

450 New Bedford teachers to participate in English Language Learners program

As many as 450 New Bedford Public Schools teachers will participate in on-line training classes in the coming school year to improve instruction of English Language Learners (ELL).

Because of high demand among local educators during a registration day last month, the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) has added 14 Sheltered English Immersion classes (SEI) for New Bedford teachers. The sessions are designed to help teachers become proficient in strategies for teaching students whose first language is not English. All Massachusetts public school teachers are now required to complete the training by July 1, 2016.

Dr. Pia Durkin, Superintendent, and Sonia Walmsley, ELL Implementation Manager, with school principals, had strongly encouraged all staff to participate in the on-line registration opportunity on June 23. They learned on that day that all slots were filled by 12 noon. As a result, DESE officials created 150 additional slots, increasing New Bedford's allocation to 450.

"We are thrilled and proud that New Bedford's teachers are taking so seriously the work of increasing their skills and expertise for our ELL students," said Dr. Durkin. "This demonstrates the urgency that our teachers hold to serve a previously under-identified population and to do so with new tools and ideas they are eager to learn about."

Dr. Durkin expressed thanks to DESE for supporting the district with these additional resources.

Ms. Walmsley added, "We are fortunate to have excellent instructors who will be leading the courses and are eager to share their skills with their colleagues."

Ms. Walmsley noted that several New Bedford teachers have applied to teach the courses as well.

Approximately 1,029 students in the New Bedford Public Schools, or about 8% of the total enrolled, are identified as English Language Learners.