

THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE OF THE CITY OF BOSTON



**English Language Learners (ELL) Task Force Remote Meeting**

**October 8, 2020**  
**10:00 a.m. – 12:00 pm**

**NOTES**

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**ATTENDEES**

**ELLTF Members and Staff:** Janet Anderson, Farah Assiraj, Geralde Gabeau, Suzanne Lee (Co-chair), Katie Li, John Mudd, Lorna Rivera (Co-chair), Maria Serpa, Rosann Tung, Jen Douglas (Coordinator)

**BPS Staff:** Faye Karp (Interim Assistant Superintendent, Office of English Learners)

**HANDOUTS**

*ELL Task Force*

- “ELLTF 10-8-20” (meeting guide slides)

**CONSOLIDATED FOLLOW-UP LIST**

**FOLLOW UP:** Request from OEL the percentage of ELs that are high needs who selected to be fully remote.

**DISCUSSION**

**1. Chairs’ Welcome**

- Roll call.

<b>First</b>	<b>Last</b>	<b>Present?</b>
Janet	Anderson	y
Farah	Assiraj	y
Angelina	Camacho	n
Paulo	De Barros	n

First	Last	Present?
Geralde	Gabeau	y
Lisette	Le	n
Suzanne	Lee, Co-chair	y
Katie	Li	y
John	Mudd	y
Lorna	Rivera, Co-chair	y
Maria	Serpa	y
Marie	St. Fleur, J.D.	n
Alejandra	St. Guillen	n
Fabian	Torres-Ardila	n
Rosann	Tung	y
Miren	Uriarte	n

## 2. Chairs' Welcome (10 minutes)

### Goals for today:

- Reflect on the past year's wins
- Set the 3 key priorities for the school year.
  - They must be within the TF's role
  - They must be actionable
  - They must have an outcome that we can document

### Preface:

- Review and explain what the TF's role is.
- Explain process: In order to hear more voices, we will be using a timer and trying to vary conversation structure

## 3. OEL presentation (20 minutes)

Karp: 41% of ELs have selected to be fully remote for this year. The reminder will be either hybrid or, if identified as part of the high in-person priority group (a selection of ELs with beginner language learning needs and ELSWDs, some of whom have opted to be in person), may have additional in-school days. Hybrid is delayed for early childhood by one week, so there are currently more students learning remotely than the 41%.

Lee: Any attendance data?

Karp: The district is still working out the process of collating attendance data; not available for today.

Mudd: What percentage are high needs?

Karp: We can provide that data following this meeting.

**FOLLOW UP:** Request from OEL the percentage of ELs that are high needs who selected to be fully remote.

Serpa: Who is monitoring the remote learning for ELDs 1–3 who are in SEI?

Karp: It is a goal to be able to look at that once we have attendance data. That level of detail was not part of the data capture for elementary grades anywhere in the district but OEL pushed for it and it will be captured. Each school is responsible for attendance taking. OEL released instructional videos in the spring in major BPS languages and are working still to make sure that teachers know those are available. Also, there is Talking Points with two-way translation.

Li: Attendance data at this point is going to most likely be at the school level, with people following up with families and trying to figure out what the issues are with signing on.

Li: Hearing from teachers about required tests that take 1, 2, 3 hours and aren't designed for ELs; it's lots of clicking and students may not understand what they're seeing.

Karp: OEL has recommended that these assessments are not appropriate for ELs. I believe that the MAP is available in Spanish but not in other major languages. At the same time, we are wanting to make sure ELs are held to grade-level expectations. Changing this practice is not something OEL can do alone. OEL is working with ODA on this issue later this week, as well as colleagues in academics, to determine what supports/guidance they can provide.

Lee: Also concerned that teachers are wasting a lot of time and that students are becoming frustrated and may turn off the computer.

Karp: As you see letters from teachers could you also share those with OEL, so we can see what you're seeing?

Assiraj: How is your office collaborating with teachers? How are you making sure that you are in communication as the school year unfolds?

Karp: There was a taskforce on ELs chaired by Bruggeman and McIntire. We also closely engaged with LATFs in the spring.

#### **4. What are some ELL Task Force wins from last year? (15 minutes—needs a little longer)**

Members were asked to name one or two wins or things they feel proud of for their work last year, and given up to one minute per person to speak. Members said:

- We did a lot of work making recommendations to the Superintendent for strategic planning and operational planning. I noticed at the June School Committee meeting, where we presented some of that work, that our recommendations were referenced. Also, some of our recommendations were included verbatim in the OEL director job description.

- ELSWD subcommittee. Made some progress on a checklist for taking the needs of ELSWDs into account. And our work on a guidance document is nearing completion.
- The issue of Latino staff is being raised at School Committee; it is on the table in a different way.
- I'm seeing some significant improvements on staff diversity data.
- I think we were taken very seriously in the re-opened hire of the OEL director. At every step of the process people were making sure ELLTF member voices were amplified and heard.
- Another: concurred. By pushing for us to be involved in the search committee and make sure the voices of ELs were at the table we made progress and showed the need for the ELLTF. We are pushing BPS leaders to take ELs into consideration and be that strong voice.
- I heard Faye mention at a recent meeting that ELs were not an afterthought or an add-on but were an essential part of equity conversations, and that she heard other district leaders besides herself and the OEL team raising those issues.
- We can sense a small shift in mindset to try to include ELs at the beginning of discussions rather than as an afterthought. There is a long way to go, but we can note that shift. People are aware that there are other language groups. The pandemic elevated the importance of communicating with families in their languages.
- I have deep admiration for TF members for lifting voices and raising visibility of ELs. Also, external community organizing, parents writing letters, parent action in Vietnamese and Cabo Verdean communities — their voices are being heard and there is momentum despite ongoing blind spots. District leadership is listening more.

**5. What do you personally get out of participating on the TF? (15 minutes)**

Members were split into small groups and asked to share a time when they enjoyed, got a good feeling, or did something differently as a result of serving on the TF (talking about who, where, what, why, how). The groups reported back.

- We have worked so hard on consistent priorities to advance equity in special education, and bilingual education. We have a window of opportunity right now with the change in leadership.
- We have an eye toward the whole, with bigger impact for ELs. TF members have their own expertise area and by coming together we are able to look at the whole system and how to advance results — it is our biggest contribution and what gives us the biggest push to participate and do more than just change little things.
- I see firsthand when families have big dreams for their young people and do not always know what quality of education they are receiving. I, as an immigrant, want to raise my voice for those students. We are making sure we have a better society where everyone is treated equally.

**6. What are the particular opportunities of this moment? (15 minutes—needs a little longer)**

Members were asked to characterize the moment. Thinking about the system as a whole, not their personal priorities, they spoke about the context, including the political context, they are working in.

- There is a new OEL leader being hired. We have an opportunity to help the person understand the challenges and opportunities of Boston, to support this person to understand the dynamics and be able to implement something in a system that is very resistant to change. And we have a chance to continue working, we hope, with Faye in that transition.
- Family engagement — the current context presents an opportunity to connect with families.
- Community engagement is another opportunity. A lot of people are really interested in supporting and helping. We need creative ways to engage the entire community and the resources of communities. How do we bring the entire village around students?
- There is a huge opportunity with virtual learning. We can bring people into the room very easily — parents, community members, interpreters, more.
- Everyone is talking about concerns with immigrant families and how they can be a part of the conversation.
- Use the election year as an opportunity to raise deep questions.
- Opportunities for teacher leadership to be involved in EL advocacy work throughout the district. Also, student leadership — want to think about how to harness that energy to focus more on ELs. Thinking about the Equity Roundtables at each school, the opportunities for schools to tailor certain things to student/community needs. It also may be that the student member of the School Committee will get a vote and move things more in the direction of meaningful student leadership.
- The moment is now to capture the activism that we've seen.

## **7. What do we want to accomplish this year? (35 minutes)**

Member broke into small groups to reflect on what they want to accomplish this year, and to focus on the “low-hanging fruit”: goals for impacting EL teaching and learning that fit within the TF’s prescribed role, that can be accomplished within this school year, and can be measured. Responses are organized here into categories.

### **Assistant Superintendent for OEL**

- Successful onboarding, support of, and relationship-building with the new Assistant Superintendent for the Office of English Learners; working as a team towards the same goals rather than compliance.
- As part of that, supporting the person in devising a good plan for the LOOK Act and increasing native language access.
- Have OEL be more systematic instead of reactive in supporting students and families (e.g., if there is an issue with a teacher where do they go? an issue with understanding progress reports?).

### **Ideas about compliance, monitoring**

- Monitoring and advocacy role: focus on areas where we are not meeting the minimum legal requirements, i.e.,
  - assessment in native language
  - student access and participation
  - meet legal requirements for ELSWDs that are not being met (minimally) (both small groups)
- Avoid going into compliance mode and keep the focus on what's best for students.

### **LOOK Act**

- Native language access through LOOK Act; dual, heritage. Have new director make plan and proposals a priority
- Increase the number of teachers who speak students' home languages. Hire more language proficient teachers.
- Regularly monitor and advocate for solutions for EL student access and participation in hybrid or remote learning.

### **ELSWDs**

- Continue focus on ELLSWD (ask subcommittee to pick one or two to advocate for this year)
  - IEP dropdown menu and checklist
  - OEL and OSE coordinated staffing
  - Guidance doc
  - Subcommittee has a two page list
- Advocate for the District to meet the education and social emotional needs of EL students with disabilities.

### **8. Public comment (5 minutes)**

Roxi Harvey: We are hoping to see more collaboration and getting more resources to SpEdPAC to share with families in various languages.

- I know the district has a lot to interpret and translate but the turnaround time is an area where we'd like to see improvement.
- A lot of things that are a challenge for EL families are a challenge for native English-speaking families. For example, the progress reports, to be able to understand what they mean, what is being said.
- A lot of focus for SpEdPAC in working with the ELLTF is on collaboration and improving quality of special education services—all those students that are waiting for assessments, from the backlog and all those students turning 3, to make sure we are able to distinguish between a disability and a language need.

We'd like to be able to do things together so those interpreters are available and we don't need to do things separately. I enjoyed being here today and hearing what you are working on.

### **9. Adjourn**