

Dear NYS TESOL members,

Welcome to the Spring issue of *Idiom*. As spring arrives, we are pleased to note our sister organizations NYSABE and International TESOL holding their similarly themed conferences this year, both in March. NYSABE's theme is "Building Bridges: Bilingual Education across Borders"; International TESOL's theme is "Crossing Borders, Building Bridges." Both themes remind me of our commitment to promote excellence and equity on behalf of our state's bilingual learners. Coincidentally, and complementing those conferences, this issue's theme, "Successful Teaching Strategies for the ESL Classroom," is full of ways we can build these bridges for our ELLs and all learners.

This past week, one of my teachers in my graduate Assessment TESOL course reminded me how important it is to build bridges within our schools so that all teachers understand that our ELLs are capable and can learn. She explained how she was told to test two English language learners—and then the teacher told her not to expect much from the children, as they were ELLs! (The teacher had predetermined the scores for these children already.) Our ELLs come with many gifts, not deficits, and we need to continually build these bridges so that all teachers support and maintain high expectations for our bilingual learners.

The New York State Education Department (NYSED) has mandated regulatory changes in CR Part 154 that we need to be doing to support students with disabilities, including ELLs. Key changes are:

- Determining, in students with a disability, whether the disability is the determinant factor affecting the student's ability to demonstrate proficiency in English
- Meeting by school staff with parents or persons in parental relation at least once a year
- Offering, through two settings, ESL instruction:
 1. Integrated ESL (ESL methodologies in content area instruction co-taught or taught by a dually certified teacher)
 2. Stand-alone (ESL instruction with an ESL teacher to develop the English language needed for academic success)

Together, our sister organizations continue to work in these areas as we commit together to implement such CR Part 154 changes as those listed above, including writing curricula for EngageNY, and the Coalition for Multiple Pathways for College and Career Readiness. We stand together as we implement the mission of the New York State Education Department's Office of Bilingual Education and Foreign Language Studies (OBE-FLS) that all New York State students, including English language learners, attain the highest level of academic success and language proficiency as outlined in the NYSED's Blueprint for English Language Learners (ELLS) Success.

I am proud—but not surprised—to see that, whether in the classroom at the elementary or secondary level or at the university level, we are building the bridges to success for our bilingual learners. Here's to *your* successful teaching and to trying new strategies with your students each day.

Sincerely,

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