

THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE OF THE CITY OF BOSTON



Minutes of the English Language Learners (ELL) Task Force Meeting February 18, 2016

The English Language Learners Task Force of the Boston School Committee held a meeting on February 18, 2016 at 9:30am 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, Paulo De Barros, John Mudd, Kim Janey, Maria Serpa, Cheng Imm Tan, Abdul Hussein, Diana Lam, Michael Berardino - Coordinator. **Other persons and BPS Staff Present:** Frances Esparza, Nate Kuder, Lemma Jarudi, Kim Tsai, Maria Campanario, Monica Roberts, Karla Estrada, Rahn Dorsey, Rachel Weinstein, An Le (City of Boston, on behalf of Alejandra St. Guillen), Samuel Hurtado, Heshan Berents-Weeramuni, Jonathon Rodrigues, Iria Dopazo Ruibal, Mary Battenfeld. **Members Absent:** Bob Hildreth, Alejandra St. Guillen, Geralde Gabeau, Wilmer Quinones.

Michael Berardino opened the meeting in his capacity of Coordinator of the Task Force. The meeting minutes from December 17, 2015 were unanimously approved.

Budget Discussion

Nate Kuder and Lemma Jarudi from the BPS Budget Office shared a document titled "Bilingual/Sheltered English Immersion (SEI) Program Budget, FY2015-FY2017 All Funds". The document shows the FY2015 Budget, the FY2016 Recommend and Actual Budget, and the FY2017 Recommended budget.

The budget document presents the budget for bilingual and SEI programs, but there is not a specific program code for ELLs in Gen Ed that are receiving Push-In services. Furthermore, the budget presented is just a recommended budget; there is a portion of the budget that is held on reserve. They hold off on distributing this money to schools to ensure that the money goes to schools where students actually attend. This means there can be an increase in the FY17 budget. This recommended FY17 budget is the minimum budget. Part of the process in the budget development is ensuring that once the funds are allocated to schools, making sure that schools are actually using the funds. The "budget collabs" are helping to raise the level of awareness around ELLs and making sure allotted funds are actually used for the instruction of ELLs. During the budget process in September, they get enrollment projections by ELD level. In December, they allocate funds according to the Weighted Student Formula. In February, the budget office created "Budget Collabs" for each school, which consists of principals, teacher leaders, OELL staff, budget office staff, and HR. The budget collabs were created to ensure that each school serves all students equally and to make sure that the allocated budget reflects the needs of the students at each school. The budget collab discussions resulted in an increase in budget and services for ELLs, while

discussing both the ethical and legal responsibility to serve ELLs. These budget collabs ensured that each school has enough resources, but also that there are “teeth” behind the budget.

Q: The recommended budget shows that there have been decreases in the budget for SEI language-specific programs, while there has been an increase on the code “Sheltered English Immersion”. Is there a decline in single language SEI programs? What is the program rationale?

A: This may be a coding issue.

Q: Does this indicate a SEI program change away from language-specific to multilingual SEI programs?

A: The district started too many language specific SEI programs, so there were too many half-filled programs. While part of the DOJ agreement was to educate ELLs in smaller classes, there were too many programs. This change in budget-line allocation indicates a programmatic readjustment.

Q: We don’t want to have policy driven by budget. There is a real concern area around SEI multilingual programs.

A: The increase in the generic “Sheltered English immersion” code may be the result of three things. 1) There have been changes in the SEI programs. 2) There have been decreases in the enrollment of certain language groups causing a shift to more multilingual programs. 3) Schools are reallocating resources elsewhere, being forced to get creative to serve the student population in the school.

Q: The document says there are only 14 bilingual teachers in the districts. Is this accurate?

A: This seems low; this is possibly a coding error.

Q: The document shows an increase of 107 FTE Bilingual ESL positions. What is this increase?

A: This could be the increase in pull-in/push-in services.

Dr. Frances Esparza offered thoughts on the budget process. The goal of OELL is to promote bilingualism. With the “Budget Collabs”, they saw a shift to SEI multilingual because there were so many linguistically diverse schools. Moving forward, the goal is to add more language specific SEI programs. TBE/Bilingual Ed is the goal, but this is still a process. OELL and the district are also working with local CBOs to ensure that there are resources. There are 2 people in OELL that are working with dual language while there were previously zero people. This requires administration to take the lead.

There is not a separate budget code for SIFE programs, so they are likely within language specific SEI line item. The budget office is opening up a new billing system for FY18, and this will look at demographics, hybrid analysis of ELLs (ELLs by ELD groups).

Q: There is an issue between student assignment vs. program (i.e. student assigned to a school where there is space rather than to where there is an appropriate program). This needs to be clear up.

A: This might be an issue of inadequate numbers of enrolled students at specific schools in specific programs and the distribution of licensed qualified teachers and potentially a coding issue.

Q: There has been a decrease in the budget for ELLs.

A: School leaders have been getting “too creative”, making do with less. While the budget for each school has increased, there was a WSF correction last year that caused a reduction in allocated funding for ELL students in certain grades. Even with this WSF reduction, the allocation of the budget for ELLs actually increased.

[Miren Uriarte]: There is also a potential problem with the new measure of low-income, where qualification for considerations under low income rely on eligibility for federally provided programs. The

problem is that immigrant families are not eligible for many of these programs and therefore might be undercounted in the low-income measure.

The next budget hearing is on March 7th. Monday, March 7 @ 6 p.m. – Budget Hearing
The English High School - 144 McBride Street, Jamaica Plain

Enroll Boston

Rahn Dorsey, the City of Boston Chief of Education, Rachel Weinstein from the Boston Compact, Dr. Karla Estrada, Assistant Superintendent BPS, and Diana Lam, Headmaster of Boston Conservatory Lab Charter (ad ELL Task Force member) attended the meeting to discuss the development of Enroll Boston, the universal enrollment plan. Mr. Dorsey began by providing background on the universal enrollment plan. The proposal is still being developed and they have had 7 public meetings about the enrollment plan. They have published summaries of the public meetings. One of the notable potential changes is changing the charter regulations from city recruiters to limiting their reach to neighborhood recruiting. The universal enrollment process is very interested in getting feedback from the public and specifically feedback from the ELL Task Force. The public meetings have been a great resource. One thing they are waiting to hear back on is feedback or a review of the home-based student assignment plan. Overall, the goal of the project is to get the right match with the needs of students.

For parents in Boston, one of the barriers to getting the best possible school match for their children has been an issue of getting consistent information. The information is complex and is constantly changing. For parents, it is also challenging navigating two separate systems: BPS and the charter schools. Navigating multiple systems is complex and challenging for parents. Another motivating factor for the universal enrollment plan is the fact that families can hold multiple school assignments, a BPS assignment and up to four (4) charter school assignments. If families wait to the last minute to make their school decision, this means schools that were reserving spots for those students are left with open seats. The city does not have a clear understanding of the waiting list. This creates challenges and universal enrollment could help stabilize enrollment. Also they believe that families holding multiple assignments prevent some students from getting their school preference.

There is a goal of getting the front-end match; matching students with the right program. And there is a back-end match; making sure that the program that students are signed up for is actually the services they receive. Mr. Dorsey had to leave at this point to attend other meetings.

Rachel Weinstein presented a slide deck titled “Unified Enrollment Proposal- Conversation with ELL Task Force” The goal of the universal enrollment is to level the playing field by folding charters into the Home-Based Assignment. The goal of Enroll Boston is to give each family the option of two BPS Tier 1 schools and two Tier 1 charter schools. The charter schools may have to be a little further away than the BPS schools depending on the family’s location. Each student will get one offer and up to 3 waiting list spots. There would be one enrollment process for grades PK-8 and one for high school. The intention is to have the same process for ELLs as for general education students, but with additional information regarding program offerings. Unified Enrollment would disaggregate ELLs by ELD level. Those at ELD 4 and 5 would be part of the “standard path” of family choice and assignment (similar to the Gen Ed population). Those in ELD L1-3 would have additional information when looking at the school choice. Choices would include “full Home-Based list as well as special programs in both district and charter schools, with information about all. Choices of SEI supports would include both district and charter schools in geographic overlay.” There is a similar distinction for students with IEPs. It is critical that Universal Enrollment does not eliminate choice for students with an IEP.

The presenters posed 4 questions for the ELL Task Force

1. What are your thoughts on the premise that ELLs should have the same access to any school as their general education peers?
2. If we proceed in this manner, it could mean that an individual school is obligated to provide additional services in order to meet state guidelines for one student. What ideas do you have for providing these supports while operating within tight budgets?
3. What capacity building can schools engage in together now, regardless of whether unified enrollment advances?
4. What other questions and recommendations do you have?

There were a number of questions and comments about the Universal Enrollment process from ELL Task force members and from the public:

- What happens for students from low incidence language groups? What happens to low incidence disabilities?
- How can the system be flexible enough to provide services that reflect the needs of students? For instance, what if 15 students select a school that are ELLs who speak Haitian Creole – what will the school do? Will they create an SEI Haitian Creole program?
- How can they make sure it is clear exactly which program is offered at each school?
- There seems to be a tension between choice and quality.
- [Dr. Maria Serpa] Need to ensure that the terminology is correct for Special Ed students.
- [Kim Janey] There is a serious tension/concern about choice. We have no idea if the issue of choice has been addressed adequately within BPS. How is this going to address the needs of high needs students? There is a real concern that this will solidify a two-tiered system.
- [Miren Uriarte]
 - o Choice vs. Program: Shouldn't be either or. It is tough to think of choice, when there aren't programs that families want. Otherwise what is the point of choice? What does BPS offer and at what level? What do charters offer for ELLs at what levels?
 - o Identification of ELLs: How will the City ensure that charters are assessing and identifying ELLs? There were results in a paper by Elizabeth Setren of MIT, which showed that Boston charter schools are reclassifying ELLs prior to enrolling them.
 - o Capacity: What is the capacity for ELLs? MATCH has capacity, but what about the other charter schools? How will they determine the capacity of the schools?
- [Diana Lam] while each charter school is independent, there has been work between some of the charter schools to come together around the issue of ELLs and work on placement of ELLs.
- [Janet Anderson] Program quality matters. The intake and student assignment process is going to be critical. There are still some issues with intake and student assignment within BPS. Choice isn't a choice unless it is informed. The more complicated the choice the more challenging the decision. Beware of an inadequate intake process. Furthermore, "program quality" isn't always the driver in school choice. This all leads to a need for parent empowerment, which needs to be addressed first before the universal enrollment is rolled out.
- [Abdul Hussein] The ELL program isn't a priority for Somali families; the schools themselves are the choice. There is a gap in middle schools. The Somali community finds that when transitioning between schools, the transition is easier in charter schools. While BPS schools cannot handle that transition well. Somali parents are still struggling to digest information and actually make an informed decision. The centralized approach for presenting information will be helpful.
- [Kim Janey] The district still needs to complete or conduct analysis on the Home-Based Assignment system before Universal Enrollment can be rolled out. There is money set aside for special ed, will this be available to charter schools as well?
- [John Mudd] When discussing school quality and program quality, there is a real fear about creating a two-tiered system. Can they ensure that the charter schools are really addressing student's needs without segregation?

- [Paolo De Barros] This Unified Enrollment plan sounds good in theory for the Cape Verdean community, but it is too general at this point. Family engagement and education is going to be a mess. When does community engagement begin? After the fact? What is the timeline for parent engagement and who will be in charge of this?
- [Suzanne Lee] Universal Enrollment might be able to help, but this is selling “false choice”. Families choose schools and not programs; we place out programs in the worst schools. For example, families chose the Quincy because it has a good reputation not because of the specific programs offered there. Parent education will be key to any new enrollment plan.
- [Miren Uriarte] In the new student assignment plan, do we know how parents are making their choices by subgroups? This is still an unsolved/ unresolved issue. What is the goal of the charter schools? To try new approaches, to take theories to the next level. If this is the case why don't the charter schools try ELL programs such as Transitional Bilingual Education or Dual-Language programs? This way they can go and grow the quality programs.
- [Public Comment: Mary Battenfeld]: Unified Enrollment is a very dangerous program for ELLs and SPED students. This is not the goal of the home-based assignments, which parents advocated for. How do we keep charter schools accountable? Before we move forward on this, can we get an understanding of the true enrollment of higher needs students in charter schools. Another issue is the high rates of discipline in some schools.
- [Public Comments: Samuel Hurtado]: Three questions – 1) How will the Universal Enrollment deal with late arrivals, specifically late arrival ELLs? 2) Will there be multiple registration cycles or just one? 3) Can charter schools opt-out from the Unified Enrollment?
 - o Response: There is a plan to create an agreement that each participating schools will take 3-4% of all late entry students.
 - o There would be one registration cycle.
 - o Charter schools can opt out of the Unified Enrollment. There is no official list of the charter schools that are willing to participate, but informally there has been very high. This is still an issue. If one or two charter schools opt out, this would create problems for the program. The commitment from the charter schools should be quicker and more specific.
- [Public Comment: Heshan Berents-Weeramuni]: The Unified Enrollment has the plan to continue the separation of ELLs and SPED students from general ed settings. The Boston Compact keeps making tailored presentations promoting Unified Enrollment, but none of the feedback is incorporated into subsequent presentations. There is a real concern around the Home-Based Student Assignment plan. No one knows if it is effective, yet the Unified Enrollment plan would roll charter schools into the this same process. Is the existing system equitable? We need a thorough evaluation and it should be done by someone not from MIT, who have vested interest in the assignment plan succeeding. The Score Cards are very charter friendly; they do not account for the spectrum of students served in BPS. Another potential problem is the attrition rate, which is built into the charter school business model. If you look at the enrollment from grade to grade at the charter schools, there is a clear drop in class size. Finally, the impact of the Unified Enrollment on the budget has not been discussed.

Parent Engagement

Rev. Cheng Tan, ELL Task Force member is the lead of the ELL Task Force Parent Engagement Subcommittee, Kevin Montoya OELL staff, and Monica Roberts, Assistant Superintendent of Engagement all presented on the state of ELL Parent Engagement in the district. Rev. Tan began by discussing the work of the Parent Engagement subcommittee presenting the document “Summary of work, October 2015 – February 2016”. The goals of the subcommittee are to: 1) develop knowledge-based recommendations of practices (best-practices), 2) document the issues facing parents of ELLs in BPS, 3) develop strategies to engage families through the process of schooling, and 4) monitor the availability of translated materials and phone supports. The Parent Engagement subcommittee made a site

visit to the Umana. The ELL parent engagement is very strong at this school and it is lead by the principal who is very active, bringing parents to the table. The parents have created a Facebook page for other parents. The principal offers space for parents to meet and discuss the education of their children. Based on the work of the subcommittee, parent engagement is best when there is a hired person in the school that is dedicated to parent engagement.

The subcommittee has also made efforts to settle on a definition for parent engagement. What does parent engagement mean? ELL family engagement should include the components of parents as teachers, leaders, advocates, and learners.

The subcommittee is also working to get a clear understanding of who/what BPS offices are responsible for parent engagement? Who is held accountable? When the focus of the district is on instruction, this may harm parent engagement. Currently it is unclear who in BPS is providing the services and support for parent engagement. Even when money is provided, they are not using the money for parent engagement.

The subcommittee is in the process of conducting a literature review to identify best practices around parent engagement for parents of ELLs. Therefore, the BPS mode should be thought of as one model of parent engagement, not the model of engagement.

Dr. Esparza – OELL is responsible for ELL parent engagement and they are working closely with the Office of Engagement. With Title III funds, OELL has 4 new hires for parent engagement; hired solely for parent engagement work. They are helping to roll out DELLAC. They also help if there are any parent engagement issues within schools. They are working to make OELL linguistically representative of the district.

Monica Roberts – the goal of the Office of Engagement is to have everyone in the district own parent engagement, not just her office and OELL. They are building off of Bronfenbrenner's Ecology of Human Development. They are looking for sustainability and building the capacity of parents. They are reaching out to community organizations to help run this model of parent engagement. The focus is on training teachers. They need to have ownership of engagement and have leaders that see parent engagement as a priority.

Kevin Montoya presented on the first DELLAC parent conference held on January 30th at O'Bryant. 90 parents, representatives from community organizations, and other community members attended the conference. The goal of DELLAC and the conference was to make sure that parents are part of the conversation. After providing an overview of the design of DELLAC, they held break out session, which were held in the language of the parents. OELL did not have an Arabic speaker, so they had a community member help facilitate this conversation. During the break out sessions, Dr. Esparza went around and introduced herself to each group. At the end of the conference, they asked the parents to be members of DELLAC. Over half signed up to be members. The trends from the DELLAC conference were:

- 1) Translations continue to be a concern for parents. The language used in the translations does not reflect the language used by the parents;
- 2) There are major concerns around school closures. The parents fear that schools are going to close and become charter schools. There is a lot of misinformation in the public.
- 3) There are concerns about a lack of college prep for ELLs.

Q: How does BPS provide orientation for new parents?

A: [Monica Roberts] there is a 10-week process of orientation for parents, but they are making efforts to shorten this orientation.

There are questions about the relationship of DELLAC and the work of OoE to the existing MasterPAC. This needs to be clarified. Does DELLAC replace MasterPAC? What about the role of the Citywide Council? There is a goal to have an elected CPC board member that will report to DELLAC and these two groups will exchange ideas. In addition to DELLAC, the goal is to have mandatory school ELLACs.

New Members

Miren Uriarte brought up two potential members to ELL Task Force. Samuel Hurtado used to serve on the Task Force and has agreed to return to the Task Force. Claudia Rinaldi is a specialist in ELL/SPED matters.