

THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE OF THE CITY OF BOSTON



Minutes of the English Language Learners (ELL) Task Force Meeting February 2, 2017

The English Language Learners Task Force of the Boston School Committee held a meeting on February 2, 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.

Call to Order:

Task Force Members Present: Miren Uriarte, Suzanne Lee, Janet Anderson, John Mudd, Kim Janey, Cheng Imm Tan, Paulo De Barros, Maria Serpa, Bob Hildreth, Samuel Hurtado, Diana Lam, and Michael Berardino - Coordinator. **Other persons and BPS Staff Present:** Frances Esparza, Daphne Germain, Vivian Tam, Ivan Borrero, Priya Tahiliani, Emily Qazilbash, Amanda Preston-Sicari, Eric Stevens, Alex Oliver-Davila (Boston School Committee member), Jonathon Rodriguez. **Members Absent:** Geralde Gabeau, Abdul Hussein, Alejandra St. Guillen.

Michael Berardino opened the meeting in his capacity of Coordinator of the Task Force.

Introductions

Miren Uriarte, co-chair of the ELL Task Force began the meeting by offering a few words about the meeting and the context of the ELL Task Force work. The night before, the Budget Office presented the proposed budget to the School Committee and it is clear that there are some potential budget issues facing ELL programming coming up. These issues are related to student assignment. The ELL Task Force will be organizing meetings between the ad hoc Finance subcommittee and the budget office.

Suzanne Lee, co-chair of the ELL Task Force added that this is a trying time and this important that we send a clear message to the district, to the students, and to the families that we are in support of all students regardless of immigration status. The district has had a positive reaction to the new presidential administration and the policies and rhetoric surrounding immigrants. Dr. Frances Esparza, Assistant Superintendent Office of ELL informed the Task Force that the Superintendent is putting together a website which has all of the available resources for any undocumented families.

The Task Force reviewed the Minutes from the December 1st meeting. Maria Serpa offered one modification to the minutes, that on page 3, the minutes should read, "There is a misperception that dual language programs are more expensive than SEI programs". With this correction the minutes were approved unanimously.

BPS Instructional Paper

Christine Cronin, from Professional Learning, on behalf of Assistant Superintendent Dr. Doannie Tran, presented the Executive Summary and the English Language Development Framework section of the BPS Instructional Position Paper (IPP). The ELL Task Force had not seen the document prior to the meeting and needed clarification around the purposes of the meeting. The goal is to provide the Task Force with an overall understanding of the structure of the IPP. Dr. Esparza informed the Task Force that each department in BPS provided input to create a district vision of BPS Instruction. The OELL input focused on the 3Cs and I model as a foundation of English Language Development (ELD) as well as Multi-Tiered Support System (MTSS) and RTI.

Christine Cronin added that the goal was to build a platform for instruction for the whole district, for all teachers. Each content area was tasked with bringing assets to the document. The asset team then synthesized the input from each content area. The executive summary is the result of this synthesis. Once the document is finalized it will be online to make it easier for administrators and teachers to access it. How might the IPP be presented and organized so that the needs of ELLs can be adequately represented.

[Dr. Esparza]: The goal of the IPP is to have district-wide strategies so that principals can have a framework so that students have cognitively demanding tasks, all while working within culturally and linguistically responsive guidelines. UDL/RTI/MTSS, OELL is working with schools so that no matter what the program type is, teachers must make sure that they are keeping students engaged. Lessons can't be just lecture based; lessons need to be interactive.

OELL submitted the ELD Framework, which focuses on the 3 C's and I: Content, Connections, Comprehensibility, and Interaction. Content – it is important that teachers have the content and the context of the material. The teachers and students partner to make connections between the lessons and the neighborhood and community. Comprehension – the goal isn't just to get students to learn the materials; it isn't just pushing the content, it is making sure that everything has been connected and relatable.

Q: [Paulo Debarros] There are often objectives on the ground, but they aren't implemented partly because teachers are continually asked to learn new pedagogical approaches.

Q: [Miren Uriarte] What is the plan for implementing the professional development for this?

A: [Dr. Esparza]: Right now, they are in the stage of asset collection and development, but the goal is to make sure all principals and teachers are trained to implement these frameworks.

Q: [Miren Uriarte] So this would be a whole school instruction?

Q: [Janet Anderson] This approach, the 3 C's and I, seems like it is an approach that would benefit all students, not just ELLs.

A: [Christine Cronin] The Executive Summary is an integrated vision for what is good for all students. This is what we need for all students, to access this together. This requires clarity of message; to measure the goals and benefits are clear to all stakeholders.

Q: [Paulo Debarros] How will "implementation" work? Will teachers be held accountable for implementing this framework?

A: [Dr. Esparza] This is an important issue to raise. It will be challenging to hold teachers accountable for implementing and following the ELD Frameworks. Right now there is no rubric for evaluating teachers working with ELs. This is one of the goals with OHC, to make sure that students are acquiring English. Each TLT works with 30 schools along with the Instructional Superintendent to implement the guidelines from OELL. This means it is challenging to hold teachers accountable.

A: [Christine Cronin] On the PD piece. In the past, each department was competing for finite resources (time and money) around PD. Teachers were often getting competing PD. The goal is to have uniform PD across the district. This will begin with all the Summer Institutes and extend into the school year.

Q: [Bob Hildreth] There are concerns around the “connections” piece of the 3 C’s and I. We need to make sure that there is a circle for families and community. Families can be included as an asset for how to integrate two languages. For instance, when we consider student safety, we know from research that the effects of bullying are mitigated by family support or exacerbated by a lack of familial support. There needs to be a fourth circle in the diagram.

Q: [Alex Oliver-Davila] Agreed and there also needs to be an affirmation of the cultural identity of students and this has to be more central to the document.

Q: [Kim Janey] Design for Diversity in preparing the lessons. Making sure that this is actually implemented. One of the goals of the Opportunity and Achievement Gap Task Force is to decolonize knowledge. This is not just teaching cultural topics, this is changing the way content is taught.

Q: [Maria Serpa] While it is important to have a document that creates an instructional approach for all students, it is important that we remember that good teaching for ELs is different than it is for Native English speakers. This needs to be acknowledged.

Q: [John Mudd] Two comments. First, like the work of the Opportunity and Achievement Gap, every district policy should be explicit in how the changes are going to impact black vs. white students, Latino vs. White students, ELs vs. native English speakers, SPED vs. non-SPED students. Name it. This can’t just be implied, it has to be part of the policy. Second, PD should be reflected across the entire district, system-wide. But we still have not seen this actually implemented. Lay out how PD district-wide will actually happen.

Q: [Diana Lam] All of these suggestions are good. Putting on a systemic hat, the devil is in the details. The district is big on vision, but is not good at executing the vision. If this new IPP is the direction the district is taking, it should be showed in the budget. How can each TLT cover 30 schools? We are not having accountability in central office. For instance how are we keeping everyone accountable for achieving the goals of student engagement? How do we design this? There needs to be more specifics. How do we create an employment force that actual has leadership and expertise and a hiring process needs to reflect this?

Q: [Samuel Hurtado] This document is a positive direction for classroom instruction. How does this relate to social-emotional development of students?

A: [Christine Cronin] This is just one piece of the entire document. Today we are just looking at the Executive Summary and the ELD Frameworks. There is an entire section on Social Emotional frameworks.

Q: [Suzanne Lee] Whole school improvement has been happening in the district for decades. This isn’t new. The execution of the plans is always the issue, When are teachers going to have the time to actually digest and learn the content of this instructional document? When will we see schools implement this so that it isn’t just a well-meaning document? Time is a resource. How will this work within the current contract discussion?

Q: [Miren Uriarte] How do we actually integrate these comments?

A: [Christine Cronin] We will integrate this feedback into the next version of the document. These comments today are reflective of the larger movement and feedback received for the whole document. The budget is an issue, making sure the PD budget reflects the rollout of the IPP.

[Dr. Esparza] The ELL Task Force should get the entire IPP, get the whole draft and provide feedback. Diana Lam, Cheng Imm Tan, Samuel Hurtado, and Maria Serpa will be point people on providing and integrating feedback into the document.

OHC Updates

Assistant Superintendent Emily Qazilbash, as well as Amanda Preston-Sicari and Eric Stevens from the Office of Human Capital presented data and information following a data request from the ELL Task Force. The data request covered assessing/evaluating staffing need, responding to the need, and the evaluation and staffing of principals. Prior to the meeting OHC informed the ELL Task Force that the Probable Org for the 2017-2018 school year is at the end of February, which meant that all data are from the 2016-2017 school year.

OHC began by presenting on the teacher and paraprofessional open positions from SY16-17 and the proportion of these positions that required ESL certification, required SPED certification, required ESL and SPED certification, and the positions that specified language fluency. The data show that of the 978 posted teacher vacancies in SY16-17 for all grades, 113 (12%) required ESL certification, 313 (32%) required SPED certification, 22 (2%) required ESL and SPED certification, and 47 (5%) specified language fluency. For the 314 total posted para vacancies in SY16-17, 201 (64%) worked with SPED and 29 (5%) specified language fluency.

Q: [Maria Serpa] In terms of recruitment, why not have the philosophy where we recruit people with multiple skills. When we look at the data, there are only 2% of positions that required ESL and SPED certification, when one-third of all ELs are SPED?

A: [Emily Qazilbash] Not all positions need ESL certification. Teachers that work with ELs can teach and still be in compliance with an SEI endorsement.

Q: [John Mudd] The system has struggled to accurately understand and identify the SPED-ELL population. OELL and Office of SPED have gone in person to survey this population, in order to identify how many ELL-SPED students there are in each school and to understand what the staffing needs are.

A: [Emily Qazilbash] There is new guidance in the Probable Org, which they will share with the ELL Task Force. There are assessments to understand the current need. But there are also contract issues; currently it is easier to require paras to have SEPD certification than it is to require paras to have ESL certification. If you look at page 22 of the Probable Org guidance document, teachers with ELs in the classroom are expected to be taught by ESL licensed or SEI endorsed. However, many paras and teachers are not ESL licensed. The district has set up several ESL pathways, including becoming a certified DESE RETELL vendor, but there are still teachers and paras that do not have the correct licensure. The district/OHC has more leverage with ELLs than with SPED. Five years ago, OHC completed an audit of permanent teachers and told all teachers who were missing the appropriate certification they had 5 years to complete all the required courses. After 5 years, there are still 98 teachers that have not completed the compliance. Superintendent Chang even found funds to pay for all of their courses, but several have not completed the courses.

Q: [Kim Janey] Why haven't they taken the classes?

A: [Emily Qazilbash] There are numerous reasons – family situations, didn't have time, or some said they didn't think it would matter.

Q: [Bob Hildreth] There is a perception that the courses required for the licensure are a "heavy lift" and that it is too burdensome.

Q: [Miren Uriarte] If a teacher/para is not willing to take the course to get ESL certified, maybe they shouldn't be teaching ELLs.

Q: [Kim Janey] Can we get the racial breakdown of these 98 teachers who still aren't certified after 5 years?

A: [Emily Qazilbash] The ESL test is hard. About 50% pass.

A: [Frances Esparza] The RETELL course for SEI endorsement requires 60 hours of course work.

Q: [Maria Serpa] In her professional opinion, if you complete the course work, the ESL test is easy to pass. But there is still a concern about requiring the right type of teacher. In BPS, SPED still trumps ELL. But monolingual SPED certified teachers are not qualified to teach ELLs. An ESL teacher per se is not an adequate teacher under current requirements. Legally, we need to identify teachers that have both certifications; SPED teachers that know how to teach ESL.

A: [Emily Qazilbash] OHC has added language fluency to all job descriptions. Teachers self identify their fluency.

Q: [Miren Uriarte] Having only 2% of job openings requiring both SPED and ELL certifications show a lack of understanding of the population. We talk about accountability for teachers. But what about accountability for central office as well? What is the responsibility of the district? We hear stories about principals where schools are getting money for ELL and SPED, but not implementing them. How do we hold everyone accountable?

A: [Emily Qazilbash] We agree. These data are from SY1617. There are new guiding documents for the upcoming Probable Org. With the new guidelines, the principals have a chance to truly identify the level of need in their schools. If there are issues where principals do not follow guidance, the Assistant Superintendent of Instruction has oversight.

Q: [Paulo Debarros] What are the current pathways and recruitment?

A: [Amanda Preston-Sicari] Students at the colleges of education at local universities want to teach at BPS. We see this at the job fairs. However, when they go to recruit at the universities with students that are about to graduate, the graduating students don't realize they need certification, dual certifications, and sometimes triple certification. And at that point it is too late to get these certifications in order to apply for positions.

In terms of recruitment, applicants to the district either apply directly to open positions at specific schools or apply for positions district-wide. When there are applicants with ESL certifications, SPED certification, both ESL and SPED, those with language fluency, or candidates of color, OHC flags those applicants. School leaders can recruit for specific positions at their school or they can pull from the pool of all the applicants. School leaders who are not finding qualified applicants directly to their school can go to OHC for help with identifying qualified candidates.

Q: [Suzanne Lee] What about instances where there are teacher that are qualified but unhappy at their current school? We should have a mechanism to keep these qualified teachers in the district. There were several instances last year where teachers ended up leaving for another district because they were not being placed at another school in BPS.

Amanda Preston-Sicari discussed the various recruitment methods OHC is currently undertaking. They are running recruitment events where they can get school leaders and potential applicants in the same room together. This allows for on-site interviews, which reduced barriers to application. They are also running the annual diversity career fair. If candidates have fluency in tracked languages, they are flagged. The emphasis at all events is that even if a potential applicant does not list having ESL certification, they encourage that teachers get dual or triple certification. They now ask all applicants for language fluency, but the responses are self-reported. There is no method currently used to verify their fluency. This year for applicants indicating they have fluency they have added a second option asking if this is academic or conversational fluency.

OHC presented the most recent Recruitment Data (as of 2/2/2017). While early in the process, the current recruitment data is on track with the previous two years. About 25% of all applicants indicated fluency in

one of the tracked languages. The vast majority of these are Spanish speakers. Of the current applicants, 19% are ESL certified, 24% are SED certified, and 9% are dual certified (ESL and SPED).

Q: [Maria Serpa] An option for identifying if applicants are truly fluent is looking for/recruiting applicants that are certified bilingual teachers. Foreign language teachers would also be a potential group.

Q: [Kim Janey] First, this recruitment data has both teachers and guidance counselors together. It would be good to see these two groups separated so that we can get a more accurate understanding of the language fluency and the certification of these applicants. Second, the Garrity Order is outdated and we need to make sure we are tracking categories reflective of the current demographics in the city. Third, at the diversity fairs, there are concerns because they are put on by the Boston Compact, which means that both charter schools and traditional public schools are at the same recruiting event. This is potentially problematic, as the charter schools do not require that applicants already have their ESL certification. This creates unnecessary completion.

Q: [John Mudd] Can we get the proportion of dual certified applicants by language group?

Q: [Miren Uriarte] Has there been recruitment of teachers in Puerto Rico, Dominican Republic, Spain, Portugal, or Brazil? Teachers in these countries are fluent in their native language and if they are special education teachers already have the expertise.

Q: [Maria Serpa] There are also opportunities with universities in other countries.

A: [Emily Qazilbash] OHC has recruited in other countries and Puerto Rico. So far, the yield has been very low, while the expense is high. There are also programs through SEED grants, with teacher pipelines and Boston Teaching Fellows to develop the homegrown teachers.

Q: [Paulo Debarros] Have you looked into the Cape Verdean program at Bridgewater State? They have partnered with teachers in Cape Verde. Paulo will get OHC in touch with that program. Another idea for a source of new teachers is current substitute teachers. We know they are already comfortable in a classroom. What about plans to develop these potential teachers? Are there incentives in place to create this pipeline?

Q: [Janet Anderson] EdVestors is working with paras to help with certification as well.

Q: [Dr. Esparza] The parent liaisons are another potential source of teachers.

A: [Emily Qazilbash] These are important ideas. Tapping individuals that are motivated and are already in a classroom is a positive idea – substitute, paraprofessionals. They have also worked with the City Year volunteers.

Q: [Samuel Hurtado] One concern with recruiting SPED-ELL teachers from other countries is that other countries are so far behind in SPED. When thinking about teachers in the It is very challenging to become a teacher with all of these requirements. Teachers are thinking about leaving because of these multiple licensure. Not sure how we deal with this. We of course want certification, but how do we implement this?

Q: [Suzanne Lee] We need to be mindful of all the challenges of teaching in a district like BPS. We need to be mindful of how we talk about the district and the profession. It is a noble profession and we should be supportive of the teachers and the applicants.

OELL - Dual Language Programs

Dr. Esparza and Vivian Tam presented information on dual language programs in the district. The focus is on Haitian Creole and Cape Verdean Kriolu. Currently there is only one Cape Verdean program in the district. They are in the process of starting a Haitian Creole Dual Language program at the Mattahunt (Mattapan Early Education Center). It will be a K1 program with up to 25 students. They started recruitment on January 1st. The classroom will have one teacher and 1 para and they are developing` culturally appropriate curriculum. The goal is to integrate this program into the whole school.

Q: [Miren Uriarte] The recruitment of Haitian students will likely be easy. How are you recruiting English speakers?

A: [Vivian Tam] They are looking in the community, discussing the benefits of the program.

Q: [Kim Janey] What is the recruitment of teachers especially if the program grows each year?

A: [Dr. Esparza] Right now they have a teacher for next year. There is a professor at MIT with expertise in Haitian language and culture that is teaching course. That is a potential pipeline.

Q: [Suzanne Lee] We need to learn from the Dever. It is important that we have the support of the families and not just starting a dual language program that doesn't fit a need.

A: [Dr. Esparza] Agreed. This program was the result of parents asking for a program.

Q: [Janet Anderson] What is the program design?

A: [Vivian Tam] The program is a two-way program, 70% Haitian Creole, 30% English in grade K1.

Q: [Samuel Hurtado] Has the School Wide Council been involved with the design and implementation of this program. They never got to hear how this program could work. What resources are needed? Teachers are scared to change the program type because they fear for their job. Dual language programs are a huge change. And there are other options that are not as dramatic a change as dual language. For instance, at the Quincy there are other potential models including heritage language programs.

A: [Dr. Esparza] If schools invite OELL to discuss the creation or expansion of programs, they will support this, but they have not been asked.

Q: [Cheng Imm Tan] Parent engagement is critical. If parents are involved, the program will be more powerful. At the Quincy, parents were not asked of their preference and had very little involvement in the implementation of the programs.

A: [Dr. Esparza] We have heard of instances where parent surveys with preferences for program types are not being used by principals.

Q: [Miren Uriarte] Why do we not have continuity? This program will feed into the Taylor, which does not have a preexisting dual language program.

A: [Dr. Esparza] The Taylor will start by adding heritage language programs for one year then move to dual language next year when the program expands. The dual language program is starting with K1 and the growth and expansion depends on demand. This demand will also determine the transition from heritage language to dual language at the Taylor.

Q: [Kim Janey] We caution the district to make sure to have a long-term plan for new dual language programs.

Q: [Maria Serpa] SEI/Question #2 was very effective. There are still teachers who think that bilingual education is illegal. We need an effective marketing campaign to support dual language programs.

Q: [Samuel] If the priority is bilingualism, if this is going to work, it needs to be with a new school. If the district is going to merge schools or open new schools, we need to start with the ground up.

Q: [Diana Lam] There is a concern about transitioning a school from heritage language programs to dual language programs; there is a big gap between heritage language programs and dual language programs. How can we make this transition smoothly?

It was decided to set up time to discuss dual language programs at the next ELL task Force meeting.

Paulo Debarros shared the work he has been doing along with META. They have been visiting schools where Cape Verdean students are enrolled and talking to families. It is critical that immigrant groups feel like they belong. The program design is important, but if the families do not feel like they belong, no program will succeed. For the past two years, there has been no movement in programs for Cape

Verdeans. Daphne Germain from OELL shared information that they have been strengthening the Cape Verdean SEI strand at Orchard Gardens. There used to be two strands, but they have pulled out the Spanish strand.

Q: [Paulo Debarros] At the Dearborn they have stopped taking students for grades 6 through 8. All the ELLs are in one class.

A: [Daphne Germain] All the ELD Level 1 students are pulled together regardless of grade level, but they go back to their regular grade classroom for content. It is a little disjointed.

Q: [Paulo Debarros] The evidence that META and Paulo have compiled showed that at Orchard Gardens there is SEI Cape Verdean program that is not actually a language specific program. The teacher does not speak Cape Verdean Kriolu.

Q: [Kim Janey] We are staring at barriers. Adults are putting their needs above the needs of students. The School Committee needs to hear about this. The Executive Board needs to hear about this.

Q: [Cheng Imm Tan] The Parent Engagement subcommittee is also working with META and there are concerns around the implementation of the SLIFE programs in the district.

It was decided that the ELL task Force will add a meeting where the focus will be on the Cape Verdean programs and the other issues META are looking at.

Subcommittee Updates

Janet Anderson provided an update on a meeting between the Data Subcommittee and OELL looking at the October DOJ reports. The DOJ compliance is improving and according to the DOJ response, continues to move in a positive direction. Difficulties remain in compliance in the middle and upper grades where the ELL population is lower. There is still some confusion around the total number of licensed teachers in the district and what proportion remains with inadequate licensure.

Cheng Imm Tan provide updates on the work of the Parent Engagement subcommittee. They met with Assistant Superintended Monica Roberts to discuss the rubric for evaluating parent engagement. Currently in the principal evaluations, principals can be deemed proficient even if they have no parent engagement. They are working with Office of Engagement to provide a reliable measure of engagement and figuring out how to incorporate this into principal evaluation. The goal is to add parent engagement into the School Quality Frameworks.

Public Comments

Jonathon Rodriguez, an external organizer for BTU provided two comments. First Mr. Rodriguez wanted to discuss the Weighted Student Formula in conjunction with the new poverty measure. There are many concerns, especially with immigrants, that schools are not receiving the appropriate federal funding for low-income students. There has been a slight increase in “Economically Disadvantaged”, but the percentages still remain below the previous low-income measure. Miren Uriarte discussed how they went through school by school with META to look at the percentages of students that are identified as economically disadvantaged. They found no relationship/correlation between immigrant status and poverty. The BPS measure for economically disadvantaged includes SCHIP, which covers immigrants. Miren offered to share this data with Mr. Rodriguez.

Second, Mr. Rodriguez wanted to know how teacher voices are implemented and heard in the ELL Task Force. For instance, MCAS scores continue to be very punitive for teachers. Teachers that are teaching high numbers of ELD Level 1 students are being unnecessarily punished for the MCAS performance of students. It was suggested to hold a joint meeting between the ELL Task Force and the BTU ELL Subcommittee.

The meeting was adjourned.