

THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE OF THE CITY OF BOSTON



**Minutes of the English Language Learners (ELL) Task Force Meeting
May 20, 2019**

The English Language Learners Task Force of the Boston School Committee held a meeting on May 20, 2019 at 9:00am at the Cape Verdean Association of Boston, 268 Bowdoin St, Dorchester. For more information about any of the items listed below, contact Jen Douglas, ELL Task Force Coordinator, at bpselltaskforce@gmail.com.

ATTENDEES

ELL Task Force (ELLTF) Members present: Farah Assiraj, Suzanne Lee (co-chair), Janet Anderson, Paulo De Barros, John Mudd, Marie St. Fleur, Alejandra St. Guillen, Rev. Cheng Imm Tan, Jen Douglas (coordinator)

BPS Staff present: Alberto Carrero (Instruction Specialist, OEL), Genevieve McDonough (Instruction Specialist, OEL), Priya Tahiliani (Assistant Superintendent, Office of English Learners (OEL))

CONSOLIDATED LIST OF FOLLOW-UP ITEMS THAT EMERGED IN THE MEETING

1. Put consolidated follow-up list at the very top.
2. Requests made for OEL to provide the ELLTF the following information:
 - A description of / report on the SFL program at the Russell
 - The numbers of students who will be impacted by each of the new programs created under the LOOK Act
 - What made the BINCA SLIFE program a model? Please share specifics.
3. ELLTF members can send recommendations to OEL for candidates to do an external evaluation.
4. What is the core principal evaluation? We know that family engagement is not part of it. Request that information from HC (HC Subcommittee will take lead).
5. Priority identified. The need for Developmental Bilingual pilot programs for Haitian and Cape Verdean students.

6. Take the following steps toward appointing new ELLTF members and confirming existing members for SY2019-2020:
 - What about Beatriz? Ask Suzanne.
 - Check with Paulo about ideas he has in mind.
 - Explore having a DELAC parent join ELLTF.
 - Check with members to see if they want to continue: Patricia Crain de Galarce, Bob Hildreth.
 - What about someone from DSNI? They do a lot of engagement in that area and are part of two schools.

HANDOUTS

From ELLTF

- Minutes of the ELLTF Meeting on April 11, 2019
- SEI Vacancies SY2019-2020
- SPED Vacancies SY2019-2020
- ELL Task Force Member List SY2018-2019
- ELLTF Follow-up Items Running List for SY2018-2019, April 11, 2019 Version

From Office of English Learners

- “OEL Director’s Report: DOF Update and EL Programs,” Priya Tahiliani, Assistant Superintendent, Office of English Learners, May 20, 2019

DISCUSSION

1. Welcome

Brenda Cassellius, new superintendent, stopped by with Rob Consalvo, BPS Chief of Staff, to meet everyone prior to the start of the meeting.

2. Chairs’ Report

- Welcome Lorna, round of introductions
- New superintendent hired

3. Approval of meeting minutes from April 11, 2019

See Minutes of the ELLTF Meeting on April 11, 2019.

Minutes passed.

FOLLOW-UP. Request made to put consolidated follow-up list at the very top of the notes next time. DONE.

4. OEL Director's Report (Priya Tahiliani)

- DOJ Update

See "OEL Director's Report: DOJ Update and EL Programs," Priya Tahiliani, Assistant Superintendent, Office of English Learners, May 20, 2019.

Expansion of training program for teachers to pass the ESL certification program. Training so far has been successful in assisting teachers to pass.

DOJ visiting starting tomorrow for a few days. They will visit 6 schools: Henderson Upper, English High, Orchard Garden, Irving, Boston Latin School, Sumner. OEL preps the schools with summaries of all their EL-related data, and will be present for the visits. Classroom visits will not be part of the visits. The six schools were selected from 12 schools that fell short on certain minimum requirements for requisite services. They will stay two hours at each school.

Clarify: Transitional Bilingual programs have been gone for awhile. Developmental Bilingual programs are being introduced in the future.

Clarify: The majority of SEI programs do not have staff that are native speakers. Despite successful advocacy to secure language-specific SEI programs, there is no legal requirement that native language be part of the classroom instruction. The BTU job descriptions also do not have a requirement for native language skill. OEL has put linguistic skill requirements on the table in union negotiations; it is a difficult issue to advance. There is a need to get senior staff, school committee, superintendent all on the same page about this priority and then negotiate for change.

FYI: The requirement for a certain number of minutes of instruction at the high school level can make things difficult for students and prevent them from taking part in other instructional opportunities like Advanced Placement (AP) courses.

Clarify: The DOJ doesn't look at outcome data. They are interested in compliance. We are the ones who are interested in outcomes.

Slide 5, list of schools that are subject to different reporting requirements. The Russell Elementary uses a Systematic Functional Linguistics (SFL) program.

FOLLOW-UP. Request made that the ELLTF receive information about / a report on the SFL program at the Russell.

5. Program Quality

- **Program Reports (Priya Tahiliani)**
 - **Program Quality Report SY2018-19**
 - **Program Development Progress Update**
 - **Program Development Proposal SY2019-20**

See "OEL Director's Report: DOF Update and EL Programs," Priya Tahiliani, Assistant Superintendent, Office of English Learners, May 20, 2019.

This portion of the report begins with the slide called "Existing EL Programs" (slide 6).

The list of schools running SEI Multilingual programs keeps growing, consistent with expectations of what would happen with Home-Based Assignment.

Why isn't BARI being asked to produce analysis of overlay impacts for EL and SWD students? OE has looked into whether they can just produce the analysis themselves. It may be that BPS is putting out an RFP to redo the BARI study. There is also a question about whether the prior RFP should be reviewed to prove that BARI is obligated to produce that analysis and try to hold them to it.

There is movement within BPS to create an Arabic program. The idea would be to do it outside of SEI and have a language requirement for the teacher.

Clarify: The plan is for the Mattahunt dual language program to keep growing up through grade 5 or 6 (to whatever is the final grade at that school, which could change). They are at K2 now and will launch first grade next year. It is a single strand (one class per grade) program. The challenge is to keep it fully staffed.

OEL is in a conversation now with the Dearborn to see if they can house the Cape Verdean SLIFE program.

Developmental Bilingual definition: students maintain and nourish their heritage language and also learn and study in English. A research-based model that is used in other places. See the January OEL presentation to the ELLTF for a visual depiction of teachers/classrooms/students.

OEL proposed programs, not schools, to DESE (per their advice): Developmental Bilingual, Two-way Bilingual, SLIFE.

What will it take to create an Arabic program? There is community interest in one especially in East Boston and Allston. It keeps being talked about and there is no movement.

There is a provision that says if 20 families come together to make a request of the district it triggers an obligation to respond within 90 days. Have the community be very specific and put it on paper.

Request for information: could we have numbers of students who will be impacted by each of these pilot programs that OEL is launching? It will be very small in comparison to the total population of EL students.

Many schools who wanted to expand programming beyond SEI were unable to do it because the current staff don't have a necessary language capacity. OEL advised that such schools focus on language capacity in their new hires to build up to the point where they can consider new programming. Observation made that this approach leaves things up to the good will of principals and headmasters. Does the ELLTF have any authority to look into these matters? That is the focus of our Human Capital Subcommittee and it has been a very heavy lift. HC does not have data on staff language capacity, except for those who were hired very recently. Staff tend to push back on it because of concerns that they will be asked to take on a variety of translating responsibilities without compensation, in addition to their formal job requirements.

What is the vision and commitment from the district? Pilot is fine. Let's look ahead 3 or 5 years. What's the impact based on new regulations with DESI and the LOOK Act. Is the vision to change all the programs from SEI to Developmental Bilingual?

What does the strategic plan look like? What is the long-term plan moving forward? It has a lot of moving pieces. Right now the OEL vision is to move away from SEI to Developmental Bilingual, but you can't just say that and have it happen. You need principal buy-in, you need staffing capacity, pipeline programs working with universities to have bilingual teachers and licensure requirements. It's going to be a long, slow transition. It would be hard to imagine a world where there aren't SEI programs. BPS has been working to bring more native language into the SEI programs, and there will be certain training provided to SEI teachers that reflects a Developmental Bilingual model.

It would make sense to look at the kids for whom SEI is not working, for example Cape Verdean kids, also Haitian, Chinese.

There are risks to learn about from the past. There were some students between 1969–late 1990s, depending on when they arrived, who did not have access to learn English because of the way EL programs were structured when they attended school.

Questions raised about staffing and curriculum, and about instruction in languages that are primarily spoken languages. Quality of instruction and quality of content—how will teachers be

evaluated? Will the people evaluating them speak their language / be able to understand what goes on in the classroom? Will the rigor be there? Also the materials—you cannot just import materials from another context that won't necessarily make sense here. There are issues with languages that are primarily spoken languages into written contexts and what that will look like for certain high school level content areas, etc. These concerns need to have a place in this pilot. If we only pilot Spanish and Chinese we will not learn about issues that are particular to spoken languages. If we look at Alvaro's numbers (Alvaro Lima, Boston Planning and Development Agency), Creole speakers are increasing in the population.

There has been some talk about tri-lingual programs that would use, for example, Haitian Creole / French / English or Cape Verdean Creole / Portuguese / English. You would have the maintenance of the native spoken language, the acquisition of English, and the ability to use text books available and not have to translate them.

More on defining "Developmental Bilingual": These programs have a native language teacher who provides native language instruction at 90% in K2 that moves to 50% by third grade. We are nurturing that first language first while teaching English. Students will be ELD levels 1–5 and possibly former ELs too. Principals like this because in those higher grades where EL numbers are dwindling, there is an advantage. Newcomers who join after K2 will join the class. For the three schools that have agreed to this it is a one teacher model, but they have additional ESL teachers who will push in to continue satisfying requirements under DOJ. (There is hope to eventually adjust the DOJ requirements to conform to the new realities.) For this year the program is not more expensive because they are doing the one teacher model.

Concern expressed about the risk that separate programming created to serve the most marginalized students will end up disadvantaging them and keeping them apart from other opportunities.

Concern expressed as well about bilingual students who join in, say, third grade. If their families have been prioritizing English acquisition the students' native language skills may not be sufficient for academic classroom use.

Who is going to help you do the assessment? You need someone external to help you take a look at this. To scale this up you need a consistent framework within which everyone operates, and a real partner who will help you evaluate whether this is the way to go.

OEL school visits: over 400 of them made this year.

FOLLOW-UP. Request for numbers of students who will be impacted by each of the new programs created under the LOOK Act.

FOLLOW-UP. ELLTF members can send recommendations to OEL for candidates to do an external evaluation.

FOLLOW-UP. What made the BINCA SLIFE program a model? Please share specifics.

FOLLOW-UP. What is the core principal evaluation? We know that family engagement is not part of it. Request that information from HC (HC Subcommittee will take lead).

FOLLOW-UP. Priority identified. The need for Developmental Bilingual pilot programs for Haitian and Cape Verdean students.

• **Program Quality Subcommittee Concerns / Updates (Paulo Barros, Co-chair)**

SEI hasn't worked for Cape Verdean students. Transitional bilingual did work. There's a group of exerts and community people who have been meeting, brought together by dual language. They are pushing for a K–12 strand for Cape Verdeans. There's no home at present, students are all over the city, put wherever there is a space, often in SEI Multilingual, maybe two Cape Verdean kids, one Somali kid, a group of Spanish-speaking students, everyone in their corners not connecting. This group likes Developmental Bilingual, because of the priority it has on native language and culture. The group has assembled signatures toward a K–12 Cape Verdean strand in Boston, and has identified schools. It will have a family/community engagement piece, connected to other resources (e.g., ESOL classes for adults at the Cape Verdean Association of Boston). The goal is to create options for families to pick from. They have identified potential schools: the Mather K–5 (used to have a Cape Verdean program, the number of Cape Verdean families is huge), Orchard Garden K–8, the Lila Frederick 6–8 (lots of Cape Verdean families). For high schools the Burke, _____, Boston International. FYI there is only one Cape Verdean teacher in the whole program at Orchard Gardens. The challenge with implementing this program is how to attract teachers, especially given hard feelings resulting from past changes. They are advocating in the community, working with City Councilors, have a meeting scheduled with the mayor.

Is the Mather big enough to house two programs, or is the Vietnamese program to be moved somewhere else?

Suggestion: make it part of the ask to have just two transition points for those students.

6. Human Capital

- **Office of Human Capital projected staffing request for SY2019-20 (HC Subcommittee)**

See SEI Vacancies SY2019-2020 and SPED Vacancies SY2019-2020.

The School Profiles include the language gap in addition to the ethnic gap. This data is recognition on internal documents of the importance of this issue.

There is also a language rubric that OEL has developed that will go live for the October hiring season. Priya will share that with the HC Subcommittee tomorrow.

FOLLOW-UP. Share School Profile Reports with full ELLTF. DONE.

7. Planning for Next Year

- **Replace departing members**
- **Meet new superintendent**
- **Report to School Committee**

See ELL Task Force Member List SY2018-2019 and ELLTF Follow-up Items Running List for SY2018-2019, April 11, 2019 Version.

At least three ELLTF members are stepping down next year. We will need replacement members who have academic knowledge about ELs.

We need someone to chair the Engagement Subcommittee. What about Angelina Camacho? She may have just taken a job with the city. Rev. Tan will reach out to her.

What about someone from DSNI? They do a lot of engagement in that area and are part of two schools.

FOLLOW-UP. Take the following steps toward appointing new ELLTF members and confirming existing members for SY2019-2020:

- What about Beatriz? Ask Suzanne.
- Check with Paulo about ideas he has in mind.
- Explore having a DELAC parent join ELLTF.
- Check with members to see if they want to continue: Patricia Crain de Galarce, Bob Hildreth.
- What about someone from DSNI? They do a lot of engagement in that area and are part of two schools.

Think about the last week of July for a possible meeting with the superintendent.

Would like to see us go to the superintendent with the ELLTF's list of priorities. It might be great if each subcommittee could bring a current priority statement, ideally with about two action priorities.

FOLLOW-UP. Incorporate new practice: in advance of subcommittee meetings, coordinator should alert subcommittee chairs about ELLTF follow-up items within their domain.

ELLTF's annual report to School Committee: Lorna is working with Michael Loconto to put it on the schedule for the fall.

John's summary of ELLTF priority issues:

1. Access to native language
2. Human capital

Might be nice to have ELLTF chairs attend and reinforce the above issues at whatever time OEL is appearing to make a presentation—now scheduled for July but may be pushed to September.

8. Public Comment

None.

9. Adjourn