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# NYSABE News

Fall Issue

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## A Message from the President, Margarita Reyes



Dear Members and  
Colleagues,

It is with great honor and gratitude that I assume my role as the president of the New York State Association for Bilingual Education (NYSABE). NYSABE is a non-profit professional organization that promotes quality educational programs for English language learners (ELLs). Its primary purpose is to share our collective knowledge to equip each member with the tools needed to become an excellent practitioner as well as an advocate and a strong voice on behalf of ELLs in New York State. As I initiate my term as the president of NYSABE, I would like to share my vision, which focuses on the following goals:

**Advocacy:** To strengthen NYSABE's voice by meeting with legislators, community leaders, and school administrators to advocate on behalf of ELLs and their families.

**Parent Outreach:** To empower parents so they can become involved in the educational process and to en-

sure that their voices are heard when decisions that impact their children's schooling are made.

**Membership:** To increase NYSABE membership in order to exert a stronger influence on policy makers, thus safeguarding the educational rights of ELLs.

**Networking:** To build solidarity among members across the six regions and to continue strengthening NYSABE's collaborative relationships with professional and community-based organizations, such as the National Association of Bilingual Education, New York State Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages, New York State Council of Educational Associations, Coalition for Educational Excellence for ELLs, Advocates for Children, and the New York Immigration Coalition.

In addition, we are committed to serving current and future members by offering high quality professional development, such as regional workshops, seminars, and presentations, as well as our annual conference. These professional development activities will focus on research-based, optimum instructional practices for ELLs. They will also offer opportunities to discuss current policies and NYSABE advocacy efforts. Please save the date

for the NYSABE annual conference, which will take place on March 11-14, 2010 at the Huntington Hilton Hotel in Melville, NY. The theme of this conference, "Bilingual Education: A Pathway to Multicultural and Multilingual Learning Communities," reflects the growing linguistic and cultural diversity of our society. It also reflects our goal of promoting multicultural and multilingual learning communities in order to meet the educational needs of all children. I invite you to visit our website ([www.nysabe.org](http://www.nysabe.org)) where you will find useful information relating to ELLs across the state and the nation. Please do not hesitate to contact the members of the NYSABE executive board, your regional delegates, or me, if you have any questions, suggestions, or ideas on how to improve our services for our members and community at large. Thank you for your ongoing support and dedication. I reiterate my commitment to continuing our advocacy efforts to ensure excellent and equitable education for all ELLs throughout New York State.

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From the Desk of  
the Executive  
Director,  
Nancy Villarreal  
de Adler

NYSABE's mission states that the main goal of the organization is to advocate for bilingual education and seek equitable education for English language learners (ELLs) through the implementation of enriched bilingual, multicultural instruction.

Advocacy, as suggested by our members, can take a variety of forms; from restructuring schools and ensuring research-based bilingual instruction to safeguarding the authentic participation of parents and families in the school's decision-making process; from designing optimum professional development activities focusing on ELLs, to sustaining effective school leadership.

Further, NYSABE members agree that advocacy work in bilingual education has required, and will continue to

necessitate, actions that go beyond the classroom and the school boundaries. Advocacy includes testifying in public hearings on behalf of ELLs, publicizing scholarly information, becoming engaged in the development of laws and policies affecting ELLs, dialoguing and seeking support from elected officials, and using the news media to bring to the public's attention the educational needs of ELLs. These are a few examples of how educators, parents, educational researchers, and members of professional and community-based organizations, advocate for an equitable education for all New York State's ELLs.

To all those individuals and institutions, who in their own way, have embraced NYSABE's Advocacy mission, we dedicate this Fall 2009

issue of the *NYSABE News*. Throughout this issue, focusing on advocacy, you will find articles and announcements that will assist you and your colleagues in gaining an understanding of the educational challenges faced by our students, educators, and parents. We also hope that this information will encourage you to join us and participate in NYSABE's initiatives. You are invited to visit our website, [www.nysabe.org](http://www.nysabe.org), or visit the NYSABE office at New York University's Metropolitan Center for Urban Education (see front page). You may also contact me by phone at (212) 998-5104 or e-mail at [nvillarrealdeadler@nyu.edu](mailto:nvillarrealdeadler@nyu.edu). It will be a pleasure to meet you.

Have a great year!

## Understanding the Disenfranchisement of Latino Males

Pedro Noguera, Ph.D.

Over the last five years, numerous practitioners and researchers have identified the growing crisis of limited social and academic outcomes occurring among males, particularly males of color. Although diverse in racial and ethnic identification, Latino males as a pan-ethnic group are populating prisons, dropping out of high school, and being overrepresented in the service industry at alarming rates. More specifically, Latino males under the age of 35, when compared to their male counterparts from other racial/ethnic groups, maintain lower wages, have higher employment rates in the service, production and construction industries, exhibit higher mortality rates due to homicide, and a report a rapidly growing rate of HIV/AIDS. Aside from a national discourse on immigra-

tion policy, there has been limited attention to this pan-ethnic group.

In 2008 with funding from the Ford Foundation, the Metropolitan Center for Urban Education at New York University brought together leading researchers from various fields to discuss the state of Latino males and to articulate the direction of future research and policy intervention. This book compiles the papers written by leading scholars on Latino males and seeks to interject into research and policy a historical and contemporary perspective of social and structural factors impacting the outcomes of this population.

**The Nature of the Problem** The disenfranchisement of Latino males begins as early as K-12 schooling. In 2007, more than half of Latino children in 4<sup>th</sup>

grade were reading below basic proficiency (51%), meanwhile, only 23% of White 4<sup>th</sup> graders were below proficiency.<sup>1</sup> The percentage of 8<sup>th</sup> grade Latino students below basic proficiency (43%), while less than that for 4<sup>th</sup> graders, differs greatly from the only 17% of White 8<sup>th</sup> graders at or below basic proficiency. The 4<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade mean reading scores of Latino males are approximately 20 points below those of their White peers.<sup>2</sup> Unfortunately, by the time Latino males are in high school about one in every two (49%) graduates.<sup>3</sup> This figure is comparable to Black males (48%), however, it is much lower than White males (74%). Latino males graduate at lower rates than all Latino students (53%) and Latina females (58%). The aggregate of these

<sup>1</sup> NAEP, Fourth and Eighth Grade Reading Scores. 2007.

<sup>2</sup> NAEP, Fourth and Eighth Grade Reading Scores. 2007.

outcomes may explain why the college-going rate is minimal among this population. In 2004, of the 18- to 24-year-old Latino male population, only 21.7% enrolled in college, which is lower than Whites (38.4%), Blacks (26.5%), and Asians (63%) in the same age group.<sup>4</sup>

Although the Latino male population appears to have limited educational attainment, they maintain high employment rates. In 2006, of the Latino males in the civilian labor force (approximately 12 million), 93.8% were employed, while only 6.2% were unemployed.<sup>5</sup> These unemployment rates mirror White males (5.1% unemployed), however, they are significantly lower than Black males (11.8% unemployed). These rates, however, differ within national origin groups. For example, the rates of unemployment are slightly higher among Puerto Ricans (8.4%), but similar between Mexicans (4.9%), Cubans (5.4%), Central Americans (5.9%), and South Americans (5%).<sup>6</sup> The majority of employed Latino males are in blue collar jobs. Among the Latino males in the workforce in 2006, nearly three fourths were employed in three industries: production and transportation (21.5%), construction and maintenance (28.7%) and, services (20.3%). Smaller percentages were in professional (12.9%) or sales and office occupations (14.2%).

The incarceration rate among Latino males represents only 1% of the entire population, however, this population is comprised mainly of men under age 35. When disaggregated by age group, over 50% of the

Latino men in correctional institutions were between the ages of 20 and 34. This figure translates into 3.9% of the Latino men ages 20-24 being in prison, which is second to Black men, with 10.5% in the same age group being incarcerated.<sup>7</sup> Also of concern is the alarming rate at which homicide is occurring among teens and young adult Latino males. Between the ages of 1 and 34, homicide is one of three leading causes of death among Latino males.<sup>8</sup> On the health front, the fastest growing issue facing the Latino community is the increasing rate of HIV and AIDS cases. Latino men report higher percentages of ever having been tested for HIV (35%) than their White counterparts (30%), and lower than their Black counterparts (52%). However, according to the Office of Minority Health and Health Disparities, in 2004, Latino men were 2.6 times more likely to die from HIV/AIDS when compared to non-Latino White males.<sup>9</sup>

Overall, the status of Latino males across social, economic, and educational outcome indicators establishes that nearly half of the Latino male population is not graduating high school. The majority of Latino men over age 18 are involved in the service and industry side of the labor market, and over a third of Latino males between the ages of 15 and 35 are experiencing serious public health concerns such as infections of HIV and AIDS, having no health insurance, and becoming the victims of homicide. Even though we understand that not all Latino males are at

risk, such alarming patterns raise substantive questions as to how such patterns emerged and what are the necessary interventions to alter and provide remedy to these patterns of limited social and economic mobility, and health status from a national and local policy perspective.

***The absence of scholarship and leadership*** In recent years, research on men and masculinity has increased substantially. This body of work has been generated to a large degree by a growing awareness that prior research on gender was imbalanced in that it primarily focused upon the condition and experiences of women and girls in society. The new research on men and masculinity has begun to investigate the role of men in society, the ways in which cultural and structural systems of patriarchy are maintained, and the various ways in which masculine gender roles shape the identities and experiences of men and boys in society.

Some of the existing research on men and masculinity is driven by an awareness that many social phenomena - violence, labor market patterns, family structure, academic performance, to name just a few - might be better understood by focusing directly on the role of gender in the manifestation of these phenomena. As this awareness has increased, the number of studies focused explicitly on men and

***(Continued on p.6)***

***(Noguera, cont. from p.4)*** masculinity has increased substantially, and in some universities has begun to rival women's studies. Gradually, the

***"Although diverse in racial and ethnic identification, Latino males as a panethnic group are populating prisons, dropping out of high school, and overrepresented in the service industry at alarming rates."***

<sup>4</sup> National Center for Education Statistics. *Status and Trends of Racial/Ethnic Minorities, 2004*.

<sup>5</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, Population Division, *Ethnic & Hispanic Statistics Branch, 2006*.

<sup>6</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, Population Division, *Ethnic & Hispanic Statistics Branch, 2006*.

<sup>7</sup> Harrison, Paige M. and Beck, Allen J. (2006). *Prison and Jail Inmates at Midyear 2005*. Number of Inmates in State or Federal Prison and Local Jails per 100,000 Residents, By Gender, Race, Hispanic Origin, and Age. June 30, 2005. Tables 13 and 12. United States Department of Justice Office of Justice Programs. Bureau of Justice Statistics Bulletin. United States Department of Justice Office of Justice Programs. Bureau of Justice Statistics Bulletin. <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/abstract/pjim05.htm>

<sup>8</sup> US Center on Disease Control and Prevention. National Vital Statistics Report. Mortality Tables. 2004

<sup>9</sup> US Center for Disease Control and Prevention. Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report. 2007. <http://www.omhrc.gov/templates/browse.aspx?lvl=2&lvlid=54>

**2009-2010  
Executive Board  
(see pp. 4 and 5)**

**Delegate Assembly**

*Region I/Long Island*

Linda Scalice

María A. Meyer

*Region II/ New York*

*City*

Lorraine Estrada

Dr. Lucia Buttaró

*Region III/Mid-Hudson*

Ray Sánchez

Elda Pérez-Mejía

*Region IV/Capital Dis-  
trict*

Ofelia Anamaría

*Region V/Rochester*

Yazmin Torres

Carmen Bermúdez-

Merner

*Region VI/Western New  
York*

Rose Colón-Cisneros

Evelyn Arent

**Delegates-at-Large**

Md. Abul Kalam Azad

María de los A. Barreto

Betty Colón

Cynthia Jonsson

Pat Lo

**Parent-at-Large**

Carmen Alverio-Hope

**Language Delegates**

Amidor Almonord,

Haitian

Diana V. Hernández,

Spanish

Silvia Zaluski, Italian

Md. Habibur R. Chow-

dhury, Bengali

Sushma Malhotra,

Hindi



**Margarita Reyes,  
President**

Born in Puerto Rico, Margarita moved to the US in 1973 with her two daughters. For the last twenty years, she has been involved in the field of education. Ms. Reyes began working in the field as a high school paraprofessional, which influenced her decision to become a teacher. After completing her bachelor's degree in Special Education, she worked as a bilingual special education teacher for 10 years. She then accepted a position as a district administrator and is now serving as the Bilingual Special Education Specialist for Monroe 1 BOCES. As a strong advocate for the education of second language learners, Margarita has been involved for many years with NYSABE and is committed to bilingual education. She has served as a delegate, first vice-president and now as the president. She believes that in order for second language learners to receive quality and equitable education, they must be provided with instruction in their native language while learning English. She holds a bachelor's degree from Buffalo State College and a master's degree in bilingual education and administration from Brockport State College.



**Maria De Los Angeles Barreto,  
First Vice-President**

Born in Puerto Rico, Ms. Barreto came to New York City at the age of 8. Beginning her career in 1986 as a teacher, Maria has served as a bilingual education teacher and district coordinator, citywide coordinator of Project Familia—Title VII, and as an assistant principal in District 32. Currently, she is the principal of Intermediate School 296 in Brooklyn. Throughout her career, Ms. Barreto has been recognized for her bilingual education advocacy on behalf of children and her skills in coordinating effective professional development activities for her colleagues. She has received the Channel 13 Exemplary Teacher Award (1987), a US Department of Education Scholarship (1990), the 2006 NYSABE Bilingual Education Administrator of the Year Award, the Channel 41 Best NYC Educator Award (2007), and the Puerto Rican Educator Leadership Award nominated by the city's National Puerto Rican Parade Association. For NYSABE, she has served as the parent-at-large, delegate-at-large, second vice-president and first vice-president. She holds a BA from Brooklyn College, a master's degree in bilingual education from City College, a professional diploma in administration and supervision from St. John's, and is completing her doctoral program at Walden University.



**Evelyn Arent,  
Second Vice President**

Raised in Guatemala until age 14, Ms. Arent then immigrated to Los Angeles, CA. Evelyn has served in bilingual special education for several years. She taught in San Diego and, in 2004, moved with her husband and three children to Buffalo where she teaches Spanish as a second language in the Buffalo city school district. She holds a BS degree in Spanish 7-12 from the State University of New York College at Buffalo/California State University San Marcos College of Education and an MS in bilingual special education from the State University of New York College at Buffalo.



**Rosemarie Colón-Cisneros,  
Secretary**

Rosemarie Colon-Cisneros is a supervisor of bilingual education and ESL in the Buffalo public school system. She has been in the field of education for the past 24 years. Rose began her career as a bilingual special education teacher in 1985. She left the classroom to become a bilingual special education diagnostician and later a teacher trainer. Rose has a deep respect for culture, education and children which is why she became a bilingual educator and part of NYSABE. She has been involved with NYSABE in a variety of capacities for more than 16 years.



**Betty Colón,  
Treasurer**

A bilingual educational specialist for the Buffalo public school system, Ms. Colón began her career as a teacher's aide in a bilingual classroom. After obtaining her teaching certification from Medaille College, she transitioned into a 6:1:1 classroom as a bilingual special education teacher. She has been in the education profession for the past 23 years. As a NYSABE volunteer, she has served as delegate-at-large, registration chair for two conferences, and member for more than four years. She holds a BA in elementary education and a masters in bilingual special education from Buffalo State College.



**Anne Henry Montante, Past President**

Prior to her current position as an ESL and bilingual supervisor in the Buffalo public school district, Ms. Henry Montante was the director of the BETAC at Erie 1 BOCES. Her ESL teaching experience includes urban and suburban K-12 settings as well as international students at the University at Buffalo. As a teacher, she focused on high school students as they were the ones who faced the greatest challenge: learning a new language and content knowledge, simultaneously, in order to prepare for the high stakes NYS tests. She holds a BA in French language and literature, a master's in TESOL, and a certificate of advanced studies in educational leadership. In 2008, she was second vice president in NYS TESOL and she is the immediate past president of NYSABE.

***"Educators are better positioned than many researchers or policymakers to have insights into the types of interventions that might prove most effective in responding to the needs of Latino males early."***

study of men and masculinity is occupying a space as a legitimate subject of research in the field of gender studies in the social sciences and humanities.

As is true in women's studies, research and scholarship on men and masculinity has gradually moved from broad generalizations about the role and status of men in society to a more nuanced analysis that acknowledges the importance of other categories of difference: namely race, class, sexuality, culture and national origin, in shaping the experience of men in society. This is particularly the case with regard to African American males. Though African American males constitute a relatively small percentage of the US population, this constituency is confronted with a broad array of hardships and disadvantages that have compelled scholars and policy makers to do more to understand and respond to these problems. This concern has given rise to a growing body of scholarship aimed at understanding the nature of the challenges confronting African American males and devising the most appropriate ways in which to respond.

Surprisingly, there has not been a similar growth in scholarship directed at the challenges and issues confronting Latino males in American society. This is surprising because like African American males, Latino males find themselves conspicuously overrepresented in certain negative categories – those who drop out of school, are incarcerated, and murdered, to name a few – and under-represented in other categories associated with success – those who earn advanced university degrees, receive high incomes, or rise to positions of political leadership.

There are many possible rea-

sons for the lack of focus on Latino males. First, Latinos are by definition an extraordinarily diverse group, comprised of individuals from a variety of countries, racial and ethnic backgrounds, and there are significant regional variations in the Latino experience. While it could be argued that it is problematic to rely upon race as a category of research for any group due to the ways in which diversity relates to class, phenotype, educational background and other characteristics that shape and influence human experience; for Latinos, using race, or the broad and sloppy rubric of Latino identity as the basis for research and analysis is even more problematic.

Second, because of the diversity within the Latino population, many of the challenges that are specific to Latino males often go unrecognized and therefore do not receive the attention they deserve. For example, while Latino incarceration and homicide rates are much lower than those experienced by African American males, they are still considerably higher than those experienced by white males. Moreover, when Latinos are broken down by national origin, social class or region it becomes clear that certain groups are particularly vulnerable to particular hardships and challenges (e.g. Puerto Rican males much more likely to drop out of school, Mexican American males in California more likely to be incarcerated, etc.) while others (e.g. Cubans and South Americans) are less so.

Finally, the relative dearth of Latino scholars and scientists in academic institutions and research centers is also a factor contributing to the shortage of studies on Latino males and masculinity. It has historically

been the case that much of the scholarship on racial minorities and groups that have historically been marginalized and discriminated against in American society (i.e. women, gays and lesbians, religious minorities, etc.) has been carried out to a large degree by members of those groups. The absence of a critical mass of Latino scholars who understand and are concerned about the challenges facing Latino males has undoubtedly contributed to the shortage of studies on this topic.

#### **Responding to the Crisis**

With such a broad array of hardships confronting Latino males, it is clear that we cannot afford to wait for policymakers to respond. Educators who are on the front lines of serving our youth must step forward to become advocates for those whose voices and needs are not heard or addressed. Educators are better positioned than many researchers or policymakers to have insights into the types of interventions that might prove most effective in responding to the needs of Latino males early. I encourage NYSABE to convene a subcommittee of educators to begin exploring the nature of this problem and to make recommendations for a course of action that can be taken at the local, state and federal level.

*Pedro Noguera is a Professor in Teaching and Learning and the Executive Director of the Metropolitan Center for Urban Education at New York University.*

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New York Lawyers for the Public Interest and Advocates for Children of New York are pleased to announce an initiative to assist immigrant parents of students receiving special education services in New York City (NYC). Parents of students in NYC schools whose primary language is not English have the right to receive translation and interpretation services from the NYC Department of Education (DOE). NYC Chancellor's Regulation A-663 and federal and state laws mandate the provision of these services in the special education context. In our experience, however, the DOE rarely fulfills its obligation to provide these services to parents in the area of special education. Language barriers prevent many limited English speaking parents from being able to participate meaningfully in the development of their child's special education program, which often results in students being inappropriately served. To ensure that parents receive language services, we have developed parent and advocate request letters and fact sheets. They are available in **Albanian, Arabic, Bengali, Chinese, French, Haitian-Creole, Korean, Polish, Punjabi, Russian, Spanish and Urdu** at: [www.nylpi.org/factsheets](http://www.nylpi.org/factsheets) & [www.advocatesforchildren.org/guidesbytopic.php](http://www.advocatesforchildren.org/guidesbytopic.php). We hope that you will use these documents to ensure that the NYC DOE provides parents information in a language they can understand. We would like to keep track of the results of using these letters, so please contact us with your experiences. Here is some basic information about the language rights in NYC:

**Translation:** Parents have the right to receive the following information in their primary language:

- Notice of consent for evaluation
- Meeting notice
- Evaluation reports
- Final notice of recommendation:
- Individualized Education Program (IEP)
- Report Cards/Progress Reports
- Procedural Safeguards Notice
- Mediation Agreement.
- Resolution agreement
- Impartial hearing decision

**Interpretation:** Parents have the right to an interpreter fluent in their primary language in the following situations:

- IEP meeting
- CSE review
- Mediation Session
- Resolution session
- Impartial Hearing

Under no circumstances should the DOE use a child as an interpreter.

If a school has not been providing language services to parents, parents should send a letter to the school to request the services. If a school or a DOE office does not translate requested documents, parents may make a complaint by calling the Office of Family Engagement and Advocacy (OFEA) at (212) 374-2323 or by faxing them a copy of your letter to (212) 374-0138.

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**NYSABE's  
Advocacy  
During the  
2008-09 Term**  
Anne Henry  
Montante,  
*Immediate  
Past President*

During the 2008 – 2009 school year, NYSABE issued several position statements on the education of LEP/ELLs. Nancy Villarreal de Adler presented a couple of the statements in person while others were sent to various offices of the New York State Education Department (NYSED) and the New York State Assembly. In these statements, not only did NYSABE present our stance, but we also outlined the challenges and

issues and then made recommendations on how to address them. As this is the first issue of the newsletter for this year, I've summarized the position statements below to refresh us all on what was issued last year.

One of the first statements was presented to The Assembly Standing Committee on Education on policy and programmatic barriers affecting the academic achievement of LEP/ELLs. The concerns were: low graduation rate, decrease in bilingual programs, weak identification tool (LAB – R), and the lack of accommodations for special education students taking the NYSESLAT. NYSABE recommended that the Assembly develop procedures to enforce federal mandates, state law, and regulations governing the identification, placement, and appropriate instructional and support services for LEP/ELLs in general and special education; allocate specific funding for the expansion of bilingual education programs; revise the LAB-R to expand its scope of assessment areas and to ensure appropriate identification of LEP/ELLs; and develop alternate assessment measures to assess the cognitive linguistic progress of LEP/ELLs with severe disabilities and determine their eligibility for services.

Another statement was presented to the New York State Board of Regents. This statement addressed three major points: Part 154 Regulations, teacher shortages,

and long term LEP/ELLs. With regard to the Part 154, NYSABE recommended that the Board revise and strengthen the language of the regulations to convey the mandated nature of bilingual and ESL services for all LEP/ELLs; give school districts the option to develop specialized programs for SIFE students (new arrivals would enter a non-graded accelerated program that will aim at developing basic language/literacy and content area skills); and support the implementation of bilingual education full – day pre – K programs that will ensure the academic readiness of students by focusing on intensive native language instruction. In order to address the issue of teacher shortages, the Board must increase ITI funding to increase the number of bilingual and ESL teachers, and encourage IHEs to develop degree-oriented programs for support personnel (e.g. bilingual school psychologists, bilingual counselors, etc.). To assist districts with the challenge of long term LEP/ELLs, the Board must fund programs specifically designed for LEP/ELLs that will provide enrichment activities beyond ESL instruction, and develop procedures to safeguard the educational rights of long term LEP/ELLs in special education

Although the challenge of mayoral control was specific to New York City, NYSABE recognized that it could easily become a state-wide challenge. Therefore, it was imperative that we, as a state-wide organization, issue a statement on these

items: the alarmingly low achievement of middle school and high school students which includes students with interrupted formal education (SIFE) and long term LEP/ELLs; the lack of fidelity and consistency in bilingual and ESL program designs; and the gradual exclusion of native language arts (NLA) teaching and the limited use of the native language in content area instruction in bilingual education classes. NYSABE urged Mayor Bloomberg and Chancellor Klein to ensure that state and federal funds target A) research and implementation of best pedagogical practices and support services for middle, high school, SIFE and long term LEP/ELLs; and B) focused professional development, and additional support for administrators and practitioners on the implementation of quality research-based ELL educational programs.

A statement on budget cuts was sent to Governor Paterson and the State Legislators. NYSABE implored the Governor and members of the Legislature to restore \$360 million of Foundation Aid intended for ELL programs; strengthen and enforce the Contracts for Excellence regulations so that LEP/ELL generated funds will be utilized specifically to develop, support and enhance ELL programs; establish clear guidelines for program accountability and alignment with Part 154 regulations; and preserve the categorical funds that support so many essential programs in districts across the

state.

Last but not least, a statement was issued opposing Bill Number A5350, which proposed making English the official language of New York State. NYSABE strongly urged Speaker Sheldon Silver and the New York State Assembly to protect the rights of New York State's linguistically and culturally diverse communities. Research was cited to demonstrate that students taught in the native language, while learning English, do better on assessments of English literacy and content areas than those youngsters in all English programs. It was noted that there is no scientific data to demonstrate that the declaration of an official language will "better serve the diverse ethnic, cultural and linguistic backgrounds of New York citizens." On the contrary, we believe that English-only xenophobic laws and policies restrict the participation of immigrants, as well as U.S. born speakers of other languages, in the political, social, economic, and educational life of their communities, thus denying them their most elemental civil rights.

NYSABE stepped up its advocacy efforts last year and under the leadership of Margarita Reyes and Nancy Villarreal de Adler, I am sure that we will be equally diligent in our efforts.



**It Takes a Village:**

### **The Role of Educators in Creating Change in New York State Schools**

By Deycy Avitia

The most basic definition of a teacher is "a person who educates others, especially one hired to teach." But as most educators know, teachers' jobs are much more complex. Teachers of English Language Learners (ELLs) know that they also play a unique role as critical engines of integration, mobility and civic participation for immigrant and ELL students. For this reason, we believe strongly in working collaboratively with teachers, parents, and immigrant communities to create an agenda for change that is driven by the needs and experiences of these communities.

Today's immigrant communities have the same goals as previous generations of immigrants – to give their children a quality education that will allow them to go to college and succeed in life. However, immigrant youth and students learning English face huge obstacles to academic success. The disregard for the needs of immigrant students and a stagnant ELL dropout crisis is wiping out the futures of an entire generation of youth. This paper discusses these challenges and presents ways that educators can collaborate with education advocates and immigrant communities in strengthening educational opportunities for immigrant students.

**Status and Quality of**

### **Public Education for Immigrant and ELL Students**

More than half of New York City's school-age children come from immigrant families. Immigrant students, particularly those learning English, face huge obstacles to academic success. About two-thirds of children who have not yet learned English are living in poverty, compared to only one-third of English proficient children. Their parents are likely to have had only limited schooling and more than half are enrolled in "linguistically-segregated" schools. ELLs who were not born here face additional obstacles: not only must they learn a new language, but they often also have to adjust to a new country and school system - all while trying to meet promotion and graduation standards.

Today's immigrant students, in New York and all across the United States, are being held accountable to meet new and more difficult promotion and graduation standards without receiving the help they need and which was promised to them. As a result, there has been an unprecedented increase in dropout rates for immigrant students learning English, and many more ELLs being pushed out of high schools, as schools attempt to suppress their dropout rates. Data from the New York State Education Department also indicates that fewer ELLs take the Regents exams, those who take the exams are more likely to fail, and those

*"Today's  
immigrant  
communities have  
the same goals as  
previous  
generations of  
immigrants – to  
give their children  
a quality  
education that  
will allow them to  
go to college and  
succeed in life."*

**For more information about the Education Collaborative, to sign up for the NYC's School Advocacy Network, or to schedule a workshop, please contact Deycy Avitia at (212) 627-2227 x 231 or [davitia@thenyic.org](mailto:davitia@thenyic.org)**

who do pass are more likely to pass the exams with lower scores. Beginning this year, all entering ninth-graders will be required to earn a Regents diploma to graduate high school. This new requirement has the potential of intensifying the already dire dropout crisis facing ELL students. This is a crisis. It demands change.

#### **Who We Are**

The Education Collaborative consists of more than 20 immigrant, educational, policy, legal and advocacy organizations and dozens of researchers, practitioners, and advocates that meet and exchange information regularly about issues affecting ELL and immigrant students. The Education Collaborative is open to all organizations and individuals regardless of capacity and members are welcome to join active subcommittees that work on policy development and implementation of priority issues for the year. The IMPACT (Immigrant Parents & Communities Transforming Schools) groups are grassroots immigrant organizations that organize parents and students to play a leadership role in the Education Collaborative and in their communities. The IMPACT groups work to unite and build power among immigrant families through community organizing, leadership development, policy research, and advocacy. This year, we are also looking to deepen our understanding of the programmatic structures needed to better support ELL

educators and to work closely with teachers to advocate for and implement the best possible programs for ELL and immigrant students.

Over the last decade, the Education Collaborative has successfully fought for and made significant progress towards equity and opportunity for immigrant families—new structures that facilitate language access, new avenues for immigrant parent participation in schools, historic increases in ELL funding, improved access to schools and services for ELLs, and heightened attention to the funding and programmatic needs of ELL and immigrant students. Yet, we know that much more needs to be done to ensure that these successes translate into the far more comprehensive response needed to ensure opportunity and equity for immigrant families over the long term.

#### **How You Can Help**

We are eager to strengthen collaborations with educators in pushing for education reforms. There are four simple ways you can join our efforts to build a movement of teachers and parents who can engage the school system at all levels, from the classroom to the state legislature, demanding that schools address the needs of immigrant and ELL children and their communities.

**Join the NYC's School Advocacy Network** to receive weekly education news, updates and information about actions/events in your com-

munity. Send an email with your name, email address, phone (if you would like to receive text alerts), and your affiliation (optional) to [davitia@thenyic.org](mailto:davitia@thenyic.org).

**Schedule a Workshop for Immigrant Parents** in your school. The NYC and the IMPACT groups offer workshops for immigrant parents on their rights and ways to connect to local advocacy efforts. Please call or email us for more information.

**Share Your Story.** We depend on parents and educators on the ground to keep us abreast of best practices and key issues affecting immigrant and ELL students and educators. Please share your successes and challenges with us.

**Join the Education Collaborative,** coordinated by the NYC in partnership with Advocates for Children, and connect with education advocates and immigrant communities in advocating for immigrant and ELL students.

*Deycy Avitia is the Coordinator of Education Advocacy at the New York Immigration Coalition.*

#### References

1. Margie McHugh, LEP and Immigrant Students in US Schools (*October 19, 2006*), National Center on Immigrant Integration Policy.
2. Linguistically segregated schools are those where more than one-third of the school's total enrollment is also classified as ELL. Source: Margie McHugh, LEP and Immigrant Students in US Schools (*October 19, 2006*), National Center on Immigrant Integration Policy.

## **NYSABE's 33rd Annual Conference**

*Bilingual Education: A Pathway to Multicultural and  
Multilingual Learning Communities*

March 11 - 14, 2010  
Huntington Hilton Hotel  
Melville, New York

*Join teachers, paraprofessionals, parents, school and central office  
administrators, community-based advocacy organizations,  
teacher educators, and researchers in sharing knowledge  
and experiences grounded in a common goal:  
to promote an excellent, equitable education for all ELLs.*

For information and pre-registration forms visit  
NYSABE's web site: [www.nysabe.org](http://www.nysabe.org)

## English Language Learners Still Left Behind

By Luis O. Reyes, Ph.D.

*This article is based on "La Educación bajo George W. Bush" in which I analyzed the impact of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act on Latino and English Language Learners (ELLs). It was published, in Spanish, by El Diario/La Prensa on November 22, 2008. Its content remains current and I consider it most appropriate to print and include it in our professional conversations.*

"After almost 8 years under President George W. Bush's administration, we, Latinos, can assess the efficiency of his efforts in the public education arena. Six and a half years after the approval of the federal legislation promoted by Bush, No Child Left Behind (NCLB), it has become very clear that the law has its flaws.

The system used by NCLB to "make schools responsible for the school outcomes has focused the public's attention on children from minority groups, students from poor homes and communities, youngsters with disabilities, and ELL students. However, the effects of NCLB have been more harmful than beneficial. NCLB is based on arbitrary goals for academic achievement and, in the case of ELLs, assessment tools whose validity is questionable. As a result, the law can not really determine with accuracy the quality of the schools. The high stakes nature of its responsibility system has had perverse effects that contradict much of what we know about best practices for the most vulnerable populations, especially ELLs.

President Bush and his allies in "education reform," including many Democrats

like the late Senator Ted Kennedy, presented NCLB as a "civil rights" measure. However, the reality of NCLB has been exactly the opposite. NCLB has been described by the bureaucrats of the U.S. Department of Education as an opening to institutional accountability and to the determination of a broad range of skills (academic achievement on grade level) that students ought to acquire. The reality is that this is a punitive law.

Ratified in 2001, the law requires that all states (and the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico) create a system of assessments and other academic indicators that can measure how well students achieve the minimum standard of skills at each grade level. Schools that repeatedly fail to achieve these levels can be closed, re-structured or placed under the control of private corporations. Schools with a high percentage of poor students that receive federal funds and do not demonstrate "progress" during three consecutive years have to use 20% of their federal funds in providing tutoring, and paying the high costs of transportation for those students who chose to transfer to another school.

In New York City, few students chose the transfer option due to the lack of access to the schools with great success in ELA and math. To enter a specialized

high school (where the representation of Hispanic and African American students is limited) the students have to pass rigorous state exams and navigate through a complicated admission process. In fact, children from low-performing schools are left behind—trapped in over-populated schools, in poor neighborhoods with high concentrations of immigrants and ELLs. The pre-service preparation and experience of the teachers in these schools leave much to be desired, in comparison to teachers working in schools located in middle or upper class neighborhoods.

At the same time, low-performing schools have seen a proliferation of programs and curricular materials with an excessive focus on the most basic skills, such as phonetics. The Bush Administration spent one billion dollars of federal funds to implement Reading First programs, whose effectiveness in improving reading comprehension was not backed up by the scientific research. Private corporations, on the other hand, have benefited from these funds.

From the perspective of Latino students and their achievement in public education, including graduation and dropout rates, the Bush administration must receive at least an incomplete grade."

*As stated earlier, not much has changed since the time*

of publication of the article. According to the latest reports, only 21.6 % of ELLs in New York City are enrolled in transitional bilingual education (TBE) programs and 3.6 % are enrolled in dual language programs (25.2% combined, down from 50% in 2000). More than 2/3 (69.2%) of ELL students are served in ESL classes. However, this larger ESL group includes recently-arrived ELLs enrolled in NYC's 10 international high schools, which provide support for native language development. Nearly 5% of ELLs are served in instructional programs for students with special needs. State reports also indicate that in New York City only 35.8% of students in the class of 2008 who entered high school as ELLs graduated after four years. Similarly, 21.7% ELLs dropped out from school in 2008. As we look to the future with renewed energies and optimism, we are hopeful that federal, state, and local funding will assist us in addressing critical issues, such as the low graduation rates and high dropout rates among ELLs by identifying the best instructional and assessment practices for ELLs, enhancing teacher preparation and professional development focusing on ELL needs, using disaggregated performance data reports to inform instructional practices and policies, and by sustaining research projects that focus on ELL achievement.

Luis O. Reyes, Ph.D., is Coor-

dinator for the Coalition for Educational Excellence for ELLs.



#### CONTACT NYS ELECTED OFFICIALS

##### News from NYSUT: Attention NYSABE Members!

Don't miss the New York Teacher 3-page spread on ELLs on the **NYSUT** web page where you will read about the October 9th ELL conference held at Farmingdale State College that NYSABE cosponsored. You will also find additional resources designed to assist educators working with ELLs. I think you'll be real excited when you go to the link!

Go to: [www.nysut.org/newyorkteacher\\_13714.htm](http://www.nysut.org/newyorkteacher_13714.htm) and click on *The Changing Face of our Classrooms*. Stay tuned in the future for news

For Assembly members, go to [www.assembly.state.ny.us/mem](http://www.assembly.state.ny.us/mem)

For Senate members, go to: [www.nysenate.gov/senators](http://www.nysenate.gov/senators)

#### CONTACT NYS BOARD OF REGENTS

For the NYS Board of Regents go to: [www.regents.nysed.gov/members](http://www.regents.nysed.gov/members)

#### CONTACT NYSED OFFICE OF BILINGUAL EDUCATION AND FOREIGN LANGUAGE STUDIES

For information go to: [www.emsc.nysed.gov/biling/bilinged](http://www.emsc.nysed.gov/biling/bilinged)



#### UPCOMING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT EVENTS

To obtain information about BETAC's services and upcoming professional development activities go to:

[www.emsc.nysed.gov/biling/bilinged/betac.html](http://www.emsc.nysed.gov/biling/bilinged/betac.html)

For information on NYSABE's regional events visit our web page: [www.nysabe.org](http://www.nysabe.org)

**Region I (Long Island)  
Collaborating for the  
Success of ELLs:  
A Co-Sponsorship  
Between NYSUT and  
NYSABE Region I**

By Maria A. Meyer and Linda A. Scalice, *Long Island Region I Delegates.*

speech. Dr. Andrea Honigsfeld, Associate Dean, Division of Education Molloy College was the keynote speaker who presented "Portraits of Collaboration: What To Do and How To Make It Work?" These two powerful speakers set the stage for what was to come in the work sessions that

cere and open as they shared their feelings of coming to a new country. They spoke about the obstacles they faced by not being able to speak the language and at times being ridiculed for having an accent, having feelings of not fitting in, and the role they took on in the home as the person who now spoke English. They actually gave us (the educators) suggestions on how to best teach them and help them achieve their goals and meet their needs. It was a worthwhile experience which reinforced *why we do what we do!!*



**Region II (New York City)  
An Evening with Dr.  
Nancy Cloud: "Literacy  
Instruction for English  
Language Learners"**

By Lorraine Estrada and Dr. Lucia Buttaro, *NYC Region II Delegates*

On Monday, September 21, 2009, Dr. Nancy Cloud presented at the first meeting of the 2009-2010 NYSABE Regional Meetings series in New York City. This event was held in collaboration with the Bronx BETAC, directed by Eva Garcia, and the Manhattan/Staten Island BETAC, directed by Dr. Bernice Moro. Lorraine Estrada, New York City Regional Delegate, coordinated the event with the BETAC directors and welcomed the audience to this first event of the academic year. In addition, Nancy Villarreal de Adler, NYSABE's Executive Director,

*At the "Collaborating for the Success of ELLs" conference in Farmingdale, Region I Delegates and colleagues share ideas and practices for teaching ELLs effectively.*



On October 9, 2009, Long Island Region I co-sponsored NYSUT's one day conference, "Collaborating for the Success of ELLs," which took place in SUNY Farmingdale. More than 140 secondary level educators took part in this empowering conference, which provided the opportunity for content area and ESL teachers to come together to share ideas, strategies and expertise to maximize learning for all ELLs. The attendees were welcomed by Maria Neira, Vice President NYSUT, with a motivating

followed. During the morning and afternoon sessions participants heard from practicing educators on a number of topics that included engaging ELLs in content area classes; the difference between language acquisition and language disability; preparing ELLs for life after high school; and the theme itself, collaboration among all educators serving our students. The highlight of the day came when a panel of four ESL students had a discussion with the educators. They were very sin-

introduced NYSABE's mission statement and goals for the organization. Dr. Bernice Moro ignited the audience by introducing Dr. Nancy Cloud, highlighting her contributions to the bilingual/ESL community. Dr. Cloud's presentation focused on research-based best practices and how we, as educators, must be careful about how to interpret data and focus on what is not biased, such as data presented in certain longitudinal studies. We need to look deeper than what is presented to understand the population represented and how data is compiled. Some important recommendations offered by Dr. Cloud include:

- Respond to pressures to show that practices are research-based (Title III)
- Build confidence in teachers that what they are doing is known to make a difference
- Justify educational practices with board members, practitioners or parents
- Lead improved teaching based on practices known to be effective, especially in settings where teachers must collaborate with other specialists. Everyone needs to be on the same page.

Dr. Cloud also spoke about national expert panels and publications that can help educators focus on how to help our ELL population develop literacy in their second language. She reminded the audience that

language learning takes time, and that it is easier to learn something new when it stems from something familiar. Language learning is culture learning and it is based on those all-important prior learning experiences that ELLs bring to their new community. Teachers need to investigate and synthesize those experiences to create an

#### **Ways L1 and L2 are the same**

1. Print-based experiences and abilities such as knowledge of letter – sound relationships and concepts of print are important in early stages of learning to read.
2. Phonological awareness is important in learning to decode and spell words; phonological awareness is what allows students to map oral language to written symbols.
3. Complex language skills are important in comprehending



*New York City Delegates and members share an evening with Dr. Nancy Cloud in the NYSABE Regional Meeting held in New York City.*

entry point for their students into the learning community.

#### **Dr. Cloud's points include: Big Ideas about Schooling for ELLs**

1. Learning takes time
2. ELLs are resourceful learners
3. It's easier to learn something new when it stems from something familiar
4. Language learning is culture learning
5. Classroom-based assessments are essential

and writing text

4. Background and cultural knowledge are important, whether reading or writing individual words are connected to text.

#### **Order Reading Instruction in ESL as Follows:**

1. Comprehension
2. Vocabulary
3. Phonemic awareness
4. Decoding and encoding
5. Fluency

According to Dr. Cloud, building reading skills in the order suggested above allows for the natu-

ral acquisition of language through meaningful activities, which in turn support the development of literacy skills and concepts, both holistically and individually.

NYSABE is proud to announce that this event was so welcomed by the educational community in New York City that we have increased our City membership with 35 new members! This is a wonderful indica-



*Region V Delegates Carmen "Millie" Bermudez and Yazmin Torres with NYSABE President Margarita Reyes.*

tion of the enthusiasm and energy that is growing in our organization. We hope that everyone reading this article will try to get at least one colleague to join NYSABE, the only local professional organization representing bilingual educators, ELLs, and their families. The conference was also a great opportunity to welcome the students from Adelphi University's STEP Program, specializing in Spanish for High School. They have joined the NYSABE community, so we warmly welcome these new members and their profes-

sor, Dr. Lucia Buttarò, our newest New York City Regional Delegate!

Many thanks are extended to all our partners and supporters, including Stu Tuckfield from Heinle & Cengage, who displayed his company's bilingual and ESL materials for instructional support and professional development.

As the song goes, "New York, New York, it's a helluva town" and we certainly did open up the year in grand fashion! There's no stopping us now and we hope you continue to join us.



#### **Region V (Rochester)**

#### **Region V Celebrates Hispanic Heritage Month with Parents and Students**

By Carmen Bermúdez-Merner and Yazmin, Torres, *Rochester Region V Delegates*

Rochester City School District, Dr. Martin Luther King, school #9 celebrated their Hispanic Heritage Month and Bilingual Council meeting on Wednesday, October 21, 2009. NYSABE Region V joined the celebration by providing information for parents and teachers. This was a great opportunity for networking, collaboration, advocacy and awareness. The successful event hosted more than a hundred parents along with teachers and students. NY-

SABE Region V members also attended the RCSD Board of Education Hispanic Heritage Month Celebration on Thursday, October 22, 2009 where more than 40 Hispanic students were recognized for their academic achievements and community service.



#### **Delegate-at-Large SUNY Fredonia and NYSABE Collaborate on Culturally Responsive Teaching Event**

by Cynthia Jonsson, *Delegate-at-Large*

On Saturday, October 17th, from 8:30 a.m. -1:00 p.m. SUNY Fredonia hosted the workshop: "Culturally Responsive Teaching: Implications for Arab, Muslim, and Hispanic students." The workshop was collaboratively presented by NYSABE and SUNY Fredonia's two U.S. Department of Education professional development grants: Projects ELA (English Language Acquisition) and BRIDGE (Bringing Resources that Incorporate Development in General Education). The grants were awarded under the Office of English Language Acquisition (OELA). This well-attended workshop opened with welcoming remarks by Cynthia Jonsson, Director of Projects ELA and BRIDGE and NYSABE Delegate-at-Large, and Rose Colon-Cisneros, Secretary of NYSABE. NYSABE Second Vice-President Evelyn Arent was also in attendance and ELA-BRIDGE Coordinator Raisa Portman introduced our presenters.

Our presenters included Denise Góñez-Santos, from Erie 1 BOCES, Dr. Shawgi Tell from Nazareth College of Rochester, and Sira Shairi from Lackawanna High School. Denise Góñez-Santos is the Director of School Support Services, which oversees West Region BETAC. She brings more than 25 years of experience in education, including teaching in ESL/Bilingual classrooms and providing technical assistance and support to ESL/Bilingual and Special Education teachers. Dr. Shawgi Tell is an Associate Professor of Education at Nazareth and has been teaching inservice and pre-service teachers for the last 10 years. Sira Shairi, a former High School Science teacher, is a certified ESL teacher at Lackawanna High School with extensive experience teaching students from different backgrounds, especially Muslim and Arab youth. Dr. Tell and Ms. Shairi design coordinate and deliver various professional development workshops for those who wish to gain more factual knowledge and greater appreciation for Arab and Muslim culture and issues.

While the ELL student population in our region of Western New York is 68% Hispanic, there is also a smaller, yet growing, population of Arab and Muslim students. There are many myths and stereotypes that exist regarding these populations, even in teachers' minds. We know what we see in the news, on televi-

sion shows, and from organizations such as the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) and Homeland Security. Most of what is portrayed is unflattering, at best, and often provides much misinformation to the public. Our workshop provided practical information to dispel many of these myths and stereotypes and addressed the educational needs of youth from these cultural groups.

Attendees participated in activities in which they identified famous Hispanic Americans and Hispanic achievements and contributions, and learned the history behind the ethnic classification "Hispanic". They also gained understanding of, among other things, the disparity between the American idea of parental involvement and how many Hispanic families, especially immigrant families, view their role in the education of their children. In addition, participants examined the prevailing myths and characterizations about Arabs and Muslims and learned about the principles of the Islamic Religion and Arab/Muslim customs. All of the presenters gave real life examples from their own lives as well as from the lives of students in the classroom, with insight into how culture influences both student and

family interactions with the school.

This event closed with a thoughtful question and answer session. The presenters remained on-site to continue answering questions after the event ended. The evaluations submitted by participants indicated overall high marks for the content and usefulness of



*Lackawanna High School's Ms. Sira Shairi, Nazareth College of Rochester's Dr. Shawgi Tell, and Erie 1 BOCES's Ms. Denise Góñez-Santos, presented at the "Culturally Responsive Teaching: Implications for Arab, Muslim, and Hispanic Students" conference.*

the workshop. Participants overwhelmingly noted that they had learned new information that they would incorporate in their classrooms to strive to become more culturally responsive and aware of their students needs.

NYSABE wishes to thank all of our contributors and supporters for lending their expertise to this publication.

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