

# THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE OF THE CITY OF BOSTON



## English Language Learners (ELL) Task Force Remote Meeting

June 2, 2020  
10:00 a.m. – 12:00 pm

### MEETING MINUTES

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#### ATTENDEES

**ELLTF Members and Staff:** Janet Anderson, Farah Assiraj, Angelina Camacho, Jen Douglas (ELLTF Coordinator), Paulo De Barros, Geralde Gabeau, Katie Li, John Mudd, Lorna Rivera (ELLTF Co-chair), Maria Serpa, Fabian Torres-Ardila, Rosann Tung, Miren Uriarte

**BPS Staff:** Monica Hogan, Director of Analytics, Office of Data & Accountability; Faye Karp, Interim Assistant Superintendent, Office of English Learners; Andrea Zayas, Chief Academic Officer

**Public:** Roger Rice, META; Alan Jay Rom, META

#### HANDOUTS

##### *Office of English Learners*

- “OEL Director’s Report — Presentation to the EL Task Force,” Faye Karp, Interim Assistant Superintendent Office of English Learners, June 2, 2020

##### *Office of Data and Accountability*

- “COVID-19 Response Data: English Learners — Presentation to the EL Task Force,” Office of Data and Accountability, June 2, 2020

##### *ELL Task Force*

- Minutes of the ELL Task Force Meeting, December 17, 2019
- Minutes of the ELL Task Force Meeting, January 21, 2020
- Minutes of the ELL Task Force Meeting, May 5, 2020

**1. Welcome**

**Roll call:**

<b>First</b>	<b>Last</b>	<b>Present?</b>
Janet	Anderson	yes
Farah	Assiraj	yes
Angelina	Camacho	yes
Paulo	De Barros	yes
Geralde	Gabeau	yes
Lisette	Le	no
Suzanne	Lee, Co-chair	no
Katie	Li	yes
John	Mudd	yes
Lorna	Rivera, Co-chair	yes
Maria	Serpa	yes
Marie	St. Fleur, J.D.	yes
Alejandra	St. Guillen	no
Fabian	Torres-Ardila	yes
Rosann	Tung	yes
Miren	Uriarte	yes

**2. Approval of Meeting Minutes from December 17, 2019; January 21, 2020, and May 5, 2020**

Motion to approve the May 5, 2020 minutes, by Camacho. Anderson seconded. Request by Mudd for a correction (to reflect accurate status of ELLTF invitation to meetings with Grandson). Approved with that change.

Motion to approve the January 21, 2020 minutes, by Anderson. Seconded by Uriarte. Approved.

Motion to approve the December 17, 2019 minutes, by Uriarte. Seconded by Anderson. Approved.

**3. Chairs' Report**

Rivera: Opened with reflections on police brutality and national uprisings against white supremacy. She reported on hearing about various platforms that teachers are using to connect with students and whether those are aligned with the data collection— we need to keep an eye on it. She reported that the assessments given to ELL students in ELA and math will be used to target students who need summer learning opportunities. It's not clear how the ELD levels 1 and 2 are being assessed. She reported that the plans for HS

redesign, to reconfigure all the schools to be 7–12 grade, have many moving parts and many impacts on ELs, who are more represented in certain schools. She welcomed Andrea Zayas.

Zayas: Spoke about her personal identity, her Black and indigenous roots, and the importance of lifting our voices for collective liberation. Referenced James Baldwin, asking “how long can we wait?” for change. She announced that Faye Karp will step into the Interim Superintendent role at OEL. In reference to the *Globe* article about “virtual drop-outs,” she said she looked forward to having more data that we can dive into and create next steps around.

Gabeau: What does it mean for OEL that Dr. de los Reyes has left, and Karp is an interim appointment?

Zayas: Dr. de los Reyes, as a BPS retiree, hit the threshold in terms of the number of hours she can work. She remains a thought partner, supporter, guide, but cannot serve formally in the role going forward. We will launch a search with a search firm to identify a pool of candidates. We would like to partner with the ELLTF to partner on that and go through a full process for selecting a permanent Assistant Super for OEL.

John: Thanks to Faye for being willing to assume this responsibility and help the system to through a difficult time. We had also hoped that you could find a way to help Eileen help us in developing a vision for the LOOK Bill. There are rumors floating about a reorganization of OEL, and pretty drastic reorganization of Academics and professional development. Can you give us insider guidance on the implications of any of that?

Zayas: I am not aware of any reorganization of OEL. My opinion and advice has been that the office be structured the way it currently is. Being positioned inside Academics is positive. I’ve consistently messaged that. Related to professional development, the district’s desire is to promulgate teacher-led learning, away from the district’s event-based learning. Teachers and school leaders are asking for a different way of doing business and we are attempting to respond to that. There are a handful of directors in Academics whose positions were eliminated as part of that move toward school-based and teacher-led professional learning. The collaboration with OEL and Academics will continue.

Rivera: It was hard to hear that [two individuals] were let go from Academics. I am concerned that there are a lot of people of color who have been let go in this last round.

St. Fleur: I’m delighted that we are elevating this search to one that our children merit, so that we seek a leader who has the expertise, content, interpersonal skillsets, and professional acumen and leadership to lead this office. 31% of our kids deserve that. I hope you will share the posting with us early so we can use our skills to shape this pool, rather than bringing us in on the end.

On the racial equity piece, I am deeply concerned about the number of Black and Latino staff that were let go. I am concerned about moving things to the school level. We are still under a DOJ order. We rely on the school to approve the teachers you are bringing in. So, in removing the top layer we are removing something toward the goals we need to

achieve. The goal may be good but the structure you've put in place may aggravate disparities.

Uriarte: Thank you for the report and for moving fast on the leadership of the office. I am also concerned about what has happened to the curriculum leaders. Lorna has been working for a long time developing Latino Studies content for the curriculum at BPS. That is not going to happen school-by-school, that has to happen at the district level. We may be taking a step back in terms of the inclusion of content necessary to make it into the school curriculum. In terms of relying on the schools—there are some schools that are terrific; there are many that are not.

Zayas: These decisions don't change the commitment to the work that is in front of us.

Li: The concern is partly just about systemic level changes. I've hosted a Telescope Network (BPS & BTU Teacher-Driven Professional Learning for Student-Centered Classrooms) at Charlestown HS. To put the onus on teachers to do the professional development of the district, it feels like a lack of strategy or vision. Especially when certain schools and certain teachers have more success in what they do. What in the system is making sure this is sustainable in the long term? That's just not done school-by-school.

Zayas: The intent is the center teachers' voices, not to put the onus on them for professional development. I remain open to having further conversations. This isn't the formal report; just me answering questions.

#### **4. Discuss *Globe* article published May 23 about participation in virtual learning**

Monica Hogan, Office of Data & Accountability, presented "COVID-19 Response Data: English Learners — Presentation to the EL Task Force," Office of Data and Accountability, June 2, 2020.

St. Fleur: Question about the percentage of students who have Internet. I saw baseline at 8%. 8% of what, and what is the plan to get it to 100%?

Hogan: It is 8% of the 7,000 who replied to the survey.

St. Fleur: But regardless of what the *Globe* had to say, what percentage of students can access Internet and access their education?

Hogan: The IT department has distributed 2,600 hot spots. I don't have information on how many families do or don't have internet. She offered to find that out.

Uriarte: I would like comparison between ELs and other students. It is hard to say how they compare, looking at this data. Could we have that report with all BPS, disaggregated by race, so we can make an assessment of the difference between ELs and other students.

Hogan: The never-ELL data includes everyone.

Mudd: The percentage identified for Student Success Plans—do they have those plans? Second, on May 13 there are very large numbers of Latinos and Blacks who have never

logged in. What's the trend—is that improving? How are we using qualitative information from support teams at schools about why people are not engaging?

Hogan: The overall percentage of students logging in has increased 2% points each week. For Student Success Plans, what we're easily able to monitor district-wide is that of We can see more information for students who have Panorama, but using that is optional. We don't have the qualitative information, but it would make things easier if that was possible.

Torres-Ardila: My concern is that we learned this information from the press and we don't have access to this data. We don't know how it is disaggregated by race, ethnicity. Aggregate data doesn't say a thing. ELs are such a big category, different languages being spoken. It is hard for me to assess. Are we going to have access to the data so we can tell what is happening? Is that our job or not, as an ELLTF? We will be commenting on what the *Globe* said, the counter response from the district, but there is no way to independently assess what is going on.

Li: Teachers right now are front line of dealing with any families. This is built on academic experience but teachers right now are responding a lot to the other things that shape whether a student can academically access their education. Having a social worker at a school is less useful because it is the teacher who is making education accessible for families. We've talked about minutes, whether students can access stuff, it's totally dependent on students' family situations. How does BPS know that kids are learning, what they're learning, and what they need to learn?

## **5. Office of English Learners Director's Report**

Karp: She re-introduced herself to the ELL Task Force members, describing her background. She was a researcher at the Gastón Institute. Prior to that she was a researcher working with college access and opportunity youth. She extended thanks to de los Reyes and Zayas, saying they have been instrumental to her and her team at OEL. She expressed gratitude to the cherished members of the ELLTF.

She presented "OEL Director's Report — Presentation to the EL Task Force," Faye Karp, Interim Assistant Superintendent Office of English Learners, June 2, 2020.

## **6. Review a draft of the ELLTF's presentation to the School Committee (scheduled for June 10)**

Members recommended edits to the presentation having to do with:

- Presenting outcomes for ELs
- Being mindful of issues of school segregation when calling for geographical proximity of EL programs to areas where language communities are concentrated
- Highlighting what of the ELLTF strategic plan recommendations made it into the final strategic plan
- Explaining why access to native language is essential

- Making recommendations for the majority of ELs who will not be in dual language programs, as well as for dual language program expansion
- Drawing links between other issues that are live in the district (e.g., high school redesign, transitional schools, professional development, etc.) and the issues the TF is raising

## 7. Public Comment

Roger Rice, META, and Alan Jay Rom presented to share the below letter.

English Language Learner Task Force  
 The Bolling Building  
 2300 Washington Street  
 Roxbury, MA 02119

Dear Task Force Member:

We write in advance of tomorrow's meeting to raise some important concerns with challenges now facing BPS ELL students. Hopefully what we raise will be answered during the presentations and we will try to attend.

We know from reports across the country and from Boston teachers and parents that, best intentions notwithstanding, remote learning is falling far short of meeting the needs of our ELL students. While all students are experiencing slippage in their education, for ELLs, including ELLs who have disabilities or are SLIFE, what is being lost is virtually a whole school year. We ask these questions.

1. How will BPS determine the actual level of not only English proficiency (Speaking, Listening, Reading and Writing) but also the actual level of content knowledge in math, science, social studies that students had as of the time of school closure in March? For those students who were in SLIFE programs or Dual Language programs, the question includes their level of proficiency in Spanish or other language. The answer to these questions will, at a minimum, include asking teachers for formative assessments and work product examples as of March.

2. How will BPS determine the current end of school year levels for the above areas for each ELL student as described above?

3. What concrete plans will BPS develop unique to meet the need of each ELL student that realistically can be implemented in the upcoming months to help close the gap for what has been lost?

4. What concrete steps will be taken, and demonstrated to the ELLTF, School Committee and public that all federal program funds already designated for the particular needs of ELLs during the current SY20 school year, but not spent because of the school closure, will be used to address the particular needs of ELLs going forward. ELLs should not be expected to forfeit millions of dollars of educational funds intended for their needs all under cover of covid.

5. What plans does BPS have for providing “systematic attention to creating high-quality summer experiences” for children with the greatest needs, e.g., ELs with disabilities who will through Extended School Year have another opportunity to make up deficits in their learning?

6. As BPS looks to the budgetary challenges of SY21, what will BPS do to ensure that there is no negative impact on staff serving ELL students in all grades, content and program areas and specializations in which BPS is already seriously deficient (e.g. SLIFE, special education, CTE).

Thank you for your consideration,

Roger Rice, Alan Jay Rom, META Inc.

Kathleen Boundy, Center for Law and Education, Inc.

## 8. Adjourn

Remind everyone to attend the SC meeting on 6/10.