

# NEW YORK STATE ASSOCIATION FOR BILINGUAL EDUCATION



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April 9, 2010

Dr. Leo Gómez  
Subcommittee on NABE National Action Plan

Dear Dr. Gómez,

Thank you for providing NABE's affiliates and members with the opportunity to review and offer input to the NABE National Plan for the Education of ELLs and the National ELL Plan submitted to the US Department of Education. It is really uplifting to note that at the core of both Plans is the goal of ensuring equitable educational opportunities for Bilingual Learners (BLs).

As we review both plans, we acknowledge the depth of the recommendations and the possibility of focus on two sub-populations that require our urgent attention: **Bilingual Learners with Disabilities and Students with Interrupted Formal Education**.

**Bilingual Learners with Disabilities:** Both plans should address the needs to:

- conduct research on the multiple characteristics, best pedagogical practices and assessment in accordance to federal laws (IDEA),
- enforce federal laws that respect and protect BL with Disabilities' rights to appropriate instruction and assessments, with respect to their linguistic, cognitive, socio emotional needs, as specified in the student's IEP,
- provide pre-service and in-service preparation and support for teachers, paraprofessionals, members of the multidisciplinary bilingual assessment team, and support personnel,
- develop alternate assessment programs for BL with severe disabilities,
- allocate funding to develop and enhance RTI programs,
- collaborate with the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) to advocate for the best instructional, clinical, and therapeutic services for BLs,
- collaborate with the US Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) to ensure appropriate regulations for the instruction, assessment, and support services for BLs with Disabilities,
- collaborate with the departments/office of Bilingual Special Education at universities across the nation,
- investigate and support the academic, linguistic, cultural, and socio emotional needs of deaf/hard of hearing students from linguistically and culturally diverse backgrounds. Recognize their use of American Sign Language to communicate and learn.

## **33rd Annual Conference**

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

**March 11 – March 14, 2010**

**Huntington Hilton Hotel, Melville, New York**

**Students with Interrupted Education (SIFE):** The plans state that *“the permanent solution to high schools in academic trouble with this population is largely rooted in their elementary schools.”* This statement seems to assume that all ELLs in High Schools have attended elementary school in the USA and ignore the influx of SIFE students. These students, many of them, traveling back and forth their homeland or entering school at the middle school or HS levels, lack the linguistic and content area knowledge and skills to succeed academically. Consequently, when discussing ELL low graduation rates, achievement gaps, drop out rates, and extended time spent in school, we must address the reality of SIFEs.

NABE’s plans needs to encourage:

- research on best school practices, including support programs, for SIFEs
- allocation of funds to develop research-based alternative programs to accelerate the achievement of SIFEs
- collaboration between LEAs with universities and professional organizations to focus on the urgent needs of SIFEs
- allocation of funding to ensure valid assessment tools in the students’ languages
- review of policies and regulations to ensure equitable programs for SIFEs

In summary, we wish to reiterate our commitment to the implementation of equitable educational programs for all Bilingual Learners.

Respectfully submitted,

Margarita Reyes  
President  
NYSABE

Nancy Villarreal de Adler  
Executive Director  
NYSABE

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