive the language supports they need to access, make progress, and receive credit in core content areas.

There is research on co-teaching in the fields of special education and bilingual/ENL instruction. It will be interesting to see how models and best practices from both fields are adapted for use in settings where students are receiving special education supports, content area instruction, and ENL instruction and supports from two or three teachers.

With the recent amendments to Part 154 and positive initiatives such as the *Blueprint for ELL Success*, it is an exciting time to be working for the Office of Special Education as it collaborates with the Office of Bilingual Education and World Languages to improve services and outcomes for ELLs with and without disabilities.

## Regional Special Education Technical Assistance and Support Centers (RSE-TASC)

There are 10 Regional Special Education Technical Assistance and Support Centers (RSE-TASC) which are located throughout the state. The RSE-TASC provides regional professional development and targeted assistance to districts and schools identified under ESEA and IDEA and focus on promoting evidence-based practices in the areas of literacy, behavior, and specially-designed instruction. They employ Special Education School Improvement Specialists who work directly with identified schools and districts and five types of regional specialists, who provide a mix of regional training sessions and school-specific supports, depending on regional need. The regional specialists are:

- Transition Specialists
- Regional Special Education Training Specialists
- Behavior Specialists
- Non-district Specialists
- Bilingual Special Education Specialists

Most RSE-TASC have Bilingual Special Education Specialists who provide technical assistance and professional development on the following topics:

- An introduction to cultural and linguistic diversity versus disabilities
- Bilingual evaluations to determine an ELL's eligibility for special education services

- Development of IEPs that address the English language acquisition needs of ELLs
- Evidence-based instruction for ELLs who have disabilities

RSE-TASC staff often works with the Regional Bilingual Education Resource Network (RBERN) in their region to provide technical assistance and professional development to ensure ELLs receive core instruction and services to which they are entitled under Parts 154 and 200 of the Regulations of the Commissioner of Education. Regions that do not have a Bilingual Special Education Specialist at their RSE-TASC may request assistance from:

- a Bilingual Specialist from another RSE-TASC, by contacting Alexia Thompson at the Office of Special Education
- a Behavior Specialist or the Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports TAC, by contacting their RSE-TASC Coordinator
- other projects that address cultural competence, such as the Response to Intervention Technical Assistance Center and the Technical Assistance Center on Disproportionality. (See listings on our Technical Assistance page for contact information.)

### For More Information:

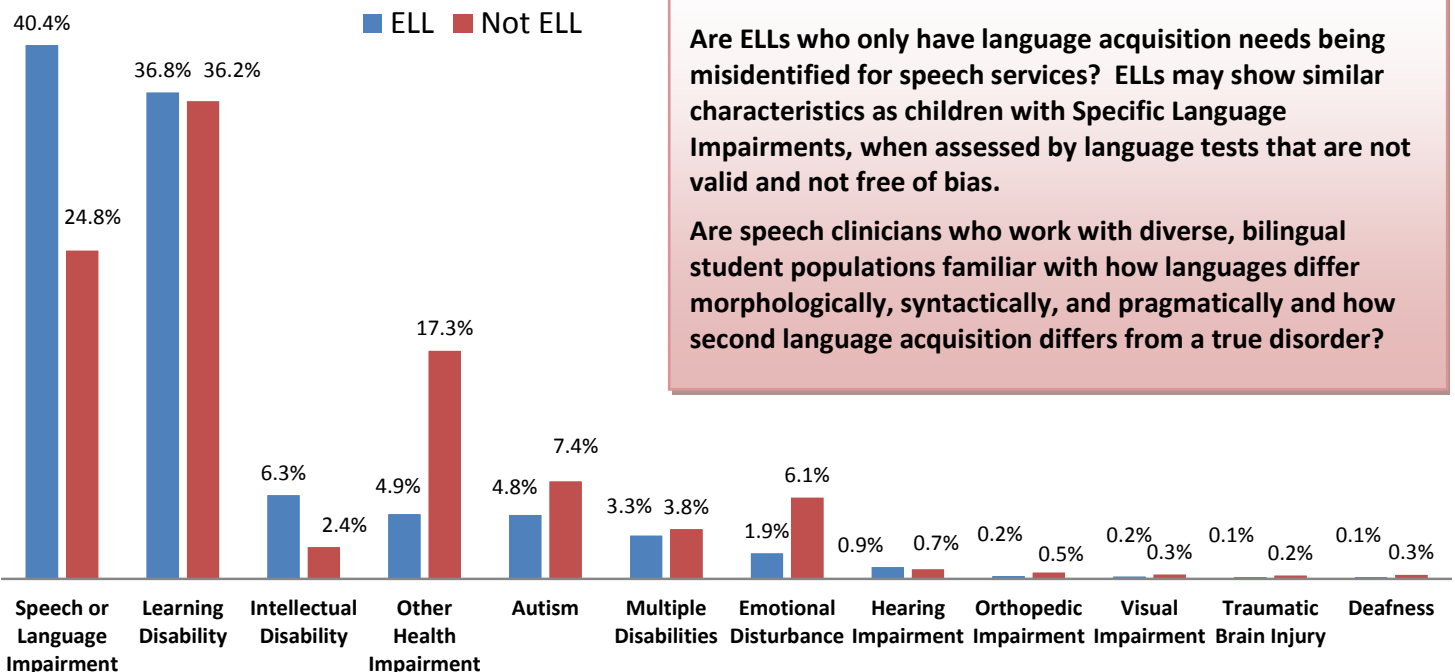
In addition to the projects mentioned above, the **Office of Special Education** funds several projects to improve special education services for students and their parents.

These are described on their technical assistance page:

<http://www.p12.nysed.gov/specialed/techassist/>

Alexia Thompson can be contacted at [alexia.thompson@nysed.gov](mailto:alexia.thompson@nysed.gov)

## Disability Classifications by ELL Status 2014-2015



### Questions to Consider

Are ELLs who only have language acquisition needs being misidentified for speech services? ELLs may show similar characteristics as children with Specific Language Impairments, when assessed by language tests that are not valid and not free of bias.

Are speech clinicians who work with diverse, bilingual student populations familiar with how languages differ morphologically, syntactically, and pragmatically and how second language acquisition differs from a true disorder?

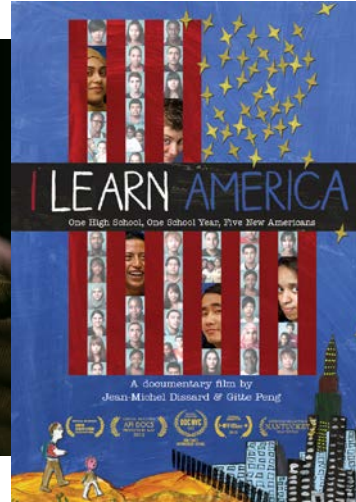
Source: New York State Education Department Student Information Repository System 2014-2015

# Using the Film *I Learn America* to Educate about the Challenges Faced by Immigrant Students and SIFE

An Interview with Jean-Michel Dissard, the Director of *I Learn America*



Director Jean-Michel Dissard



***I Learn America* is a Feature Length Documentary directed by Jean-Michel Dissard & Gitte Peng**

**What drew you to the topic of immigrant students? How/Why did you become interested? Did your own experience migrating to the US as a teenager influence your interest in the subject?**

The children of immigration, here to stay, are our future. The fate of these young immigrants is at the core of our continually emerging identity. How we fare in welcoming them will define who we are for years to come.

At the International High School at Lafayette in Brooklyn, we saw one school's efforts to prepare teenage immigrants for the complexity and diversity of life in America. The work and educators at Lafayette showed us the power of putting young immigrants front and center – of enabling kids to be themselves. After our first visit, we had no choice but to film. We spent more than a year at Lafayette filming the lives of five newcomers from four very different countries.

Spending time within the bowels of an American public high school had an unexpected consequence: it brought me back to the time I migrated to the US at the age of 15. I now have two nationalities. I now call Brooklyn my home but as a teenager, my transition from living in France to living in Arizona was rough. I went from a village of 2000 people to a high school of 2000 people and from green fields to dust and concrete. The American cafeteria didn't even provide the same foods. No more green beans, and the fries got renamed. I couldn't force myself to say the pledge in the morning. It made me uncomfortable being the new kid, attracting attention. Among other things, it took me forever to figure out the American "dating" thing. The kids at Lafayette where we filmed *I Learn America* could empathize, and vice versa.

**How and why did you choose the International High School at Lafayette as a subject for your film? What is it about the school that led you to believe it would be the right setting for the film?**

*I Learn America* is the story of five teenagers attending the International High School at Lafayette, a Brooklyn public high school dedicated to newly arrived immigrants from all over the world. Sing is a refugee from Myanmar who has recently relocated to Brooklyn, leaving his family behind. He is isolated, angry and barely speaks English. Brandon made the journey from Guatemala to America to reunite with his mother after ten years apart. Crossing the desert and making the perilous journey was easy compared to getting to know his mom again. Sandra, from Poland and undocumented, is a tomboy and a class leader. She and Jennifer, a sassy classmate from the Dominican Republic, are inseparable best friends – "like a flower with water." Itirat came to America from Pakistan to join her father, a traditional Shia Muslim. She is still divided between her two cultures and countries.





Photo by David Jacobs

### Sandra and Jennifer

*“At the time the film was made, Sandra was an 18-year-old senior from Poland who arrived three years prior. At school, she was a soccer star and a class leader, always curious, helpful, and hilarious. Her time in America and at the school have enabled her to explore her identity as a girl who dresses like a boy. She and Jennifer, a witty and sassy girl from the Dominican Republic, have been inseparable best friends.”*

*From the I Learn America Press Kit*

Our main decision in the film was to pick the school. The original idea was to film in five schools around the country to compare and contrast what the experience coming to America might be for a kid landing in rural Kansas versus a kid landing in suburban Las Vegas or urban New York. Through our research, the International School model, in a place in schools like Lafayette kept on coming back. (See: <http://internationalsnps.org/>) Many experts in the field of education/immigration see it as a hopeful approach to teaching newcomers.

(See: <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/05/31/opinion/sunday/how-a-school-network-helps-immigrant-kids-learn.html> )

To concentrate on a school that embraces the idea of equity and diversity became more interesting than showing schools that do not know what to do with young immigrants. By concentrating on such a place, the film might actually become useful for cities and school districts where demographics have changed significantly and where school-based services, for many reasons, have lagged behind.

We picked Lafayette because it is one of the most diverse schools we visited. As the principal says in the film, “When you walk into one of our classrooms, you’ll see students from Mexico or Albania who’ve been here for six years, who speak and write beautifully in English, next to students from Pakistan, Haiti, and China who have just arrived in this country three days before and speak no English. While they may come from different countries and different backgrounds, they are going through the same experience: learning a new culture, navigating a new city, reuniting with their family, making friends at a new school,” all the while dealing with all the teenage problems, the acne, the hormones, and much more.

We spent a lot of time in the school. The students who ended up in the film were as curious about who we were as we were about who they were – the perfect foundation for a relationship. The way we related to Sing, a refugee from Burma, was very different than the way we related to Brandon (undocumented from Guatemala). Still with each of them we found a safe place for all of us to open up and be ourselves. Ultimately, these five kids are just teenagers like any other teenagers, going through the same kinds of adolescent angst and exuberance, yet they have experienced enough in their young lives to give them perspective and fortitude. It is mind-blowing that they manage to keep going, particularly as society erects countless barriers. Yet, they found a uniquely supportive and safe community where students are able to figure out how to express and assert themselves as they face all the trials of coming of age in a new country.

### **Are you optimistic about the future for immigrant students in the US?**

Last December, the US Department of Education invited us to screen *I Learn America* in Washington.

For the past year, we've been using the film in American schools and communities, from Chicago to Los Angeles by way of Cleveland, Alabama, and New York City. Students connect to the students in the film. Their stories bring empathy and understanding. They are tools that engage other students to share their own experience. The film has become a platform for youth around the country to voice their own stories.

For the screening in Washington, DC, we made sure to round up 500 students from schools that have been using *I Learn America* in New York, Maryland, DC, and Oregon. Following the screening, young representatives from each of the schools shared their own immigrant stories to the policy makers, decision makers, and stakeholders in attendance. Secretary Arne Duncan was there. He heard them and in his speech he recycled what we've been saying all along, "The newcomers are huge assets to all of our children and to all of our schools. What we can learn from them is often greater than anything they might learn from us."

For the last year, we've been traveling from one school to the other around the country. We've seen many schools that are choosing to fully embrace the young immigrants in our classrooms, teachers who are making the choice to truly care and listen to the young newcomers, and communities that do not want to define immigration as an issue in our lives, but rather our window to the world. Again, the children of immigration are here to stay.

### **How can schools and teachers get more involved?**

Whether we arrived just recently or came to the U.S. generations ago, we are immigrants and descendants of immigrants who make up our nation. We all have something important in common. We all have unique experiences, aspirations, and stories that deserve—and need—to be told.

From advertising companies to places of worship, from political speeches to *YouTube*, the use of well-crafted stories has become a powerful force in society. *I Learn America* is an excellent example of storytelling at its best: intimate, alternately humorous and alarming, character-based, and ultimately hopeful. And when embedded into our "school-tested" strategy and workshops, *I Learn America* has the potential to help people – young and not-so-young – connect with one another, find new ways to talk about themselves, and learn their new land. (See: <https://www.facebook.com/ILearnAmerica> )

Drawing inspiration from the stories in *I Learn America*, we team up with schools and organizations to harness the immigrant experiences in their communities. Through screenings and workshops, we tap into the powerful stories of migrating youth. *I Learn America* provides a safe platform to craft unique and personal narratives that can be shared with the world. With our local partners, we build bridges between classmates, their schools, their communities, and their new land. We've partnered with schools and districts in New York City, Upstate New York, Denver, Los Angeles, Washington, DC, Oregon, Chicago, Cleveland, Maryland, Maine, Paris (France), Creteil (France), and Almada (Portugal), where universities, school districts, and high schools are already using the project:

- To give a voice to the young immigrants in our classrooms
- To increase empathy and "welcoming" for young immigrants through personal storytelling/exchange of shared experiences
- To connect schoolmates
- To train teachers to work with newcomers
- To improve services in schools with immigrant students
- To strengthen programs that support young immigrants.

We invite you to bring the project to your school! Contact us at [ilearnamerica@gmail.com](mailto:ilearnamerica@gmail.com) OR at <http://ilearnamerica.com> where you can also find general information about the film. You can also check out the *I Learn America* viewing guide at: <https://www.facinghistory.org/for-educators/educator-resources/resources/i-learn-america-viewers-guide>

**Jean-Michel Dissard (Director/Producer)** has always been creatively involved in critically acclaimed films chronicling adolescent youth including: "Raising Victor Vargas," a fiction developed in cooperation with Latino youth about a Dominican teenager in New York City. Recently, Jean-Michel wrote a TV series in Paris derived from workshops organized with French immigrant teenagers. Eight films from Jean-Michel's catalog premiered in Cannes. Six films have won major prizes in Sundance. He is on the Advisory Board of Cine-Institute, the only film school in Haiti. Originally from France, Jean-Michel immigrated to America when he was a teenager. He is a dual citizen.

## Need Professional Development?

Kenji Hakuta of Stanford University has created FREE **Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs)** that will fulfill the professional development requirement. *Supporting English Language Under New Standards* and *Learning from Your Students: A Lab Course in Formative Assessment Practice in the Era of Common Core State Standards* are just two of several that are available.

### New York State Teacher Centers

Many of you know what a great resource the **NYS Teacher Centers** are. With the start of the school year, we wanted to remind you that they are there to support you throughout the school year. There are more than 125 centers in the state. Check out their website.



## CR Part 154 Quiz:

Regarding the professional development requirement, does the 15% refer to the 175 hour PD requirement for teachers who are certified under the post-2004 certification requirements?

Yes

No

Or does it pertain to all teachers, including those with permanent certifications?

Yes

No

(See answer on back under Frequently Asked Questions)

### Foreign Language Association of Chairpersons & Supervisors

#### News and Events

**FLACS Calendar of Meetings (2015-2016).** For more info, visit the FLACS website: [www.flacs.org](http://www.flacs.org)

#### September 25

FLACS General Meeting- members only

#### October 8/October 23

FLACS Item Writing Workshop-open to teachers and supervisors

#### January 8

FLACS General Meeting- members only

#### April 1

FLACS/Queens College Conference –open to all

#### June 3

FLACS End of Year Meeting/Awards Presentation- members only

#### Some important links/resources for World Language teachers and supervisors:

Official Seal of Biliteracy Guidelines are now available at:

[http://www.actfl.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/SealofBiliteracyGuidelines\\_0.pdf](http://www.actfl.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/SealofBiliteracyGuidelines_0.pdf)

PowerPoints on Resources, Common Core, etc. for World Language programs:

<https://drive.google.com/drive/search?q=lote%20resources>

YouTube video prepared by Lillian Carey on how to access quality resources:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fBIId--21I9I&feature=youtu.be>

#### **From Dr. Jennifer Eddy at Queens College:**

- Do you have a Chinese, Korean, Arabic, or Portuguese program or are interested in starting one? Apply this fall for a summer 2016 STARTALK grant, a fully funded immersion camp that can help start or expand your year round program. K-12 students attend the camp for free. Learn best practices at two professional development conferences. For more information and the 2016 RFP, visit <https://startalk.umd.edu>
- Join Dr Jennifer Eddy for a free webinar, *Introduction to Performance Assessment in the Three Modes of Communication*, Monday, October 5 at 3:00. Contact [WorldLanguageEd@aol.com](mailto:WorldLanguageEd@aol.com) for more information.
- Queens College World Language Education program invites you to mentor a student teacher candidate for spring 2016. Your candidate will have at least advanced low on both the OPI and WPT and can design tasks in the three modes. You will receive a free voucher to attend an online hybrid course on thematic curriculum development or action research. If you have already mentored our candidates, thank you! Please register for your free PD course in December. For more info contact [Jennifer.Eddy@qc.cuny.edu](mailto:Jennifer.Eddy@qc.cuny.edu).



## EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Please send us any job openings that you would like to highlight in this section, and we will be pleased to post them.

### OBEWL OPENINGS

Have you ever wanted to work for OBEWL? Well, think about it. We currently have three positions open: one **Supervisor of Bilingual Education** in Albany and two **Associates in Bilingual Education** in Brooklyn. If you are interested, please follow the directions in the job description. This is a wonderful opportunity to impact the teachers and students of New York State.

## Some Upcoming Events

September		
18 <sup>th</sup>		<b>English Language Learners: Understanding Linguistic, Cultural, and Academic Differences</b> Mid-State BOCES
15 <sup>th</sup> & 16 <sup>th</sup>	All day	<b>New York State Board of Regents Meeting</b> New York State Education Department 89 Washington Avenue, Albany, NY
25 <sup>th</sup> & 26 <sup>th</sup>		<b>Mastery for ELLs Through Curriculum Mapping</b> Sponsored by the Eastern Suffolk BOCES
October		
27 <sup>th</sup> & 28 <sup>th</sup>	8:30am	<b>Benchmark B Assessment Design for World Languages: Spanish, French, German, Italian, &amp; Latin</b> Columbia College, Syracuse Sponsored by OCMBOCES (Also on Nov. 12 <sup>th</sup> and Dec. 10 <sup>th</sup> )
28 <sup>th</sup> -30 <sup>th</sup>		<b>What's Different About Teaching Reading to ELLs?</b> Presented by The Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL). Must attend all 3 sessions. Sponsored by the Eastern Suffolk BOCES
29 <sup>th</sup>		<b>OBEWL Parent Academy</b> NYU Details TBA
30 <sup>th</sup> & 31 <sup>st</sup>		<b>2015 Annual Conference: "21st Century LOTE Education: Providing the Keys to College and Career Readiness"</b> Saratoga Springs, New York <b>Marie Campanaro</b> , Chair Spencerport CSD <a href="http://www.nysaftl.org/conferences/">http://www.nysaftl.org/conferences/</a>
November		
7 <sup>th</sup>		<b>OBEWL Parent Academy</b> Syracuse Details TBA
13 <sup>th</sup> & 14 <sup>th</sup>	All day	<b>45th Annual NYS TESOL Conference</b> White Plains, NY

 **MARK YOUR CALENDARS!**

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NYSED

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**The Office of Bilingual Education and World Languages** (OBEWL) provides support to districts in developing and implementing educational programs for English language learner (ELL) students. Under the guidance of OBEWL, over 625 districts, Charter Schools and Non-Public Schools implement educational programs and services for over 300,000 ELL students in our state. These students come from over 200 language backgrounds. Our [website](#) has current information on regulations, programs and funding for districts. Please contact us for additional information.

Website: <http://www.p12.nysed.gov/biling/>

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**Quiz answer:** The 15% refers to the 175 hour PD requirement for teachers and applies to teachers who fall under the PD 175 hour requirements. Under Part 154-2.3(k), a minimum of fifteen percent (15%) of required professional development hours for all teachers must be dedicated to language acquisition. For all Bilingual and English to Speakers of Other Languages teachers, a minimum of fifty percent (50%) of the required professional development hours must be dedicated to language acquisition in alignment with core content area instruction.

## CR Part 154 Frequently Asked Questions

**Question:**

What are the requirements to establish a new Bilingual Education Program, and continue with an existing Bilingual Education Program? Is it 15 total ELLs in the school or 15 ELLs in a grade?

**Answer:**

The requirement to establish a new Bilingual Education Program is 20 or more ELLs of the same grade level, and all of whom have the same home language (other than English) in a school and/or district. If a BE Program had 15 ELLs the previous year it must continue into the next school year. New York City must follow the



provisions of the 1972 ASPIRA Consent Decree which is 15 ELLs in two contiguous grades.

**Question:**

To which classes does the two year

grade span apply?

**Answer:**

Per CR 154-2.3(i), the maximum allowable for grouping instruction in a grade K-12 ENL or BE Program is two contiguous grades except for ELLs in a special class as defined by section 200.1(uu). This applies to all Integrated ENL, Stand-alone ENL, and BE classes.

**Question:**

What other services and supports will be accepted in lieu of ENL/ESL services?

**Answer:**

There are no services in lieu of ENL services for ELLs.

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