

THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE OF THE CITY OF BOSTON



**Minutes of the English Language Learners (ELL) Task Force Meeting
September 13, 2018**

The English Language Learners Task Force of the Boston School Committee held a meeting on September 13, 2018 at 9:00am at Bruce Bolling Building. For more information about any of the items listed below, contact Jen Douglas, ELL Task Force Coordinator, at bpselltaskforce@gmail.com.

ATTENDEES

ELL Task Force Members present: Janet Anderson, Patricia Crain de Galarce, Jen Douglas (coordinator), Diana Lam, Lisette Le (proposed), Suzanne Lee (co-chair), Julia Mejia (proposed), John Mudd, Maria Serpa, Alejandra St. Guillen, Rev. Cheng Imm Tan, and Miren Uriarte (co-chair)

BPS Staff present: Alberto Carrero, Dr. Charles Grandson, Genevieve McDonough, Superintendent Laura Perille, Monica Roberts, Priya Tahiliani, Kim Tsai

Other persons present: Peggy Wiesenber

ELL Task Force Members absent: Andres Alonso, Farah Assiraj, Paulo De Barros, Geralde Gabeau, Bob Hildreth, Marie St. Fleur (proposed)

All portions in quotation marks below are a combination of direct quotes with some paraphrase.

1. Chairs' Report

Miren Uriarte, Co-Chair of the Task Force, opened the meeting: "Spate of recent reports, many with bad news / posed significant problems for ELL, and changes at the end of last year. There is a commitment from past and present superintendents for action going forward, a comprehensive approach to the problems to ELLs. We will want to talk with the district about the proportion of ELLs with disabilities that appeared in the study as being behind at least two

years, and that ELL overlays were not analyzed in the student assignment which did not allow the kind of planning we want to do.

2. Introduction to Interim Superintendent Laura Perille and Dr. Charles Grandson, Interim Chief Academic Officer, BPS

Uriarte: She welcomed Superintendent Laura Perille and Dr. Charles Grandson, Interim Chief Academic Officer. “We will give you the good news and the bad news so we can grapple.”

Superintendent Laura Perille: She spoke about district ELL priorities and her initial steps as superintendent. “The ELLTF work is the work of the district, to fully understand the implications of what we do. It is part of the charge and assignment of what I was given to do this work. One of the reasons I felt it was important to move in the earliest weeks of my interim role to attend to responsibility to educate well all the children with a particular eye to equity and most vulnerable. ASSET department closely tied: OELL, SPED, [named others,] overlap between. Office of Opportunity and Achievement Gaps is one of the engines of the equity work in the district. Operationalizing how we meet the needs of students sits within Assets. Position was vacant since mid-May. Cindie Nielson, Priya, have a leader that can support them. Deep listening sessions with school leaders and central office. Felt was critical given the abrupt transition, very disruptive in a any large system to have unexpected change in leadership. One thing critical about an interim position is to ensure that work continues to move forward. We cannot afford to mark time, children cannot afford to wait. I feel that particularly urgently.

“The first place I went was school leaders, held school leader listening sessions, just the leader, myself and a note taker external to the district. It is critically important to ensure that school leaders are well-supported by the district. I am since broadening to school leaders. 11 sessions with 72 leaders. Then with other members of the ASSET team and every central office team, and other staff that are the direct liaisons, coordinators, assistant directors, budget analysts. Those two streams coupled with an analysis of central office budget allocations. If the role of central offices is to support schools then how we allocate our resources needs to align with student-serving positions and roles. Maximizing resources as close as possible to direct student service and then backing up the food chain. Taking a look at some of those allocations.

“One of the reasons I value the role of this TF is that the work is complicated, deep, rich. Boston has a long and not always pretty story in terms of meeting the needs of all our students. Expertise, history, eyes and advocacy around this table is incredibly important. Charles’s role working with Priya to see what additional she needs.

“Ask first always what is already good and strong and good and important that we need to preserve, not forget, overlook, step on. Second question: what are the road blocks, what not working, needs to be shifted out of the way in order to meet our highest mission on behalf of students. Also important, especially with this TF re: LOOK act, what is emergent, what can be wind behind the sails?”

Dr. Charles Grandson: He spoke about his work vis-à-vis the ELLTF goals. “I’m looking forward to working closely with this group in implementing the superintendent’s vision. Am really excited as I look at materials what jumped out to me is ‘fostering multicultural and multilingual environment.’ I value that personally, I have a multicultural family. . . , we are working on the multilingual part, and hoping we are lucky enough to get into the lottery for the Hernandez and that kind of thing.”

Perille: “I am a BPS parent, my youngest graduated in 2015, my children’s home school was the Hernandez, my youngest is fluent in both languages today currently working in a bilingual immigration clinic in Michigan. Over the years when I was working at Edvestors we were involved in providing resources to many of the dual language programs, Haitian at Mattahunt, over the years with Muñiz and Hurley in particular. It is not the only way to educate well but one of the rich offerings that we have. I hope you win the lottery too, Charles.”

Grandson: “This has been a part of my work for the last decade, an ELL Academy founded at English High, I was a part of it. I became a principal in Springfield, co-designed and founded an ELL Academy and Newcomers Academy. And when I was in _____, I designed a SLIFE [Students with Limited or Interrupted Formal Education] program there.”

3. Brief reports of key areas of work of Task Force

Overview of ELLTF – history and current priorities

Uriarte: “Let me briefly introduce and then unleash the various subcommittee chairs. The ELLTF was founded in 2009 in view of the DOJ mandate to address the needs of ELLs. Boston was not able to do that in a way that supported the rights of equal education for ELLs. The TF begins in 2009 with the idea that it would help guide the district to develop new approaches to the work with ELLs. Began with what Dr. Grandson said, which is recognizing the importance of a multicultural multilingual environment for all kids.

“Since then we have been working since 3–4 years ago in subcommittees that are able to drill down on areas of major concern. We have been working on issues related to data because when I came in the district was about to get sued because of the problem of maintaining transparent data. It is a problem that is critical—the transparency of the data and the capacity of the district to produce information that is credible (not going to go as far as to say that it’s totally accurate), this is something that we will all stand up and scream if that changes. If DOJ feels that we are lying and hiding that will be a problem.”

Perille: “Some of you may know I’m a big fan of data.”

ELLTF subcommittees and their current priorities

Uriarte gave an overview of the ELLTF subcommittee concerns: “I think it has been a war that was won. Then there are the areas in which we have particular concerns. The number one is ELL

with disabilities. I'll be totally honest with you, because we could get sued. The other things to be protected is the communication between ELL and SPED, the capacity of those two departments to work together. The other area of concern has been parent engagement. I will let the Reverend take off on that. The next is program quality. The door that is opened by the LOOK Bill is one that we have to walk through. I think Diana can speak to that very well. What are the road blocks? One of the big ones has been Human Capital, bilingual teacher, bilingual staff. Last year after a lot of back and forth discussions in loud places, loud modes, we created a human capital subcommittee."

Suzanne Lee added additional highlights: "Two more additional. Work that is of the whole TF. Continue to monitor the student assignment plan. We don't have good data on impact for ELLS. The other area is also budgeting."

Uriarte: "We have highlighted budgeting as a focus of the ELLTF this year."

John Mudd added an additional highlight: "The other thing is BuildBPS. How do we create a physical infrastructure that can deal with SPED, ELL."

Student Assignment. Janet Anderson: "We no longer have a subcommittee on student assignment. I've been here 7 years and in the beginning a lot of our focus was on the inequitable enrollment of the ELL families, getting them into round one and two when they have more access to good quality seats. That's one of the areas where we've seen some growth and want to provide some focus. The piece that's still a challenge is the actual assignment process. We were disappointed that the BARI did not look at the ELL overlay or for students with disabilities. We were kind of on pause the past year, on the plus side Miren and I were asked to be on the committee for selecting the research team. The tension we are wrestling with is between parental choice and access to programs and services. The DOJ leans more on the parental choice piece. Certainly we all think students should be served in whatever schools they attend, but if we think there are programs that better serve our ELLs, they should have access. Then again where those program seats are placed has been in the lowest-performing schools because of space, and that's been an issue we are hammering on."

Uriarte: "People have framed the student assignment issue only in terms of equity. But for us it is about program services and program placement. For example for the Cape Verdean kids. The intent of the overlays was to have services near the communities where those kids live. That was the purpose. We hope that this year we can get data on program placement, use student assignment to help the placement of programs, work with Priya on that."

Perille: "On the topic of BuildBPS, one of the challenges is that Grandson was moved out of that work, but it continues to be helpful that he brings the lends of ELL/SPED equity to that work."

Uriarte: "One of the things we are doing is trying to make the case to the DOJ about needing some flexibility against parent choice, but we need that data to be able to make the case. It won't take a lot of money to do that analysis, but this is a plea to get that done."

Perille: “It would be helpful to get an offline recommendation to me, Monica, Charles about what the resource need is. Especially if it’s something we would [need consulting resources to do]. A general sense of the outlines of what the need is. That might be something we do want to expedite.”

FOLLOW UP. Get information to Perille, Roberts, Grandson about the evaluation needed of ELL overlay in student assignment process.

Parent Engagement. Rev. Cheng Imm Tan: “We began our work by visiting schools and talking to parents. We worked closely with Monica’s (OE) and OEL staff to identify these schools. Through those conversations we came up with four recommendations. It was clear to us that we wanted to look at the school level.”

1. “Recommendation: District-wide recommendation to better train, support, resource and hold school leaders and educators accountable for family engagement for all students, including ELLs.
2. “Recommendation: Build Culturally and Linguistically welcoming school environments and culturally relevant curriculum that affirms our diverse student body and families. Commitment to better train, resource and hold school leaders and educators accountable to this recommendation.
3. “Recommendation: Build language capacity at the district and school levels, both oral and written to communicate with parents in schools.
4. “Recommendation: Ensure adequate information and outreach to familiarize new immigrant parents with the school registration process (including the registration timing and schedule) and help parents understand how to pick schools that best meet their child/ren’s needs.

“It has been challenging to monitor parent participation. Not because of any negligence on the part of OE, but because of the inherent difficulty and the lack of resources. At the school level, with Parent Councils and beyond—very difficult to get information on quality of participation. Then at the district level, you’ve got important meetings, say those about the start times, how do you get data about the different groups of parents that are involved? We are still wrestling with that. OE is the only organization that has any intent to collect any of this data, other departments don’t even think about it. OE doesn’t have any muscle to require that other people who do outreach do anything to collect the data. For example, BuildBPS, and even the start times.”

Monica Roberts: “How are we measuring who is coming, so we know who is missing? ELL, students with disabilities, marginalized families, etc. So we are actually looking at our data and we do that at the top, as a way of functioning across the district.”

Tan: “The state doesn’t require it, but there is nothing to say that we couldn’t take that leap as the City of Boston.”

Perille: “We could make a recommendation. Both Charles and Priya could make a recommendation. It is a combination of HC and our pipeline work.”

Tan: “It’s very clear that it’s all about leadership, and principal leadership. If the principal is serious about it, it happens. If not it doesn’t.”

Perille: “There is a training and a compliance way of looking at that. Where we are looking very affirmatively at the pro-social development of our leadership pipeline, we need to emphasize that this is not just a district concern but help school leaders understand how it helps their work.”

Decision made to end discussion here in the interest of time.

Program Quality. Diana Lam: “The state is working on new language on diversity and inclusion, that will be the right transition for putting the engagement concerns in some sort of evaluation and performance tool. When we began the work of this committee, ‘compliance’ was what was in our heads. Only in the last year did we start thinking about quality. We’ve had a rocky start. We wanted to start with a set of questions about whether the department had some coherence and sense of purpose in the work. In the conversations we’ve had there are some tensions: wonderful ideas, the writing great, the execution we need to figure out.”

Perille: “In my listening sessions there actually was a lot of excitement and enthusiasm for the thoughtful, equity-focused push around culturally and linguistically sustaining practices, affirmed as a value. But what I heard a lot was, ‘How do we make it real? How to bring it to the classroom? How do I get the guidance? I get the concept and support it but I don’t really understand it. How do I implement in the classroom?’”

Lam: “There’s also a mental shift, we need to go past compliance in terms of the quality pieces. The compliance piece requires only technical type of leadership. The quality piece requires a different kind of leadership, one that I’m hoping we can find across the district.”

Perille: “From technical to adaptive, yes.”

Lam: “If all of this is about some positive changes, we need to have some idea about how change occurs—small? big? pilot? How do we know that it will respond to the needs? I don’t think that the department right now has the resources. We need to be thoughtful about this. When we plan something we need to know what do we think is going to work in this particular situation. We need to have a shift in, ‘What are the indicators?’ If we plan for professional development, say we are going to do 10, the measure should not be just to count to 10. We need to figure out, ‘How does it trickle to what we believe in?’ which is the students. We are

looking for the department to give us a priority or at least part of a priority and that it be targeted to this set of questions, we can make it available to you.”

Perille: “I would love to see it. Charles, I’m sure you would as well.”

FOLLOW UP. Send Program Quality matrix to Perille and Grandson.

Lam: “OEL cannot be held accountable alone, they need the collaboration of all these other departments, and not just in name. Accountability needs to go to where the work occurs.”

Perille: “One of the identified areas of growth for the district is the collaboration, alignment, and frequent cross-communication across ASSET. . . the execution, day-to-day management. . . . There are many opportunities to foster greater alignment and collaboration. Those fingers need to interweave down and across. Involves Mary Driscoll, Donna Muncey.”

ELL Students with Disabilities. Maria Serpa: “The four key points.” See handout, pasted below, for the key priority issues she listed for the 2018-19 school year.

**ELL TASK FORCE OF THE BOSTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE:
ELSWD SUBCOMMITTEE**

Goal: To advance equity in Special Education for ELSD students

Number of ELSDs: 3,700 ELSD students, one third of all Special Education students in BPS

Number of Special Education Bilingual Teachers: 16

Number of Bilingual Speech & Language Therapists: 29

Number of Bilingual Paraprofessionals: 58

ELSD Academic Achievement: ELSDs have the Lowest Academic Achievement and highest off-track percentage of any subgroup.

KEY PRIORITY ISSUES (2018–2019)

- **Native Language Access**
 - Critical need to provide native language instruction to ELSD, which is essential for their success in BPS

- **Bilingual ELSD Teachers Shortage**
 - Compete accurate assessment of need for ELSD staffing and then create strategies to recruit, hire, and develop ELSD teachers, paras, and other support

- **Develop and implement IEPs with language access and culturally responsive checklist**
 - Pilot test a checklist that includes *Language Access and Cultural Responsiveness* in the development and implementation of IEPs during Fall 2018-2019
 - Develop a district implementation plan based on lessons learned in the pilot
- **ELSPWD comprehensive Guidance Document including BPS vision and operations**
 - Complete, test and disseminate the ELSPED Guidance document

Every ELSPWD is entitled to a Free and Appropriate Education (FAPE) in the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)

“The thing we would like to preserve is the collaboration between SPED and OELL. Discussion of successes to-date, including IEPs getting online, and producing a checklist of things that should be on the IEP for ELLs. “Finally I’m trying to bring back a focus on how bilingual learning and disabilities interact, as opposed to having two parallel lines with good intentions and parallel lines.”

Lee: “When we talk about all these issues it really has to do with what kind of staffing we have. Do we have the capacity to meet the demands? When we delve into these issues we cannot find in the district real concrete baseline data of bilingual staff, without which we cannot measure. It took us two years to get the point where the two computer systems could talk to each other, preliminary data is what they can do, it’s just for 50% of the SEI classrooms. Of the language groups, based on the 50% of the data that we have, the most alarming is the Cape Verdean population, that’s a 35% match, that means having the right teacher in the right classroom. We’re talking about SEI classrooms, teachers are supposed to have the language capacity to educate the students. We can talk all we want about wanting a multicultural, multilingual district, but if we don’t have the capacity to do that I don’t think we should apologize to the rest of the world, but admit it and see what we need to do.”

Perille: “I think transparent baseline data is important, not data used for some sort of gotcha game. I’m all for transparency of that data so we know what to do.”

Mejia: “I’m also wondering whether there is appetite for gathering data on cultural background, not just language background.” A teacher can have language skills and still not meet students’ needs due to lack of cultural understanding.

Perille: “The cultural question. I do believe that our data on cultural background is a little easier to grab. I would think that while we’re looking at data around language proficiency we can look at the cultural piece as well.”

Uriarte: “I think soon we should make an appointment to talk with you about the DOJ and what the issues are.”

Perille: “I respect how long-running this committee is and how you have continued to adapt and push, and are moving into forward-looking best practices.”

4. Office of English Learner Director’s Report:

- **Startup Issues**
- **Initial perspective on approach to LOOK Bill opportunities during School Year 2018-2019**
- **DOJ Update**

Uriarte: “We felt it was important to bring the DOJ reporting back into the work of the ELLTF and ask Priya to do a small report related to their work on the DOJ at each of our meetings this year.”

DOJ Update. Tahiliani: “Upcoming reporting [to the DOJ] is due 10/1. Right now what we’re working on is overall compliance levels, due into Aspen by September 21. We also run scheduling clinics that principals can schedule right in Aspen. A lot of the compliance is very technical, we are trying to streamline so it takes less time. They can schedule a clinic with us, we are doing lots of outreach and supports to schools. At the next meeting we will have compliance numbers to see how they compare to last year. Our team worked very hard last year.”

Mejia: “Is there any part of that data that the public may have access to?” Genevieve McDonough from OEL will look.

FOLLOW UP. Is the data provided to DOJ available to the public?

Uriarte: “At the next meeting you might want to make an intro to the kind of reporting you do for the DOJ. It is to go on forever.”

Tahiliani: “We will bring a summary at the next meeting. We are working with the DOJ to see if we can be released from certain reporting so we can work more on the areas of growth.”

LOOK Act. Tahiliani: “We addressed it at our August leadership Institute and did a lot of planning over the summer. See handout with timeline for the year. We are exploring options with schools that still have linguistic capacity to do more transitional bilingual exploration. All of this is subject to agreement with DOJ and with DESE guidance due out in November. We have a sooner meeting with them because November is too late for guidance so we can move forward.”

From OEL PowerPoint handout:

- OEL has released a LOOK Act Bilingual Programming Statement of Interest for School Leaders to gather ideas from schools about how to create more bilingual programs and expand opportunities for native language instruction to support English Learners. OEL has developed a schedule for this process, with schools' Statements of Interest due 9/27/18, and a series of different planning activities within BPS and with stakeholders, culminating in program development and staff training from November 2018 – January 2019.

Mudd: Requests materials to the ELLTF through Jen.

Tahiliani: "I can share all of that. Again we have proposed models but we want to be open-minded and listen to schools about what they think will best meet needs of ELLs."

FOLLOW UP. Ask OEL for models they are exploring under the LOOK Act.

"We can't make any promises but have been working with SPED to move back toward bilingual SPED, that is our goal. Another thing we are working on is BTU negotiation to understand what is allowable under the contract."

Anderson: "You mentioned that some of the schools that are interested and have capacity are moving forward. Just want to make sure that it isn't about schools that still have teachers that did the prior bilingual model, that they aren't thinking about resurrecting a model that didn't have a lot of successes as implemented. It didn't do that well in the data."

Uriarte: "I agree with Janet. The approach in Boston was very problematic in Boston and then for the last 20 years we have been handcuffed. So we don't have a large knowledge base here whereas in other cities they do—Denver, Los Angeles, Miami, Texas. I think you need to go to those places and see what is going on. We don't have that expertise. The second one is on the BTU. Last year I know John was trying, we need to understand what the issues are, some of us do have contacts in the BTU. Maybe we can help to understand why some of these pieces are important. I think we need to be able to talk about this, but we cannot get in the middle of those negotiations."

Tahiliani: "One of the major things is building in the language capacity as one of the requirements for the positions. For dual language it is. But for SEI that's one of the reasons that we have teachers who do not have the language capacity. The BTU is pushing back quite a bit, I think they just don't want to have one more requirement, have teachers displaced, it's not that they don't value multilingualism. But the LOOK Act is passed and we need to move forward."

Serpa: "The system has committed to multiculturalism. . . . How do we adequately recruit and prepare teachers when students need high quality instruction in their native language?"

Start-up Issues. Tahiliani: "Every year we have students who are not correctly placed. We have some tension between multilingual, staying committed to multi-language programs. . . . We are looking at dual-language enrollment policy, especially as we look to expand. This year we

worked very hard to make sure there were not students who could not start school because they were waiting for language assessment. Last year we had a big back up and this year there are 0 students waiting. We hired additional testers (4) and staggered their schedules to cover more hours.” She gave details about evening and weekend hours that were available.

Summer School. Tahiliani: “We are working on ways to get sufficient data. . . . There are several things we did over the summer that speak to the work of the subgroups, but we kept this high level to be consistent with what you asked.”

From OEL PowerPoint handout:

- OEL shared data showing that 392 summer school students demonstrated growth, using “i-Ready” diagnostic results. In reading, the data showed that 51% demonstrated full year growth (target=100%) and 9% of students are at or above grade level.

EL Summer Symposium. Tahiliani: Described successful EL Summer Symposium for educators.

Serpa: “In terms of professional development, how do you monitor outcomes?”

Tahiliani: “We stipend our own teachers to do the seminars. They are responsible to follow up with the people who were in their seminar.” For the purpose of exploring for next year, there are plans to meet with all the schools, and provide information that they can use to meet with families.”

5. Preparation for Boston School Committee Report Presentation on October 10

7. Goals and Priorities 2018-2019

The committee reviewed a draft of a presentation to be given to the Boston School Committee on October 10. It contains the following components: ELLTF’s overarching goals, ELLTF member list and structure, ELLTF accomplishments during the 2017-18 school year, ELLTF goals for the 2018-19 school year. Detailed feedback was provided and will be incorporated into a re-draft.

Mudd: He spoke about the first overarching goal of the committee, to “Recognize and promote BPS as a multilingual, multicultural district.” He said that he is still does not see task force activities that advance that goal, that most of the work of the TF is really focused around English acquisition and not multilingualism. From his remarks emerged a recommendation for a discussion topic “Multilingual education: what does it mean beyond ELL?” The following task force members volunteered to participate: Tan, Uriarte, Mejia.

FOLLOW UP. Initiate conversation about how the ELLTF can advance the goal of a multilingual, multicultural BPS.

Anderson: Spoke to encourage that information from such a discussion be fed back into the work of the committee. An agenda item for a future meeting could be our first step. Seeing how departments work together.

Mejia: She suggested that parent engagement focus in particular on dual language schools, and use them as case studies. She hears from Spanish-speaking parents who don't feel included.

FOLLOW UP. Focus parent engagement information gathering on dual language schools.

6. Membership

Agenda item dropped due to time constraints.

8. Confirm agenda for school year

The committee reviewed the plan of meetings and topics for the school year.

9. Public Comment

Mejia: "We (Collaborative Parent Leadership Action Network (CPLAN)) are receiving calls from families who don't know how to find their children when the buses are delayed. This is a problem that is heightened for undocumented parents and for low-wage workers." She went on to describe hearing from immigrant parents who don't know who to call when the bus is delayed, have no idea how to go about finding where their children are, and how this is extremely frightening for undocumented parents who also may be particularly reluctant to be in touch with authorities in any way. She also described challenges for low-wage workers who have to take time away from work to retrieve their children at bus stops, only to find that the kids are not there, and how burdensome it is to lose pay and/or place one's employment in jeopardy.

Peggy Wiesenberg: "Thank you to the committee. It's very important work. Big picture, yes, the school district is 40% now ELLs and so really it's time and this either can come from like the school committee or the leadership to say, you know, we are, whatever word you want to do, a multilingual district and have a different frame. And I was quite taken with Maria's comment that even calling this 'English learners' has a power dynamic in it. So at first I thought when you were presenting this you could have a little footnote or a little glossary that would be helpful for the public and even the school committee members to define the different terms and kinds of programs—SEI, bilingual, LOOK. Or even change the name of the task force, 'In introducing it, we are keeping this language, but by next year, working with Colin and that for culturally appropriate language.' I attend a lot of the school committee meetings and even for me this is overwhelming. I thought the discussion today was incredible to hear what areas you've really made a difference on. Would be good to know more about what the issues are and what you're talking about. I remember years ago there was data on where the different demographics are and where people are moving." . . . On school assignment, "BARI is not getting paid anymore and they don't want to do any more for free. . . . I find it problematic and no one has been given

an explanation that parents are notified until May. It was moved up to March for a reason because it coincides with private parochial and charter schools. The problem could be solved if they put a ton of resources.”

Discussion moved into areas beyond ELL-specific concerns. The meeting was adjourned.

10. Adjourn