

## **SIGs and Regions Spotlight: Western New York Region**

*By Kimberly R. Wolf; NYS TESOL member, Buffalo Region Focus Group member, [kwolf@buffaloschools.org](mailto:kwolf@buffaloschools.org) and Denise Gonez-Santos, NYS TESOL Buffalo Region Chair; <dgone-santos@elb.org>*

The Western New York Region has had a very exciting and busy year working to support the highly diverse English Language Learner population in the region. The region, which includes Buffalo, Niagara Falls, Dunkirk, Lackawanna, Fredonia and numerous suburbs, is home to over 7,468 English Language Learners. The largest school district, Buffalo, has 4772 ELLs with a sizable refugee population from Burma, Thailand, Somalia, Nepal, Bhutan, and Iraq. We have 83 languages represented in the region. In addition to educators in the public and charter schools in the region, the Western New York Region is home to 7 colleges and universities with TESOL programs. There is much going on in the far west!

During the 2014-2015 academic year, the Buffalo region held four regional Focus group/NYS TESOL meetings. The three on October 23, 2014, December 15, 2014, and February 9, 2015 gathered teachers from the many districts in the area to share current news, discussions of best practices, and to learn of the changes to CR-Part 154. The fourth meeting was the Western New York Regional ODMAC which featured presenters Dr. Andrea Honigsfeld and Dr. Maria G. Dove and 278 attendees from all over the region held on May 2, 2015. Drs. Honigsfeld and Dove spoke about collaboration and co-teaching practices for English Language Learners. This conference was much anticipated and was enhanced by the collaboration between RBE-RN West, NYS TESOL, and NYSABE. Numerous regional educators collaborated on this very successful event.

The upcoming 2015-2016 year aims to prove just as collaborative, informative, and successful. We will have three Focus Group/NYS TESOL events and an ODMAC in the spring. We hope to continue supporting, educating, and encouraging the multitude of teachers, administrators, and advocates of ELLs in our region. We also look forward to expanding the activities of our region through a strong partnership with newly appointed Buffalo Region assistant chairperson Daniel Heckmyer who is working hard from his location at SUNY Fredonia to strengthen the reach of NYS TESOL in the school districts located south of Buffalo in the Western New York region.