

ELL Task Force of the Boston School Committee
SPED-ELL Subcommittee Meeting
March 20, 2018

Bolling Building, Room 213
Action Minutes

Subcommittee Members present: Maria de Lourdes B Serpa, John Mudd, Priya Tahiliani, Ivonne Borrero, Ellen Kelleher

1. Minutes of February 13 meeting:

In the review of the agenda section of the minutes, members agreed to add an item #3: “and language access strategies for Learning Networks under Reorganization.”

With this change, the members approved the minutes unanimously.

2. Review of Agenda

Members suggested adding a number of agenda items:

- Spain’s embassy and bilingual teachers availability to teach at BPS
- Review of SMART Goals adding LOOK legislation, access to language strategies
- Recommendation to Opportunity and Achievement Gap Task Force

3. Review of Teacher Assignment Data

Ivonne presented the summary of preliminary data that she had gathered manually on Bilingual SPED and ELL teachers and paras in individual schools. The results show the startling and urgent need for more bilingual teachers and paras to meet the language / cultural needs of the SPED-ELL and ELL students in the Boston Public Schools. Some dramatic examples would include the facts that in November 2017 there were **3,552** SPED-ELL students and in the 65 of the 133 schools that reported data:

- There are only 16 bilingual SPED teachers, 37 bilingual content teachers, and 20 ESL teachers.
- There are 58 paraprofessionals but only three schools report having paras that match the language of the students (Spanish, Haitian, Vietnamese)
- There are 1,002 SPED-ELL students who speak Spanish but have no access to a teacher that speaks Spanish.
- 15/65 (23%) schools reported that the language spoken by teachers does not match the language spoken by the students
- 40/65 (62%) schools increased their SPED-ELL population by more than 5 students compared to last year

There was agreement that this draft data should be presented to the ELL Task Force Human Capital subcommittee both as a demonstration of need for bilingual teachers and paras, AND as an example of what data could be gathered manually, until BPS develops automated personnel systems. (Ivonne estimated it took her 3-4 days to gather and analyze this data.) There was a discussion of how to highlight the most significant data in any revisions.

Ivonne said she had interviewed the para pool for language capability and made recommendations to OHC (but not to the Schools division). What happened? In addition, there was no contact with OELL in planning for the hiring fair; and no feedback from principals on hiring for ELLs or SPED-ELLs.

4. Review disaggregated data on performance of SPED-ELLs by ELD Level

The subcommittee appreciated that ODA had followed through and provided the data that we had requested disaggregating performance of SPED-ELL students by ELD level.

In general, SPED-ELL students are the lowest performing group of students compared to all other reported groups: All students, Non-ELL SWD, ELL non-SWD, Non-ELL Non-SWD on Spring 2017 MCAS Grades 3-8 Achievement Levels.

ELD 1 SPED students significantly underperform ELD 2-5 SPED students and non-ELL SPED students. ELD 1-5 SPED-ELL students show only relatively small percentages of students that meet expectations (1%-5%), but there is a significant reduction in the percent of these students that are not meeting expectations (from 83% to 36%) and an increase in the percent that partially meets expectations (from 17% to 59%). ELD 5 SPED-ELL students outperform the Non-ELL SPED students in the categories for not meeting expectations and partially meeting expectations.

This performance data reinforces the significance of SPED-ELL students as the group that has the greatest achievement gap and the one most in need of academic native language access while learning English (a developmental process that takes 5-7 years or longer) and other support in the Boston Public Schools.

Maria emphasized the need for high quality bilingual education to support content until English skills develop, because language barriers are real in SEI settings. In addition, the failure rate of students in SEI program settings is of utmost concern. The data shows the need for bold action steps. ELLs are not accessing or learning the academic curriculum and one reason is that instruction is carried out in English and students do not yet understand it well enough to make academic progress. Language mediates access to learning content and is foundational for accessing and developing higher level thinking skills and strategies (See Don Deshler Model).

BPS needs to change the SEI mindset urgently. New hires should be bilingual. BPS should use the LinkedIn language self-assessment rubric tool already sent to OHC. It needs to develop language programs that give access to grade level academics learning outcomes for both SPED-ELL and Non-SPED-ELL (See Andrews FAPE Supreme Court case).

In the 21st century technology age, there is a need to leverage the language of home, expand on it academically, and promote multilingual proficiency. It does not cost more (Esparza, 2016). Native language literacy and native language skills in addition to English proficiency are needed in the global workforce of the near future.

Priya noted that the data showed the need for more emphasis on learning English. But Maria pointed to the comparable need for language access through more native language support as the way to improve English proficiency (given the Common Underlying Proficiency documented by credible research).

With the LOOK bill, we should be able to do both urgently: ESL instruction to learn English and Grade level Academic Instruction in the home language while learning English. OELL is moving in the direction of increased access to native language. Ivonne is looking at the curriculum, and OELL is looking at materials in native language as well as native language self-instruction technology.

At the next meeting, the subcommittee will focus on native language instruction:

- 1) What models, support, retraining, materials are there to use in classrooms?
- 2) How does BPS promote access to native language for SPED-ELL students?

One key is changing the SEI mindset to a Multilingual Mindset and to make sure that administrators are on board, given that the evidence is quite clear that appropriate bilingual dual language programs not only eradicate the achievement gap for Els-Emergent bilinguals but also gives them precious, academic skills in English plus another language.

John said that the subcommittee needs to develop options/plans for how to incorporate native language into BPS for SPED-ELL (and all ELL) students. This will require a systemic change in language of instruction policy. What needs to be done? What is BPS's agenda? How will BPS implement this change?

With time running out, the subcommittee decided that the next meeting would consider:

- Pilot Project Updates
- LOOK Bill options/plans
- BPS strategies to ensure access to native language for SPED-ELL students
- Use of BPS's planned Reorganization: What will OELL liaisons bring to the table?
- What context: Role of Superintendent and Karla in the change of climate on language
- Draft of Guidance document

5. Public Comment

No public present