



Joel I. Klein
Chancellor

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION SPONSORS SIXTH ANNUAL ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS CONFERENCE

An Estimated 1,500 Parents of English Language Learners Participate in Workshops and Panels Facilitating Enhanced Engagement in Schools

The New York City Department of Education and the nonprofit organization Learning Leaders today sponsored the sixth annual citywide conference for parents of current and former English Language Learners (ELLs). More than 1,500 immigrant parents speaking 12 languages registered for the event, which provides parents with resources and information to become effective advocates for their children in public schools. The ELL conference, which was held at Columbia University's Alfred Lerner Hall, included workshops on strategies to help ELL students improve their vocabulary and reading skills, what children learn at each school level, and programs available for students who are learning English. Participants received the Department of Education's new Great Expectations learning guides, which describe what children should know by the end of each school year, as well as information about resources and options available to adults interested in pursuing a college education. Translated documents and simultaneous interpretation were available in Spanish, French, Russian, Chinese (Mandarin and Cantonese), Bengali, Arabic, Haitian Creole, Albanian, Polish, Korean, Punjabi, and Urdu.

"This conference reflects the extraordinarily vibrant diversity that enriches our classrooms and schools as well as our commitment to the success of every child," Chancellor Klein said. "Whatever their native language, children in our schools have to be given an opportunity to excel. Because family support is so important, we provide immigrant families with easily accessible translation and interpretation services, hold forums about educational and school issues in native languages, and offer opportunities throughout the school year to learn more about the school system."

"We consider our partnership with the Department of Education as the key to providing access and information to our parent volunteers—more than 23 percent of whom are recent immigrants—so they and their children can be successful in school and beyond," Learning Leaders President Mindy Duitz said.

In 2007-08, nearly 42 percent of New York City public school students reported speaking a language at home other than English, even though only 14 percent of New York City students were designated English Language Learners.

Learning Leaders, formerly the New York City School Volunteer Program, is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization that helps New York City public school students succeed in school by

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training volunteers to provide tutoring and other school-based support, and by equipping parents (including non-volunteers) to foster their own children's educational development. More than 14,000 volunteers help over a quarter of a million young people in 960 of the city's 1,400 public schools, including 90 percent of its public elementary schools.

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