



REAL SOLUTIONS FOR NEW YORK CITY:
SCHOOL, FAMILY, AND
COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

Building Partnerships and Ensuring Access to a Quality Education

A Blueprint for Justice & Opportunity for Immigrant New Yorkers

More than one in seven students in New York City schools is in the process of learning English and is classified as an English language learner (ELL). Numbering more than 154,000 studentsⁱ – nearly three times the size of the entire San Francisco Unified School District – ELLs constitute a sizable portion of the student population in New York City. At least one out of four students in New York City’s schools was not proficient in English upon entry into the school system.ⁱⁱ

ELLs represent 168 home languages and come from a variety of backgrounds with a diversity of skills and needs.ⁱⁱⁱ More than half of ELLs have specialized learning and social needs because they have interrupted formal education (SIFEs), disabilities, are long-term ELLs, or are newcomers who have entered in the last two years.^{iv}

English language learners face huge obstacles to academic success. About two-thirds of children who have not yet learned English are living in poverty, compared with one-third of English-proficient children. Their parents are more likely to have had only limited schooling.^v ELLs who were not born here face the daunting challenge of learning English and adjusting to a new country, all while catching up to meet academic requirements.

With the right support, however, ELLs overcome these obstacles and boost the system as a whole. English language learners who become proficient in English perform even better than their peers.^{vi} In addition, they contribute valuable language skills and cultural competencies to our future workforce, an enormous asset in a global economy.

ELL Students Continue to Lag Far Behind

Mayor Bloomberg, the City Council, and the Department of Education must continue efforts to reverse the drop out crisis facing ELLs and SIFEs and move aggressively to boost their preparedness for college and careers.

Despite progress with elementary school ELLs and improvements in ELL graduation rates, too many immigrant and ELL students continue to fall through the cracks. Only 41.5% of ELLs graduate in four years (June graduation rate), putting them far behind English-proficient students who graduate at a rate of 61%.^{vii} Only 28% of ELL’s earn a Regents or Advanced Regents Diploma.^{viii} Only 12.4% of ELLs were proficient on 2010 3-8 English Language Arts exams, compared with 43.9% citywide.^{ix} On the 3-8 math exams, only 34.5% of ELLs

THE FACTS ON NYC’S IMMIGRANT STUDENTS

- ✓ There are more than 154,000 English Language Learners (ELLs) in NYC’s schools.
- ✓ NYC’s ELLs represent 168 home languages.
- ✓ More than half of ELLs have specialized learning and social needs.

were proficient, compared with 57.3% citywide.^x Most shockingly, only 7% of ELLs graduating on time are ready for college and careers.^{xi} We urge Mayor Bloomberg and the DOE to better address the needs of middle school and high school students learning English, particularly those at the highest risk of dropping out.

School, Family, Community Partnerships are Needed to Stem the Drop Out Crisis

Given the proven link between parent engagement and student outcomes, the DOE needs to eliminate barriers to family engagement such as language and information barriers, and remove the obstacles that families face at schools' front doors, as a result of confusion and inconsistent policies regarding the type of identification cards accepted by school security guards. We also urge the DOE to support leadership development for parents and youth, foster meaningful school-community partnerships, and expand professional development for school and district staff in culturally-sensitive family engagement practices.

Last year the New York City Council provided support for a pilot program creating limited programming for Family Resource Centers (FRCs) to increase parent engagement by bringing Consulate identification services directly to schools. Consulate IDs are picture IDs with a New York City address that facilitate access to schools, higher education, financial institutions and public safety. In one year, close to 7,000 immigrant community members attended 11 events at 7 schools; 5,236 IDs were issued; and families came from over 450 schools citywide and the tri-state area. While some progress has been made in strengthening school-family-community partnerships, more must be done: the role of FRCs should be expanded to develop parent and student leadership; provide "one stop" access to all school-related information for families; and foster partnerships with other local nonprofits and city agencies. Such partnerships would provide parent education (native language college readiness and financial literacy, ESL, GED etc.) and other services and resources for immigrant families, as well as promote their civic participation in the school and wider community.

Detailed Recommendations:

Eliminate barriers that prevent immigrant parents from participating in their children's education and ensure college/career readiness for all English Language Learners and immigrant students in partnership with community based organizations:

- **Promote parent engagement by funding Family Resource Centers (FRCs) at \$500,000.** The City should expand upon the success of the FRC pilot project by funding FRCs that 1) bring consulate documentation services to schools to facilitate access to schools and financial institutions and resources, and promote broader immigrant civic engagement; and 2) promote college readiness and financial literacy for immigrant students and parents through workshops on **Family Financial Planning for College and College Readiness for your Child**.
- **Fully implement the changes to the School Safety Plan Shell** that requires 1) School Safety Agents to accept Consulate IDs and Foreign Passports at schools' front doors and 2) school administrators to escort parents without IDs to the school office. The NYPD School Safety Division and the DOE must also provide training to School Safety Agents and school staff on this parent access policy change.
- **Translate into nine languages the Immigrant Parent Guide to College Readiness** developed in collaboration between the DOE and immigrant CBOs. This guide increases immigrant families' understanding of "college ready" requirements, the college admissions process and FAFSA/financial aid completion.
- **Eliminate the languages barriers that prevent family engagement in schools by ensuring the full implementation of Chancellor's Regulation A-663.**

Strengthen Funding and Instruction for Students Learning English:

- Invest in students who are among the most at-risk for dropping out. Specifically, we urge Chancellor Walcott to: build on the DOE's history of leadership in identifying ELLs by creating a formal assessment process for identifying SIFEs; expand options for SIFE students by creating a funding mechanism for SIFE services; and provide opportunities for training and support for schools in implementing best practices.
- Address the bilingual and ESL teacher shortage, encourage experienced teachers to work in low-performing schools, and provide more opportunities for teachers to get the specialized skills necessary to teach ELL students.

Improve ELL Access to Quality Programs:

While there is still a long way to go, ELL graduation rates have been improving as a result of successful DOE initiatives. The DOE should build on this success by improving ELLs' access to a range of quality programs.

- Increase ELL enrollment in pre-kindergarten, multiple-pathways, talented-and-gifted programs and Career and Technical Education programs and hold charter schools accountable for increasing the number of ELL students served.
- The DOE should continue to expand the capacity of all small schools to provide quality ELL instruction and support services.

For more information on this issue, please contact **Melanie Reyes, Manager of Education Advocacy**, at 212-627-2227 Ext. 238 or at mreyes@thenyc.org.

ⁱ New York City Department of Education. "Demographics of ELLs 2010-2011," Spring 2011. Page 4.

<http://schools.nyc.gov/NR/ronlyres/3A4AEC4C-14BD-49C4-B2E6-8EDF5D873BE4/108227/DemoRpt0722.pdf>. Downloaded April 4, 2012.

ⁱⁱ *Ibid*, New York City Department of Education, page 4.

ⁱⁱⁱ *Ibid*, New York City Department of Education, page 4.

^{iv} *Ibid*, New York City Department of Education, page 12.

^v New York Immigration Coalition. "Getting it Right: Ensuring a Quality Education for English Language Learners in New York," November 2008.

^{vi} New York City Department of Education, News and Speeches. "State Education Commissioner King and City Schools Chancellor Walcott Announce Comprehensive Plan to Support English Language Learners," October 12, 2011.

<http://schools.nyc.gov/Offices/mediarelations/NewsandSpeeches/2011-2012/stateellrelease101211.htm>. Downloaded April 4, 2012.

^{vii} *Ibid*, New York City Department of Education.

^{viii} New York City Department of Education, "New York City Graduation Rates Class of 2010 (2006 Cohort)," June 14, 2011. Page 8. http://schools.nyc.gov/NR/ronlyres/30D1B49C-D908-4FAA-BC3D-1F7CA246549E/0/GRADRATE2010_HIGHLIGHTS_WEB.pdf. Downloaded April 4, 2012. Note: this figure includes August graduation rates.

^{ix} New York City Department of Education, News and Speeches. "State Education Commissioner King and City Schools Chancellor Walcott Announce Comprehensive Plan to Support English Language Learners," October 12, 2011.

<http://schools.nyc.gov/Offices/mediarelations/NewsandSpeeches/2011-2012/stateellrelease101211.htm>. Downloaded April 4, 2012.

^x *Ibid*, New York City Department of Education.

^{xi} *Ibid*, New York City Department of Education.