

Learning the Language

Mary Ann Zehr is an assistant editor at Education Week. She has written about the schooling of English-language learners for more than nine years and understands through her own experience of studying Spanish that it takes a long time to learn another language well. Her blog will tackle difficult policy questions, explore learning innovations, and share stories about different cultural groups on her beat.

Network of Schools for New Immigrants Gets 'Integration' Award

The New York City-based [Internationals Network for Public Schools](#) is one of four organizations that will receive an "immigrant integration" award today from the [Migration Policy Institute](#). The institute has established the new [E Pluribus Unum](#) prizes, a \$50,000 award for each organization selected, to highlight organizations that are doing a good job in helping immigrants adjust to U.S. society.

Interestingly, the Internationals Network for Public Schools supports a group of high schools that enroll only immigrant newcomers, which are sometimes criticized for separating immigrant English-language learners out from native speakers of English. But when I asked a principal of one of these schools, Brooklyn International High School, [during a visit in 2007](#) how she would respond to such criticism, she said the good results of the schools, better graduation rates for ELLs than in New York City's schools overall, speak to their success. The schools do provide students with internships in local businesses and organizations that give them exposure to the wider society.

In addition, I recall interviewing a couple of students at Brooklyn International who said the schools they had attended previously in New York City that had a mix of native speakers of English and ELLs were downright dangerous. They said they were more able to focus on learning in Brooklyn International High School, which was small and enrolled only immigrant students.

Another education group, [ADVANCE-El Paso](#), which provides education for preschoolers and their immigrant parents, is also a recipient of one of the immigrant integration awards.