

# THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE OF THE CITY OF BOSTON



## Official Minutes of the Remote English Language Learners Task Force (ELLTF) Meeting May 26, 2022

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The English Language Learners Task Force (ELLTF) held a meeting on May 26, 2022 at 3 p.m. on Zoom. 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, Paulo De Barros, Co-chair Suzanne Lee, Katie Li, John Mudd, Co-chair Rafaela Polanco Garcia, Maria Serpa, Rosann Tung

Not present: Angelina Camacho, Geralde Gabeau, Roxanne Harvey, Lisette Le, Marie St. Fleur, Fabián Torres-Ardila, Miren Uriarte

#### Boston Public Schools (BPS) Staff

Ceronne Daly (Managing Director, Office of Recruitment, Cultivation, and Diversity Programs)  
Jen Douglas (Coordinator, ELL Task Force)

#### Public

Ivelise, Estephany Banos, Edith Bazile, Kathleen Boundy (Center for Law and Education (CLE)), Isel Cruz, Sonia Maldonado, Maria Mejia (Parent), Griselda Polanco (Staff, City Councilor Julia Mejia), Roger Rice (Multicultural Education, Training & Advocacy, Inc. (META)), Alan Jay Rom (META, Inc.), Sugey Scannell (Parent), Santa Soto, Bianca Vázquez Toness (Reporter, *Boston Globe*)

### DOCUMENTS PRESENTED

#### ELL Task Force

- Minutes of the ELL Task Force Meeting, April 14, 2022

### CONSOLIDATED FOLLOW-UP LIST

- A group of ELLTF members will sign up for public comment at an upcoming School Committee meeting to give testimony about the purpose and priorities of the ELLTF and background on the LOOK Act.
- The ELLTF will send a memo to district and city decision-makers expressing concerns with the MOU between BPS and Massachusetts Department of Elementary & Secondary Education (DESE).
- Convene a sub-group of ELLTF members to discuss information sharing about the LOOK Act.

- Consider scheduling one additional ELLTF meeting in June.

## **Chairs' Welcome**

Ms. Lee informed the group that the presentation from OEL that was scheduled for this meeting cannot go forward because members of the office are out sick. She guided the group in a moment of silence to pay respect to the children and teachers who were murdered in the school shooting in Uvalde, Texas.

Ms. Polanco shared updates from School Committee last night:

- Opened with a discussion about the mass shooting and security measures in schools.
- Announced the new contract to begin next year with the new food vendor, City Fresh.
- \$2 million dollars in next year's budget assigned for installations, renovations.
- BPS reached an agreement with the drivers of the school buses, after months of negotiation, and expects that the buses will arrive on time.
- Discussed the vote to close Mission Hill School and heard a report that nearly all children are on track to receive a new school assignment.

Ms. Polanco shared updates related to DESE's threat of placing BPS in receivership:

- DESE's recent report on BPS highlighted transportation problems, concerns about academic outcomes.
- 3 SC members went with teachers and community organizations to express opposition to receivership. Opposition from so many was impactful.
- The district may enter into a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with DESE; it has been drafted. She does not see access to native language emphasized in that memo. She is pushing for clear metrics. Good things in the document include literacy, native language, and special education.

Ms. Lee and Mr. Mudd noted the emphasis on ESL, and the lack of attention to native language, in DESE's report. Mr. Mudd and Ms. Serpa noted no mention of ELSWDs as a group with particular needs. Harvey noted the absence of specifics about services that will be available to ELs and SWDs, and the need to go beyond short-term accountability and focus instead on what students deserve.

Ms. Polanco clarified that the MOU has been sent to the members of the SC but has not been signed yet. Ms. Lee shared that the turnaround time is anticipated to move at lightning speed and likely would not be a process that guarantees engagement.

## **Approve meeting minutes from April 14, 2022**

The Task Force unanimously passed the minutes of the April 14 meeting, with abstention by Ms. Li.

## Public Comment

Ms. Scannell: Hearing from parents with children that have special needs that they are very angry with the district because there is no plan for them.

Ms. Lee reflected that more than half the current SC members have joined since the ELLTF's last report in May 2020. She proposed that members give public testimony about the purpose of the EL Task Force, and educate SC members about the LOOK Act. Ms. Tung and Ms. Anderson expressed support.

**FOLLOW UP:** A group of ELLTF members will sign up for public comment at an upcoming School Committee meeting to give testimony about the purpose and priorities of the ELLTF and background on the LOOK Act.

Mr. Rice expressed that we should not be surprised that the Pioneer Institute and its former employee Charlie Baker would not mention native language in their 180-page report. These are the people who drove bilingual education out of Massachusetts 2 decades ago. If the current MOU is lacking in what parents and advocates want, we can have a new MOU with a new governor, and work with the mayor and others to make sure that happens. This is just the beginning, not the end.

Mr. Mudd shared concern about the DESE report and how distant DESE board members were from Boston. Ms. Lee said that we have agreed that we want to send a strong letter to the SC and the mayor's office with our concerns about the MOU.

**FOLLOW UP:** The ELLTF will send a memo to district and city decision-makers expressing concerns with the MOU between BPS and DESE.

Ms. Lee spoke about making sure that parents know their rights under the LOOK Act. Ms. Li wondered about what organization could provide succinct PSA-style information to parents. Ms. Lee proposed to empower a subcommittee to explore those avenues. Ms. Lee, Mr. Mudd, Ms. Tung, and Ms. Serpa volunteered to work on that.

**FOLLOW UP:** Convene a sub-group of ELLTF members to discuss information sharing about the LOOK Act.

Ms. Serpa asked about the parent advisory council for BPS that is mandated under the LOOK Act. Ms. Lee and Harvey explained that the District English Learners Advisory Committee (DELAC) is run by the Office of English Learners.

Ms. Scannell shared that the ELLTF meetings are at a time that many parents find difficult. Emphasized the importance of native language services for families who speak lower-incidence languages, giving the example of a parent at the Blackstone who is from Ethiopia and wanted to testify in Amharic but was not able to do so.

Ms. Lee asked members to let us know if we can schedule a June meeting of the TF, saying that we will ask OEL for dates and let members know.

**FOLLOW UP:** Consider scheduling one additional ELLTF meeting in June.