

THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE OF THE CITY OF BOSTON



Minutes of the English Language Learners (ELL) Task Force Meeting April 4, 2017

The English Language Learners Task Force of the Boston School Committee held a meeting on April 4, 2017 at 3:00pm 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.

Call to Order:

Task Force Members Present: Miren Uriarte, Suzanne Lee, Janet Anderson, John Mudd, Kim Janey, Paulo De Barros, Alejandra St. Guillen, Maria Serpa, and Michael Berardino - Coordinator. **Other persons and BPS Staff Present:** Frances Esparza, Daphne Germain, Vivian Tam, Faye Karp, Denise Pagan-Vega, Cindie Neilsen **Members Absent:** Bob Hildreth, Samuel Hurtado, Diana Lam, Cheng Imm Tan, Geralde Gabeau, Abdul Hussein.

Introductions

Miren Uriarte, co-chair of the ELL Task Force began the meeting by offering a few words about the context of the ELL Task Force work. The discussion of programming for Cape Verdean ELLs has been a crucial topic in the district for a long time and was one of the first things brought to her attention after being named to the School Committee. The district, the Task Force, and the community are committed to improving the educational opportunities for Cape Verdean students in the district. Open minds and clear pathways.

Paul De Barros

Paul DeBarros, ELL Task Force member, Program Director of Catholic Charities Teen Center at St. Peter's, and BPS graduate, provided an overview of his experiences and the research he has been doing with META/Roger Rice to document what is actually happening in the schools that Cape Verdeans attend.

Paulo prepared a detailed presentation on the demographics of Cape Verdeans in the city and the ELL programs at the schools that Cape Verdean students attend. This research has been circulated throughout the district and the city. Instead of going over the presentation in detail, Paulo provided an overview. There used to be good Cape Verdean programs at the Emerson, Condon, and Dearborn. Over time, the community has seen these programs change or the school be reorganized and the district has not provided adequate replacements for Cape Verdean students. As a result, the Cape Verdean community has worked with experts including academics and educators, making site visits and collecting data, to document the current landscape and experiences of Cape Verdean students and to make recommendations based on the current demographics in BPS schools. The site visits showed that at many schools where they were serving Cape Verdean ELLs, even those with SEI Cape Verdean programs were often not adequately

staffed. The reality is that based on site visits some schools are not actually implementing SEI Cape Verdean programs; the teachers are not fluent in Cape Verdean Kriulu. There are also concerns with the Newcomers Assessment and Counseling Center where there are anecdotes of inconsistent school assignment and program recommendations. Students with proficiency in their native language assigned to SLIFE programs or administratively assigned to schools with low numbers of Cape Verdean students.

Paulo DeBarros has made this same presentation several times and has had meetings with BPS officials, but the conversations did not lead to any changes. The goal is to make sure that there are SEI Cape Verdean programs for students in grade K through 12. The district needs to create and strengthen programs and also educate parents to the differences between ELL program types.

The most important takeaways from his presentation are (1) that Cape Verdean ELs in Clusters D and E should have choices in school and program for grades K-12, SLIFE, SEI, and ultimately Dual Language; (2) the district needs to do a better job of educating parents on the options available and the differences between the school and program choices; and (3) at programs serving Cape Verdean ELLs, ensure there is appropriate staffing and work to retain current staff. Recommendations for program expansion/creation: for K-5 Mattahunt and Condon; for K-8, Orchard Gardens and MLK; for 6-8 Lella Fredericks and Dearborn; for 9-12, Burke, Madison Park, Dearborn, and International Newcomers Academy.

OELL and Budget Office – Presentation of Data on Cape Verdean ELLs

Dr. Esparza introduced the data and information that OELL initiated along with Assignment and Budget. Daphne Germain presented a slide deck with information on the Cape Verdeans in BPS and the work OELL have done over the past few years on this population. The slide deck had three objectives: (1) to provide information to the community around what been done to date on Cape Verdean programming; (2) to identify opportunities for deeper partnerships with the Cape Verdean community; and (3) establish better communication forums to share our learnings, work complete, and hear feedback from community.

BPS has made positive strides with the Cape Verdean community in Boston including working with Dr. Donald Macedo and working with community members who advocated for a dual language program. There have also been increases in programming opportunities for Cape Verdean ELLs for SY17-18: (1) Madison Park is adding SLIFE programming and for all SLIFE students have access to Vocational Ed options in 9th grade; (2) Orchard Gardens is become a full K-8 SEI Cape Verdean program; and (3) Dearborn is extended their SEI Cape Verdean program to 6-12 with a Cape Verdean SLIFE program for grades 6-8.

OELL sees four programming options for Cape Verdean students: Dual Language, SEI Cape Verdean, Language Heritage Programs, and SLIFE. The district is working with Dr. Donald Macedo and teachers to prepare dual language curriculum starting at grade K1 and they are working to open a program with a school to be determined for SY18-19. Looking at the current registration and enrollment data, there is not a strong case to open a full strand of CV SEI program. The district is reviewing current practices of how students are assigned and are identifying what additional linguistic and cultural supports can be provided to support students' academic gains. OELL is rolling our before or after-school Heritage Language programming at some schools.

Nate Kuder from the Budget Office presented data on the current distribution of Cape Verdean ELLs in BPS schools. There are 336 Cape Verdean ELD Level 1-3 ELLs in a SEI Cape Verdean ELL program (at Burke, Dearborn, Orchard Gardens, and Newcomers academy). They then provided the number of Cape Verdean ELD 1-3 ELLs in any other program. These data shows that (1) Cape Verdean ELLs attend numerous schools across multiple Clusters; and (2) there are no more than 13 Cape Verdean ELLs in one grade at any of these schools with many schools and grades having less than 6 students. 13 students is an insufficient number of students to have fiscally viable SEI language-specific program (you need 18

students). They then presented data on the number of former ELLs at each school. Again, the numbers are low in schools across the district. Based on this current data, there is not a feasible spot for new SEI Cape Verdean programs with the current student assignment practices.

There has been work with Orchard Gardens where following an audit of the ELL programs found that the former principal was not actually implementing a SEI Cape Verdean program. Starting with this school year (SY16-17), they worked closely with the new school leadership and cleaned up the programs to make sure they were actually implementing SEI Cape Verdean. Expanding the SEI Cape Verdean strand to K-8 makes it so families can choose the school based on the knowledge that they can stay in the program past 5th grade. Paulo DeBarros shared that there have been improvements at Orchard Gardens including a guidance counselor who is offering classes in Cape Verdean Kriulu for teachers.

Q: [Miren Uriarte] So the only way to create a new SEI Cape Verdean program for grade 9-12 would to group students or concentrate students across high schools?

Q: [Alejandra St. Guillen] Is there a mechanism in place to parents to make this change?

Q: [Paulo DeBarros] It seemed like Cape Verdean students were doing better when CV students were concentrated in schools, before the new student assignment plan. Parents looking at the Dearborn are told that they are capacity and there is no room for them.

A: [Daphne Germain] This is a problem that they are hearing. Similar experiences with Haitian families.

A: [Nate Kuder] This is incorrect; there are currently 8 open seats at Orchard Gardens in the SEI Cape Verdean program. There is a breakdown in the information.

Nate Kuder shared about the current work being done to determine how to establish multiple SEI language specific programs in one school. The goal is always to have culturally responsive and appropriate staff in every school, but they also need to maintain some flexibility. It is expensive to run SEI programs in low-incidence ELL schools or SEI schools with low numbers of ELLs from language groups. They are looking to start conversations with stakeholders to develop a strategic plan to new language specific programs in high-performing schools.

Daphne Germain and Vivian Tam shared information on Instructional Options for Cape Verdean students moving forward. As discussed, OELL is working to create a Dual Language program; potential school options include DSNI, Everett, King, Winthrop, and Orchard Gardens. For Heritage Language programs potentially school options are Burke, Dearborn, Orchard Gardens, International, BATA, and Condon.

Most importantly for this conversation, for SEI Cape Verdean programs for SY17-18, there are 440 seats in SEI CV programs and 45 seats for CV SLIFE programs. These programs are at Burke, Dearborn, and Orchard Gardens. The Condon is a potential option for a new strand. At Madison Park there is a CV SLIFE program and SEI Multilingual for CV ELLs.

Q: [Paulo DeBarros] Dual Language programs are a great goal, but the need right now is SEI Cape Verdean programs. This is a practical need right now. In addition to the Condon, a potential site for another program is the King. Opening up new programs is great, but we need to make sure we are educating parents about these options. This is an issue with NACC, to make sure they know the programs being offered for the next school year, the actual capacity for CV ELLs, and the benefits of these programs. This might help with the concentration of families. Right now the charter schools are doing a much better job of advertising to Cape Verdean families (but when they attend these schools they aren't getting the services they need so they return to BPS). How can we re-brand these schools for the families?

Q: [John Mudd] Very interested in the discussion of appropriate number of programs at a given school. This will require changes to the current system. What will the process look like to determine the number

of programs and their distribution? How will the district sell this potential concentration of students to DOJ? And how will they sell it to parents?

A: [Nate Kuder] There are two big events that are helping with engaging families. Build BPS provides a community-based discussion looking t both facilities and programs.