

Dear NYS TESOL Members,

It is hard to believe that summer has arrived. This issue of *Idiom* is full of articles from our Spring conferences; there may also be some articles from our events that have been held throughout the year. Recently, I have been to some of our Special Interest Group (SIG) events. At one of them, held at New York University here in New York City and facilitated by our executive board member and regions assistant coordinator Ravneet Parmar, I learned about the positions and responsibilities of many of adult education teachers in New York City, including some who came from as far as Westchester and even Connecticut! Please take advantage of our Regions and Special Interest Group events that are and will be held all over the state. We hope to have several taking place during the summer months. These events are held at no or little cost—just more of the benefits you get as a member of NYS TESOL!

No doubt many of you are relieved that the state ELA, Math, and Regents testing is over by now. The NYSESLAT testing has also changed this year. Most notable of the changes is the new proficiency levels that will be determined by the test for our students: Entering, Emerging, Transitioning, Expanding, and finally Commanding, which means the person is no longer an English language learner (ELL)—or, using the new terminology, a new language learner (NLL). English as a second language (ESL) teachers will now be called new language (NL) teachers.

Other changes in the Spring 2015 NYSESLAT measure the linguistic demands of grade-level Common Core instruction delivered to ELLs. These changes, or “shifts,” in the assessment can be categorized as:

1. Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) and New Language Arts Progressions
2. Performance levels
3. Integrated approach to modalities/global themes
4. Complexity: Grade-level text for all levels, with content area foci
5. Instructionally relevant academic language

Please see the NYSESLAT website at <http://www.p12.nysed.gov/assessment/nyseslat> for all of the changes.

Now that the NYSESLAT test has been given, there have been many comments by teachers about it. For example:

- My students felt like they were experiencing three days of “the same test,” and it both exhausted and aggravated them. While I understand the benefits of embedding listening/reading/writing in the same test, it created a much longer test for our students.
- My first graders had to write two paragraphs. Even non-EL first graders have a hard time writing two paragraphs at one time, and this was in a testing situation.
- I thought the writing rubric was very poor. Students could earn high grades with the rubric even if they were not addressing the task or if they misunderstood the reading.

We at NYS TESOL have asked you to send us your critiques of the NYSESLAT test and administration on our listserv, as we are writing a position paper; it is also just fine to give us your positive comments. We look forward to hearing from you.

To all NYS TESOL members, please enjoy the summer and look for opportunities to join us at events. Make this a learning summer as well as a restful one. We look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Robin Finnan-Jones

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