



Transforming Districts, Schools and Classrooms  
in New York State  
by prioritizing Equity and Academic Success for  
Multilingual Learners/English Language Learners

A SYNTHESIS REPORT

August 2019



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# Introduction

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In spring 2014, New York State Education Department (NYSED) adopted the [Blueprint for English Language Learner/Multilingual Learner Success](#), a new approach to ensure that Multilingual Learners/English Language Learners (MLLs/ELLs) attain the highest levels of academic success and language proficiency. Working to ensure that all students are ready for college, career, and civic readiness, the Office of Bilingual Education and World Languages (OBEWL) implemented a comprehensive set of capacity building efforts to implement BOR policies. These all share the common goal of supporting the individual educational paths and socio-emotional needs of all MLLs/ELLs, undergirded by the belief that *all* teachers are teachers of MLLs/ELLs.

These changes defined a new era in the state's educational history for MLLs/ELLs, transforming how students are learning English as a new language *and* developing their understanding of language(s) in their academic classes. This approach focuses learning on 21<sup>st</sup>-century practices of critical thinking and problem solving through an integrated model of English as a New Language (ENL), key shifts toward culturally responsive and sustaining education, and the development of more robust resources such as those for [Students with Interrupted/Inconsistent Formal Education](#) (SIFE) and [Emergent Multilingual Learners](#) (EMLLs) in prekindergarten. Underlying this new approach has been a significant investment in capacity building through aligned collaborations with educators, families and community-based organizations (CBOs), and a shift towards a growth model using student performance data on the [New York State English as a Second Language Achievement Test](#) (NYSESLAT).

These efforts have resulted in modest improvements in student achievement and graduation rates combined with a decline in the dropout rate. All graduates can also now earn the [New York State Seal of Biliteracy](#) while [early learning programming for EMLLs](#) has been strengthened. At the same time there remains challenges ahead for preparing and building the capacities of all teachers and leaders to educate the state's MLLs/ELLs.

The goal of NYSED has always been to improve and accelerate teaching and learning efforts and reverse the long-term disparities in educational opportunities between monolingual English learners and MLLs/ELLs (García & Kleifgen, 2018). This synthesis report highlights ways that New York State Education Department (NYSED) has undertaken an ambitious reform strategy in the past five years in order to substantially improve learning opportunities for MLLs/ELLs in the context of Next Generation Learning Standards<sup>1</sup>, while also identifying areas for continued efforts to improve outcomes for these students.

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<sup>1</sup> In 2017, the Next Generation Learning Standards (NGLS) replaced the Common Core Learning Standards.

### Figure 1. Fast Facts: Who are New York State's MLL/ELLs?

- Of the approximately 2.6 million public school students in New York in 2017-18, 9.8% were MLLs/ELLs, representing over 240,000 students statewide. Students who communicate in Spanish (64.8%) and Chinese (8.9%) constitute about three-fourths of the State's MLL/ELL population.
- The State's MLL/ELL population is diverse. Students include Newcomer MLLs/ELLs (48%), Developing MLLs/ELLs (33.7%), Long-term MLLs/ELLs (18.3%), MLLs/ELLs with Disabilities (22.1%), and Former MLLs/ELLs (8.8%).
- As of 2017-18, the top ten languages spoken by NYS MLLs/ELLs are Spanish, Chinese, Arabic, Bengali, Russian, Haitian-Creole, Urdu, French, Karen, and Uzbek.
- Students with Inconsistent/Interrupted Formal Education (SIFE) make up of 3% of the total MLL/ELL population in 2017-18.

(Source: NYSED SIRS 2017-18 SY)

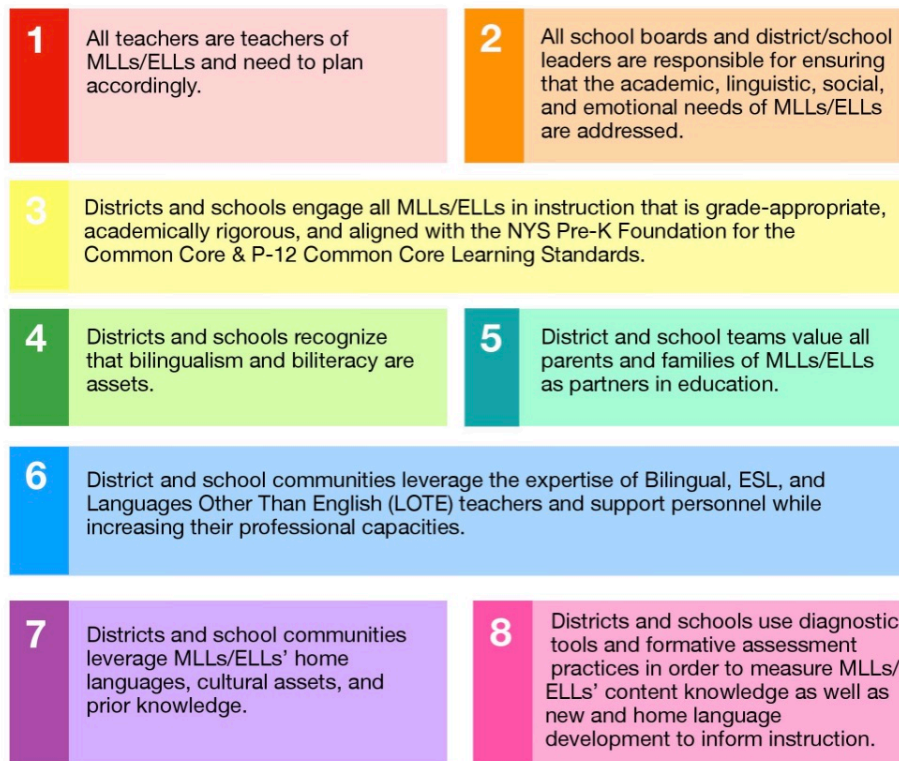
# The Blueprint

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In the spring of 2014, NYSED developed the *Blueprint for English Language Learner/ Multilingual Learner Success*, leading the way with a bold new strategy for improving the academic success of MLLs/ELLs. This Blueprint differed dramatically from the state’s prior approach that viewed the English language development of MLLs/ELLs as a *separate* process that supplemented academic coursework. NYSED recognized the changing and critical role of the English to Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) teacher as schools across the country were implementing the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS) (Valdés, Kibler, & Walqui, 2014). In order to drive systemic improvements, the state organized and centered its policies and practices on supporting the academic success of its learners in the core academic disciplines.

With the goal of accelerating student learning, NYSED developed an ambitious and comprehensive vision centered on learning and assessment practices that recognized the rich and diverse linguistic and cultural resources of its MLL/ELL population. Taking this opportunity to increase the equitable educational opportunities for MLLs/ELLs, the state focused its efforts on building teacher and leadership capacities of ESOL, bilingual education teachers, and content area teachers to ensure greater collaboration, as well as targeting improved parent and community involvement. The core principles of the Blueprint are detailed in Figure 2.

**Figure 2. Eight Principles of the Blueprint for MLL/ELL Success.**



Source: New York State Department of Education. <http://usny.nysed.gov/docs/blueprint-for-ell-success.pdf>.

# The Rationale

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The visionary reform efforts for MLLs/ELLs have been a long time coming. In Spring of 2014, NYSED released the [\*Blueprint for English Language Learner Success\*](#) therefore clarifying and elevating expectations for administrators, policymakers, and practitioners to prepare MLLs/ELLs for success beginning in prekindergarten, and to lay their foundation for college and career readiness. NYS has been bold in its thinking and maintains a high level of expectation for all stakeholders through each of the Blueprint's eight principles. The shift towards a more inclusive and integrated model for MLLs/ELLs—an approach that ensures students are learning both language *and* rigorous academic content—reflects the growing knowledge base in the last decade from both the practitioner and research communities (Hakuta et al., 2013; Kibler et al., 2015; Santos et al., 2018; Walqui & Bunch, 2019).

The changes in the Blueprint stem from substantial research evidence, extensive input from educators and policymakers, and a hard look at the historical data that spoke to the need for a new approach in how the state educated its MLL/ELL population. Decades of building internal capacity and leadership among educators of MLLs/ELLs also positioned NYS to be a leader in transforming MLL/ELL education. NYSED has made this sizeable and diverse population of students, their assets as well as needs, a clear focus of NYSED's work and the broader conversation about public education in NYS. The Board of Regents has consistently made the needs of MLLs/ELLs a priority. The Department has taken the charge to prioritize the needs of MLLs/ELLs by ensuring highly qualified and dedicated leaders have been in place to guide the transformation therefore expanding the ability to lead state-wide reform-based initiatives. This has helped to ensure that devoted the linguistic and cultural assets of MLLs/ELLs are both acknowledged and leveraged to close the gaps in opportunity and academic outcomes for these learners. Regardless of leadership, the mission to support MLLs/ELLs has carried and is sustained by the Board of Regents who has consistently made the needs of MLLs/ELLs a priority.

# Taking Stock

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This is a particularly important time to evaluate the progress NYS has made in educating its MLL/ELL population, as in the past decade the nation's students—from kindergarten to college—have continued to grow in linguistic and cultural diversity ([NCES, 2019](#)). Educators, policymakers, researchers, and community and family members have come together as never before determined to improve the learning outcomes of MLLs/ELLs within the public educational system.

This synthesis report looks back at what has been accomplished and some of the challenges still to be addressed by NYSED. What follows is a summary review of the key policies and practices implemented since the release of the Blueprint, accompanied by an examination of outcomes for MLLs/ELLs during this period.

## Aligning a Cohesive Set of State Policies to Meet the Blueprint's Vision

In order to support the vision of the Blueprint, NYSED has instituted a cohesive system of more equitable policies, regulations, and practices that are tailored to the educational needs of MLLs/ELLs. These allow resources to be directed to students, teachers, school and district leaders as well as to families, guiding how MLLs/ELLs learn throughout the school day, increasing the capacities of educators within the system, and engaging families as an integral part of their child's educational development.

In particular, Part 154 of the Commissioner's Regulations (CR 154) (along with the NYS Every Student Succeeds Act Plan) has played an influential role in shaping how MLLs/ELLs are now educated and assessed in New York State. In addition, the NYS Seal of Biliteracy for high school graduates (adopted in 2016) signals a formal recognition of those students who have achieved high levels of proficiency in English and at least one other language and builds on the rich linguistic and cultural assets of the high school graduates of NYS. Furthermore, early learning programming for EMLLs has been strengthened to include guidance and support for state-funded prekindergarten programs in implementing best practices relative to students' home language(s). And most recently, a World Language Leadership Team has been working closely with stakeholder groups in revising the World Language Standards and building capacity through organized professional learning opportunities so that MLLs/ELLs can better meet the demands of 21st century learning.

NYSED expanded its enforcement work by requesting and created an attorney position to exclusively work on the enforcement of Commissioner's Regulation Part 154 (CR Part 154) and to ensure MLLs'/ELLs' educational rights—and that of immigrant students more generally—are protected. To support these efforts, the Department hired additional OBEWL staff—thereby

expanding the capacity of the OBEWL team to oversee the implementation of CR Part 154 and provide ongoing guidance and support to the field.

### **Commissioner’s Regulations Part 154**

In December 2011, the NYS Board of Regents, under the direction of Assistant Commissioner Ira Schwartz, directed NYSED staff to engage the field to determine how CR 154—regulations that specify the requirements for provision of education to MLLs/ELLs in New York State and that had not been significantly amended in 30 years—could be updated to better serve the needs of the state’s growing MLL/ELL population. Over the past decade, the State’s MLL/ELL enrollment (spanning all geographic regions throughout the state) had increased by 20%, surging to over 240,000 students who made up just under 10% of the total public student population. NYS has also grown significantly in its linguistic diversity during this time, with over 200 languages spoken by students.

Finalized under the leadership of Deputy Commissioner Angélica Infante-Green and Assistant Commissioner Lissette Colón-Collins and approved by the Board of Regents in 2014, key changes in CR 154 now guide all aspects of MLL/ELL programming in NYS, identifying touchstones toward fulfilling each of the eight Blueprint principles. Key areas of work include MLL/ELL identification processes, design of bilingual programs, and practices that support the implementation of a co-teaching Integrated ENL model.

Prior to the changes in CR 154, MLLs/ELLs had been pulled out from heterogeneous classrooms and separated in ENL courses, depriving students of contact and interactions with their native English-speaking peers (and other MLLs/ELLs on their way to English mastery). As a result, students were provided with a more narrowly restricted education in which grammar and vocabulary rather than academic content were the focus (Valdés, 2001). Recognizing that MLLs/ELLs cannot effectively be taught language in isolation from content, the guidance from the Blueprint aimed to provide students with more rigorous opportunities that supports all students in learning grade-level material while providing them the English language skills needed to access that information.

Central to these changes have been enhancements designed to make certain that regardless of their English proficiency level, MLLs/ELLs have *equitable* access to grade level content. With the changes to CR Part 154, not only do MLLs/ELLs now receive instruction keyed to their proficiency level, but also the delivery of ENL has also been diversified. ENL now can be provided either via a stand-alone ENL instructional model (with an ESOL educator teaching the English language skills needed for academic success) or through an integrated model for ENL instruction (leveraging ENL practices in content area instruction)—either co-taught by an ESOL and content area teacher or individually led by a teacher dually certified in both areas.



The new ENL approach enables MLLs/ELLs to develop the academic language needed for higher education and ensures equitable access to grade level content area instruction regardless of a student’s English proficiency. Whereas MLLs/ELLs students previously only received elective credits for ENL instruction, they now have the ability to earn up to one English Language Arts and one other content area credit (in addition to elective credits). This shift in policy was made to ensure that all students had an equitable opportunity to earn course credit needed for graduation and college-entrance requirements.

### **The Every Student Succeeds Act and MLLs/ELLs**

The passage of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) in 2015 provided New York State with a valuable opportunity to further advance its vision for MLL/ELL success. New York State’s ESSA Plan – which was developed with extensive stakeholder feedback – sets ambitious but attainable goals for MLLs/ELLs to gain English language proficiency in three to five years, using a [transition matrix](#) to take into account students’ levels of proficiency at entry and number of years in New York schools to measure their progress.

For the first time, MLLs’/ELLs’ progress at gaining English language proficiency is an explicit factor in school accountability and improvement decisions, which ensures that MLLs’/ELLs’ needs are prioritized by all schools. However, because MLLs/ELLs in the first twelve months of enrollment may not yet have the English proficiency to meaningfully perform and show progress on the English Language Arts (ELA) exam, New York State continues to exempt such students from the state ELA exam. MLLs/ELLs take the ELA to measure both progress and achievement in their second year of enrollment, in addition to taking the New York State English as a Second Language Achievement Test (NYSESLAT) every year.

New York State continues to pursue funding to create a Native Language Arts exam (first in Spanish, the language spoken by approximately 2/3 of the state’s MLLs/ELLs) to more accurately measure the language arts achievement of MLLs/ELLs, as well as to expand translation of content area assessments in math and science to eight languages (Chinese (Traditional), Chinese (Simplified), Haitian-Creole, Korean, Russian, Spanish, Arabic, and Bengali).

### **MLL/ELL Data Interface**

One barrier to districts’ provision of instruction and services for MLLs/ELLs is their difficulty in integrating multiple sources of data to identify their students’ needs. To help overcome this problem, in 2019 OBEWL piloted the MLL/ELL Data Interface, an interactive database that combines a district’s MLL/ELL data from multiple sources—including the English Language Proficiency Accountability Indicator (ELP) developed under ESSA, Title III reporting, state assessment outcomes, and student demographics. This tool delivers new reports and visualizations that give districts the ability to analyze MLL/ELL outcomes at the district, school, grade, performance level, and individual student levels. The Interface allows key stakeholders within

school communities (superintendents, principals, school leaders, teachers, etc.) track student progress as they work to differentiate instructional and programmatic supports to address the specific needs of all the MLLs/ELLs in their district and school.

Twenty-five districts (including one Charter School network) are participating in a Pilot that will allow the Department to assess the usefulness and usability of the Interface. As Pilot Districts are utilizing the Interface to analyze data and support decision making and resource allocation, Pilot districts will identify and report potential improvements that can be made to the tool. OBEWL will communicate regularly with Pilot districts to ensure the Interface and its individual features are providing information that districts find accessible and easy to interpret. The tool will be updated to address feedback received during the Pilot.

An introductory video on the MLL/ELL Data Interface can be viewed [here](#).

### **New York State Seal of Biliteracy (NYSSB)**

The [New York State Seal of Biliteracy \(NYSSB\)](#) was passed by the Legislature and signed into law by Governor Cuomo on July 31, 2012. Assemblywoman Carmen E. Arroyo sponsored this bill, laying the groundwork for a state-wide formal recognition for high school graduates who have attained a high level of proficiency in listening, speaking, reading, and writing in one or more languages, in addition to English. Chapter 271 of the Laws of 2012 (Section 815 of Education Law) established the NYSSB.

In January of 2016, OBEWL presents its recommendations to the NYS Board of Regents for students to earn the NYSSB. Board members agreed on the importance of language instruction and bilingualism in the 21st century and in April of 2016, NYSSB was adopted by the NYS Board of Regents.

The intent of the NYSSB is to encourage the study of world and home languages in schools and identify those high school graduates with language and biliteracy skills for employers and universities. Not only does the NYSSB prepare students with twenty-first century skills, but it also affirms the value of language diversity in a multicultural society. For the 2018-19 school year, 4,031 students from 228 schools (35 high schools and 3 charter schools in New York City and 190 high schools from the rest of the state)—representing eighty-three different countries of origin and speaking forty-seven different languages—earned this prestigious distinction.

### **Culturally Responsive Sustaining Education Framework**

Grounded in a cultural view of learning and human development, OBEWL collaborated with other NYSED offices to create a [Culturally Responsive and Sustaining \(CR-S\) Education Framework](#). Geared towards all educators throughout the state, this guide was created to ensure that instructional programming is responsive to the multiple expressions of diversity found in NYS

classrooms and these expressions are valued as assets in how students learn. This framework creates student-centered learning environments that affirms racial, linguistic, and cultural identities; prepares students for rigor and independent learning; develop students' abilities to connect across lines of difference; elevates historically marginalized voices; and empowers students as agents of positive social change.

### **Emergent Multilingual Learners in Prekindergarten**

In 2014, the Committee of Bilingual Education in Prekindergarten Programs was established to address the language and literacy needs of pre-kindergarten.<sup>2</sup> Comprised of members of NYSED, educators, and advocates of early learners, this committee convened regularly and promoted multilingualism in prekindergarten classrooms, deepened knowledge about Pre-K emergent multilingual learners' (EMLLs) development, and developed academically, culturally and linguistically responsive Pre-K curriculum and instruction aligned to the vision in the Blueprint. Protocols and procedures that resulted from the work of this community include the [Emergent Multilingual Learners \(EMLL\) Language Profile](#) for Pre-K students, [instructional planning and programming guidance](#) for school leaders and teachers, and a comprehensive set of [Parent and Family Resources](#).

### **Revision of the World Language Standards**

As with any set of standards, the Department periodically conducts reviews of standards to ensure the learning standards are rigorous, appropriate, and represent what a student should know and be able to do in a specific subject area. The World Language Standards had not been revised since 1996. In 2016-17, a survey of world language teachers in NYS was conducted to gather information on teachers' use of these current standards titled *Modern Languages for Communication* and their desire for a revised set of standards for world languages that is aligned with the national World-Readiness Standards for Language Learning, initiatives on performance assessment, and the [NCSSFL-ACTFL Can-Do Statements](#).

In 2018, a World Language Leadership Team, consisting of leaders and experts in world languages from across NYS, was created to provide recommended revisions to the World Language Standards that will ultimately be submitted to the NYS Board of Regents for approval in late 2019. To inform this work and ensure that the revisions to the standards reflect the views and opinions of stakeholders across the State, the World Language Leadership Team in conjunction with OBEWL convened seven Regional Standards Review Committees across NYS. A significant part of this standards initiative will be to provide professional learning opportunities to world language teachers. To this end, OBEWL conducted two large-scale conferences: [NYS World Languages in the](#)

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<sup>2</sup> Although EMLLs are not assessed for English language proficiency, they are screened for language for instructional purposes, and may or may not be later identified as MLLs/ELLs in kindergarten.

[21<sup>st</sup> Century](#) (November 6, 2018-Saratoga Springs) and [NYS World Language Global Design for Proficiency](#) (June 6, 2019-Queens College, CUNY).

## Taking a Long View in Capacity Building Efforts

In order to build a robust system of educators and system leaders who can support the academic successes of MLLs/ELLs, OBEWL has allocated funding and resources to support professional learning across the continuum of stakeholders within the system. This includes expanding the number of qualified ESOL and bilingual educators, addressing the teacher shortage in NYS, increasing the leadership and instructional capacities of school, district, and regional leaders, and building an infrastructure of family and community supports so that parents and community-based partners can contribute to the academic and life success of MLLs/ELLs.

### **Building a Robust Pipeline of Bilingual Educators through Clinically-Rich Intensive Teacher Institutes (CR-ITIs)**

[CR-ITI programs](#) may prepare up to twenty candidates per year with graduate level coursework leading to certification in English to Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) and/or Bilingual Education (BE) Extension. NYSED currently has established partnerships with sixteen Institutes of Higher Education (IHEs) to prepare teachers and leaders of MLLs/ELLs with coursework and training necessary for certification in either ESOL or BE. Through the use of state funded grants, tuition for teachers in the CR-ITI programs is subsidized and coursework is offered in an accelerated format. Since 2014, close to 500 teachers participating in these CR-ITI programs have completed coursework necessary for certification in either ESOL or a BE Extension. OBEWL continues to work with IHEs to increase and sustain high quality CR-ITI programs across the state therefore building the knowledge and capacity of teachers and leaders to serve NYS's MLLs/ELLs and their families.

### **Teachers of Tomorrow**

As part of a long-range solution to address the shortage of high-demand teachers in NYS, funds have been allocated to districts to attract qualified educators who have received (or will earn) a transitional teaching certificate to work in low-performing schools that are experiencing a shortage of teachers in science, mathematics, bilingual education, and/or ENL. Nearly a million dollars in funding has been allocated to support approximately 140 teachers, including over fifty pursuing the Bilingual Extension certification.

### **Teacher Certification**

OBEWL has been working with IHEs to ensure that its office has the data needed to track bilingual teacher candidates working towards base certifications other than TESOL who might be positioned to obtain a Bilingual Education Extension (in order to fill vacant BE positions and increase the number of certified BE teachers employed across NYS). In order to anticipate the demand for BE teachers, OBEWL has also been working with districts to understand the growth and projections

of MLL/ELLs in their districts so that a plan can be in place not only to increase the number of certified BE teachers but also recruit and fill anticipated BE positions.

### **Teacher and Leaders Capacity Building**

New York State has numerous vehicles for assisting teachers of MLLs/ELLs in meeting statewide long-term goals regarding English language proficiency. New York State funds eight [Regional Bilingual Education Resource Network \(RBERN\)](#) centers that provide technical support and professional development to educators who are on the front lines working with MLLs/ELLs with an eye towards reducing dropout and increasing graduation rates.

In addition to the work within these RBERNS, an ELL Leadership Council (comprised of administrators from over thirty districts across the State) meets regularly to discuss challenges and opportunities as well as develop resources and solutions based on best practices at the district level.

Finally, in collaboration with WestEd and Stanford's Understanding Language initiative, NYSED is working with twenty-five school districts to participate in a three-year leadership institute designed to cultivate district leadership to build systems for MLL/ELL success. Leadership teams have examined data and best practices in order to create a vision to address the needs of MLLs/ELLs in their district as well as develop a plan of action to make their goals a reality.

### **Parental Engagement**

NYSED is committed to supporting MLLs/ELLs and their families. OBEWL has been continually building on local, regional and state-level efforts to increase parent access and engagement to support their children's educational experiences in NYS schools. The outcome of this work has been an extensive set of [resources](#) tailored to the diversity of linguistic and cultural backgrounds of MLL/ELL families.

Materials include the [MLL/ELL Parents' Bill of Rights](#) that outlines seventeen of the most critical rights of MLL/ELL parents. The Department also has a [parent guide](#) available in twenty-five languages and a multilingual parent hotline (housed at the New York University Language RBERN) that allows MLL/ELL parents to seek educational advice in their native/home languages and in a culturally responsive manner. Finally, the Department has produced [a parent orientation video](#) (available in eight languages) that provides an entry point for engaging parents of MLLs/ELLs.

OBEWL released a [Guide to Community-Based Organizations for Immigrants](#) which provides a list of organizations throughout New York State (organized by seven geographic regions and translated in ten languages) that may be useful to families and communities. Some of these services include, advocacy & community engagement, health care & insurance, housing, labor & employment, legal

services & lawful status, public assistance, safety, and youth & education. Parents of MLLs/ELLs and former MLLs/ELLs are encouraged to contact these organizations when they need assistance.

## Focusing on Teaching, Learning, and Assessment Practices that are Academically Rigorous and Culturally Relevant and Sustaining

Recognizing that *all* teachers are teachers of MLLs/ELLs, NYSED has moved from a culture of “separate but equal” that isolated MLLs/ELLs in English language development classes to one that is more inclusive and integrated so that MLLs/ELLs can graduate college, career, and civic ready.

### Teaching & Learning

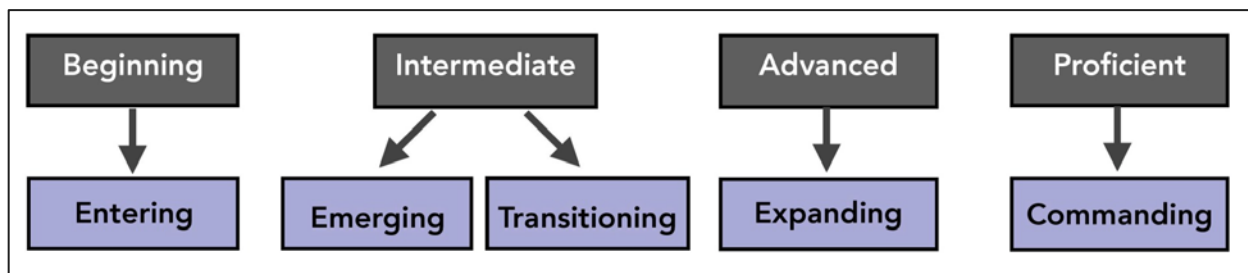
In order for MLLs/ELLs to attain the highest level of academic success and language proficiency, NYSED developed [New Language Arts Progressions \(NLAP\) and Home Language Arts Progressions \(HLAP\)](#) for every NYS Common Core Learning Standard in every grade. Completed in 2012, [the NYS Bilingual Common Core Initiative](#) served as an important opportunity for both ESOL and content area educators to collaborate in designing a continuum of teaching and learning experiences for the state’s MLLs/ELLs so that they would meet the expectations found in the NYS’s learning standards.

Additional [resources and tools](#) that build on the theoretical and practical underpinnings of these progressions have been developed in a series of topic briefs, tools and resources designed to aid NYS educators in implementing the Next Generation Learning Standards. These resources offer an expansion and deeper explanation of the concepts embedded in the Standards and accompanying Standards documents and provide additional guidance to the field—particularly in settings serving linguistically and culturally diverse learners.

[Units of Study tables](#) were developed to provide guidance around mandated services for MLLs/ELLs in both ENL and Bilingual Education programs. Organized by K-8 and 9-12 grade spans, these Unit of Studies tables (illustrating how MLLs/ELLs should spend their instructional minutes) are organized according to [five different English proficiency levels](#) (Entering, Emerging, Transitioning, Expanding, and Commanding). These minimum time requirements spelled out in CR 154 ensure that no matter where they are with respect to English proficiency and which kind of instructional model, they find themselves in, MLLs/ELLs will be guaranteed the necessary instructional hours needed to ensure success at reaching the next proficiency level. The amount of new language instruction for these students did not change when the Regulations were revised. What did change was that—in varying amounts depending on their level of proficiency—MLLs/ELLs now receive a portion of their English language instruction alongside content area instruction through Integrated ENL/Core Content Area. Through Stand-alone ENL, MLLs/ELLs receive English language instruction separately from content area learning. In this Stand-alone ENL model, the focus is on students’

language development so that they have the English language skills necessary for to be successful in core academic areas as well as in social contexts.

**Figure 3. English Language Proficiency Levels.**



### Assessments

One of the most ambitious long-term goals in increasing the percentage of MLLs/ELLs who make progress in achieving English proficiency is the reorganization of NYSED’s identification, placement, and exit plans. NYSED’s shift from four to five proficiency levels allows for more differentiation among students (as shown in Figure 3) and an expansion of options for assessing and defining English proficiency.

- On the initial English language proficiency assessment (known as [New York State Identification Test for English Language Learners](#) or NYSITELL), only students who score at the Commanding level are *not* identified as MLLs/ELLs.
- Once identified, all MLLs/ELLs take the NYSESLAT annually to determine placement for the following year.
- Students may exit MLL/ELL status either by achieving a Commanding level score on the NYSESLAT or by scoring at the Expanding level on the NYSESLAT and scoring above designated cut points on the [Grades 3-8 English Language Arts Assessment](#) or the [Regents Examination in English Language Arts](#).

In addition, as part of NYS’s ESSA plans, the state continues to translate Grades 3-8 Math assessments and Regents Examinations into five languages (Chinese [Traditional], Haitian-Creole, Korean, Russian, and Spanish) and Elementary- and Intermediate-level Science assessments into three languages (Chinese [Traditional], Haitian-Creole, and Spanish). These languages were chosen based on a report commissioned by the NYS Board of Regents identifying those languages as the most commonly reported native/home languages of students (collectively, they represent the native/home languages of 85% of MLLs/ELLs in NYS).

# Assessing Impact

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Since the adoption of the Blueprint, NYSED has experienced steady progress toward higher levels of English language proficiency for MLLs/ELLs. In the three years since the CR 154 amendments have been implemented, NYS MLLs/ELLs are achieving English proficiency and exiting ELL status at higher rates than before (including over 20,000 students who have exited ELL status via the expansion of exit criteria outlined earlier).

The percentage of ELLs exiting with a score of Commanding on the NYSESLAT has increased across all grade levels from 9.0% in 2015-16 to 13.8% in 2017-18.

- In elementary school, the percentage of MLLs/ELLs achieving Commanding levels of proficiency has increased from 9.8% in 2015-16 to 14.7% in 2017-18.
- In middle school, the percentage of MLLs/ELLs achieving Commanding levels of proficiency has increased from 13.2% in 2015-16 to 17.6% in 2017-18.
- In high school, the percentage of MLLs/ELLs achieving Commanding levels of proficiency has increased from 6.1% in 2015-16 to 9.9% in 2017-18.

Despite the promising increases in English language proficiency rates, much work is still needed to address the MLL/ELL graduation and dropout levels. According to NYSED 2018 high school graduation data (for the cohort entering 9th grade in 2014), the overall 4-year graduation rate was 80.4%, yet disconcerting achievement gaps exist for MLLs/ELLs, whose graduation rate was only 29.0% (though an increase from the 2013 cohort rate of 26.6%). At the same time, the 2018 dropout rate for the 2014 MLL/ELL cohort was 27.5%; while an improvement of 2.2% compared to the previous year, it is still significantly higher than the overall dropout rate of 6.0%. “Ever ELLs” in NYS (students identified as English language learners in any school year preceding the school year of their last enrollment) continue to outperform their grade level peers. In the 2014 cohort graduation rate data<sup>3</sup>, Ever ELLs had a graduation rate of 85.5%. Ever ELLs show strong overall academic progress in ELA and surpassed the overall statewide graduation rate by more than five percentage points.

In addition, only 18.7% of MLLs/ELLs attained a Regents diploma, with only a little over 1% attaining an Advanced Regents designation. A significant proportion (40.5%) of non-graduating MLLs/ELLs remain enrolled in hopes of graduating in their 5th or 6th year of high school.

The current outcomes are inequitable and unacceptable, and more intensive efforts are needed to better serve MLLs/ELLs. OBEWL remains committed to working with teachers, community

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<sup>3</sup> <http://www.nysed.gov/news/2019/state-education-department-releases-2014-cohort-high-school-graduation-rates>



members, parents and school and district leaders to build on existing successes and addressing the outcomes gaps identified above.

To support districts in assessing program quality of a school, OBEWL created the [MLL/ELL Program Quality Review and Reflective Toolkit](#). This toolkit supports schools in determining the current level of implementation of school-wide practices that support MLLs/ELLs toward graduation, college, career, and civic readiness. It is designed to help schools strengthen programming and organize the resources needed to offer a quality MLL/ELL program that fosters student success.

To support districts in developing a strong plan to increase high school graduation rates and to decrease dropout rates for MLLs/ELLs, OBEWL released the [Multilingual Learner/English Language Learner Graduation Rate and Dropout Prevention Planning Tool](#). This tool provides research-informed effective practices and strategies, protocols, and templates for use by districts and schools as they dive into the MLL/ELL data. Through the examination of data for this diverse population, NYS school districts can ascertain what is contributing to such outcomes.

# Looking Ahead

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Like many other educational systems in the country, NYSED faces a critical juncture where the educational decisions made today will define the future for our students, our society, and our country. As detailed in a 2019 *TESOL* report, NYS's efforts have been favorably received:

New York State endeavors to adequately support ELLs through access to participate in state assessments with appropriate accommodations, transparent accountability methods that specifically measure progress of ELLs, and motivation in holding teachers to rigorous standards for teaching English as a second language during preparation and through in-service years (Broughton, Soto, & White, 2019, p. 63).

Building on these successes and closing the equity and achievement gap will require sustained attention to effectively implement the necessary practices, policies, and cultural shifts needed at the classroom, district, regional and state levels. While considerable progress has been made, there is much more work needed to ensure the learning opportunities for MLLs/ELLs continue to improve. Major areas of future work will focus on systematically supporting schools and districts to increase academic outcomes for MLLs/ELLs; paying more attention to the diverse learners and subgroups that make up the MLL/ELL population; and intentionally designing instructional programming that leads to academic, career and civic readiness beyond high school.

## Ongoing systemic reform efforts

- **Supporting the implementation of CR 154**
  - Continue to monitor the progress of districts in the implementation of CR 154 through site visits and routine monitoring.
- **Continuing to address graduation and dropout rates**
  - Support districts in their plans to improve policies, programs, and instructional practices geared toward improvement in MLL/ELL graduation rates.

## Deeper knowledge and supports for diverse learners and subgroups

- **Understanding diverse learners/subgroups and MLLs/ELLs that are differently abled**
  - Assist districts and schools in data analysis and understanding the unique assets and needs of diverse subgroups of MLLs/ELLs (e.g., differently abled, emergent multilingual learners in pre-kindergarten);
  - Design and offer professional learning opportunities that support the assets and needs of MLLs/ELLs that are differently abled (e.g., training for school psychologists on identification and support services of MLLs/ELLs who are

differently abled, training for Individual Educational Plans (IEP) teams on how to recommend bilingual SPED services, training for teachers of MLLs/ELLs with IEPs).

- **Laying a strong foundation for Emergent Multilingual Learners (EMLLs) in Pre-K**
  - Design of protocols and resources that reflect the assets and needs of emerging bilingual children in pre-kindergarten programs;
  - Promote academically, developmentally, culturally and linguistically responsive Pre-K curriculum and instruction.
- **Meeting the educational needs of Students with Interrupted/Inconsistent Formal Education (SIFE)**
  - Develop and release a SIFE Manual for administrators and teachers with guidance and best practices regarding SIFE intake, programming, and instruction;
  - Develop a Native Language Arts Adapted Unit for SIFE that will include one exemplar/sample unit in Spanish for native speakers aligned to the Integrated ELA curriculum;
  - Support and mandate the use of the Multilingual Literacy Screener (MLS) tool to identify SIFE (in current CR 154 regulations the MLS is recommended but not formally mandated).

Design and delivery of instructional programs that prepare MLLs/ELLs for college, careers, and civic participation

- **Improving Bilingual Programs models**
  - Continue to support districts in implementing high quality bilingual education programs, including bilingual special education.
- **Creating mathematics and science initiatives**
  - Provide language teaching strategies for science and mathematics specialists and ENL teachers working with MLLs/ELLs;
  - Offer professional learning opportunities that foster collaboration among educators;
  - Create instructional tools that advance MLL/ELL learning in mathematics and science courses.
- **Increasing access to Career and Technical Education (CTE) Programs**
  - Ensure that all students have a pathway that leads to college and career readiness by offering grant opportunities for districts to increase MLL/ELL enrollment in approved CTE programs;

- Provide additional support and resources that broaden the participation of MLLs/ELLs in (and ensure equitable access to) CTE programs and activities (including the promotion of gender diversity in non-traditional career paths).
- **Revising the World Languages Standards**
  - Engage with the World Languages Leadership Team and stakeholder groups to revise new learning standards for World Languages (Languages Other than English), as well as create resources and professional learning opportunities to support teachers.
- **Design resources to support MLLs/ELLS and the Next Generation Learning Standards**
  - Align the Bilingual Common Core Progressions with the Next Generation Learning Standards for English Language Arts in accordance with the [NYSED Next Generation Learning Standards Roadmap and Implementation Timeline](#);
  - Continue building the capacity of educators of MLLs/ELLs to scaffold the grade level academic demands and linguistic demands of the Next Generation Learning Standards;
  - Continue building the capacity of school leaders to implement literacy-based reform processes.

# Highlighted Resources

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[Blueprint for Multilingual Learner/English Language Learner Success](#) (2014).

A statewide framework of eight guiding principles for administrators, policy makers, and practitioners to prepare MLLs/ELLs for success beginning in prekindergarten to lay the foundation for college, career, and civic readiness.

[Culturally Responsive-Sustaining Education Framework](#) (2019).

This framework is intended to help education stakeholders create student-centered learning environments that affirm cultural identities; foster positive academic outcomes; develop students' abilities to connect across lines of difference; elevate historically marginalized voices; empower students as agents of social change; and contribute to individual student engagement, learning, growth, and achievement through the cultivation of critical thinking.

[Emergent Multilingual Learners in Prekindergarten Programs](#) (2017).

Resources are intended to support the design of optimal learning environments that value linguistically diverse children who enter as early as Prekindergarten. Tools included best practices that help educators identify when a prekindergarten student's home or primary language is other than English, as well as instructional planning and programming guidance.

[A Guide to Community-Based Organizations for Immigrants](#) (2019).

This resource provides a list of organizations that may be useful to parents and communities. Organized by geographical regions, listed services include advocacy & community engagement, health care & insurance, housing, labor & employment, legal services & lawful status, public assistance, safety, and youth & education.

[A Guide for Parents of Multilingual Learners/English Language Learners in New York State](#) (2014).

This booklet, translated into 25 languages, includes Bilingual Education and English as a New Language program descriptions and Frequently Asked Questions about MLLs/ELLs. Facts about Bilingualism and Bilingual Education, links to MLL/ELL parent resources, and tips on "Participating in Your Child's Education" are also included.

[Multilingual Learner/English Language Learner Graduation Rate Improvement and Dropout Prevention Planning Tool](#) (2019).

This resource provides research-informed effective practices and strategies, protocols, and templates for use by districts and schools to use with their MLL/ELL data.

[Multilingual Learner/English Language Learner Program Quality Review and Reflective Protocol Toolkit](#) (2019)

This toolkit is designed to provide teams of leaders in districts, Regional Bilingual Education Resource Networks (RBERNs) and school sites who are charged with assessing program quality. Included are suggested processes and resources as well as an MLL/ELL Program Quality Review Continuum for determining a school's current level of implementation of school-wide practices that support MLLs/ELLs towards graduation, college, career, and civic readiness.

[The New York State Seal of Biliteracy](#) (NYSSB) (2019)

NYSSB was established to recognize high school graduates who have attained a high level of proficiency in listening, speaking, reading, and writing in one or more languages, in addition to English.

[Parent' Bill of Rights](#) (2018).

The Parents' Bill of Rights summarizes critical rights concerning educational access and programming for MLLs/ELLs and their parents.

[Students with Interrupted/Inconsistent Formal Education Resources](#) (2019).

A set of tailored resources designed to support districts and schools in the education of Students with Interrupted/Inconsistent Formal Education (SIFE).

[Topic Briefs to Support Linguistically Diverse Learners for the NYS Next Generation P-12 Learning Standards](#) (2018).

A series of eight topic briefs developed by Dr. Nonie K. Lesaux and Dr. Emily Phillips Galloway for NYS that shift the traditional model of MLL/ELL instruction to one that serves MLLs/ELLs through high-quality, daily advanced literacy instruction, and builds language and communication skills for the 21st century.

For additional information and resources related to MLLs/ELLs please visit the [Office of Bilingual Education website](#).

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