

THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE OF THE CITY OF BOSTON  
**English Language Learners (ELL) Task Force:**  
**ELL-SWDs Subcommittee Report**  
**May 27, 2015**

Distinguished Members of the School Committee of the City of Boston:

One third of the students in special education at BPS are English Language Learners with Disabilities (ELL-SWDs). This means that nearly 3,500 of the 10,910 Special Education students have both 'Language Learning' as well as 'Special Needs'. This is many more than most people have understood and presents a special challenge to BPS. Their school specialized learning is governed by two kinds of laws, Language Learning and Special Education, that must be integrated in practice so that these students are provided with the educational services they are entitled to by law and they need to develop their potential.

The ELL Task Force created a subcommittee to focus on the particular needs of this under-recognized group of ELL students with disabilities. Through the work of this subcommittee, for the first time we brought together the BPS leadership of Special Education, Office of English Language Learning, and Office of Human Capital to meet together to develop joint strategies to provide education and learning for these 4,000 students. BPS reported two areas of significant improvement. A major advance had been made in bi-lingual assessment for psychological evaluations of ELL/SWDs in native languages and that 100% of IEPs now include current ELD levels and goals. In addition, the BPS now has a staff position of Supervisor/Coordinator with responsibility to bridge Special Education and Language Learning Education. (The new structure suggested by the incoming superintendent bringing SPED and ELL together under one manager could facilitate this coordinated action.)

Our most significant, overall conclusion, is that even though some progress has been made, students with disabilities who are ELLs (aka ELL/PED) have not yet been provided with appropriate services that meet their unique needs. Special Education and Language Learning Education Departments have functioned as two separate silos.

Major challenges remain. Continuing work of the ELL Task Force is of paramount importance to ensure that the school system addresses the needs of the SPED/ELL students and to monitor the implementation of the recommendations made in our report on this issue submitted to the district in November of 2014. These recommendations fall into four major areas outlined briefly below:

### **1. The IEP Design Process**

BPS must ensure that IEPs provide linguistically and culturally appropriate education in the least restrictive program environment specific to ELL-SWDs by taking steps to institute new program and staff assignment codes and reinstating the designation of bilingual-special education teacher.

## **2.The Hiring of Qualified Personnel for ELL-SWDs**

BPS must develop an interdepartmental staff needs analysis and a joint recruitment and hiring strategy to increase the availability of dually certified teachers to ensure that Special Education teachers who are hired must hold both a Special Education as well as an ESL/TESOL or bilingual licensures by language groups.

## **3.Professional Development**

BPS must address internal capacity building. There is currently not a district-wide professional development capacity to ensure appropriate culturally and linguistically responsive professional development at BPS, which increases Teacher Quality in ELL Special Education and Inclusion that addresses the needs of ELL-SWDs from the start. It must be a top priority for BPS to create and implement a coherent, system-wide strategy to meet these professional development needs.

## **4.Guidance Document**

BPS must complete the Special Education guidance document for ELL-SWDs required by the Department of Justice that clearly indicates what is additional and/or different about the implementation of Special education services from pre-referral / RTI to eligibility legal processes for ELL Students with Disabilities.

And in all cases, there must be attention to family engagement and the provision of translations and qualified interpreters who are able to help the parents of SPED/ELL students navigate the special education system and the IEP process.

The full report is attached as Appendix A.

We can answer any questions that the committee may have about this area of education. As a final thought, I want to emphasize that these challenges and opportunities need the continuation of a strong School Committee ELL Task Force to continue the work that still needs to be done for the children and youth at BPS. Thank You

ELL-SWDs Subcommittee Members:

Rev.Cheng Tan, M.Div; John Mudd, Ph.D.; Maria de Lourdes B. Serpa, Ed.D. (Chair);  
With Maria Campanario-Araica, CAGS, & Mercedes Orozco, CAGS from BPS

**Free and Appropriate Education  
In the Least Restrictive Environment for ELL-SWDs**

## *APPENDIX A – Report from the ELL-SWDs Subcommittee*

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### ELL Task Force of the Boston School Committee **ELL-SWDs Subcommittee** *Report on Current Priorities and Action Steps*

November 21, 2014

Members: Maria de Lourdes B. Serpa, Ed.D. (Chair), Cheng Tan, M.Div.; ; John Mudd, Ph.D. ; Maria Campanario-Araica, CAGS and Mercedes Orozco, CAGS

ELL-SWDs Subcommittee of the *ELL English Language Learners Task Force* held two meetings on November 3 & 14, 2014 at Lesley University with two major purposes: (1) To follow-up on the decision made by the ELL School Committee Task Force to deepen a shared understanding about the critical issues affecting English Language Learners with Disabilities (ELL-SWDs) at BPS and (2) To discuss and plan for recommendations to be presented to the ELL School Committee Task Force at the November 21<sup>st</sup> 2014 meeting.

ELL-SWDs are entitled to a Free and Appropriate Education (FAPE) in the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) according to (IDEA 2004). These students have additional and or different needs when compared with English Proficient students because they are in the process of learning a new language and adapting to a new culture. To ensure appropriate services to this segment of the BPS Population four priorities emerged from this subcommittee: IEP, Hiring, Professional Development & Guidance Document.

**1. IEP Design Process.** IEPs for ELL-SWD students must reflect the intersection of Special Education legal requirements (IDEA 2004) with Language Learning Education provisions (TITLE III of NCLB)

**Need:** IEPs which provide for linguistically and culturally appropriate education in the least restrictive program environment specific to ELL-SWDs

#### **Action Steps:**

##### ***a. Procedures: There must be***

- (1) Program codes to identify ELL-SWDs that reflect both language/cultural and special needs across different disabilities and levels of English proficiency.
- (2) Appropriate staff assignment codes to ensure qualified staff for this school age population
- (3) Reinstatement of the designation of bilingual- TESOL special education teacher in SEIMS.
- (4) IEPs for ELL-SWDs must also include English language Learning development goals

##### ***b. Parental Participation/Level of understanding***

- (1) There needs to be linguistically and culturally responsive communication and interaction with parents
- (2) Ensure meeting times with parents are at a convenient time for the parents

##### ***c. Interpreters and translations– information is needed about the following questions:***

- (1) How are interpreters made available and appropriately qualified?
- (2) How does Boston vet Interpreters for IEP meetings?

(3) Accuracy and adequacy of translations for parents

NOTE: This is a much broader issue that needs to be addressed

## 2. Hiring of Highly Qualified Personnel for ELL-SWDs

**Need:** Increased availability of dually certified teachers to ensure that Special Education teachers who are hired must hold both a Special Education as well as an ESL/TESOL or bilingual licensures by language groups.

**Action Steps:** BPS Academic departments and the Office of Human Capital need to implement the following:

**a. Project Teacher Need - – information is needed about the following questions**

(1) What is the projected need for ELLSPED teachers? Who is doing it and is this adequate? How are projections made for dually certified teachers? Are both language and disability codes used?

(2) Who is responsible for ensuring appropriate job descriptions that are specific to serving this school age population?

**b. Targeted Recruitment Strategy-**

(1) Devise and implement a targeted recruitment strategy involving all Academic departments and the Office of Human Capital (This is also a requirement of the DOJ Settlement Agreement, paragraph 46 and 47.)

(2) Provide guidance and training for principals/headmasters and personnel subcommittees in hiring ELL-SPED teachers.

(3) Make sure that the BPS goal which states that teachers should reflect the diversity of the students in the schools includes not only race, but also language(s), culture(s) and disability needs.

**3. Professional Development.** Clarification of PD plans, capacity, and adequacy with Ross Wilson, Shakera Walker, Antonieta Bartolomey , Eileen de los Reis & Eileen Nash.

**Need:** To build capacity to ensure appropriate culturally and linguistically responsive professional development which increases Teacher Quality in ELL Special Education and Inclusion that addresses the needs of ELL-SWDs from the start.

**Action Steps:**

**a. Clarification**

There is an urgent need for clarification about who is in charge of Professional Development at BPS and at what level? What is happening now? What is needed? How will it be funded and implemented?

**b. Planning and delivery**

(1) What are the long and short term plans to provide PD to the different groups including: Principals, *ESL ,Bilingual & Sped* Teachers, Evaluators, LATF, etc.

(2) What is the process for including all ELL-SWDs needs in District PD that expands and integrates research-based knowledge related to appropriately

educating ELLs in the Least Restrictive Environment? (PD for UDL, Math etc. must include what is different and additional for ELLs; not as an after- thought).

(3) Pathways must be developed to meet the need for training for dually-certified teachers serving ELL-SWDs.

(4) BPS must have PD to ensure that any Curricular Initiatives must be inclusive and reflect the needs of ELL-SWD students. Examples: UDL & Expeditionary Learning must be integrated for ELL-SWDs.

(5) BPS must ensure that teachers receive PD in culturally responsive, socio-emotional development

(6) PD should be classroom embedded, ongoing and multifaceted.

#### **4. Guidance Document DOJ**

**Need:** In the absence of MA state guidance for ELL-SWDs there is a pressing need for articulating guidance procedures that clearly indicate what is additional and/or different about the implementation of Special education services from pre-referral / RTI to eligibility legal processes for ELL-SWDs.

##### **Action Steps:**

(1) Establish a short-term and long-term plan – [the train has left the station and ELL students are in the train...]

(2) SST Draft document to establish a plan for creating this document with review of other states and school districts.

##### **Additional Issues that must be addressed in the future include**

1. **Transition** of ELL-SWDs to the world of work (required by IDEA 2004)
2. **Eligibility Process** (culturally and linguistically responsive assessment)
3. **Independent Evaluations**
4. **Preschool and K Screening For Special Needs** (Chapter 71B) vs., **Preschool and K Screening for language learning proficiency** (Chapter 71A)
5. **Translations and interpreters**
6. **Intake process** at Parent Welcome Center & Newcomers Assessment Center
  - a. Clarification about the process why two stops for parents of ELLs and ELL-SWDs?
  - b. Walk us through the process for (a) ELLSWDs with an IEP (b) ELLs who may exhibit indicators of a possible disability (c) Who is in charge?

##### **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:**

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BPS has increased interdepartmental collaboration between Special Education & the Office of English Language Learners and has appointed Maria Campanario-Araica, CAGS, as the ELL-SPED Liaison-Director in July 2014 to serve as a 'bridge' between both departments.

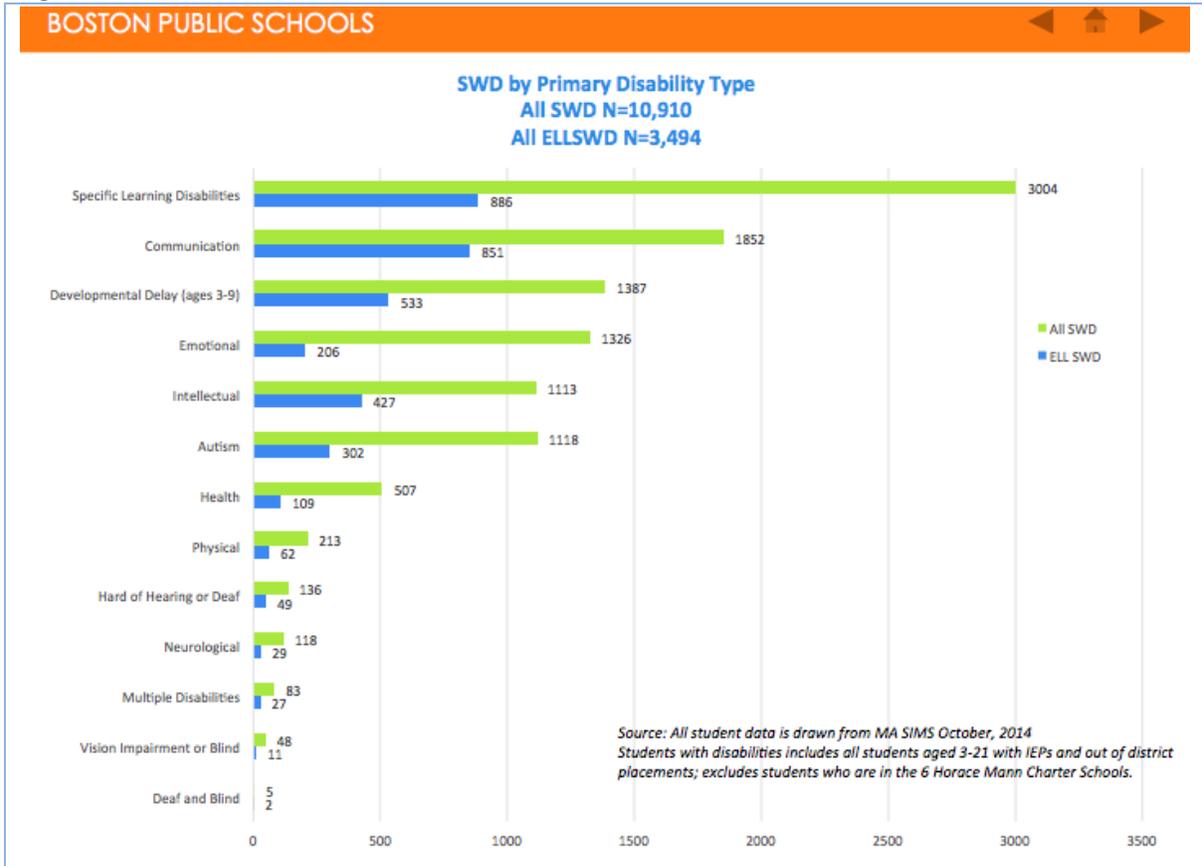
- The Assessment and Welcome Center has Odila Mercedes Orozco, CAGS, as the Bilingual Special Education Teacher Assessor to address ELL-SWDs.
- Special Education has Mr. Carmelo Sanchez, M.Ed. as the Coordinator of Translation Services

## ADDENDUM

### ELL-SWDs at the Boston Public Schools By Disability Category

The following figure 1 provides an overview of all the SWD N= 10,910 at BPS and also identifies the numbers of ELL-SWDs by disability category N= 3,494

Figure 1



Source: All student data is drawn from MA SIMS October, 2014  
Students with disabilities includes all students aged 3-21 with IEPs and out of district placements; excludes students who are in the 6 Horace Mann Charter Schools.

Free and Appropriate Education  
in the Least Restrictive Environment for ELL-SWDs