

NY State Education Department Office of Bilingual Education and World Languages

News from the Associate Commissioner

This is an exciting time for ELLs and teachers of ELLs in New York State. Spring is a time for renewal and new beginnings, and as we look back to the principles that were outlined in 2014 in the *Blueprint for ELLs*, we look forward to the new programs and the hard work by educators that will

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Ensuring Equal Opportunities for Our ELLs

by Patricia Burns, Matthew Gavin, and Nicole Moriarty

A few years ago, the Mineola School District reached the “magic number” of 20 or more students speaking the same second language in one grade. At this time we were also focused on the implementation of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). We had set the expectation that all students would meet the new and more rigorous standards. To meet these challenges the leadership recognized that the district needed to reassess the instructional programs offered in the K-12 setting. We affirmed our commitment to the success of all of our students with a focus on our English Language Learners. Consequently, we began our journey through research and what we subsequently created embodied the best ideas of educational practice.

Through our research we uncovered that one of the first tenets of effective schools is teacher collaboration. Thus, the district placed this at the forefront of our initiative. The goal was for all teachers to collaborate in order to plan lessons that were aligned with the needs of their students and to embed learning-style responsive lessons. The idea was that if teachers could collaborate they would be able to avoid common instructional pitfalls, enhance their pedagogical repertoire, and provide professional, real-time feedback on the use of various practices and protocols throughout a unit or lesson. This collaboration would also lead to a more integrated approach whereby all learners

were learning rigorous content in an inclusive setting. This was a departure from the past, where students receiving additional services, like ESL, might walk down the hall in a pull out model, work in the corner of their classroom, or participate in a lesson that was completely unrelated to the instruction their peers were receiving. In one monumental shift we changed the old manner of doing business where the students who needed the most support were receiving the most erratic and fragmented instruction to the model where all students’ needs were equally addressed.

The next area we turned our attention to was our curriculum. As active participants in the Network Team Meetings in Albany, the district decided to gradually implement the NYSED ELA and Math modules. We selected a math and literacy

specialist in Grades K-4 who worked closely with the teachers to unpack the modules and understand the implications for instruction. The district adopted the math curriculum from kindergarten through high school. Having just implemented Foundations phonics program in our primary grades, the district decided to continue using a balanced literacy approach to teaching reading and writing in K-2. The teachers created interdisciplinary units of study with specific grade appropriate learning objectives and assessments using the Core Knowledge program as a guide. In Grades 3-12, we have adapted or adopted the modules from EngageNY, including the Odell Inquiry-Based Research Framework at the HS. Common learning objectives and assessments are being

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implemented and aligned to the CCSS. Teachers work collaboratively to design lessons with the individual learners in mind.

Assessment, an area of much debate, was also addressed. The teacher-designed units were created to give teachers the opportunity to assess students' progress toward meeting grade-level standards. Teachers in

Approximately two hundred Hispanic/Latino high school students traveled to Albany in March 2015 to participate in the 25th Annual Angelo Del Toro Puerto Rican/Hispanic Youth Leadership Institute (PR/HYLI) – a statewide leadership program supported by the Office of Bilingual Education and World Languages and others. The trip was the culmination of a hands-on learning experience that helped students develop leadership skills and gain an in-depth knowledge of the state’s legislative process.

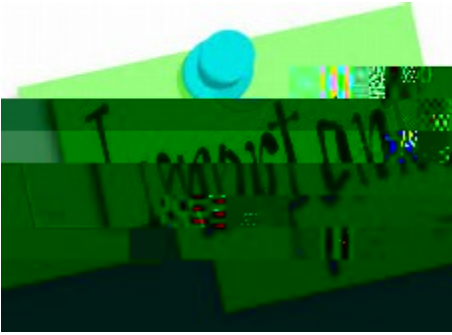
Questar III BOCES District Superintendent Dr. Gladys I. Cruz, who has been associated with the program for more than a decade, said the program continues the work of the late Angelo Del Toro, a member of the New York State Assembly who died in 1994.

“Angelo Del Toro felt the Hispanic community needed to be more engaged in the political process if they were going to have any voice. He decided we needed to start training Hispanic youth at a younger age as part of the adult SOMOS el Futuro conference.

Thanks to his vision, this program is giving a new generation of Hispanic leaders the skills and connections that last a lifetime and change lives,” Cruz said.

As part of the yearlong program, PR/HYLI students participated in local training sessions coordinated through the statewide RBERNs and the New York City Department of Education. Students studied the legislative process, researched bills and learned parliamentary procedure in preparation for the weekend program in Albany.

In March, eight regional delegations gathered in Albany for three days of activities, including leadership, ice breaker and team building exercises at Siena College in addition to information sessions, student presentations and networking opportunities. Additionally, students met with members of the State Legislature, Assembly/Senate Puerto Rican and Hispanic Task Force, local



June		
1 st	8:30-3:00	Dual Language Institute: Getting to Know Your ELL Students: Culturally Responsive Teaching Keynote Speaker: Socorro Herrera Fordham University, Lincoln Center
2 nd	6:00 to 8:00pm	Resettling in Albany: A Refugee Art Exhibition Open House City Hall, 24 Eagle Street, Albany, NY
9 th	8:00 to 3:00	Collaboration and Co-Teaching: Strategies to Support English Language Learners The University at Albany / Alumni House 1400 Washington Avenue, Albany, New York 12222
11 th	8:30 to 3:00	Third Session of ELL Leadership Institute New York LaGuardia Airport Marriott 102-05 Ditmars Boulevard, East Elmhurst, NY
12 th	8:30 to 3:00	Third Session of ELL Leadership Institute

