

# New enrichment academy aims to prepare local English Language Learners for college and career success



*Grant from the Massachusetts Executive Office of Education funded program for middle and high school ELL students during out-of-school time.*

New Bedford Public Schools has launched a new enrichment academy designed to help English Language Learners establish and achieve college and career goals. The ELL Alternative and Accelerated Language Development Program began this spring through a \$135,000 Gateway Cities grant from the Massachusetts Executive Office of Education.

Approximately 30 middle and high school students from across the district are participating in the program, which was held on 10 Saturdays at New Bedford High School. Students also participated in the program for three days during April vacation, and the program will continue this summer.

The program is operated by staff from the New Bedford Public Schools, other districts, the Immigrants' Assistance Center, and Northstar Learning Center. Educators support students – some of whom are new to the United States – in learning English, with a focus on developing academic vocabulary. The program also emphasizes college and career readiness, including parent and student visits to college campuses to learn about college admissions, financial aid, and more.

ELL students in grades 7-12 at any New Bedford Public School may apply for the summer program, which will be held at the Roosevelt Middle School, Monday through Thursday, 9 a.m. to 12 noon, from July 7-31. To apply, please call Sonia Walmsley at (508) 997-4511 ext. 3315 or 3333.

The program emphasizes family engagement, including ongoing communication with parents about students' progress. The summer program will culminate with an intercultural arts performance for families, in which students will demonstrate their academic learning and celebrate their heritage through music, dance, and theater.

"This is exactly the sort of innovation we need to ensure the success of all students," said Dr. Pia Durkin, Superintendent of the New Bedford Public Schools. "We are very proud of this new initiative to provide English Language Learners with additional support and encouragement to succeed after high school."

Sonia Walmsley, Implementation Manager for Quality Services for ELLs, said, "Our hope is that this program is only the beginning of a successful and supportive tool to improve the academic achievement of ELLs in the New Bedford Public Schools."

Ms. Walmsley stated that the district plans to apply for additional State funding to continue the program in the fall.

