

THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE OF THE CITY OF BOSTON



English Language Learners (ELL) Task Force Remote Meeting

May 13, 2021
3:00 pm – 5:00 pm

NOTES

ATTENDEES

ELLTF Members and Staff: Roxann Harvey, Suzanne Lee (Co-chair), Katie Li, John Mudd, Lorna Rivera (Co-chair), Maria Serpa, Marie St. Fleur, J.D., Fabián Torres-Ardila, Rosann Tung, Jen Douglas (Coordinator)

BPS Staff: Daphne Germain (Director of EL Program Planning & Implementation, Office of English Learners), Faye Karp (Executive Director, Office of English Learners), Genevieve McDonough (Dual Language/English Learner Instructional Specialist, Office of English Learners), Eva Mitchell (Deputy Chief of Equity and Strategy), Charles Paige (Recruitment, Cultivation and Diversity Programs Coordinator), Silvia Romero-Johnson (Assistant Superintendent, Office of English Learners), Claudia Willis (English Learner Instructional and Support Specialist, Office of English Learners)

Public: Roxanne Harvey (Chair, SpEdPAC, and prospective ELLTF member), Alan Jay Rom (META), Roger Rice (META)

HANDOUTS

Office of English Learners

- “Office of English Learners Assistant Superintendent Report: Presentation to the Boston School Committee English Learner Task Force,” Daphne Germain, Interim Assistant Superintendent, May 13, 2021

ELL Task Force

- Minutes of the ELL Task Force Meeting, March 25, 2021

Division of Equity and Strategy

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CONSOLIDATED FOLLOW-UP LIST

FOLLOW UP: Work with Daphne Germain to get the revised Roadmap to members and quickly schedule a meeting, probably next week.

FOLLOW UP: Request ACCESS data for 2020.

DISCUSSION

1. Welcome

3:00 (10 minutes)

- Roll call.

First	Last	Present?
Janet	Anderson	No
Farah	Assiraj	No
Angelina	Camacho	No
Paulo	De Barros	No
Geralde	Gabeau	No
Lisette	Le	No
Suzanne	Lee, Co-chair	Yes

Katie	Li	Yes
John	Mudd	Yes
Lorna	Rivera, Co-chair	Yes
Maria	Serpa	Yes
Marie	St. Fleur, J.D.	Yes
Fabián	Torres-Ardila	Yes
Rosann	Tung	Yes
Miren	Uriarte	No

2. Chairs' Report

3:10 (10 minutes)

Rivera: I was the one dissenting vote at last night's School Committee meeting about whether to adopt the MassCORE standards for next year. I did mention data, interested people can watch the transcript, that was broken down school-by-school to look at what student populations are more likely to succeed with those standards (based on the 2020 graduating class). For example, only 14% of ELs that graduated in 2020 actually took any of the courses that were MassCORE requirements. Despite my agreement the policy passed, so we look next to accountability and oversight. I think we need to request school-by-school data so there can be an assessment of each school's readiness. I think it will be challenging to do this in the long term with the kind of resources that will be needed.

Also, last night we discussed the decision to close the Jackson-Mann under BuildBPS and a lot of concern about which school buildings will be given priority and what schools are going to be closed and how those decisions will impact ELs.

Lee: I support your vote.

Mudd: I concur that we need to request school-by-school data and ask for it to be broken out by race and EL status. Will the system support the students in meeting those goals or will the system penalize students for adult failure again?

Rivera: I asked for an extension of a year to get ready for MassCORE. I heard that there was already an extension last year due to the pandemic. I asked that we revisit that MOU, but that didn't go over.

3. Presentation and discussion about ESSER and other federal pandemic relief funds, with Eva Mitchell, BPS Deputy Chief of Equity and Strategy 3:20 (40 minutes)

See presentation.

Mitchell: 16th day on the job as the newly-appointed Chief of Accountability. Was Deputy Chief of Equity and Strategy previously, a teacher before that.

Lee: Can you be more specific about what is meant by supporting community and family?

Mitchell: Superintendent will talk about each area in the second meeting. One example is that we never want to give up the ability to communicate with families through Zoom; we have had much more access. There may also be other ways to connect and we want to fill in those details.

Mudd: Some issues stand out that have been connected to opportunity and achievement gaps for nears—racially and linguistically diverse staff, professional development, development of curricula and materials. Do those things fit into your core or no?

Mitchell: Those have already been identified as non-negotiables and are already in our strategic plan. There are investments in our current budget and we can use ESSR funds for building that capacity, perhaps for building the teaching force. Maybe our community partners can help us increase in win-win ways. We are looking for proposals and suggestions for people to concretize.

Lee: I will be sitting on the commission to guide these expenditures and you all can email me at any point as well as sharing your input here today.

Serpa: To what extent is this plan focusing on the achievement gap? Also, what is equity meaning in this context? Also, students with disabilities, SLIFE students. We have too many students who are not literate in any language. And two, how is native language going to take a front seat in cultural responsiveness?

Mitchell: For students who need literacy, the funds mean we can provide deeper support than we ever have before. How can we build capacity to do things differently?

Germain: In the Roadmap that we've shared with the superintendent – our next step will be to share it out with committees – one of the needs is investment to build bilingual capacity now. Print or online materials for literacy, collaboration with organizations supporting us, especially for languages for which fewer materials are available. We are working with organizations to create materials that honor language and culture and ESSR funds will support those community partners to create materials.

Also, we have to invest in native language teachers who have capacity and also heritage speakers, children of immigrants who understand a language but who may not be fully bilingual or biliterate. We've been talking with UMass Boston about getting access for our teachers, creating platforms for them to become fully literate and ready to teach in their heritage language.

Admiration for Mitchell and her commitment to ELs.

St. Fleur: At one point in this city Haitian Kreyol was not an accepted language. We do not have the staff to translate the curriculum for those kids where they are not a majority. We need to think about the segment of the community that do not have the political influence or the numbers. When you are building community groups and linkages, I hope you are thinking about those small language communities—Somali, a number of African communities, I want us to think about those dollars in ways that lifts up those folks too.

Serpa: How can recovery money enable us to make sure that general is the responsibility of every one not just people in special ed. We did use to think that students with disabilities needed to go to someone in special ed but now all teachers have the responsibility to teach them.

Li: With MassCORE being implemented, can there be alternative programs for ELs who come late, even overage. The programs we have really don't serve entry-level ELs at older ages. We need programs that take into account the pressures outside schools on these students.

Germain: In the passing of the MassCORE we made sure that the evaluation of transcripts for ELs was included, a requirement to establish one consistent process, so that there is a non-arbitrary way from high school to high school. This is something that ESSR funds can be utilized to do—transcript reviews and how we give credits to newcomer ELs so they are on a path to graduation and not wasting time in courses they don't need.

Mitchell: I'm leaving with two questions. 1. How do we make sure that we are doing a better job when a student might have a special need and/or be an EL and their assignment can't seem to figure that out. 2. I love this as a way to build our community partners' capacity and want to put a pin on that.

4. Office of English Learners report

4:05 (45 minutes)

See "Office of English Learners Assistant Superintendent Report: Presentation to the Boston School Committee English Learner Task Force," Daphne Germain, Interim Assistant Superintendent, May 13, 2021

Lee: Thank you for adding "challenges" to the slides.

- I want to note the slide that said that 49% of ELs are chronically absent.
- I am wondering whether some of the money can be used to support some of our older students who might have to work, especially with all the demand right now for service workers, so they can be paid for attending a summer program.

Germain: There are things that can be done innovatively.

Tung: I thought we were going to be able to talk about the changes to the Roadmap. When will we get the Roadmap that the SC will vote on, so we can understand how the concerns we've raised will be addressed? I don't know what this conversation is about.

Germain: A final draft of the Roadmap was shared with the Superintendent this week. We did address a number of the concerns.

- What are we doing at schools that will transition from SEI? The feedback we received was around lack of clarity about what the new model would be. We are clarifying that those schools will transition to developmental bilingual. Those programs will do a number of things at K–6 schools [missed details]. The 7–12 model we are asking for schools to build up language strands. Like a Snowden school. It will give us the capacity to build a bilingual strand across the high schools and allow families and students to select the program model that is right. They can choose whether to continue to develop their native language at the high school level, in our citywide choice.
- Transitioning SEI programs to dual language. All schools K-6 that have SEI programs. They can make a decision in year one about moving toward dual language. In year 2 we will work with them to become dual language strands. If not, they will go to developmental bilingual. In year 4 we evaluate them and see which are ready to move to dual language.

Mudd: To clarify, are you saying that language-specific SEI strands will have a choice to move into developmental bilingual? So, you're developing the option that schools can continue with developmental bilingual, an improved language-specific SEI?

Germain: yes.

Mudd: We talked about students who are now in multilingual SEI could benefit from being in a developmental bilingual program, who could transfer, and similarly for students in gen ed who may not have realized there would be an opportunity for developmental bilingual to transfer into that?

Germain: This plan cannot happen unless there is both investment for heritage language and for world language. Otherwise, where will students who speak English at home have the opportunity to be exposed to a second language at K-6? Boston is offering our children the opportunity to have a global experience. The world is inside our classrooms. We will train all teachers to use language and support students in becoming bilingual, bicultural.

Tung: That's a significant shift from the Roadmap that we saw. It sounds like principals and schools communities will have the chance to choose. If we take Quincy Elementary. Right now, they have SEI-Chinese. That would become DBE (developmental bilingual education) and they would be asked "do you want dual language?" I'm guessing some families will want it and some won't. Will there be one decision for the whole school or will some families go into DBE and others into dual language? And how does that work in a smaller school?

Germain: The Quincy is a good school to have this conversation about. They have a head start in regards to this structure and model, they already have bilingual teachers, they already cluster their students. The difference between DBE and what the Quincy is doing is setting standards for Chinese language development. Let's say after a few years that non-Chinese speaking families come back and say they want the option of a dual language program. There could be a one-strand program developed within the school, similar to what's happening at the Mattahunt with Haitian Kreyol. The part of how the sausage is made that people don't want to hear about is that, within the LOOK Act, any changes made within the school have to have buy-in from the community that is there. That is the heavy lift for helping the community overall to understand the benefits of bilingualism. For some parents, shifting their mindsets toward the idea that bilingualism is a benefit to the child, is something we'll have to do in year 1 as we're working in partnership with the schools.

Serpa: Thank you for the changes you have made. Questions: 1. How are the students with disabilities integrated throughout? They are everyone's responsibility. How do we integrate universal design for learning for students with disabilities that go from intellect to emotional? 2. The language we used. I would like to propose that we don't call monolingual education in English as the general ed. Students who are in other programs are receiving their general ed there. Let's be more precise about receiving general education that is bilingual or that is monolingual, etc. It clarifies general education versus special education. We have a whole new group of kids with trauma coming out of this year.

Germain: With DBE it will allow us to do bilingual inclusion because now we can hire a teacher who teaches the students' language, maintain the stability of the program model—you have now a platform to do inclusion for bilingual students. I have to give credit to Ellen; we've been able to go over the guidance document and pull out portions that align with the Roadmap and we will be doing a series of conversations about these needs for bilingual special education and smaller group supports and interventions, including strategies to recruit and qualify bilingual specialists interventions. Not just people who

understand a language, but who understand cultural approaches to process and healing from trauma.

Li: I'm hoping that when you come out with the new Roadmap that we could throw up a profile of a student and seeing the way that they would walk through the proposed model. I have so many questions about students with different characteristics and how they would be assigned in the models you are proposing, what path they would follow, and that you could guide us through it. What if it was a minority language? A later arrival? There are so many scenarios.

Germain: We are working with an editor to help us create the visualizations. We are doing one for community. One for teachers. And just the standard document. Teachers want to understand what it all means for their professional development needs. We are working with a vendor to help us create those tracks. We are presenting to School Community on May 26. We are also still required to put together a budget proposal. I am not asking for ESSR funds for this because we need staff and we need it beyond three years. We are bumping that up through the chain of command. All of that is continuing in background. I will work with Jen about a way to meet next week and I will share out the information as soon as it is ready.

Rivera: If there was a report presented to SC, we wouldn't be able to vote on it that day.

Lee: Is the Roadmap a plan that requires School Committee approval? We don't know.

Tung: Could we please have a date by which we receive the new draft, so we can put a meeting in our calendars? It's hard to schedule everyone on short notice. We don't want to wait until after the SC meeting. Also, a question: one of my biggest concerns about the draft we saw was around how low-incidence language ELs were treated differently because they didn't have the option of TBE. I'm still not clear what the option is for those students in SEI-multilingual.

Germain: For low-incidence language it is very hard to create a classroom program. We have to leverage community partners, before- and afterschool offerings, other resources that we could invest in and partner with. For 7-12 we may be able to partner with universities.

Karp: Presented slides on student attendance.

St. Fleur: it would be worth reaching out to students who are chronically absent to find out what their concerns are. In my generation it was because we were serving as the "other parent" / "other adult" in the household to take care of younger siblings, older family members, etc. It wasn't always work. Our parents were working.

Karp: That is actionable feedback and a necessary next step.

Li: When you reach out to students it would be a good idea to do that outreach through the teachers that have the close relationships with them. And to make sure that the person asking them about their experience speaks their language.

Karp: Family liaisons would be another key group to include in this outreach.

Serpa: We haven't seen any student outcome data for 2020.

Faye: There was no MCAS test given in 2020 but the ACCESS testing was completed before the pandemic school closures.

FOLLOW UP: Work with Daphne Germain to get the revised Roadmap to members and quickly schedule a meeting, probably next week.

FOLLOW UP: Request ACCESS data for 2020.

Tung: We still need to schedule a meeting to provide feedback on the Roadmap.

Rivera: The information is not ready. We are waiting for answers to the questions and the answers just aren't ready. The information is going to come very last minute, it just is.

St. Fleur: Can we get an answer to that question about whether the SC will vote on the Roadmap?

5. Approval of Meeting Minutes from March 25, 2020 4:00 (5 minutes)

Mudd: Motion to pass.

Tung: Second.

Approved unanimously.

6. Public Comment 4:50 (10 minutes)

None.

7. Adjourn 5:00