

THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE OF THE CITY OF BOSTON



MEETING MINUTES **English Language Learners (ELL) Task Force Meeting**

Bruce C. Bolling Municipal Building
6th Floor Community Space
Roxbury, MA 02119

November 19, 2019
10:00 a.m. – 1:00 pm

Handouts

Office of English Learners

- “October 2019 DOJ Reports: Presentation to EL Task Force,” November 19, 2019, Priya Tahiliani, Assistant Superintendent
- 3 Cs & I: Instructional Expectations and Best Practices for English Learners Classroom Observation Protocol

Superintendent’s Office

- “Community and School Engagement Tour Update,” Dr. Brenda Cassellius

Secondary School Superintendents

- “Boston Public Schools Strategic Problem of Practice: Draft”

ELL Task Force

- ELLTF Strategic Priority Review, Fall 2019
- Minutes of the ELL Task Force Meeting, May 20, 2019
- Minutes of the ELL Task Force Meeting, September 17, 2019

Attendees

ELLTF Members and Staff: Janet Anderson, EdVestors; Angelina Camacho, Parent; Paulo A. De Barros, Cape Verdean Association of Boston; Jen Douglas, ELLTF Coordinator; Geralde V. Gabeau, IFSI-USA; Suzanne Lee, ELLTF Co-chair; Katie Li, BTU/BPS; John Mudd, Advocate; Fabian Torres-Ardila, Gastón Institute; Lorna Rivera, ELLTF Co-chair, School Committee Member, Gastón Institute; Rosann Tung, Independent Researcher / Parent

BPS Staff: Dr. Elia Bruggeman; Priya Tahilianiani, Assistant Superintendent, Office of English Learners; Andrea Zayas, Chief Academic Officer

From the public: Roger Rice, META; Alan Jay Rom, META; Bianca Vazquez Toness, Reporter, *Boston Globe*

1. Welcome

2. Chairs' Report

ELL Task Force role: Monitor the district's activities in relation to the goals established in the DOJ ruling.

Superintendent's strategic planning process: Decisions are not yet made. Community input is sought. Final to be released in February.

3. Approval of Meeting Minutes from May 20, 2019 and September 17

Approved for both dates.

4. Office of English Learners Director's Report (Priya Tahiliani)

DOJ reports are due almost monthly. The October cycle is among the most intensive.

Slide 3: Compliance more successful at elementary than secondary level.

Slide 7: Ongoing issue with receiving the data (about 600 students for whom we have not received information, at both high school and elementary levels). Efforts are underway to make sure this message is coming from superintendent and upper leadership, not just OEL. To some extent this problem is about certain schools with ongoing histories of not reporting.

Schools use October numbers to create their November plan.

Question posed: Is there conflict between the work necessary to attend to opportunities opened by the LOOK Act and that required to fulfill compliance mandates in the DOJ agreement?

Answer: There is some sense of that within the group but there is not any particular obstacle expressed by the DOJ people with whom BPS works.

FOLLOW UP. Request made that the December OEL report include a slide identical to the one on slide 5 of today's presentation, but with December numbers.

FOLLOW UP questions related to Slide 15.

- To what schools are administrative assignments made? Concern is that those are often placements in less well-performing schools, because that's where the seats are.
- Please tell us the percentage of administrative assignments that are for newcomers. In which round are EL students receiving their first choice? Is it in round 1, when more seats are available, or in round 3, when there are fewer options?
- How appropriate are the placements? Are students assigned to an SEI program consistent with their native language? Can we tell to what extent the

assignments appear to be driven by students' educational needs, or by what the Budget Office thinks makes sense?

Note made: Student assignment has huge impact on schools. When there's no plan, then things can change (sometimes dramatically) year-to-year about which students will come to a particular school, with which needs. School choice also has substantial impacts.

FOLLOW UP. Slide 16. For the first bullet about bilingual special education evaluator staff, please provide information about how many staff speak each language, and what positions they hold (teacher, para, psychologist, etc.) and how it relates to the need?

The Observation Protocol that OEL provided for this meeting is for the pilot programs.

5. Learn and Discuss: BPS Strategic Planning for ELs

Andrea Zayas

Intro to report on community engagement / strategic planning themes. She is open to sit down with ELLTF members to receive feedback. Affirmation of commitment to ELs and to acting in concordance with emerging themes to change outcomes for kids.

IB programs in open enrollment schools, create a language certificate.

Elia Bruggeman

Working with McIntyre to develop recommendations for high school. For open enrollment schools, being very intentional about where ELs are: Working with consulates to develop MOUs to have materials from other countries. Cape Verde, Columbia, Dominican Republic, Central American countries. Also Puerto Rico. Bring pre-AP into open enrollment schools for 9th and 10th graders.

Looking at social-emotional learning, native language supports. Bring in psychologists and social workers that speak another language, wrap-around services. Bruggeman and Dr. McIntyre are working closely together.

Recommending that an Office of Compliance be established to take a look at the whole system.

FOLLOW UP. ELLTF members who are interested in working with Bruggeman to advise planning for high schools: Paulo, Katie, Janet, Fabián, John. Bruggeman will let Jen Douglas know when there is going to be a meeting and when they can come.

Discussion

Question: What changes will result from putting OEL and OSE under Academics?

Answer: The intention of having OEL and OSE with the other education departments is to create coherence and ensure that all students are being thought about in a holistic way. It is an effort to get EL services embedded, not treated as something peripheral.

Question: What will the approach be to late-entrance ELs (arriving at high school level with little/no English)?

Answer: That will be a part of the plan. There are also related issues within the district, with kids that move so much and we are not following them, that will be part of the plan.

Question: We have been in gradual movement from compliance focus to instructional focus. There has been a lot of experimentation of what to do with ELs, from the time they were a small percentage of the district to now when they are a majority. We want to make sure that, whatever changes are made related to the balance between compliance and instruction, the ELLTF is a part of that discussion.

Answer: We can't get to instruction yet the way that we need to: Why? We are hashing out, "What are the reasons, why?" especially because we have so many resources and dedicated people in this building. The consent decree is there for a reason. We were violating students' civil rights. That's the floor and we need to solve that, not have it continue to be something we are trying to solve. How do we get there by leveraging the teams and resources we have already and make the organization more coherent so it works on behalf of our English learners.

A note of caution: there is a lot of resource and capacity in the Cape Verdean community within Boston. You don't have to go outside of the country to find that. There are a lot of teachers who left BPS because the system was not a welcoming environment for teaching. What can you do to attract the people who are going to charter schools and not to BPS?

A note of concern: If the EL kids become everybody's concern they can frequently become nobody's concern. I've seen that at the state level, in other institutions. I see that every time a new superintendent has come in they rearrange the boxes. Now we have new functions and new boxes. I would wonder, if they functions get too far spread, who are we talking to. Response: All of the functions in OEL as they have been, the office is just now reporting to Academics and Zayas will start attending the ELLTF meetings alongside Priya. What has changed are the lines of direct reporting, and an intention to give all the functions — assignment, instruction, etc. — more coherence.

6. ELLTF Strategic Planning – subcommittee report-backs, looking at our role

There are 17 schools already identified for 6th grade expansion. An initial group that the SC voted on last year and a new group in East Boston. There will be a big staffing shift because 6th grade teachers have been core content teachers (they don't teach every subject) and in a K-6 they will have an elementary school license and teach all subjects—it's a different license. We need to pay attention to which teachers are lost/gained.

We need to be focused on what's happening in East Boston. Those are ELs and it's a big shift. There are a lot of domino effects from the changes to those schools (for feeder school relationships, etc.).

We need to confront the assimilationist sentiment prevalent in the district, in families, by teachers, that prioritizes English. It can't be just about language, it has to be about culture and cultural pride.

We need to make linkages between heritage language and the work being done on ethnic studies.

What's the vision? We are the values? The ELLTF has as its opening line a vision of embracing a multilingual, multicultural BPS.

Need for more family education about program offerings. Parents may resist a bilingual program because they want their child to learn English; they don't know what a bilingual program is.

Need for data and transparency of data. Most of the data that is reported is that required by the federal government, and that's not necessarily what we need.

There is a School Quality Task Force. How could we interact or engage with them? They are looking at programming, creating dashboards for the data they collect. Even the task forces of the SC work in siloes.

We need to be more specific in this group about what we want.

We have too many goals. We need a small number that are achievable. Let's come out with a strategic plan for ELs and not wait for it to come to us.

We are too general, especially when it comes to implementing programs for specific language groups.

We need the system to hold principals accountable. We have principals and headmasters who are not providing data, who are not working with us.

Zayas: I would urge you all to consider some student achievement outcome goals as part of what the TF looks for over time. The report in the *Globe* this Sunday, if you look at the EL graduation and college rates over time, what are ambitious and reasonable goals we can set around life outcomes for those young people?

Regarding disaggregation: The OAG Task Force has recommended for years that we disaggregate Black and disaggregate Latino students. It's been hanging out there with no movement.

ITEMS FOR STRATEGIC PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Staff language diversity
- Program opportunities made possible by the LOOK Act
- Access to native language
- Language *and culture*, inc. describe and explain what we mean by "heritage program"
- Data and transparency

Before the policy change, Cape Verdeans were successful students in BPS. It didn't work for CVs after. It worked for Latino groups.

I don't think it worked for the Latino populations.

We need to express our big vision and state whatever we think are the levers for change. HC (teachers and leaders), instruction (teaching and learning), family and student engagement, maybe 25 things that we can whittle down to 5 or so priorities. If we have some goals, for example, around HC, what are the goals and where would we like them to move?

What if we make heritage language the priority? Even if we increase every year one or two dual language programs, it's still going to be a small part.

What if we just ask, "How are we getting beyond SEI?" What is the plan to get beyond it at scale?

Also this notion that SEI has worked for some group of students. How has it worked for, and what are the gaps? FELL students are among the most successful students in the district. Who is being successful and why do we have some students who aren't successful and become long-term ELLs?

Another list:

- Human capital
- Instruction and professional development (suggestion made to disaggregate instruction by language and ethnicity)
- Engagement / parent preparation
- Funding and budget
- Asset-based mindset

7. Public Comment

8. Adjourn