

# BRONX BORO NEWS

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Mothers in the Literacy Partners' English language program, held at E. 168th St. in Concourse, attend free classes four times a week throughout the school year. Many of the mothers in the program, which partners with Head Start, attend classes while their children take part in Head Start. New classes begin Sept. 15, and run from 8:30 a.m. to 12:15 p.m., Monday through Thursday.

## The language of life

### Literacy group helps immigrants learn everyday English

BY TANYANIKA SAMUELS

AS THEIR children settle in for a new school year, it's back-to-school time for some Bronx moms, too.

At Literacy Partners on E. 168th St. in Concourse, about a dozen moms, originally from all over the world, come together four times a week for free English classes.

"Everyone comes ready to learn," said Laura Dotterer, program coordinator and instructor. "They're highly enthusiastic and very motivated. It's a very positive, energy-filled environment."

This year, classes start on Sept. 15, and will run from 8:30 a.m. to 12:15 p.m. Monday through Thursday. The program follows the academic year into June, and there's even a summer session.

Typically, students take classes

for three years. On average, about 15 students pack the classrooms here. The program partners with Head Start. Many of the moms take class while their children participate in the Head Start program.

Classes generally revolve around themes, such as transportation, health and nutrition, everyday signs and symbols, dealing with doctors or grocery shopping.

"We try to do lessons that relate to their everyday lives, so they can work on their skills," Dotterer said.

Instructors try to emphasize reading, speaking and listening.

Estela Meza, 47, of Concourse, has been taking classes since October.

Meza is originally from Mexico, and said she knew very little English.

"My experience has been good," she said. "I have an opportunity to begin to talk in English."

The classes, she said, have helped with everyday life.

"Now I can speak with my doctors and my children's teachers," she said. "Or if somebody asks me something, I can try to help."

Fatoumata Maiga, 32, emigrated from Mali, West Africa, two years ago. Back then, she could only say "good morning," "good-bye" and "what's your name."

She has been taking classes since March 2007, and working hard on her reading, writing and speaking.

"I speak a little better than before," said Maiga, who now lives in Bathgate.

She has two young daughters, so it is important for her to be able to communicate with a pediatrician.

"When I go to the hospital, I can speak to the doctor and explain if my children have something," she said. "And when I go to the supermarket, when I take something, I can look at the date and make sure it is fresh."

Like Meza and Maiga, most of the students come from Latin America and Africa, which makes for quite the multicultural setting, Dotterer said.

"We all learn from each other," she said, "and it becomes a nice cultural exchange."

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For more information on Literacy Partners, call (212) 725-9200 or visit [www.literacypartners.org](http://www.literacypartners.org)