

**Date:** April 25, 2020  
**To:** Superintendent Brenda Cassellius  
School Committee members  
**From:** English Language Learners Task Force (ELLTF) of the BPS School Committee  
**CC:** Andrea Zayas, Chief Academic Officer  
Eileen de los Reyes, Interim Assistant Superintendent, Office of English Learners  
Cindie Neilson, Assistant Superintendent, Office of Special Education  
Monica Roberts, Chief of Student, Family & Community Advancement  
Albert Taylor, Jr., Chief Human Capital Officer  
Nate Kuder, Chief Financial Officer  
**Re:** District Operational Plan released on April 15, 2020

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Dear Superintendent Cassellius and School Committee members,

We appreciate the breadth and comprehensiveness of the 20/25 Strategic Plan that will be on the School Committee's agenda for approval at its meeting on April 29. But we write to share our concern with the lack of urgency expressed around English Learners in the District Operational Plan released on April 15, 2020. It does not do justice to the larger vision of the Strategic Plan.

Is this District Operational Plan something that will be developed further with stakeholder involvement? The ELL Task Force would be anxious to participate in that process.

English learners and their families are fully *half* of the BPS community.<sup>1</sup> **We continue to believe that all work should be designed with ELs at the center, rather than designing without ELs in mind and then trying to adapt non-EL-centered plans to the needs of ELs.**

In brief, our concerns about the 4/15/20 Operational Plan are that we see. . .

- No path expressed for how the district will get beyond SEI, and LOOK Act action delayed,
- Little mention of access to native language (beyond a note about AP courses on page 20),
- No goal around matching teacher language to single-language SEI classes,
- No mention of English learner students with disabilities (ELSWDs), and
- Inadequate action steps proposed on teacher diversity.

We strongly support and appreciate including the development of a District-wide Comprehensive Professional Development plan by June 2020 (page 21). It needs to be clear that such a plan must involve the resources and actions of all the relevant parts of BPS including Academics, Office of English Learners, Office of Special Education, Accountability, and the PD hours set aside in the BTU contract for each school. The Office of Human Capital cannot do this work alone without inter-departmental cooperation and collaboration.

**We urge that the Superintendent establish a process for strengthening the Operational Plan with stakeholder participation and suggest that the following changes be considered for inclusion now before this plan is finalized:**

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<sup>1</sup> 57% (n=31,927) of current BPS students live in a household where a language other than English is spoken and at least 49% (n=27,393) of BPS students have a first language other than English (data is for SY2018-19).

1. **Moving beyond SEI and implementing the LOOK Act.** Move the date for submission to DESE of LOOK Act plans from March 2021 to January 2021 so that the new programs can be implemented in the fall of 2021 (page 19). With a March deadline we will be in danger of losing an additional year in implementing significant changes enabled by the LOOK Act.
2. **Addressing the needs of ELSWDs.** Include operational steps to implement long-identified strategies to ensure that ELSWDs' needs for an appropriate education in the least restrictive environment are planned for and met, not handled as an afterthought (would go on page 19), especially:
  - Make access to native language mandatory in ELSWDs' IEPs, instruction, and support services.
  - Produce and maintain data on the extent of SEI teacher-student language match.
  - Develop a plan to recruit, hire, and develop sufficient bilingual teachers, paras, and other support staff to meet the needs of ELSWDs.
3. **Achieving a linguistically representative workforce.** Develop a Human Capital plan that includes language diversity as well as racial and ethnic diversity as part of school and district staffing criteria diversity goals, with aggressive near-term targets for compliance and formal accountability of school leaders. Make language diversity and ethnic diversity explicit in the last three rows on page 21.
4. **Practicing multilingual, multicultural family engagement.** Put resources and requirements behind a system-wide family and community engagement plan with EL families and community members at the center. Such a plan would include an assessment and expansion of the capacity at the district, school, and classroom levels to communicate, both orally and in writing, with families in their preferred languages (would go on page 20). This urgent need has become ever clearer during the period of school closure due to COVID-19.
5. **Conducting assessment and evaluation.** Create transparent and accessible data systems for monitoring and improving services to ELs and tracking EL and ELSWD outcomes. Tracked indicators should be disaggregated along numerous characteristics including program, program type, school, school type, grade, ELD level, language group, race, and national group, and should disaggregate Black, Latinx, and Asian students using the proxies of home language, city of birth, and country of origin data elements.
6. **Involving stakeholders.** Commit to a process to strengthen the Operational Plan with involvement from the ELL Task Force and other stakeholders.

**It is imperative that we seize this opportunity to develop a district-wide inter-departmental plan to operate as a multilingual, multicultural system.** We recommend the changes above as key interventions to modify the plan to better adapt BPS curricula, staffing, instruction, and support services to the unique cultural and linguistic needs of Boston's different linguistic subgroups.

Sincerely,  
Suzanne Lee and Lorna Rivera, ELLTF Co-chairs, on behalf of the ELLTF