

THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE OF THE CITY OF BOSTON



**Official Minutes of the Remote
English Language Learners Task Force (ELLTF) Meeting**

The English Language Learners Task Force (ELLTF) held a meeting on October 27, 2022 at 5 p.m. on Zoom. For more information about any of the items listed below, visit <https://www.bostonpublicschools.org/domain/247>, email jdouglas4@bostonpublicschools.org, or call the Boston School Committee Office at (617) 635-9014.

ATTENDANCE

ELLTF Members

Present: Janet Anderson, Angelina Camacho, Paulo De Barros, Co-chair Suzanne Lee, Katie Li, John Mudd, Co-chair Rafaela Polanco Garcia, Maria Serpa, Marie St. Fleur, Fabián Torres-Ardila

Not present: Geralde Gabeau, Roxanne Harvey, Rosann Tung, Miren Uriarte

BPS Staff

Farah Assiraj (Deputy Chief Academic Officer and Interim Assistant Superintendent, Office of Multilingual and Multicultural Education), Linda Chen (Senior Deputy Superintendent of Academics), Jen Douglas (Coordinator, ELL Task Force), Faye Karp (Executive Director, Office of Multilingual and Multicultural Education), Raushan Martin (Acting Director of Recruitment), KimVy Nguyen (Bilingual Educators & Accelerated Community to Teacher (BEACTT) Program Coach), Lauren Viviani (Interim Senior Advisor, Office of Special Education)

Public

Kaylania, Elsa Almeida, Estephany Banos, Kathleen Boundy (Center for Law and Education (CLE)), Hidekel Casado, Marielena Cruz (Parent), Konny Cueto, Mirian Garrido, Ruth Georges (Prospective ELTF Member), Susana Gonzalez, Tarina Harrison (Parent), Sarah King, Danilza Martinez, Yrmaris Matias (Parent), Sonia Medina (Parent), Maria Mejia (Parent), Jairalis Mercado (Parent), Maria Moura (Parent), Griselda Polanco (Staff, City Councilor Julia Mejia), Fior Ramirez, Roger Rice (Multicultural Education, Training & Advocacy, Inc. (META)), Alan Jay Rom (META, Inc.), Claritza Rodriguez, Sughey Scannell (Prospective ELTF Member), María-Simoné Sarmiento, iPhone

DOCUMENTS PRESENTED

ELL Task Force

- Minutes of the ELL Task Force Meeting, September 13, 2022 (English, Spanish)
- ELLTF Subcommittee Membership & Goals SY22-23 (English, Spanish)

Office of English Learners

- “Office of Multilingual and Multicultural Education (OMME): ELTF Presentation 10/27/22,” Farah Assiraj, Deputy Chief Academic Officer and Interim Assistant Superintendent for the Office of Multilingual & Multicultural Education (English, Spanish)

Office of Human Capital

- “Office of Human Capital Office of Recruitment, Cultivation and Diversity (RCD) Bilingual Educator Pipeline Planning,” Dr. Charles Grandson, Chief Equity and Strategy Officer; Sharra Gaston, Acting Deputy Chief Equity and Strategy Officer; Rashaun J. Martin, Acting Director of Recruitment; KimVy Nguyen, BE/ACTT Aspiring Teacher Coach Specialist, October 27, 2022 (English, Spanish)

CONSOLIDATED FOLLOW-UP LIST

- Receive multi-year data on Cabo Verdean student enrollment by school. Discuss with Assiraj, De Barros, Lee.
- ELTF to receive updated enrollment information later this fall.
- Reach out to district leadership to inquire about ELTF participation on the screening committees for hiring an OSE and an OMME chief.
- Obtain data from Martin on educator language for new hires.

Chairs’ Welcome

Lee spoke about making decisions as co-chair and thanked everyone for their contributions. She reflected on her testimony at School Committee on the district's Plan for Multilingual Learners. She said that it was not a perfect plan, but does represent a marked difference in tone from an English-only perception of the district toward a path to be a bilingual multicultural district, and it will come down to implementation. She expressed hopefulness about working with OMME on planning committees, the new superintendent, and the increased political will in the city to embrace language access.

Polanco Garcia shared information from her recent attendance at a Council of Great City Schools event. She was the only person using interpretation at the English-language event so she could be linguistically present for all modules. Her presence there led to discussion of the import of interpretation to enable speakers of other languages to be full participants. She spoke of her pride to represent her language and her culture in that forum, and to lift up language access as crucial in schools in order to communicate with communities in the district.

Approve meeting minutes from September 13, 2022

The Task Force unanimously passed the minutes of the September 13, 2022 meeting.

ELTF Subcommittee goals for SY22-23

Torres-Ardila updated members about the work of the Data & Monitoring Subcommittee. He indicated that they are seeking new members to join the group to participate in monitoring data about student enrollment, assignment, outcomes, and more as the new OMME Strategic Plan is further developed and implemented.

Mudd spoke on behalf of the Multilingual Students with Disabilities Subcommittee (MLSWD), describing the audit of special education that was conducted by the Council of Great City Schools (CGCS), and the meeting the subcommittee had with Karla Estrada and Sue Gamm at the end of September. At that meeting ELTF members emphasized that responsibility for MLSWDs rests with both OSE and OMME, and also stressed the import of access to native language and all that comes with making that a reality in terms of staffing and more. They anticipate the CGCS report to arrive next month; it will help to shape advocacy priorities for the ELTF's MLSWD Subcommittee for SY22-23.

Serpa, MLSWD Subcommittee Co-chair, urged that the district replace the two staff people who had joint appointments between OSE and OMME, and also urged that the district consider nontraditional ways of providing native language access in the short-term.

Li gave an update from the LOOK Act / Programming Subcommittee. She shared that the subcommittee had recently reviewed their priorities for the current school year. She read out their five goals. *See "ELLTF Subcommittee Membership & Goals SY22-23" in the meeting materials.*

Presentation from the Office of Multilingual and Multicultural Education

See the OMME presentation in the meeting materials.

Assiraj reflected on hearing a lot of alignment between the subcommittees' goals and the OMME strategic plan. She underscored the import of the work Polanco is doing to elevate linguistic participation as an important issue in schools.

Assiraj presented data on MLs and former MLs. She indicated that there was an increase in the numbers of ELD1-3 and SLIFE students over last year, despite the overall decline in enrollment. She shared data about the languages that students speak, showing that the great majority are Spanish speakers and that there is an uptick this year of Portuguese speakers. These Portuguese-speaking arrivals include Brazilians and people from other ethnic groups (especially Haitian) who have also lived in and/or are coming from Brazil. ELTF member Dr. Gabeau and another Haitian community leader are advising her office as they make sense of students' linguistic skills and linguistic needs.

Georges shared an experience of meeting a group of Haitian youth at a farmers market and finding that they could understand Kreyol but were more comfortable in Portuguese.

De Barros asked that the district keep in mind that Portuguese spoken in Portugal and in Brazil are very different from each other. He asked about enrollment numbers for Cabo Verdean

students and whether there was an increase in new student arrivals. Assiraj said that initial data did not show an increase and data analysis is ongoing.

Lee requested that Assiraj follow up with that data after the meeting and follow up with De Barros. Lee expressed interest to be part of that conversation.

FOLLOW UP: Receive multi-year data on Cabo Verdean student enrollment by school. Discuss with Assiraj, De Barros, Lee.

Anderson noted that the percentage of MLs is the same as in prior years, and wondered how that could be possible if ML numbers went up while total enrollment went down.

Assiraj responded that she had been told there were about 1,000 new MLLs in BPS this year over last, and speculated that perhaps the reason the percentage stayed the same could be because of the number of students who exited MLL status over that same period. She said she would share more data after it becomes available in November.

FOLLOW UP: ELTF to receive updated enrollment information later this fall.

Assiraj shared information that was sent to the US DOJ in October as part of the district's reporting requirements. She indicated that the aggregate level of compliance is the highest it has been from 2015 through the present. She attributed that outcome to "a tremendous effort across the system" between OMME, LATFs in schools who worked closely with the US DOJ, and others. OMME was able to negotiate with the US DOJ to be able to report with measures that are more appropriate than the count of instructional minutes. Additional data is available in the OMME presentation materials for this meeting.

Assiraj reported on teacher vacancies in ML programs, sharing that the numbers are unchanged since the report at the September 13 meeting.

Serpa asked whether the many people in Boston who are multilingual could be tapped in some way to fill staffing gaps. Assiraj responded with a reminder about the import of meeting the cultural needs of the students. St. Fleur also asked by chat, "How can we help with vacancies? Is District willing to consider alternative pathways?"

Assiraj shared information about the process that led to the OMME Strategic Plan, expressing appreciation for input from many stakeholders. She reflected that "a plan is a plan is a plan" and it will be all about implementation. They are now moving into the level of planning that is for implementation purposes.

She shared that 2–3 ELTF members will participate in each of five strategic priority committees that OMME has set up, as shown below, and indicated that meetings will be in January, May, and September, with dates yet to be finalized.

- Strategic Priority 1 - Uriarte, Tung
- Strategic Priority 2 - Serpa, Mudd
- Strategic Priority 3 - Li, Torres-Ardila
- Strategic Priority 4 - Polanco Garcia, De Barros
- Strategic Priority 5 - Vu, Scannell, Camacho

In addition, Lee and researcher / advocate Dan French will participate in the BPS Reimagine Funding Steering Committee that will be looking at budgeting.

Lee requested that ELTF members bring back information from their committees to the larger group, and said she would do that same from the committee on budgeting.

Mudd asked whether January is the earliest that meetings can begin. Assiraj indicated that January would be the soonest.

Assiraj expressed gratitude to ELTF members for their participation and contributions.

Conversation with Linda Chen, Senior Deputy Superintendent of Academics

Chen expressed her enthusiasm for returning to BPS, and reported on seeing firsthand the impact Polanco had at the Council of Great City Schools.

Chen then shared her personal background with ELTF members. She introduced herself as a daughter of immigrants and described how she went to school not knowing English, and lived with her grandparents who spoke only Mandarin. Her parents intentionally did not want English spoken at home as an effort to preserve Chinese language skills of their children, and because they were not comfortable sharing their “broken English.” Chen said that the work for multilingual learners feels personal because of her experiences seeing her parents navigate school systems. She also has a brother-in-law who is an immigrant and has autism, and to this day she supports her in-laws in navigating systems to get his needs met.

Chen shared that as a teacher and then a staff developer in literacy, she saw many educators who did not know what to do with English learners. She saw students placed in the back of classrooms with headphones on, by people who thought it was best to separate students. She became a principal in New York City of a K-5 dual language school (Spanish and English) with a full continuum of special education programs. She brought inclusion to that school in partnership with the teachers. They had had a high number of referrals and she came to learn that they did not have the appropriate services in place for student learning. After a number of years, they were able to change the resources they provided students and reduce the number of referrals.

At BPS, Chen's priority is to center multilingual learners at the front end, not as an afterthought. She shared her appreciation for all the work that Assiraj and the OMME team have done, and the content of the strategic plan they developed.

She was appreciative that ELTF members had spoken with the Council of Great City Schools (CGCS) staff. CGCS is preparing an assessment of BPS special education services and will make recommendations to the School Committee on November 16. She asked ELTF members to keep in mind that the OMME Strategic Plan was developed without the information that will be provided by that CGCS report.

She said Superintendent Mary Skipper has been very clear with BPS central that the OMME Strategic Plan is one of a small handful of system-wide priorities. Chen also expressed her desire to focus intently on the approximately 4,000 multilingual learners with disabilities.

Lee asked about the leadership vacancies at OMME and OSE, and requested that ELTF members be invited to sit on the screening committees as they have done in the past. Chen explained that OSE and OMME leaders will be elevated to chief-level roles. She thought the hiring for OMME and OSE would include families and community members in the process.

FOLLOW UP: Reach out to district leadership to inquire about ELTF participation on the screening committees for hiring an OSE and an OMME chief.

Mudd expressed that it was reassuring to hear about Chen's background and priorities for the district. He urged as well that ELTF members participate in the OMME hiring process, and expressed that the MLSWD Subcommittee will want to collaborate with her.

Chen welcomed Lauren Viviani, the interim leader for OSE. She said it has been difficult to find people who have expertise in MLs and in special education. They would welcome recommendations of people who have both skills to fill the two OMME-OSE joint positions that have been open for some time.

Polanco Garcia spoke to emphasize parent participation, pointing out that there are many parents present here today. It is very important and they are a resource for ideas and need access to the process. In response, Assiraj shared the links for people to sign up to participate on the strategic priority planning committees in various languages.

Chen affirmed that family engagement is necessary for dual language programs and that without it the programs do not survive.

Lee expressed appreciation for leadership-level competency on these issues.

Bilingual Educator Pipeline Planning, Rashaun Martin, Director, Retention Programs and Services for Educators of Color and KimVy Nguyen, Bilingual Educators & Accelerated Community to Teacher (BEACTT) Program Coach

Martin presented data on workforce diversity in SY22-23. He showed evidence that the district has increased the percentage of educators of color by 1% in each of the last three years. He also shared data on hires in each of the last five years, showing that 2021 was a peak year for hires of educators of color, and data on external candidate hires, which again showed a decline in 2022 in the percentage of educators of color hired. He named many forces that were thought to contribute to departures of educators of color — see transcript — and shared that BPS has actually been able to reduce the departure of educators of color in recent years.

Serpa asked how many of the new hires speak a language other than English, and whether the Office of Human Capital is taking steps to enable BPS educators to learn a language other than English. St. Fleur added in the chat, “I encourage that teacher recruitment data for multilingual teachers be presented and interrogated by school committee.”

Martin said he could get data on educator language for new hires and share it. He thought some schools were offering educators an opportunity to learn a language but wasn’t aware of anything comprehensive. Assiraj shared by chat, “We are working on a proposal to identify language courses and stipend teachers to participate - we have some language courses that have been offered through our World Language dept.”

FOLLOW UP: Obtain data from Martin on educator language for new hires.

Nguyen shared data on BPS Teacher Pipeline Programs. She reported 41 pre-service and 6 bilingual candidates in the 202–23 cohort. She shared information about the race/ethnic identity of bilingual educator candidates, their language spoken, and the types of roles that the prior cohort went into. On her slides was also information about the schedule and content of the teacher training program she leads.

Mudd said the programs are wonderful but tiny and asked about plans for expansion. He inquired whether ESSER funds could be used to scale up these programs.

Martin gave some numbers related to program expansion. He shared that the massive amount of transitions in the internal office have slowed recruitment and program expansion and use of the available funds. He expressed hope that there will be progress when he reports next year.

Public Comment

There were no comments from the public.

Adjourn

Lee expressed gratitude to everyone for participating and adjourned the meeting.