

THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE OF THE CITY OF BOSTON



**Official Minutes of the Remote  
English Language Learners Task Force (ELLTF) Meeting  
September 13, 2022**

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The English Language Learners Task Force (ELLTF) held a meeting on Tuesday, September 13, 2022 at 3 p.m. on Zoom. The meeting was in English with simultaneous Spanish interpretation. For more information about any of the items listed below, visit <https://www.bostonpublicschools.org/domain/247>, email [jdouglas4@bostonpublicschools.org](mailto:jdouglas4@bostonpublicschools.org), or call the Boston School Committee Office at (617) 635-9014.

#### **ATTENDANCE**

##### **ELLTF Members**

Present: Janet Anderson, Angelina Camacho, Paulo De Barros, Roxanne Harvey, Co-chair Suzanne Lee, Katie Li, John Mudd, Co-chair Rafaela Polanco Garcia, Maria Serpa, Fabián Torres-Ardila, Rosann Tung, Miren Uriarte

Not present: Geralde Gabeau, Marie St. Fleur

##### **BPS Staff**

Farah Assiraj (Deputy Chief Academic Officer and Interim Assistant Superintendent, Office of Multilingual and Multicultural Education), Jen Douglas (Coordinator, ELL Task Force), Faye Karp (Executive Director, Office of Multilingual and Multicultural Educations)

##### **Public**

Boston Little Saigon, Clari, Diana, Isabel, Estephany Banos, Edith Bazile, D. Caraballo, Marielena Cruz (Parent), Sumeiry Garcia, Ruth Georges (Prospective ELLTF Member), Yrmaris Matias (Parent), Sonia Medina (Parent), Maria Mejia (Parent), J. J. Muñoz, Monique Nguyen (Prospective ELLTF Member), Viviana Perez, Roger Rice (Multicultural Education, Training & Advocacy, Inc. (META)), Alan Jay Rom (META, Inc.), Sughey Scannell (Prospective ELLTF Member), Linh Vu (Prospective ELLTF Member), Peggy Wiesenber, iPhone, iPhone

#### **DOCUMENTS PRESENTED**

##### *Office of English Learners*

- Multilingual Learners portion of the August 15, 2022 draft Systemic Improvement Plan between DESE and BPS (English, Spanish)
- “OMME Strategic Plan,” Farah Assiraj, Deputy Chief Academic Officer & Interim Assistant Superintendent for the Office of Multilingual & Multicultural Education (English, Spanish)

## *ELL Task Force*

- Minutes of the ELL Task Force Meeting, May 26, 2022 (English, Spanish)

### **Chairs' Welcome**

Lee welcomed everyone and affirmed the importance of this task force's advocacy for ELs. She welcomed prospective new members. She explained that the ELL Task Force provides guidance to the School Committee and the superintendent, and monitors all issues pertaining to English learner (EL) student learning. She named a success for the ELLTF in advocating for the district to include access to native language as part of the recent agreement between the Boston Public Schools and the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE), and noted that implementation of that priority will continue to be a monitoring and advocacy priority for the ELL Task Force. She reminded meeting participants that ELs comprise nearly half of all BPS students.

Polanco spoke about the plan to finalize the strategic plan by October 12, and also about transportation challenges at the start of the school year.

Lee thanked Assiraj and Karp for holding down the strategic planning all summer. She informed ELLTF members that Assiraj will continue to lead the Office of Multilingual and Multicultural Education (OMME) for the 2022–2023 school year.

### **Approve meeting minutes from May 26, 2022**

Members present unanimously passed the minutes from the May 26, 2022 meeting, with one abstention from Harvey who was not at the May meeting.

### **Presentation of data on staffing and teacher shortages in EL programs for SY2022-23**

Assiraj spoke about her excitement for continuing in her leadership role with the Office of Multilingual and Multicultural Education (OMME) and stabilizing and restructuring the office. She reported a recent hire of eight coaches, seven of whom are proficient in one or more languages in addition to English, and emphasized the priority to represent students including more Arabic-speaking, African, and other Black immigrants, as well as an incoming influx of Portuguese speakers.

Assiraj shared "OMME Strategic Plan," a slide presentation.

Related to staffing vacancies, Lee inquired about what language programs the vacant SLIFE positions will serve. Assiraj asked Karp to find that information; Karp came back later in the conversation to share that the open positions are for SLIFE-Spanish and SLIFE-Haitian Kreyol.

## Discussion of the Multilingual Learners portion of the August 15, 2022 draft Systemic Improvement Plan between DESE and BPS

Assiraj continued to present “OMME Strategic Plan.”

Lee asked about teacher-student language match in SEI language-specific programs. Assiraj said that her dashboard does not track that information. Assiraj indicated that 140 educators went through an ESL MTEL prep training that Karp collaborated on this past summer with RCD (the Office of Recruitment, Cultivation & Diversity Programs). She reiterated the concern about filling ESL positions, saying they have asked for flexibility from the state for emergency license requirements, and that was extended for one more year.

Assiraj shared that OMME intends to hold stakeholder sessions at each school where potential programs will be considered, and will create videos in district native languages to explain potential program models to families.

There was discussion to clarify that classrooms which BPS formerly labeled “General Education” (“Gen Ed”) are now re-labeled “State SEI Program” classrooms if they include one or more students who are categorized as an English learner with an ELD level 1–5 (presentation slide 17). Assiraj said, “That means we no longer have this label of Gen Ed.” District SEI Multilingual classrooms and District SEI Language-specific classrooms will continue to be comprised of students with ELD levels 1–3 (presentation slides 18–19). She clarified that inclusion classrooms will have teachers who are SEI-trained, who have met state qualifications.

Lee requested clarification. “Are you telling me that any classroom. . . with one or more English learners — which in BPS is pretty much every classroom — [is a State SEI classroom]? And does that mean that every teacher will have [an SEI qualification]?” Assiraj affirmed Lee’s understanding, saying “We already have this. It just wasn’t described clearly.” She also said that neither the state nor the district programming requires an ESL license for State SEI classroom teachers, because that is a service that follows a student.

Tung requested clarification about whether enrollment in State SEI programs would be tracked and reported separately from District SEI programs, or if the ELLTF would see a big uptick in SEI placement when enrollment numbers are next reported. Assiraj stated that classrooms that were labeled Gen Ed will be labeled State SEI. She further stated that she agrees with the state’s classification, because in those classrooms ELs are not grouped by ELD level nor by language, and they are grouped with English speakers.

Mudd requested clarification about whether State SEI classes would have a different class size requirement than District SEI classes. Assiraj affirmed that the differences between those two types of classes are class size and student ELD level.

Assiraj reported that BPS is going through DESE’s Tiered Focused Monitoring Review, a state review of compliance with special education and civil rights regulations, performed every six years. The self-assessment was due August 31, and the review will continue through this school year. The feedback from DESE was that they have concerns about grouping of multilingual learners in SEI programming as segregation, where students lack access to language models and peers as well as Tier One schools. BPS will be required to do an equity audit. Lee said she hears the concern about segregation as a statement of disinterest in having single-language SEI.

Assiraj reported that BPS language-specific SLIFE programming is considered a TBE model by DESE and will be designated as such.

Lee emphasized the importance of communicating clearly the different program types to school families so they can understand what they are choosing.

Assiraj expressed a priority to increase TBE programs, especially for older students, to ensure they're accessing content in their native language as well as increasing their English language development. She said OMME will contract with MABE (Massachusetts Association of Bilingual Educators) and a district leadership group to develop programs.

Assiraj clarified that the “Readiness Assessment” portion of the process for schools for ELE program conversion (presentation slide 23) will look at data on schools, neighborhoods, and languages to identify potential schools. She further clarified that the involvement of DELAC in voting to approve a new program is required by the LOOK Act.

Polanco Garcia requested clarification about the timeline. Assiraj clarified that steps 1–6 represent the parts before a program begins, and that it is in year 3 of the process that a program starts at a school. Lee clarified that step one “previous year” is actually this year, SY22-23. Tung clarified that step 5 would be during SY23-24 and that the school couldn’t open with a new program until SY24-25. Assiraj affirmed.

#### **POST-MEETING CORRECTION:**

Slide 23 does describe a process leading to program implementation in SY24-25, as affirmed by Assiraj in the meeting, but *only if the process had begun last year.*

- **Year 1, SY21-22.** Called “Previous School Year” on the slide. **Step 1** (Readiness Assessment Projection & Data) and **Step 2** (School and Family Engagement) occur.
- **Year 2, SY22-23.** **Step 2** continues, **Step 3** (School Site Council Vote / DELAC) is accomplished “by December each year,” and **Step 4** (MA DESE & DOJ Program Approval) with reviews by January 1 (DESE) and August 1 (US DOJ) is accomplished by the end of the summer after the school year.
- **Year 3, SY23-24.** **Step 5** (School Program Assignment & Parent Choice) occurs “by November each year,” followed by **Step 6** (Implementation Prob Org & Hiring), “By Dec - March each year.”

- **The next year, SY24-25**, a new program would launch.

Given that Step 1 is beginning this year (SY22-23) not last year, however, ***the soonest a new program could launch is in SY25-26.***

Serpa spoke about native language access and alternatives that could -be considered now while program changes are being planned. She notes as well that SEI does not have the outcomes that TBE and dual language programs have, and spoke about the importance of explaining that information to families.

Tung asked how many schools are doing steps 1–2 this year. Assiraj said all schools with major language programs will have a readiness assessment. She stressed that program decisions will be made at the school level.

In addition to the program planning process described on slide 23, Assiraj hopes there will be 8–10 heritage language programs where there are majority Spanish speakers created next year as additive programs.

Mudd asked whether there is any way to speed up the planning process. Assiraj reiterated that a community engagement process must occur, a DESE application has to be prepared for each separate program conversion, and the objective is not to do one-off program plans but to create infrastructure for a coordinated process across the district.

De Barros asked for more information about OMME’s plan for community and family engagement, especially for the Cape Verdean community. Assiraj said OMME’s family and community engagement team would be engaging people in their native languages.

De Barros asked about staffing and what is being done to create a pipeline of bilingual teachers. Assiraj named several strategies including increasing seats at a pipeline program with Boston College, working with the BPS Office of Recruitment, Cultivation & Diversity Programs (RCD) to create community pipelines and identify the bilingual paraprofessionals.

Torres-Ardila via chat: I am still grappling with this idea of State SEI classroom (formerly known as Gen Ed). Does this mean that from now on, all MLs will be in SEI classrooms just by changing the name? Isn't a bit naive to think that a teacher in a 25-student classroom with 10 ELs will offer sheltered instruction to all because of those students? If the teacher will be doing the same as in a gen ed classroom, why the change in designation? Is there anything that I am not understanding here? (Unanswered)

### **Discussion of ELLTF priorities and schedule for SY2022-23**

Lee introduced prospective ELLTF members and invited them to introduce themselves.

- Monique Nguyen introduced herself as the Director of the Mayor’s Office for Immigrant Advancement (MOIA), formerly the Office of New Bostonians.
- Ruth Georges shared that she is a resident of Mattapan who has worked in roles with the city related to neighborhoods and youth and as a language access liaison, and is of Haitian heritage.
- Lee described Sugey Scannell as a parent advocate who has been attending ELLTF meetings.
- Linh Vu

Lee presented a proposed subcommittee structure and encouraged all members to join 1 or 2:

1. Programming / LOOK Act Implementation
2. Multilingual learners with disabilities (MLWDs)
3. Data and Monitoring (budget, enrollment, staffing, student outcomes)
4. Family engagement

Members made suggestions related to subcommittee structure.

- Harvey asked how the family engagement work would connect to DELAC and avoid duplication.
- Uriarte advised that the subcommittee structure be well-aligned with the areas where OMME requested ELLTF members to participate and advise (OMME presentation slide 40).
- Mudd spoke about the need to focus on budgeting and have some presence in the revision of the weighted student formula, and also to focus on staffing.
- Barros concurred with Uriarte and asked whether the OMME ask is for this year or longer. Assiraj said the time commitment would be preferably for this whole year and perhaps longer.
- Rafa spoke about the import of having meetings at times that work for families.

Members discussed the best time to hold meetings. Lee said parents had requested for meetings to be held later in the evening, from 5-7 pm, saying that 3-5 pm is a difficult time for parents to attend. De Barros and Polanco Garcia concurred with the recommendation to choose the better time for parents. Lee expressed an assumption that meetings would continue to be held on Zoom. Assiraj requested consideration for perhaps one in-person meeting. Torres-Ardilla indicated that some Thursdays he would have conflicts. The below meeting schedule was agreed to:

Proposed ELLTF Schedule - SY2022-23 – all meetings are on Thursdays, 5-7 pm, via Zoom

1. September 13
2. October 27
3. December 8
4. January/February TBD (waiting to hear back from budget)
5. February/March TBD (waiting to hear back from budget)
6. April/May (TBD)

## **Public Comment**

Scannell asked whether schools where MLLs have lower outcomes can be prioritized in program planning.

Bazile spoke about colorism and anti-Black sentiment and named a need to combat anti-Blackness in the immigrant community in BPS. Assiraj will be working with the Opportunities and Achievement Gap Task Force to hold a series of community sessions addressing anti-Blackness in immigrant communities.

George appreciated Bazile's comments connected to anti-Blackness and colorism and immigrant youths. She described how young people experiencing those phenomena may not have language for that and encouraged that Assiraj's session be interpreted.

Rice shared that Multicultural Education, Training & Advocacy, Inc. (META) has been waiting for 6 months or more for data showing how BPS spent Title I federal money in the last school year. He will plan to report to the ELLTF on this topic at the October meeting.

## **Adjourn**