

THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE OF THE CITY OF BOSTON



English Language Learners (ELL) Task Force Remote Meeting

**September 24, 2020
10:00 a.m. – 12:00 pm**

NOTES

ATTENDEES

ELLTF Members and Staff: Janet Anderson, Farah Assiraj, Angelina Camacho, Paulo De Barros, Geralde Gabeau, Lisette Le, Suzanne Lee (Co-chair), Katie Li, John Mudd, Lorna Rivera (Co-chair), Maria Serpa, Marie St. Fleur, J.D., Fabian Torres-Ardila, Rosann Tung, Miren Uriarte, Jen Douglas (Coordinator)

BPS Staff: Ivonne Borrero, Dr. Brenda Cassellius (Superintendent), Ethan D’Ablemont Burnes (Assistant Superintendent, Office of Special Education, Daphne Germain, Charles Grandson (Chief Equity & Strategy Officer), Faye Karp (Interim Assistant Superintendent, Office of English Learners), Ellen Kelleher, Michael Loconto (Chairperson, Boston School Committee), Genevieve McDonough, Alexandra Oliver-Dávila (Vice Chairperson, Boston School Committee), Andrea Zayas (Chief Academic Officer), Carol Zhang

Public: Roger Rice, Alan Jay Rom

HANDOUTS

Office of English Learners

- “OEL Assistant Superintendent Report: Presentation to the EL Task Force,” Faye Karp, Interim Assistant Superintendent, September 24, 2020.

CONSOLIDATED FOLLOW-UP LIST

FOLLOW UP: Could request from OEL specifics about PD provided to EL teachers in the 10 days prior to students starting the school year.

FOLLOW UP: Seeks ELLTF member input to identify candidates for open positions.

FOLLOW UP: Ask for info about Cape Verdean summer services.

FOLLOW UP: Explore how ELLTF members can collaborate with OEL on engagement of Latinx / Spanish-speaking students in summer programs.

DISCUSSION

1. Chairs' Welcome

- Zoom protocols were announced.
- Roll call.

ELLTF Members		Present?
Janet	Anderson	y
Farah	Assiraj	n
Angelina	Camacho	y
Paulo	De Barros	y
Geralde	Gabeau	n
Lisette	Le	n
Suzanne	Lee, Co-chair	y
Katie	Li	y
John	Mudd	y
Lorna	Rivera, Co-chair	y
Maria	Serpa	y
Marie	St. Fleur, J.D.	y
Alejandra	St. Guillen	n
Fabian	Torres-Ardila	y
Rosann	Tung	y
Miren	Uriarte	y

2. Challenges facing English Language students during the pandemic: updates from district leadership

- **Faye Karp, Interim Assistant Superintendent, Office of English Learners**

See slides: *"OEL Assistant Superintendent Report: Presentation to the EL Task Force," Faye Karp, Interim Assistant Superintendent, September 24, 2020.*

Lee: Can we have a breakdown by high school, elementary, K-8?

Mudd: Question about ELSWD and SLIFE.

Karp: SLIFE is part of the high-priority in-person group that will be prioritized for first in-person instruction, but it is not clear whether 4-day weeks will be possible. This group of students will be able to start attending on October 1. For those who will do a four-day schedule, it begins October 13.

Superintendent: We don't anticipate having a teacher shortage. We will know for sure after next Thursday. "I will be updating the entire public quite frequently now, quite important to do."

De Barros: Where did Cape Verdean students receive summer programming? At what locations?

Karp: Orchard Park and the Dearborn.

De Barros: I know that a lot of Cape Verdean families did not receive information.

McDonough: Instructional team partnered to make sure there were specific sessions on Seesaw and other platforms for multilingual learners.

Germaine: Have found some parent exhaustion from being invited to so many things. We are providing recordings and other ways besides live events. There is a need for lots of different ways to connect and for BPS to receive feedback.

St. Fleur: What kind of training are we giving to teachers to support them in using technology to teach our children? That professional development is critical. Also, heard from families that they did not have access to teachers over the summer.

Cassellius: We did 10 days of professional development before the school year started. We could provide that data specifically for EL teachers; I think that would be good for this committee to have—what was provided specific to EL teaching. Faye, please provide. We also provided support through Parent University and our tech division.

<p>FOLLOW UP: Could request from OEL specifics about PD provided to EL teachers in the 10 days prior to students starting the school year.</p>

St. Fleur: Would like to know sooner rather than later how impactful that training has been.

Lee: I think we need to ask parents as well as teachers.

Li: What lists were used? How was the outreach done? Are there office hours in different languages when parent can join in and ask questions at their convenience? I also saw low number of attendance at info sessions on your slide and wonder how that outreach was done.

Karp: Our sessions were leveraging our ELAC groups. The district held other types of sessions.

Lee: What I noticed in the Chinese community sessions I attended is that anytime that you had signed up with an external company to do the interpretation it did not work well at all. My sense is that we need to build up the in-house capacity. The interpreters from the company don't know any of the interpretation concerns.

Karp: We also are not satisfied with the quality of the vendors we contracted for recent meetings. We do send them information in advance—the slides, the terminology—and typically have a meeting with them in advance. But we need better quality; we are not satisfied, even though these vendors are vetted by the state. We don't have enough in-house capacity.

Uriarte: I also have questions about the extent of reach for the summer program. Was it broad or targeted? How was the outreach to Latino kids? It appeared to be lacking. Could you talk about some of the challenges of engaging in the summer program?

Karp: We did use multiple methods of engagement in the summer programs. You have brought it to our attention several times about low Spanish-speaking or Latinx participation in summer programs. I think we might need to look to you as far as how we can explore new avenues. Even though we have partnered with community organizations and used multiple outreach methods it is not sufficient. We would welcome collaboration and problem-solving ideas. What more, what better can we do? The programs that our office ran were geared toward ELD levels 1–3 and SLIFE, not all ELs (i.e., not the 16,000–17,000 denominator). We are just reporting on our programs, not all programs across the district. We can provide additional information.

McDonough: We had some success in East Boston with providing, for example, just an hour of focused intervention.

FOLLOW UP: Seeks ELLTF member input to identify candidates for open positions.

FOLLOW UP: Ask for info about Cape Verdean summer services.

FOLLOW UP: Explore how ELLTF members can collaborate with OEL on engagement of Latinx / Spanish-speaking students in summer programs.

- **Charles Grandson, Chief Equity & Strategy Officer**

Feel pleased with planning so far to ensure equity is at the center of our re-opening strategy. On our website we have our one-of-a-kind equity analysis with 50 pages of detail about what we need to do to prioritize the needs of multilingual learners and to do

it in a remote and/or hybrid environment. There is a 3-page executive summary, but to get into the table of contents and look at the strategies there is much more. As we shift into October, after October 1, we are starting with central office coming back to conversations around aligning workplans with OAG policy goals so they're not two separate processes. They will refine the workplans they've been building since February of this year and have conversations with chiefs in their divisions, work with many stakeholder groups. Also excited to partner with office of Data and Accountability to have metrics they can use at any given time and be able to intervene and be transparent. That's what we're working on and looking at.

Karp: I am encouraged that in many of these cross-functional meetings the question about "what are we doing for ELs?" is not posed only by OEL colleagues. It is a shift and is to the credit of the solid work happening at the equity roundtables and through the use of the racial equity tool.

Lee: We are seeing very few folks with EL knowledge at the top levels. That can make it hard to have that level of working together. We are glad to hear the shift in thinking, that it's more than just OEL, but we need to have people with deep knowledge.

Cassellius: Deep appreciation to everyone on the call. I need to step off.

Grandson: We do have more people with dual language experience (two former leaders of dual language schools) but we need more. They have been a plus and a welcomed one. It is hard being the only person in a room screaming, "What about our ELs? SWDs? Latinx students? Black students?" To have more voices is helpful in getting the work done for kids.

I want to recognize the work BPS is planning to do with the Mass Asian American Educators Association. We need to update our equity tool, but it is more than that. We need to not render Asian American students and families invisible and also make sure we are seeing students who are and are not doing well even if Asian Americans do well as a group. We are thinking about how we can leverage ALANA [BPS ALANA (African, Latino, Asian, and Native American) Educators] as a source of strength and unity. It's one of the shifts we're seeing as necessary especially given the impact of COVID, which has elevated issues as a society in ways that were timely and needed.

Li: I think we're wondering whether the district is thinking about success beyond test scores and grades. Especially if students who do well are leaving the community and not coming back. It really is about humanizing people. Should that be our goal? What does that look like when all of our metrics are numbers? We are talking about learning English to some degree, but we're asking students to participate in hegemony. What is it when we talk about bilingual, bicultural, for students to feel pride in their identities? What does that look like?

Grandson: Spoke about preparing students to be the next generation of Boston. We know this becomes important to work with the city and have strategies around other issues including housing. Really being clear about what outcomes we're trying to see in terms of the graduates we produce and what impact on the society and systems. We have to look at the systems within which we operate and there are many goals beyond test scores in order for someone to have a meaningful life.

Lee: Those of us on this task force are very concerned with the many problems in our communities and the looming evictions we may be facing.

• **Ethan D'Ablemont Burnes, Assistant Superintendent, Office of Special Education**

First, we look forward to working with the ELSWD subcommittee on the checklist they have drafted. We hope to do a pilot later this fall to pressure check how it works and look toward more full implementation after that. Second, with regard to the dual language VietAID program, that will be inclusive next year. More broadly, we look forward to working with our dual language programs to increase the SWDs in those programs. It is complex because of several departments including enrollment and assignment being involved, but we can play an important role. I will be working with Ellen Kelleher to move that work forward.

Uriarte: Also, a warm welcome to Ethan.

Lee: Also want to lift up the issue of native language access for student with disabilities.

D'Ablemont Burnes: Importance of having high-quality interpreters at COSE-LATF meetings. We will be getting guidance out on that.

Mudd: We are working on native language also in instruction and support services—teacher recruitment, development, other things to give broader language access to these students.

3. Schedule English Language Learners Task Force meeting dates for the 2020-2021 school year

Should we meet later in the day and invite a student?
Let's consider an official representative from the SPED-PAC

Change meeting time to 3–5 pm: decided.

We will send a list of dates for consideration. For the next meeting, we need to plan a process and circulate information. People don't necessarily know what subcommittee they used to be on.

4. Review of English Language Learners Task Force rules and regulations (Michael Loconto and Alexandra Oliver-Dávila)

Annual check-in. They try to do that at least once a year with each TF. Not a specific agenda. Just want to drop in and say hello and thank you and hear if there's anything the TF wants to raise up to them. Each expressed thanks to TF members for their service.

They are working on the BSC to design some guidelines for TFs going forward. Mr. Tran is working on that and they hope to roll out this fall. A lot of that is trying to get better strictures around the expectations for service, what appointment process looks like. Interested for BSC to find an opportunity for all the TFs to get together and share best practices and ensure we are supporting one another and supporting the goals of the BSC around the best use of TFs in our daily practice. Will look forward to scheduling that some time in the next year; not sure if a virtual meeting will be best so perhaps when we are able to come back together.

Lee: Thank you to BSC members for your service as well. We are all here because we love Boston and we love the children in it and want the best for them. The needs right now during COVID are much more urgent because of all of the challenges families are facing.

Mudd: The message about the access to native language and not just "learning English" needs to come from the very top so it pervades the system in a different way. One way in which it is clear is about how we value language skills in our teachers? And how do we look at the language gap as well as the equity gap? Emphasize this issue of access to native language when looking at equity.

Oliver-Davila: I agree with John. It is important that it is not just learning English. Our young people need to know that they are accepted for who they are and that their culture is valued. It could not be more important.

Also, appreciation to Suzanne, Lorna, and to Faye Karp. Please pass to the whole OEL team.

Next step is for OEL to come to the BSC to give a response to the ELLTF presentation from last spring.

5. Public Comment

None.

6. Adjourn