



# NEW YORK STATE ASSOCIATION FOR BILINGUAL EDUCATION

P.O. Box 70  
Buffalo, New York 14207

[www.nysabe.org](http://www.nysabe.org)

**Executive Director**

Nancy Villarreal de Adler

## POSITION STATEMENT ON MAYORAL CONTROL

New York City

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**2008-2009**

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On behalf of the New York State Association for Bilingual Education's membership, which includes educators, parents, advocates, community-based organizations, private and public institutions involved in the education of English language learners (ELLs), I thank you for this opportunity to address issues related to Mayoral Control and ELL students in the New York City public school system.

The recent report from the New York City Department of Education, *Diverse Learners on the Road to Success*, presents data that evidence the progress of ELLs, mostly at the elementary level, in meeting ELA and Math standards. In addition, the report underscores the crucial role of quality Bilingual/ESL instruction by highlighting the achievement of former ELLs. The levels of performance on State ELA and math tests as well as graduating rates of former ELLs clearly surpass those of native speakers of English.

Despite this encouraging information, we must agree that much more work needs to be done to address New York City's systemic realities including:

- The low proportion of ELLs graduating with a high school diploma (30.8% in 2007) and the high ELL dropout rate (29.4 %)
- The alarming low achievement of middle school and high school students. This group includes Students with Interrupted Formal Education (SIFE) and Long Term ELLs. Only 5% of ELLs met state requirement in ELA
- The decrease in the number of students participating in bilingual education programs
- 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
- The high percentage of students identified as ELLs not participating in appropriate ELL programs
- The lack of fidelity and consistency in bilingual and ESL program designs which results in students transferring back and forth between the two settings throughout their years of schooling
- The unclear and inconsistent implementation of Response to Intervention (RTI) for ELLs
- The unclear and limited achievement data on ELLs with disabilities in the *Diverse Learners on the Road to Success* report
- The lack of strategies to ensure equitable access to ELL programs in charter schools and small high schools
- The lack of authentic participation of parents of ELLs in the educational decision-making process in the New York City schools and the NYC Department of Education.

Based on these identified issues, NYSABE urges Mayor Bloomberg and Chancellor Klein to consider the following recommendations:

- Make fiscal accountability a priority in the New York City school system to ensure that **all** ELL generated funds, federal and state, are used to support and enhance educational initiatives for ELLs. Fiscal transparency must be ensured through the availability of fiscal reports for each school as well as the Department of Education.
- Ensure that State and federal funds target the achievement gap of ELLs by supporting and enhancing initiatives including:
  - Research and implementation of best pedagogical practices and support services for middle, high school, SIFE and Long Term ELLs.
  - Establishment of pre-school programs in geographical areas with high concentrations of immigrants. A major goal of these pre-school programs must be to promote bilingualism and multicultural education while developing the youngsters' readiness skills.
  - Long-term, focused professional development, and additional support for administrators and practitioners on the implementation of quality research-based ELL educational programs, particularly those focusing on middle school, high school, SIFE and Long Term ELLs.
  - Development of a strategic system-wide plan to transform the current parent engagement practices into an integrated, collaborative relationship where parents, regardless of their language skills, educational background or immigration status, can participate in the decision-making process of our schools.
- Emphasize programmatic accountability to:
  - Ensure that all students identified as ELLs are able to receive quality instructional and support services in English and the native language.
  - Ensure that current practices in Bilingual Education programs are aligned with scientific research that focuses on academic success as a result of the use of native language in content area teaching and the development of biliteracy skills.
  - Ensure ELLs' access to charter schools and small high schools where they can be provided challenging, research-based instruction that targets their language and academic needs.
  - Ensure that ELLs with disabilities are assessed appropriately and receive the best instructional and support services to which they are entitled.
  - Ensure that future reports on the achievement of ELLs include disaggregated data demonstrating the academic and linguistic progress of ELLs in special education.
  - Ensure that administrators and practitioners apply the research-based core features of RTI to the development of the schools' programs for ELLs. RTI for ELLs must take into consideration the linguistic and cultural strengths of the students and must be aligned to the language of instruction in the core program.
  - Ensure professional development and supports for all practitioners serving ELL students with disabilities.

In closing, NYSABE reiterates its mission to advocate for the educational rights of all English language learners.

Anne Henry Montante, President