

THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE OF THE CITY OF BOSTON



English Language Learners (ELL) Task Force Remote Meeting

**October 28, 2021
3:00 pm – 5:00 pm**

NOTES

ATTENDEES

ELLTF Members and Staff: Janet Anderson, Ernani DeAraujo (Co-chair), Suzanne Lee (Co-chair), Katie Li, John Mudd, Maria Serpa, Rosann Tung, Miren Uriarte, Jen Douglas (Coordinator)

BPS Staff: Farah Assiraj (Deputy Chief Academic Officer), Ceronne Daly (Managing Director, Office of Recruitment, Cultivation, and Diversity Programs), Faye Karp (Executive Director, Office of English Learners), Drew Echelson (Deputy Superintendent of Academics), Monica Hogan (Senior Executive Director, Office of Data and Accountability), Aketa Narang Kapur (Assistant Superintendent, Office of English Learners), Stephanie Marek (Director of Analytics, Office of Data and Accountability), Massielle Pimentel (Office of English Learners), Claudia Willis (English Learner Instructional and Support Specialist, Office of English Learners), Dunja Ždero (English Learner Instructional and Support Specialist)

Public: Roxanne Harvey (Chair, SpEdPAC, and prospective ELLTF member), Peggy Wiesenbergs,

HANDOUTS

Office of English Learners

- “Office of English Learners Assistant Superintendent Report: Presentation to the EL Task Force,” _____, Assistant Superintendent
- Submission of Paragraphs 54 and 55 Per Successor Agreement, Office of English Learners (OEL), October 15, 2021
- Memo from OEL to the ELL Task Force (ELLTF) regarding the October 15, 2021 report to the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ)
- EL Taskforce Members Feedback Form, OEL (to collect ELLTF member feedback on the October 15, 2021 report to the USDOJ)

ELL Task Force

- Minutes of the ELL Task Force Meeting, September 23, 2021

Other Boston Public Schools

- Public ESSER School Guidance, Boston Public Schools

- BPS Acceleration Academies Description, Academics Department
- 2019 and 2021 MCAS Results for English Learners, Office of Data & Accountability, October 2021
- BPS Academics Team: Academics Vision, School Committee, November 3, 2021

CONSOLIDATED FOLLOW-UP LIST

- Confirm whether “Former ELs” actually includes all students formerly classified as ELs or just those who are 4 or less years from an EL designation.
- Request MCAS data disaggregated by school from Hogan.
- Hear from Echelson what can be done to support 10th grade students who are not meeting expectations / not on track to graduate per their MCAS results.
- Work with Echelson to schedule ELLTF members to attend a public retreat.

DISCUSSION

1. Welcome (5 min)

2. Chairs’ Welcome (3:05, 25 min)

Roll Call

	Present?
Janet Anderson	y
Angelina Camacho	n
Ernani DeAraujo	y
Paulo De Barros	n
Geralde Gabeau	n
Lisette Le	n
Suzanne Lee, Co-chair	y

	Present?
Katie Li	y
John Mudd	y
Maria Serpa	y
Marie St. Fleur	n
Fabián Torres-Ardila	n
Rosann Tung	y
Miren Uriarte	y

a - Set meeting norms

1. Be curious, open, and respectful – call in, not out
2. Take space / make space – make room for all voices
3. Hold public comment until the end

b - School Committee update

Note: DeAraujo had a planned absence from the SC meeting last night.

Mudd: There was a lengthy BuildBPS report. In the community there have been serious concerns that the equity concerns attached to the BuildBPS proposals are inadequate. There has been no provision for the overlay maps in student assignment with the BuildBPS plans that were promised when the district adopted the Home-based Assignment Plan. As they talk about new buildings or closings there is no analysis of the educational needs of those kids in particular areas and how BuildBPS fits into meeting those educational needs.

c - Announcement: ESSER guidance and DOJ report are being shared in writing

Handouts were shared electronically with meeting participants. ELLTF members were informed that they could submit feedback to OEL using a provided google form.

d - Brief report-back from ELLTF members who sat on the OEL hiring committee

Anderson: On the hiring committee was a student from BINCA, three staff from OEL, several teachers / BTU reps, and three ELLTF members, with 14 participants in total. Responsibilities included reviewing application materials and participating in group interviews via Zoom with 3 finalists. Each of the candidates were asked a set of structured questions in the interviews and also asked to answer other questions in writing. In the live interview they did a performance task, which was a live presentation to the SC. Each hiring committee member then submitted individual ratings based on a rubric. Echelson and Cassellius performed the final interviews and reference-checking. After the hire, ELLTF participants and co-chairs were invited by the superintendent to meet with Narang Kapur and share priorities around ELSDs, family/community engagement, access to native language, and staff diversity.

e - Meet Aketa Narang Kapur, newly appointed Asst. Supt. of OEL (Drew Echelson)

Kapur: Honored and humbled to have the opportunity to serve bilingual and ELs with and without disabilities in BPS. Excited to serve the diverse linguistic communities in BPS. "I am walking into this role with urgency and a deep commitment to serve the diverse linguistic communities in our city." Kapur has worked 15 years as an educator in BPS, an LATF, language coach, school leader, more, and currently the MTEL Program Specialist. "We began the first ever bilingual educator pathway to licensure that is district-based;" it aims to recruit and cultivate paraprofessionals, career changers, and others to be teachers. "My own experience as a bilingual learner has cemented my personal desire to establish native language instruction in BPS." Kapur's goal over the next few weeks is to meet with internal and external stakeholders. "I look forward to working with all of you."

Lee: Thank you! I also want to take this opportunity to thank Faye who has been holding down a lot of this work.

3. Approve meeting minutes from September 23, 2021 (3:30, 5 min)

Mudd: Motion to pass the minutes.

Uriarte: Second.

Passed unanimously, with Tung abstaining because she was absent on September 23.

4. MCAS results for English Learners (Monica Hogan) (3:35, 60 min)

*See the presentation, [2019 and 2021 MCAS Results for English Learners](#),
Office of Data & Accountability, October 2021.*

Data questions emerged about how Former ELs are monitored after four years. The footnote to slide 10 says “The “Former EL” subgroup includes all active BPS students who were reclassified within the past four years.” It implies that Former ELs who are 5 or more years past reclassification could be missing from the data (when they are no longer classified as Former ELs, but also would not be never ELs). Do they comprise a separate category, and if so, are they missing from the data? Karp confirmed that four years is the federally-required monitoring period when a student who was an EL must be classified as a former EL. She will let us know about whether there is indeed a “missing group” of 5+ years out FELs.

FOLLOW UP: Confirm whether “Former ELs” actually includes all students formerly classified as ELs or just those who are 4 or less years from an EL designation.

In 2021, Grades 3-8 were permitted to take the MCAS remotely. Hogan indicated that different groups of students chose to stay remote versus come back in person, but stated that there were no patterns in who made which choice or in performance between remote versus in-person test-takers.

Lee: Have you compared school-by-school results, comparing schools with large percentages of ELs to those with large percentages of Never ELs?

Hogan: I could look at that and share bright spots and lower performance if that would be helpful.

Lee: Yes, I would like to see that.

FOLLOW UP: Request MCAS data disaggregated by school from Hogan.

Uriarte, Lee, Mudd: These numbers are pretty shocking.

Anderson: The Ns have decreased substantially between 2019 to 2021. Does that reflect enrollment declines?

Hogan: The federal participation standard is 95%. BPS usually has 97–98% participation. The declines here reflect both declining enrollment and decreased participation.

Uriarte: I'm trying to compare these values with the straight values for the district, trying to assess what happened with the achievement gap in this process. It would be helpful to have a comparison column here where we could see the district as a whole. It's not clear who is included and who is not included in some of these columns but we can roughly conclude that there is a tremendous increase in the achievement gap and a disproportionate impact on ELs of the pandemic.

Hogan: ELs have the largest decrease of any groups between the two time points. They were already underperforming and then had a larger decrease.

Uriarte: My question is to Drew. Where does this data take you in terms of policy?

Echelson: I've been in a lot of classrooms; done observations at 39 schools. I'm seeing that students are not having adequate opportunities to demonstrate competencies. At base, I think we have a Tier 1 problem. Students may be using a grade-level text but then they are asked to simply reproduce text that a teacher wrote on the board. They are not doing something high-level that asks them to make sense of complex materials. I want to fix and address the Tier 1 problem. At the same time, we need to think about Tier 2 and Tier 3 work that may be happening ad hoc but needs to be system-wide. Finally, this needs to be paired with far more significant opportunities around native language instruction, and we need district-level infrastructure to do those things. It starts with building high expectations in Tier 1 expectations for ELs and ELSWDs.

Lee: When you instruct students only through English, the content is not there. They are losing content.

Mudd: I also hope that family engagement is also addressed so that families can work with their students.

Hogan: The story is similar in grade 10 but the gaps are smaller.

Uriarte: I think the smaller gaps are a function of who took the test. [Students who anticipated not doing well / not meeting this graduation requirement may not have taken it.]

Hogan: Yes. [Agreeing]

Li: I'm wondering if there is correlation between attendance and these MCAS scores.

Assiraj: I'm wondering also about the differences in the decline in N between ELD4 and ELD5; that may be something we can further analyze.

Lee, looking at majorities not meeting expectations of grade 10 ELA test takers who speak Cabo Verdean, Haitian, and Spanish: What can we provide these students so they can catch up in 2 years?

Serpa: There is no reason students cannot be doing better. Many may already read in their native language. They could be taught to read English within 3 months. What are we going to do? How, collectively, can we be creative and problem-solving so they can leave school with foundational literacy? How do we promote grade-level achievement in a way that we are promoting the right to learn? What is the emergency plan to address their needs?

Echelson: I want to thank you for these questions about 10th grade students. I need to do some thinking with the team and can get a response back to you quickly.

FOLLOW UP: Hear from Echelson what can be done to support 10th grade students who are not meeting expectations / not on track to graduate per their MCAS results.

Li: It's in the classrooms that you'll find the answers, not in the numbers. If you can drill down to the school level that will be a good start.

Echelson: I also would like to further unpack Maria's suggestion that there is some ease in moving toward native language instruction. I want to make sure we do this really well.

5. Discussion of a revised Roadmap for Multilingual Learners (Drew Echelson) (4:35, 15 min)

*See the presentation, [BPS Academics Team: Academics Vision](#),
School Committee, November 3, 2021*

Karp, sharing a word about the alignment between the BPS-DOJ agreement and the LOOK Act: Recognizing that the DOJ agreement was written in the policy regime that existed prior to passage of the LOOK Act, it is still clear that there is room to comply with that agreement and implement the LOOK Act. There are allowances for dual language programs that have not been fully accessed and that BPS is not yet planning for. Also, there is room within one of the provisions for exploring content-based ESL; BPS would need implementation strategies. In summary, the overall sense is that we have the opportunity to collaborate with DOJ. It will be important to make sure BPS comes to that collaboration well-prepared with strong a research-grounded rationale.

Tung, looking at slide 5 with a list of relevant Academic departments: Wondering about the work of the Chief Equity & Strategy Officer and whether it belongs on this graph.

Echelson: You are right that that office is not under Academics.

Serpa, responding to a list on slide 6, titled “What needs to be true across every BPS classroom most especially for multilingual learners and multilingual learners with disabilities”: Students may see complex texts that are in English. I see classrooms where teachers are providing those texts, but it is totally inaccessible to students who don’t have the English proficiency to access it.

Echelson: I accept your amendment to add a language specification to the statement, “Read and write from complex text in every class, every day.” It should be clear that that is in students’ native language.

Li: I think there’s a difference between complexity and difficulty. You can teach complex ideas with any level of difficulty. Maybe some clarification on that language may be helpful. People have very different ideas of complexity.

Echelson: We have a district definition of complexity; it has to do with the structure of the text and certain criteria.

Tung: I’m wondering how you see culturally and linguistically responsive and sustaining curriculum instruction pertaining to some of these ideas.

Echelson: We have a wheel that defines these practices and how they are undergirded by culturally and linguistically sustaining practices (CLSP). We will be presenting that at an upcoming CERT meeting.

Lee: I can envision how elementary schools can adopt these approaches, but how does what you are presenting happen in high school? It is linked to what we were talking about earlier to figure this out for students who are in high school right now.

I’m encouraged to see this language. It is the most explicit that we have seen from the district. Now we need to put our thinking cap on to see how we can operationalize it. And do we need to engage the union in talking about any of this.

Echelson: I have a regular meeting with BTU leaders. We disagree sometimes but I have a high level of respect for them. One of the things I really appreciated about the earlier drafts of the Roadmap is the emphasis on mindset. We shouldn’t be starting from a deficit model of things students can’t do or shouldn’t do. I hope that’s something we can carry over into the new version of this vision statement. A lot of times when educators make those deficit-oriented statements, it’s because they don’t have the skills to do different.

Lee: We need to start with the principals.

Echelson: My view is about asking what we need to do at the district-level to improve principal practice, so that they can change teacher practice.

Mudd: We have argued for a long time that the School Committee has to make access to native language a matter of policy for the district. We need an unequivocally clear policy statement from the highest levels in the district.

Echelson: My vision is that we need to come to agreement as a team and bring this forward as a policy for the SC to approve. I want to move us to the implementation and execution conversation as quickly as possible.

Li: I want to caution about relying too much on working through school leadership, because the leadership changes a lot. Usually if you go into any school, people can identify which teachers have the best practices in the classroom.

Lee: My comment is not an either/or, it's just that none of this can move without the school leader.

Echelson: The data on this is clear. The most important part is the educator. But none of this can move without the leadership.

Tung: I liked the slide about what we need to see in each classroom, and I like the vision statement. Miren and I led a set of studies, and Faye was a participant in that work, to identify what principals, LATFs, instructors looked like in our schools. It was done a long time ago but I am going to guess that a lot of that is still relevant.

Mudd, responding to the idea on slide 7 of having a public retreat with key stakeholders including ELLTF members, to move to infrastructure and action planning: It's a great idea to have the retreat but I would encourage you to have some base outline of a document that's based on prior studies, rather than everyone thinking it up together live in a meeting.

Echelson: We will have done some pre-thinking.

Anderson: I could be supportive of the vision expressed in the presentation. I feel comfortable moving ahead with that as a foundation.

Echelson: Should I be working with Jen to schedule? Yes. We'd like to do that ASAP.

Tung: I have a request of the BPS folks to get us materials in advance of the meetings. I need an opportunity to review and think ahead of the meeting in order to be prepared before I speak.

Echelson: We agree.

FOLLOW UP: Work with Echelson to schedule ELLTF members to attend a public retreat.

6. Public Comment (4:50, 10 min)

Wiesenberg: I had an idea with respect to high school students. What about financial literacy for ELs who are working and going to school? And, will BPS pay older students to attend summer school where they could get more language instruction, etc.? This superintendent and the School Committee are interested in de-tracking but might want to think about the fact that at the Hennigan there was an Advanced Work Class for Spanish-speakers. I'm wondering if the TAG program still exists. How does BPS collect home language? From which parent's home? When I first came to Boston the City's public health department went to Puerto Rico to recruit nurses, so I'm wondering about the creativity of responses.

7. Adjourn / wrap