

Department of Global Programs: Kayla Dorsey-Twumasi, Director
Excellence for All: Dr. Regine Phillipeaux, Executive Director
Office of Academics and Professional Learning: Christine Landry, Assistant Superintendent
Office of Early Childhood Education: Dr. Jason Sachs, Executive Director
Office of English Learners: Faye Karp, Interim Assistant Superintendent
Office of Health and Wellness: Jill Carter, Assistant Superintendent
Office of Special Education: Cindie Nielson, Assistant Superintendent
STEM Programming: Elizabeth Milewski, Executive Director

To: Boston Public Schools, School Committee Members
From: Andrea Zayas, Chief Academic Officer
Faye Karp, Interim Assistant Superintendent OEL
Date: 6.09.20
RE: Brief on English Learners Task Force 6.10.20 S.C. Presentation

The English Learner Task Force is an official subcommittee of the Boston Public Schools School Committee. Its purpose is to provide guidance to the SC and to monitor and provide support. They will be presenting to the School Committee on Wednesday, June 10th, 2020. The purpose of this memorandum is to provide the School Committee with presentation highlights as well as a succinct analysis of the presentation from BPS' perspective.

Presentation Highlights

ELs comprise 31% of students in BPS, and nearly half of students (49%) in BPS have acquired English as their second language. ELSWD have the lowest performance outcomes of all students in the district. Graduation rates and other standardized tests scores all demonstrate ELs mastering content at significantly lower rates than their peers. The Task Force has advocated for: dual language programming, resulting in the Vietnamese, Cape Verdean, and expanded Haitian Creole programs being planned; tracking of language capacity of employees, resulting in language data being captured for all new hires; implementation of a language access and cultural responsiveness checklist. The Task Force credits the DOJ for their intervention in the BPS, which has created the pressure necessary for systems change to positively impact English Learner experience.

What We've Learned

The Task Force has a stated clarity about the mindset shift that is needed to impact lasting change in the Boston Public Schools. We must engage language-specific communities to gather their insights about how to move an agenda to benefit ELs. All departments need to be involved in planning for the success of ELs. We have been planning from an instructional lens; the challenges are also structural, and connected to processes in various offices in the BPS.

Recommendations

We agree with the Task Force's recommendations, namely that we convene a committee of experts and stakeholders in bilingual and dual-language education to collaborate with us to develop our LOOK Act plan, and align that committee's work to our BPS Strategic Plan. Secondly, intentionally plan across divisions for building language capacity in BPS: for new programs, demographic data trends should drive placement of new EL programs in schools accessible to linguistic minority communities; expand language-specific EL programs, and phase out SEI; implement the emerging Vietnamese and Cape Verdean programs; monitor language capacity, for example, by setting language gap reduction goals (to increase the percentage of teachers that can communicate with students in the language they speak); and to ensure the Office of Special Education implements and monitors strategies for ELSWD.