

## THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE OF THE CITY OF BOSTON



### **Minutes of the English Language Learners (ELL) Task Force Meeting September 28, 2017**

The English Language Learners Task Force of the Boston School Committee held a meeting on September 28, 2017 at 9:00am at Bruce Bolling Building. For more information about any of the items listed below, contact Michael Berardino, ELL Task Force Coordinator, at [bpselltaskforce@gmail.com](mailto:bpselltaskforce@gmail.com).

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#### **Call to Order:**

**Task Force Members Present:** Miren Uriarte, , Janet Anderson, John Mudd, Bob Hildreth, Samuel Hurtado, Cheng Imm Tan, Diana Lam, Farah Assiraj, and Michael Berardino - Coordinator. **Other persons and BPS Staff Present:** Karla Estrada, Monica Roberts, Priya Tahiliani, Faye Karp **Members Absent:** Suzanne Lee, Kim Janey, Alejandra St. Guillen, Paulo DeBarros, Geralde Gabeau, Maria Serpa, Abdul Hussein, Patricia Crain de Galarce.

#### **Introductions**

Michael Berardino, Coordinator, of the Task Force opened the meeting. Miren Uriarte, co-chair of the Task Force began by talking about a meeting that morning organized by Superintendent Chang, which discussed the potential influx of students from Puerto Rico following the crisis from Hurricanes Irma and Maria. Many of these students will be ELLs and it is important that the district has a plan to welcome in these students. This work will have to involve an advanced demographic understand of where these students will live. Demographics have changed in the city and Puerto Ricans are more likely to live in parts of the South End, Dorchester, and Roxbury. This will involve getting information from Alvaro Lima at BPDA (old BRA) about the concentration by neighborhood of the PR population in Boston. Most incoming children will likely arrive at the homes of families already here.

Beyond what neighborhoods the children will be coming to, it is also critical to discuss how/where students will be placed. Should the district identify schools and seats” in schools in neighborhoods w/ PR concentration and reserve these seats for the influx of PR students? Should the district prioritize some programs and not others in selecting these schools? For example, prioritize those with EL Spanish language specific programs? Will it be possible to avoid English-only SEI Multilingual programs to provide a smoother transition?

It will also be important to alert the district and the potentially impacted schools about the potential influx and address the support for trauma services and professional development for staff emphasizing cultural proficiency. This will also involve addressing the funding needs, which are already stretching OELL services.

The Task Force also recommended connecting with PR community initiatives and providing these agencies and groups with information packets in Spanish about BPS services and ways to enroll students

in BPS programs. In other times of high PR migration, the community organized a greeting service at the airport, which included information about BPS. Furthermore, have Superintendent Chang connect with superintendents in other districts with high enrollments of PR students to coordinate initiatives at monthly statewide superintendents' meeting. Districts include: Chelsea, Lynn, Worcester, Holyoke, Chicopee, Springfield and Lawrence, among others. Finally assume that not all children will remain in Boston permanently. Develop "educational passports" for students returning to PR after a stay in BPS that provide information about placement, program, grades, etc."

### **Co-Chair Opening Remarks**

Dr. Uriarte provided opening remarks for the meeting. The ELL Task Force planned to do a lot of work over the summer in developing SMART Goals jointly with district staff, but that was curtailed by changes in the OELL. Dr. Karla Estrada requested that we pause the development of the SMART Goals until new staff was ready and/or new director was hired. Dr. Estrada requested that we review our own goals/priorities and that we relate them to existing district goals but not set in stone until new director is hired. We will begin this process today. Today we set the stage for the ELL Task Force Goals and Priorities, at the next meeting we begin to set the Goal and Priorities in stone.

We will also hear an update today about the search for the Assistant Superintendent of OELL and the challenges involved with this search. The ELLTF requested strongly that the district conduct a national search and that the district involve Diana Lam and Suzanne Lee with the search committee, both who have programmatic expertise. It is important that the ELLTF understand that a national academic search – as this is- is not a quick thing and that it usually means that the newly hired will not arrive until the beginning of the next school year. This search is challenging because in the restrictive language policy in the state of Massachusetts, districts like Boston are not attractive for qualified candidates from around the country. This may change with the LOOK Bill.

This summer, Miren met with Dr. Donna Muncey to discuss the report on student assignment. At that point, the RFP for the analysis of the data has not been released and Donna cautioned that it will likely focus on more general equity issues and NOT the specific issues related to ELL programming.

[Monica Roberts]: An update – the RFP is out and bids are expected shortly. Lisa Harvey is doing outreach for the meeting to review the RFPs

[Miren Uriarte]: This topic came up with the School Committee and Lisa Harvey said they are not in a place to have a preliminary analysis done by December.

Today we will also hear a presentation about OELL's priorities for the next three years. These, of course, may change somewhat to reflect the vision of the new director who will be hired this coming year. But nevertheless, they provide a good start for the work of aligning our goals with those of the district. Listen carefully, ask lots of questions. Then we can gather in subcommittees and explore how these may affect the existing priorities on each subcommittee.

Today we will also set off to explore the creation of a new subcommittee, which will focus on issues related to hiring of the type of staff that is needed for this growing EL enrollment. We felt it became necessary when issues related to this began to crop up in other subcommittees. Often the district staff in these subcommittees did not have the information or power to address this issue and thus it became confusing and difficult to address. This exploration will begin with determining who should be in the committee, explore a partnership with the OAG office and Task Force, so that we can be as coordinated and helpful as possible around this critical issue.

Finally, there will be a new scheduling scheme for the Task Force and its subcommittees. This has become necessary because during the last year the district departments felt stretched by the demands the

TF and subcommittees were placing on staff. We went from 1 meeting every 2 months to more than monthly meetings if you take into account the meetings of the subcommittees. Proposal: Whole TF will continue to meet bi-monthly. Subcommittees can meet as much as once per month. All meetings are to be public meetings, arranged through Michael Berardino and the School Committee Office, and agendas need to be posted. Data request have to be made in advance – at least 30 days. A way to address these new requests is to plan the themes of the meetings well in advance. There will always be issues that crop up and need to be addressed, but these should be the exception rather than the usual.

Q: [John Mudd] Regarding student assignment, there are rumors that BuildBPS will create changes to student assignment with the potential school closings, new schools, or school mergers. Is there any official word on this and how ELLs fit into the larger consideration?

A: [Monica Roberts] In the Spring there was a meeting where the representatives from BuildBPS, going through the potential ideas checking the feasibility. The goal is to create a rubric, which will determine what is feasible for mergers, closures, or new buildings. The meetings focused on the neighborhoods of Roxbury and Dorchester; areas where the district thinks there needs to be changes. Once the areas are identified, they will need OELL and SPED to see if the proposals make sense programmatically.

A: [Priya Tahiliani] OELL has only been involved with one meeting, which focused on the issues relating to SPED students.

Q: [John Mudd] How does this fit with concurrent conversations about the expansion of dual language programs, SLIFE, SEI language specific programs? This is so important because the dispersion of ELLs around the district is a constant barrier to program quality and fidelity. If there are only a few ELLs in each grade, the school cannot build language specific programs. With the potential changes brought on by BuildBPS, is this a time to discuss grouping ELLs with the state and the DOJ?

Q: [Miren Uriarte] How is BuildBPS moving forward when we have no understanding of the current student assignment system and the associated outcomes?

A: [Karla Estrada] The conversations with BuildBPS discuss how we involved the community in decision-making so that there is engagement. Too often decisions are made without input from the public. The challenges exist because the community is often unaware of how decisions are made.

Q: [Miren Uriarte] What is the timeline for this? Will the potential of grouping be discussed?

It was decided that the Task Force would invite leaders of BuildBPS to the next ELL Task Force meeting.

Q: [Diana Lam] In terms of setting the Goals and Priorities for the Task Force, the Task Force needs structure, but we also need to understand how the district is seeing their goals. One potential approach of the Task Force is to understand the work of the district and to provide policy recommendation/position paper at the end of the year.

Q: [Miren Uriarte] Today we are hearing the OELL Goals for the year. This will help with our own discussion.

A: [Karla Estrada] It is important to continue to have dialogue and conversations about having consistent, clearer objectives with measurable goals. This will help with aligning the work and holding everyone accountable. The Task Force is awaiting the results of the EL Longitudinal Study, which will help with understanding program quality and establish the Task Force goals. This study is not necessary for us to establish metric for establishing quality in classrooms. We can set up “data dips” to evaluate the Task Force goals. Karla welcomes new ways of measuring changes.

Q: [Diana Lam] Who is in charge of these data dips to see what is happening in the classroom?

A: [Karla Estrada] Teacher and Learning Teams – 4 teams that are regionally organized to provide targeted support. The teams have Instructional Superintendents, reps from OHS, ODA , and other offices.

## Update on OELL Search

Karla Estrada provided an update on the search for the new Assistant Superintendent of OELL. When Dr. Esparza left the district, it was not ideal or beneficial timing. This assistant superintendent position is not an easy position to fill in late June. Immediately after Dr. Esparza's announcement, the district put together a job announcement and put out the position locally and nationally on the key job posting sites, throughout the social networks and shared with online and professional networks.

After they received applicants and went through the job requirements and qualifications, they decided that there was not a match. They pulled the position on September 5<sup>th</sup>, rather than having the position remain open, which can look bad for the system. Priya was named the interim director over the summer. Priya and Karla meet twice a week and they talk daily. In October Dr. Estrada is travelling extensively for numerous conferences and professional events, including Council of Great Schools and RTI, where she will be looking for talent. In December/January, when people are looking for positions for the following school year, they will open up the position posting again. They will provide an updated for the Task Force in November or December.

Q: [Miren Uriate] We encourage everyone in the Task Force to share the position widely. What about the screening process? Will you involve the Task Force (Diana Lam and Suzanne Lee)?

A: [Karla Estrada] They welcome input and recommendations.

Q: [John Mudd] John has experience making personal calls to candidates. Who will be the one hustling to get the best candidates to the district?

Q: [Farah Assiraj] Turnover and timing has been an issue in eroding trust within the city.

A: [Karla Estrada] The search will be both internal and external. They are focused on finding candidates that are here for a while. BPS only gives one-year contracts making long-term commitments challenging. They are exploring options for this arrangement.

## OELL Priorities

Priya Tahiliani Interim Assistant Superintendent of OELL presented a slide deck covering the OELL priorities for this school year. There were several summer bright spots for OELL: Family Literacy Programs, August Leadership Institute, Kindergarten Kick-offs, Summer symposium, Haitian Creole Dual Language, DACA Support, Teacher Summer Institute, and the EL Summer Enrichment Academy where 1,002 ELs were involved with Summer Enrichment Academy involving many range of activities.

OELL is attempting to align their priorities with the previous ELL Task Force Priorities: (1) Recognize and promote BPS as a multilingual and multicultural district; (2) improve data systems and the use of technology; (3) improve student assessment and assignment of ELLs and increase transparency; (4) expand program quantity and quality; (5) support EL students with disabilities; (6) improve family and community engagement; and (7) Ensure accountability and monitoring.

The OELL vision is to provide a culturally and linguistically responsive education with the supports needed to ensure equitable access to opportunities that promote language acquisition, bilingualism, biliteracy, and lifelong learning. The OELL priorities fall under 6 categories: instructional programs, professional learning, equity & accountability, parent engagement, newcomers assessment, and translation & interpretation.

Instructional Priorities: There are 5 components

- **3 Cs & I and UDL:** Train every educator to utilize 3 Cs & I to intersect those principles with UDL in order to meet the needs of ELs and ELs with disabilities. Last year, OELL completed training with

the LATFs. They were asked by schools to come out and provide further training. Now they have the task of getting this model to work in all schools.

**Q:** [Farah Assiraj] Has this been rolled out? Is there a rubric to evaluate this and has there been trainings with these rubrics? The challenge is that the evaluators do not always know the rubric, so it is hard to have teachers evaluated by a rubric that is not understood by evaluators or the teachers.

**A:** [Priya Tahiliani] They piloted the rubric this summer.

- **English 3D:** Implement the district's first intervention program for Long-Term ELs and track student progress to determine effectiveness. This program was initially just for 3 schools, but more schools are interested.
- **Seal of Biliteracy:** Expand the Seal of Biliteracy to more high school students in order to recognize and promote the growing bilingualism amongst our graduates.
- **Disciplinary Discussions:** Ensure cognitively demanding academic discourse and authentic conversations for all ELs at every language development level. OELL received a 3-year grant from UC Davis for this work.
- **Dual Language:** Recognize the asset of bilingualism and promote high school graduation and college/career readiness through proficiency in at least 2 languages. This begins with the assignment and coding of 6 schools. The discussion is now how to make sure the dual language programs are equitable. Which new languages will be added? Make sure dual language can be expanded past 8<sup>th</sup> grade. This started last year with the expansion of the Haitian Creole program and they hope to expand a Cape Verdean Creole program.

**Q:** [Samuel Hurtado] Does this approach include heritage language programs? The plan to create dual language at the Quincy was not successful, and it was due to lack of communication with parents.

**Q:** [Farah Assiraj] How do you educate parents about the benefits of dual language? Farah taught SLIFE and there was even resistance from parents to put their children in SLIFE programs because of the stigma around first languages. OELL needs to focus on the perception and the capacity to expand dual language programs.

Professional Learning Priorities: 5 priorities

- **3 C's & I and UDL Intersection:** Continue to provide training to every educator in the district on how to best instruct ELs and ELs with disabilities.
- **Essentials Courses:** Collaborate interdepartmentally to complete the implementation of the first round of course o Boston Public School's Essentials for Instructional Equity. These are offered at the Summer Institute.
- **Professional Learning Communities:** Lead PLCs at schools to attract cohorts of educators who are interested in strategizing how to better support the ELs at their schools; facilitate PLCs for school leaders emphasizing how they can better support ELs and ELSwDs.
- **SLIFE Workgroups, PLCs, and Trainings:** Utilize the expertise of SLIFE educators to participate in the revisions of the entry/exit criteria; plan a continuum of trainings and PLCs that support the unique needs of SLIFE educators and their students.
- **Differentiated Sessions for and by LATFs:** Provide LATFs with deeper training around their specific areas of need and stipend them to share their instructional expertise at their schools.

Equity and Accountability Priorities: there are 5 items within this priority.

- **Language Goals in IEPs:** Monitor the input of and adherence to language goals and accommodations documented in the IEPs of ELs with disabilities.

[John Mudd] This is an important step, but this is only part of the larger process. They need to also have instruction in native language as a requirement. Additionally, the language goals could be more prominently placed within the IEP.

- **VComply:** Implement an online accountability system to improve monitoring and compliance responsibilities for schools.
- **Special Admissions Enrollment:** Increase equitable enrollment of ELs in special admissions high schools. This involves high school choice and access to exam schools, art schools, etc.
- **EL Master Plan:** Finalize a handbook of policies and procedures that provides guidance to schools about programming, scheduling, and other legal requirements. They are finalizing the compliance and procedures component of the handbook.
- **LOOK Bill:** Determine how the LOOK Bill might impact programming and servicing of ELs and ELs with Disabilities.
  - [Miren Uriarte] The LOOK Bill will enable us to try programs that have not even been on the table for districts in the state. This means when exploring options for successful programs, it is critical to look across the country, not just examples in Massachusetts or from across the state.
  - [Farah Assiraj] It is important to remember that the constraints on the programs aren't just coming from the state, they are also coming from the DOJ, with the grouping of ELD Levels 1-3.

Parent Engagement Priorities: OELL continues with their parent engagement work. Kevin Montoya, who used to help lead the parent engagement activities such as DELLAC has left the district.

- **Parent Advocacy:** OELL is collaborating with OoE to expand the District Learner Advisory Committee and to encourage parent participation in School Parent Council and School Site Council.
- **Access to Resources:** Providing information and resources that include the updated website, pamphlets about programming, ESOL courses, and information sessions and webinars.
- **Parent Education:** Create opportunities for families of English learners to better support their children's education, such as Tech Goes Home, Family Literacy, and Mock SEI Kindergarten showcases. Monica Roberts and OoE are continuing ESOL funding and classes.
- **Cultural and Linguistic Awareness:** Increase educator's understanding of the diverse learners in BPS so that they may better provide students with culturally and linguistically responsive instruction and supports.
- **Dual Language:** Continue to work directly with CBOs to inspire commitment to dual language programming throughout the district.

Newcomers Assessment Center Priorities: The goal is to get ELs assigned to schools as soon as possible.

- **Scheduling:** Ensure that families who have to register their children for school are leaving the Welcome Center with an appointment for language testing.
- **Accessibility:** Employ testers with flexed schedules so families can bring children in for language testing during afternoons/evenings, Saturdays, and days during the summer.
- **Staffing:** OELL hired four new testers, 3 Spanish speakers and 1 Vietnamese speaker, to provide greater access to multilingual families and to lower the cost of temporary testers.
- **Data Collection:** create streamlined reporting systems that better capture data points such as wait time between registration and testing, parent phone calls/e-mails, and trends of incoming students.
- **Future Planning** – Brainstorm options that prevent testing from being a significant obstacle that inhibits student from being assigned to and attending school.

Translation and Interpretation Priorities

- **Sustainable Future:** Implement systems and operations that are designed to maintain equitable language access for all BPS families.
- **Communication:** Focus on internal and external communication practices to ensure that school leadership on all levels understands the process for requesting translation and interpretation requests.
- **Governance:** Create working conditions that promote staff capacity and knowledge so that they are empowered to participate in the continual improvement of the department and provided services.
- **Business Model:** Present a variety of options to the Executive Cabinet in order to determine the ideal structure and best financial model moving forward.

Q: [Miren Uriarte] Where is the budget in the discussion of priorities?

A: [Priya Tahiliani] The budget is embedded in the entire discussion of priorities. This year, they are meeting on October 10<sup>th</sup> to discuss all the programs and the costs. They are also having enrollment meetings to get a handle on WSF for dual language students. ELs in dual language programs are classified differently and likely need a supplemental WSF funding line.

Q: [Miren Uriarte] It is really important that we see the enrollment numbers for this school year. The changes to the ELL budget for FY18 were based on assumptions of enrollments that we have not seen yet. Too much seems to be based on assumptions.

Q: [Farah Assiraj] It would be very helpful to see enrollment data for the last three years for ELs during the peak enrollment times. We want to know who is coming into the district.

### **Discussion of ELL Task Force Goals and Priorities**

Following the presentation of OELL goals, the discussion shifted to the ELL Task Force Goals and Priorities. The latest version of the ELLTF Goals and Priorities is organized around the same subject areas as the subcommittees. Therefore, it was decided that the subcommittee would lead the review of the previous ELLTF Goals and Priorities. The objective this year is to produce manageable goals, which are measurable in some way.

Diana Lam will be taking on the role as Lead of the Program Quality Subcommittee. They will review the Program Quality goals, but will try to pare down what they are trying to accomplish. This subcommittee will involve Suzanne Lee and Andres Alonso. Diana Lam recommends that all subcommittees work on identifying what is feasible for one year. What can we actually produce in one year? It is important to systematically analyze these issues and then make policy recommendations at the end of the year in a position paper.

John Mudd, representing the ELL-SPED subcommittee, has already provided updated priorities for the school year. They will proceed with the new schedule and the proposed priorities.

Student Assignment Subcommittee – Janet Anderson and Miren Uriarte will continue to learn about the evaluation of the Home-Based Assignment plan, monitoring the RFP, the applicants, and any analysis that comes out of the work.

Parent Engagement Subcommittee – Cheng Imm Tan will continue as the Lead of the Parent Engagement Subcommittee. There are certain things that this subcommittee would like to address, which were not included in the OELL priorities. The concern is that ELL parents are left out of important policy discussions and they must keep pushing school-based parent engagement.

The new human capital subcommittee will officially start their work.

The meeting was adjourned.