

THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE OF THE CITY OF BOSTON



**Public Meeting Notice and Agenda
English Language Learners (ELL) Task Force Meeting**

**Bruce C. Bolling Municipal Building
2300 Washington Street
Roxbury, MA 02119**

**December 10, 2020
3:00 – 5:00 pm**

ATTENDEES

ELLTF Members and Staff: Janet Anderson, Farah Assiraj, Paulo De Barros, Lisette Le, Suzanne Lee (Co-chair), Katie Li, John Mudd, Lorna Rivera (Co-chair), Maria Serpa, Marie St. Fleur, J.D., Fabián Torres-Ardila, Rosann Tung, Jen Douglas (Coordinator)

BPS Staff: Daphne Germain (Director of EL Program Planning & Implementation, Office of English Learners), Faye Karp (Executive Director, Office of English Learners), Genevieve McDonough (Dual Language/English Learner Instructional Specialist, Office of English Learners), Lena Parvex (Administrative Assistant, School Committee), Silvia Romero-Johnson (Assistant Superintendent, Office of English Learners), Andrea Zayas (Chief Academic Officer)

Public: Alan Jay Rom, Roger Rice, Jenna Russell, Roxanne Harvey (SPED PAC)

HANDOUTS

Office of English Learners

- "Office of English Learners Assistant Superintendent Report: Presentation to the EL Task Force," Dr. Silvia Romero-Johnson, Assistant Superintendent, December 10, 2020.

ELL Task Force

- Minutes of the ELL Task Force Meeting, November 12, 2020

CONSOLIDATED FOLLOW-UP LIST

<p>FOLLOW UP: Communicate with TF members about next steps for collaborating with Grandson on the operational plan.</p>
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FOLLOW UP: Request from OEL for the January meeting a clarification of about how “full services” for ELs are being measured at this time, and whether it is the same measurement that has been used or one modified with new pandemic-moment DESE standards.

FOLLOW UP: Request from OEL for the January meeting an update about the WIDA ACCESS testing process and what is being communicated with ELs.

MEETING DISCUSSION

1. Welcome and introductions

- Roll call.

First	Last	Present?
Janet	Anderson	y
Farah	Assiraj	y
Angelina	Camacho	n
Paulo	De Barros	y
Geralde	Gabeau	n
Lisette	Le	y
Suzanne	Lee, Co-chair	y
Katie	Li	y
John	Mudd	y

First	Last	Present?
Lorna	Rivera, Co-chair	y
Maria	Serpa	y
Marie	St. Fleur, J.D.	y
Fabian	Torres-Ard ila	y
Rosann	Tung	y
Miren	Uriarte	n

2. Chairs’ Report

Rivera: School Committee will be having a strategic planning meeting on Saturday, 9a–3p. It is a public meeting. ELLTF members are encouraged to attend. Purpose is to revisit the strategic plan for the district and pivot where needed to meet priorities where needed given the pandemic. Members of the public will get a sense of what BSC members see as a priority given the COVID context, as well as the superintendent’s priorities that she has articulated as part of her own goals — her evaluation goals for herself include ELs and ELSWDs. The School Committee retreat will include:

- 15 minutes of public comment (being clarified).
- A bigger discussion around becoming an anti-racist district and exploring how the budget process can be more aligned with those priorities.
- Issues with high needs learners and their return to school.

We are interested in having student representatives on the ELL Task Force; that is possible now that our meetings occur in the afternoon after school hours.

We also know how much we need to do as a district to engage with our families especially in light of the fiasco – being frank – with Vietnamese dual language programming. We need effective ways to engage with families moving forward.

Lee: I want to acknowledge all the work Lorna has been doing on this committee and outside it to advocate for ELs. We are often the last resource for some of the families we represent. We are concerned for those students who really rely on good public education to move forward. I hold myself accountable to that vision, that's what we're here for.

We want to pay more attention to the implementation for the Cape Verdean program, the Haitian Creole programming, as well as programming in all of our different schools and what quality we're delivering.

We have asked since June but we still don't have really concrete data on how many ELs we're serving. I hope we can get on top of that moving forward.

We got information from META highlighting how the district is using Title I funds and we understand the district has responded and hope that is moving forward.

We also got constructive guidance from John and Maria on what we should be advocating for before the school committee votes on the strategic planning next week. Thank you for putting that on paper so that Lorna can raise those issues on Saturday.

3. Approval of Meeting Minutes from November 12, 2019

Mudd: We should still ask to meet with Charles Grandson about the operational plan.

Lee: I did email him last week and will keep everyone posted. Do I have a motion to approve the minutes from our last meeting?

Mudd: So moved.

Le: Seconded.

No objections.

FOLLOW UP: Communicate with TF members about next steps for collaborating with Grandson on the operational plan.

4. Office of English Learners Director's Report

Romero-Johnson: Thank you everyone, I feel I am among friends. [Brief pause to reestablish internet connection.]

Zayas: We are constructing our OEL workplan that will reflect the strategic plan. We can work together with ELLTF members so that we collectively own it. I think it is a powerful place for us together to chart a path with 1, 2, and 3 year goals that can be dovetailed into the district-wide plan. It doesn't have to be the other way around.

For the details from Dr. Romero-Johnson's presentation, please see "Office of English Learners Assistant Superintendent Report: Presentation to the EL Task Force," Dr. Silvia Romero-Johnson, Assistant Superintendent, December 10, 2020.

Mudd: Please break out ELSWDs from ELs for future presentations, whenever possible.

Rivera: Regarding enrollment data on ELs, DESE's recent EL enrollment data for our district has different numbers.

Anderson: The decision at the SC level to move forward with grade configurations at East Boston and Charlestown. What do you know about how that will be communicated with families, around enrollment? Second, what attention or resources are being devoted by the district to prepare those schools to welcome 7th (EB) or 7th and 8th (EB and Charlestown) at those schools, particularly around supporting ELs and EL families? I don't expect you to have an answer today.

R-J: One of the principals that requested to meet with me was the EB HS principal and I feel we are on a really good road to collaborate.

5. Budget projections and BuildBPS planning, as pertains to English Learners and EL programming

Kuder: Good to be here and understand the context going into the budget season. We strive to increase the transparencies of our processes.

Lee: We see that a number of things happening in the district are driven by budget and by student enrollment. For example, the Vietnamese dual language program, whether it would be placed at the Mather, there was question about whether it could sustain both a dual language and an SEI program.

Our concerns today are to understand what your projections are based around.

Kuder: We have the data and we want to make it available to the community around BuildBPS, LOOK Act implementation. We want to keep ELs at the forefront of these processes.

Nate oversees development of the Operating Budget. Newly this year the capital budget and BuildBPS (10-year facilities master plan) has been moved under his oversight.

We have a Planning and Analysis Team (PANDA) that does the analytical work to support both operating and Build BPS work. We start every conversation with this statement from the Opportunity and Achievement Gap policy: “Every child, in every classroom, in every school of the Boston Public Schools system has the same opportunity to achieve the greatness within them as anybody else.” We have a strong place for closing opportunity gaps and that’s a standard I hope people hold us accountable to.



Shifting Timelines & Major BuildBPS Projects

COVID-19 disrupted our project timelines and caused delays across the board:

- Active construction projects like My Way Cafe, BAA
- Horace Mann swing space identification
- Jackson Mann planning
- McCormack & BCLA Merger
- Announced closure of all middle schools
- Planned expansion of K-6 Elementary and 7-12 Secondary Schools

As a result, we’ve narrowed our focus prioritized 5 key projects we need to make progress on:

- Horace Mann & Jackson Mann (SY22-23)
- Edwards School Closure (End of SY20-21)
- McCormack-BCLA Merger (SY21-22)
- 7-12 Expansion at East Boston High School and Charlestown High School (SY21-22)
- Dual Language Expansion Vietnamese (SY21-22) and Cabo Verdean (TBD)

Lee: Are the BuildBPS projects in the operational or the capital budget?

Kuder: BuildBPS does blend, making sure the schools are ready and that the staffing is there.

Lee: I see here dual language expansion for Vietnamese? That is at the Mather, is that correct?

Kuder: That is correct.

Lee: And new students coming in, they will be enrolled in dual language or SEI?

Kuder: There is an assumption that the SEI program at the Mather will fade out, though continue in the short run. We are working with the school community. We look at the overall enrollment patterns of students in ELD levels 1–3 and estimate the likelihood that they will enroll in dual language. The budget process with schools is very collaborative. We work with them to make sure they have the appropriate staff. When we launch a new program, the conversation does center around how many students we expect to serve, and

WSF will fund a lot of that if the program fully enrolls in the first few years, but we also make sure the program has sufficient funding to continue.

Our intention is to have supports for EL program development, including dual language as part of that.



Several linguistic communities have accessed the LOOK Act to request programs

Vietnamese Program - Planned for SY 21-22

- UPK Dual Language Vietnamese program launched SY 19-20 K2
- Vietnamese DL Committee formed Summer 2016
- Request made to the District.
- Multiple schools considered
- Mather K-5 School identified
- Continue staff, family and community engagement

Cabo Verdean Program Planning in Progress

- Cabo Verdean Working Group formed in April, 2020
- Working Group composed of stakeholders, including:
- Request made to the district during the SY 2015-16
- Heritage program launched at Burke
- Curriculum development underway
- Timeline for program placement is under discussion
- Schools are being considered for placement

Lee: My understanding is that there are also ongoing changes at the Quincy elementary. I don't see that here.

Kuder: There have been multiple conversations over the past 5 or so years about dual language Chinese. It is complicated by the fact of it being a high-demand school in Chinatown and there's a lot of attention about who has access to that school and who will have access with the program change. It's not driven by enrollment or budget projections per say. We're starting the collaborative process now so will know more over the next two months.

What's Next for Engagement: <small>*All projects include ongoing Racial Equity Tool Process</small>	
Project/School	Engagement Type & Time Frame
District-Wide Comprehensive BuildBPS	-Launching general update sessions starting in early 2021
BCLA/McCormack	- Engaging students and families in the building redesign process - survey, feedback sessions and design model reviews - Design team development of vision, mission and school culture work - Continued stakeholder engagement and updates including local residents and businesses
Charlestown & East Boston-Edwards	- Next community meeting planned for the week of December 7th - Staff transition and support - Student assignment information and support sessions
Horace Mann	- Continued swing space exploration - Ongoing discussion about long-term plan
Jackson Mann	- Student & Family Survey: Second Round - Next community meeting on December 15th - Ongoing discussion about long-term plan

We're starting the conversation today about significant program declines we are facing, particularly enrollment declines by ELs. It is the largest enrollment decline we've had in the last 15 years, and the largest since we've implemented WSF. It is a challenge for us.

10 Boston Public Schools

Enrollment Update

Our current year enrollment is down 2,286 students, following two prior years of declines

Actual Enrollment by Grade Span

Grade Span	Oct 2019	Oct 2020	1 year decline		3 year decline	
Elem (K0 - 5)	26,452	24,649	-1,803	-6.8%	-3,485	-12.4%
Middle (6 - 8)	10,922	10,783	-139	-1.3%	71	0.7%
High (9 to 12)	16,160	15,816	-344	-2.1%	-1,198	-7.0%
Total	53,534	51,248	-2,286	-4.3%	-4,612	-8.3%

Actual Enrollment by Program Type

Program Type	Oct 2019	Oct 2020	1 year decline		3 year decline	
General Ed	41,317	39,933	-1,384	-3.3%	-3,660	-8.4%
EL Programs	5781	5122	-659	-11.4%	-949	-15.6%
Special Ed Programs	6436	6193	-243	-3.8%	-3	0.0%

We're down about 2,300 students, following several years of enrollment decline. They are across all grades, but most persistent in the earlier grades, and are across all neighborhoods. We are not enrolling new students at the rate we used to see.

There are particular implications for ELs. Black and Latinx enrollment is decreasing at the highest rate in the district. Black and Latinx students are also concentrated in schools that are experiencing highest enrollment declines. We think that addressing enrollment declines is part of our strategy for racial equity.

Enrollment by English Learner Status and Program

Decreases in newly enrolled students had the largest impact on English learner programs

Actual Enrollment by ELD Level

ELD Level	Oct 2019	Oct 2020	1 year decline		3 year decline	
ELD 1-3	9,774	9,674	-100	-1%	-240	-2%
ELD 4-5	7,414	4,949	-2,465	-33%	-2,528	-34%
ELD 1-5	17,188	14,623	-2,565	-15%	-2,768	-16%

Actual Enrollment by English Learner Program

Program	Oct 2019	Oct 2020	1 year decline		3 year decline	
SEI Chinese	281	208	-73	-26%	-189	-48%
SEI Haitian	184	131	-53	-29%	-81	-38%
SEI Cabo Verdean	322	288	-34	-11%	-53	-16%
SEI Multilingual	1,923	1,822	-101	-5%	-117	-6%
SEI Spanish	1,951	1,728	-223	-11%	-463	-21%
SEI Vietnamese	130	121	-9	-7%	-68	-36%
Dual Lang - Haitian	25	27	2	8%	13	93%
Dual Lang - Spanish	626	640	14	2%	136	27%
Total	5,442	4,965	-477	-9%	-812	-14%

Why EL enrolment declines? We aren't sure. Gentrification, people leaving the city due to COVID reasons. Perhaps immigration declines during the Trump years. We don't know.

Enrollment by English Learner Status and Program

We look at the full picture of English learner enrollment to assess and maintain programs

Actual Enrollment by Former EL and SWD Status

Category	Oct 2019	Oct 2020	1 year decline		3 year decline	
FLEP	6,312	7,586	1,274	20%	558	8%
EL SWD	3,873	3,549	-324	-8%	-93	-3%

Actual Enrollment for SLIFE Students

Program	Oct 2019	Oct 2020	1 year decline		3 year decline	
SLIFE-Haitian	27	17	-10	-37%	-25	-60%
SLIFE-Cabo Verdean	26	26	0	0%	-8	-24%
SLIFE-Multilingual	49	29	-20	-41%	-9	-24%
SLIFE-Spanish	237	151	-86	-36%	-19	-11%

The declines in ELD levels 4–5 are the result of students exiting. Overall, it's a “both-and” in terms of lower new enrollments and departure of existing students.

We see less enrollment declines for SPED students.

We also want to flag SLIFE students. We fully fund SLIFE programs, even though we project the number of students we have as a planning tool. We have no plans to change the number of programs. It is a very difficult population to project and this year more so.

Our plans are to maintain programming for SEI in all the languages. We don't know how much of this is a one-year blip and we don't want to lose capacity. If we don't see enrollment decline reversing then we would be looking at potentially significant changes to programming.



Future year projections are primarily driven by the number of students we enroll

- BPS tends to lose students as they age except in entry grades (K2, 7, 9)
- A small K2 cohort does not typically grow as it progresses through BPS
- Enrollment news from our key grades is not promising
 - K2 enrollment is down
 - 7th and 9th grade growth is down

Even with a rebound in K2, 7th and 9th grade next year, low enrollment in these cohorts of students are likely to persist

We think that current enrollment is the best predictor of next year's enrollment. Typically, we lose students as they move through grades until we get to 7th grade and then it increases slightly. We anticipate enrollment declines persisting as they move through the grades. So, we may be seeing smaller cohorts moving through. We might see increases in K0, K1, K2, but we don't see it bouncing back in upper grades.

Mudd: As you're doing BuildBPS and structuring the buildings, has there been any discussion about grouping ELs or ELSWDs for programming—student assignment and grouping? Also, given these enrollment declines, are you anticipating that there may be layoffs, and if so, how are we going to protect teachers of color or teachers with language ability?

Kuder: Our BuildBPS plan is in service of our educational vision. At times we've had failures of communication in showing that. We wouldn't want to build around our current model because we want the flexibility to implement the LOOK Act.

Working with Silvia, I can already tell that she's going to provide us a lot of clarity about how to move forward with facilities planning. We need to look overall at where students have the opportunity enroll and make sure we're breaking down barriers. We have 5 high schools that serve a disproportionate percentage of SPED students. We have 5 that disproportionately serve ELs. Three are on both lists. So, we are already concentrating students, but doing it without a programming vision.

The question about layoffs. There is a process called "excessing" where a teacher loses their position and still has rights to certain positions within the district. We do a lot of hiring

every year and can slow that. There are also teachers in the SPC pool (suitable professional capacity). In short, it's too early to say much.

Mudd: In your budget guidance to school leaders, is there concern for maintaining access to native language as well as the ability to deal with students with disability? How are school leaders using that double allocation (for EL and SPED students) to address ELSWD needs? The Office of Special Education (and the Office of Special Education) need to monitor how School Leaders are in fact spending their double allocation and staffing their schools to meet the needs of their ELSWD students in the Probable Org meetings. I think OEL said at the last meeting of the Task Force that they already had a staff person (Daphne Germain?) attending Probable Org meetings. This would be a time to gather information not only on how staff is being used but on the needs of each school to provide instruction and support for ELSWD students.

Le: For the Vietnamese dual language program, how were your office and OEL thinking about the budget to build the program over several years, and what that's going to mean? The question about layoffs will be real for the SEI teachers at the Mather if they don't have the ability to teach the dual language. What is the commitment to building that program over the next 3–5 years and what is the commitment for the teachers who are at the Mather?

And community engagement, COVID has put a fine point on the need to expand that work as has the Vietnamese programming planning process.

Kuder: When we think about the funding of an individual program, we think about it in the long run. WSF pays for core classroom staffing within certain limits. If you take one full class of kids you've doubled the costs without doubling the WSF revenue. If we're doing that as a temporary measure to establish a new program we might supplement with other funding. We have done that with Applied Behavioral Analysis (ABA) programs that typically serve students with autism. We fund a staff member up front, and as the program gets filled over several years WSF covers the staff costs. There are also upfront costs like furniture and that is funded outside of WSF. There are a lot of conversations about equity versus equality—we ensure that students are funded based on need (ELs get more, SPED students get more). These conversations about special programs come in conflict with equity goals unless planned appropriately.

Torres-Ardila: Where are the 9,000 students not shown in slide 12?

Kuder: All of the students shown in levels 4-5 are not enrolled in SEI. The other could be students who receive ESL services in a Gen Ed setting. Third, ELSWDs may be enrolled in a SPED program seat (like ABA) and receiving services through that program. It's almost like there's another table—ELs in non-EL programs.

6. Finalize ELLTF priorities and member roles for the 2020–2021 school year

Torres-Ardila: Why no mention of student outcomes in the priorities list?

Item was added.

Lee: We will finalize this subcommittee structure and how members will work on each priority by the next meeting.

7. Public Comment

Rice: Nice to meet you, Dr. Romero. I hope you will form a favorable impression of what I'm trying to do here today. There is something coming fast we need to talk about. It appears that you and the ELLTF have enormous power — I sent an EM yesterday morning to the ELLTF and late yesterday afternoon I received a reply from Cathy Lizotte, BPS Legal Advisor, saying that the Title I dollars "have now been transferred to OEL's budget." The task now is to make sure those dollars are spent. These are dollars that should have been spent last year. Some of the kids who would have benefitted from it have left the system, but their colleagues and friends are still there. That money is for ELs. What do they need?

Second, there's another million dollars out there that may or may not have been illegally supplanted. Nate said he thought they could show that it had been spent properly, but we haven't heard back. Please keep your eye on that ball. You heard a presentation that said 65% of ELs are now getting full EL services. Be aware that DESE watered down the number of minutes required for the various levels during COVID. I'd like to know: is that 65% of what they would have gotten or the watered down version?

There's no question that with the economic collapse due to COVID and the economic impact on service workers, particularly Black and Latinx workers, people lost jobs and Boston is an increasingly difficult place to live. Hopefully when projections are made it's not with the assumption that they will never recover.

The decline of SLIFE students, not time to go into today, you've heard me talk. BPS at intake parts of program has been strangling that program for years at entrance and exit points. Kids who met standards aren't getting into the program. If the numbers are getting low that's no surprise. You're not identifying them as a system. Another thing that is a reality in terms of decline in ELs in high school and Latinos in HS, we now know that BPS has been reporting kids to BRIC and to ICE throughout the high schools into the middle schools and we even have incidents that kids have reported out of elementary schools and it's not a welcoming situation.

Lee: You have a lot of information. Could you send us some of those notes? Also, we have people who are not a part of the TF who work on the subcommittees and maybe you could be a part of that.

Rice: January begins the window of time for the WIDA ACCESS testing. DESE is requiring that kids whose parents have chosen remote instruction must carry their Chromebooks into schools for WIDA ACCESS testing. Many ELs are from communities more impacted by COVID and many of their families have chosen remote schooling. So far, in response to advocacy,

the window of time in which the test can be taken was extended, and if it goes into warmer months when windows can be opened that might make more sense. But there's no point in it. There are language proficiency tests that can be done at home or online. There's a movement that is happening now, in Colorado and elsewhere, to say that it makes no sense to force kids into school to take this test. At a minimum parents need the information that taking this test is voluntary.

FOLLOW UP: Request from OEL for the January meeting a clarification of about how “full services” for ELs are being measured at this time, and whether it is the same measurement that has been used or one modified with new pandemic-moment DESE standards.

FOLLOW UP: Request from OEL for the January meeting an update about the WIDA ACCESS testing process and what is being communicated with ELs.

8. Adjourn