

THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE OF THE CITY OF BOSTON



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

December 9, 2021

ATTENDANCE

ELLTF Members

Present: Janet Anderson, Angelina Camacho, Co-chair Suzanne Lee, Katie Li, John Mudd, Maria Serpa, Fabián Torres-Ardila, Rosann Tung

Not present: Paulo De Barros, Co-chair Ernani DeAraujo, Geralde Gabeau, Lisette Le, Marie St. Fleur, Miren Uriarte

BPS Staff

Farah Assiraj (Deputy Chief Academic Officer), David Bloom (Deputy Chief Financial Officer), Ceronne Daly (Managing Director, Office of Recruitment, Cultivation, and Diversity Programs), Shira DeCovnick (Acting Director of State and Federal Accountability), Jen Douglas (Coordinator, ELL Task Force), Drew Echelson (Deputy Superintendent of Academics), Aketa Narang Kapur (Assistant Superintendent, Office of English Learners), Faye Karp (Executive Director, Office of English Learners), Serena La Rocque (Director of ESSER Accountability), Eva Mitchell (Chief of Accountability), Jamie Racanelli (Director of Planning and Analysis), Claudia Willis (English Learner Instructional and Support Specialist, Office of English Learners)

Public

Kathleen Boundy (Center for Law and Education (CLE)), Roxanne Harvey (Chair, SpEdPAC, and prospective ELLTF member), Yrmaris Matias, Griselda Polanco (parent), Roger Rice (Multicultural Education, Training & Advocacy (META), Inc.), Alan Jay Rom (META, Inc.), Suguey Scannell (parent), Peggy Wiesenberg

DOCUMENTS PRESENTED

Office of English Learners

- [“ELTF DRAFT: Multilingualism for Equitable Learning Strategic Plan 2021,”](#) Boston Public Schools.
- [Cover Letter Paragraphs 54 & 55 December 2021](#)

ELL Task Force

- [Minutes of the ELL Task Force Meeting, October 28, 2021](#)

Budget Office

- [“Enrollment Update to ELL Task Force,”](#) David Bloom (Chief Financial Officer) and Jamie Racanelli (Director of Planning and Analysis), Boston Public Schools, December 9, 2021

Office of Data and Accountability

- [“ESSER Update to the English Language Learner Task Force,”](#) Boston Public Schools, December 9, 2021

CONSOLIDATED FOLLOW-UP LIST

- Request guidance that’s in the Budget Collab, particularly related to student assignment.
- Receive updated information about ELD3 assignments (in January).
- Collect feedback from members with their follow-up questions about. . .
 - The recent DOJ report.
 - Strategic planning for multilingual learning.
 - Enrollment projections.
 - ESSER funding.

Chairs’ Welcome (Suzanne Lee)

Lee: Importance of understanding the pressures everyone is under and the hard work everyone is doing in the district, amidst understaffing and pandemic. Importance of proceeding with respect and with solutions, not just criticism.

Roll call

Conducted virtually.

Approve meeting minutes from October 28, 2021

Mudd: When you circulate the notes, please link or attach any memos or other follow-up documents that have been written between meetings.

The Task Force unanimously passed the minutes of the October 28, 2021 meeting.

Updates and reports from OEL and Academics (Aketa Narang Kapur and Faye Karp)

Kapur: Importance of proceeding with trust, with communication. This is not an easy job. Reach out to me if you want to come to my office hours.

As Suzanne was saying, this is a hard time. Many teachers and principals are feeling like they don’t want to do this anymore. Students are upset, they are hitting teachers. It isn’t always public. When you come into a new country, not being able to communicate in your first language, it is often a traumatizing experience. The social-emotional piece is so important.

Spoke about importance of understanding trauma and distinguishing it from disability diagnoses. We can't get into the work if we don't have healthy children and staff.

Focus right now is on building a team. Came into a situation with half of the OEL team not present. One of the big announcements I want to share is that we have hired two Supervisors of English Learners with Disabilities. Nora Hassan and Melissa Brown. Also considering bringing on Ivonne Borrero to work on issues of trauma.

See document: [Cover Letter Paragraphs 54 & 55 December 2021](#)

Karp: Reporting on DOJ reporting. Have been working with school leaders and others to get data entry up to date. Work remains to be done but the December report reflects progress since October and is believed to be a more accurate representation of what's going on in schools.

Kapur: For ELD3s, we will use their ACCESS data to determine placement. Regardless of what program assignment they have, they will receive stand-alone ESL.

Mudd: Question about an item on page 7 of the DOJ report, related to ELD3s. Where are they this year? Are they continuing in SEI programs? What guidance has been given to school leaders for planning for assignments for next year? That would be important for us to see, especially in light of the district's recently-expressed commitment to native language.

Kapur: For the guidance on Budget Collab, I took out the part about the ELD3s. We're meeting with LATFs at the schools and looking student by student to make sure that for every ELD3 the data is guiding their placement. We are doing that now. I will already have spoken to almost every single teacher by the ELLTF's January 20 meeting and can share back at that time.

FOLLOW UP: Request guidance that's in the Budget Collab for schools, particularly related to student assignment.

FOLLOW UP: Receive updated information about ELD3 assignments (in January).

See document: ["ELTF DRAFT: Multilingualism for Equitable Learning Strategic Plan 2021,"](#)
Boston Public Schools

Kapur: Now to discuss the draft document, Multilingualism for Equitable Learning, noting that the specific title is still in development. There will be deeper conversations going forward and Phyllis Hardy may be able to join some of those meetings.

Tung: I know Phyllis but maybe some don't. How did you choose her?

Kapur: Phyllis sits on Multistate Association for Bilingual Education, Northeast (MABE). They give guidance on bilingual education, as do DESE and others.

Focusing in now on the strategic priorities, the overarching rationale and how we are moving forward with the feedback we received from many different people. We want to build in native language access for our children; they need it. We have around 25 schools that have strong representation of languages among learners. Those schools have more bilingual paras and other staff, as well as concentrations of families we can work with.

I've heard from everyone, including TF members, that there is data we need and don't yet have: who is bilingual in that building and to what extent? Are they paraprofessionals, teachers? What language? And to what proficiency? We need to increase the numbers as well as their ability to become licensed. Digging deeply and collecting the accurate and most recent data, and doing so in dialogue with our teachers and principals about the destigmatization of bilingualism, working with them so they can speak asset-based, not deficit-based about our students. We need to talk about the language students have and value and honor it. That's going to require training for our students, teachers, and school administration.

Similarly, we need to be focusing in on families and our school communities.

Lee: Reminder that we are short on time.

Kapur: Second priority is educating our families. Third is building infrastructure and materials.

Lee: One question. Your proposal and action plan is a very ambitious timeline. There is a lot to get done by the end of the school year, including conversations with families. I'm wondering whether there is staffing within your office to do that.

Kapur: This action plan is informing how we allocate our funding. After we receive your input in this meeting, we are making decisions.

Tung: The priorities expressed in this document are very logical and the right direction. My questions are in the weeds and more about capacity; we can discuss more going forward.

Kapur: I love talking about weeds.

FOLLOW UP: Collect feedback from members with their follow-up questions about the DOJ report.

FOLLOW UP: Collect feedback from members with their follow-up questions about strategic planning for multilingual learning.

Enrollment Projections (Jamie Racanelli and David Bloom, Budget Office)

See document: "[Enrollment Update to ELL Task Force](#)," David Bloom (Chief Financial Officer) and Jamie Racanelli (Director of Planning and Analysis), Boston Public Schools, December 9, 2021

Racanelli: Enrollment projections went to schools two weeks ago. Budget projections will be distributed on Monday. The Planning and Analysis team is responsible for producing enrollment projections. You may have read in the paper that enrollment is down. We'll fill in here today what that means and look at English Learners.

Racanelli then delivered the presentation linked above.

Karp: Alongside the decrease in ELDs 1-3 there is an increase in former EL students. May not be equal in size.

Kapur: When students reach ELD4-5 students are often reaching middle school and that is often the time when they are shifting to charter schools. Also, FYI the 17,000 number of ELs that you see online includes both ELs and former ELs.

Anderson: Trying to get the story line right. Trying to reconcile what Jamie is saying about new students declining and we're not seeing that on this chart on slide 8.

Camacho: I think we need to see this data by grade, and by entry and exit point.

Lee: You said this won't impact the budgets for schools for next year?

Racanelli: There will be impacts. But, recognizing the size of the declines, last year the district provided money in addition to what was available through weighted student funding. They are looking to do something similar this year so that schools won't have to make cuts commensurate with the declines in enrollment they are seeing. The goal is not to overreact to some of the changes we've seen in the past couple of years. We will have to think about how we make changes longer term.

Serpa: I think we need to bring up the issue of how many students are dropping out, and what impact that has on enrollment.

Echelson: If we better understand the questions you have in the future, we can better prepare staff to create presentations that meet your needs.

FOLLOW UP: Collect feedback from members with their follow-up questions about enrollment projections.

See document: "[ESSER Update to the English Language Learner Task Force](#)," Boston Public Schools, December 9, 2021

Mitchell: I appreciated Suzanne's intro about all the pressures people are under in the district and the importance of a collaborative, solutions-oriented approach.

Presentation begins with info about Central Office spending, because schools needed to know what the district was providing before they could figure out what they wanted to prioritize in their school spending.

Lee: What is the academic acceleration for ELs?

Echelson: To support things like Acceleration Academies, tutoring options serving needs of multilingual learners including those with disabilities. We are running programs at about 64 schools in February, not sure yet how many in April, and are deeply into planning for summer programs.

Serpa: How much of this money can be invested for home language and the different things we need to do short-term for native language access?

Echelson: The \$10 million for infrastructure is for that.

Lee: No, that money is for future capacity. She means for right now.

Kapur: I spoke with students on IEPs and with Ethan [D'Ablemont Burnes, Assistant Superintendent for Special Education]. We do need to figure out infrastructure within our IEP process that provides access to native language. We can follow up on that.

Lee: What is meant by instructional interventions for ELs?

Echelson: That is an intervention in things like Lexia, literacy programs.

Serpa: I'm very familiar with Lexia. Do we want to invest in English as a start? Or to invest in reading in the home language, after which it is much faster to learn to read in English? I think we should ask what is the most appropriate for our students. I would like for you to consider that.

Assiraj: For Imagine Learning, Claudia has been leading that work in the OEL office, as well as the A to Z program and other books online. We can provide more detail about the investments that have the home language support.

Kapur: Where we're talking about multilingual curricula, in our planning meeting, for every component there is that question about how we provide native language supports for students with disabilities, and we will be pulling from the Academics budget as well as the OEL budget.

Echelson: Named other digital resources that have native language offerings.

Mitchell: Schools were very enthusiastic about these investments. Also, a shout out to Ceronne Daly for her work to increase teacher diversity and to make sure the MTEL isn't a barrier for bilingual candidates to enter into the classroom. It was a very important point. There's an additional \$3 million for recruitment.

Now to school investments. Some schools got funds early on and some did not. We had three rounds of funding, and when you got your money depended on when you applied. School leaders were really struggling during the pandemic to staff up, support students and families, to set up equity based roundtables. Instead of setting one deadline to submit plans we held three rounds. See the slide called "School Summary."

Mudd: Can we see the school plans?

Mitchell: For those of you affiliated with an individual school, you should be able to get your school plan. Each one was required to have an equity-based roundtable involved in the decisions, and all plans were developed with School Site Councils.

Mudd: I had heard that only 25 schools had equity-based roundtables.

Mitchell: Schools that submitted applications without equity-based roundtables were pushed back.

Mitchell colleague, present with her but off-screen: Some schools submitted in later rounds because they had to wait for elections to their School Site Councils to be completed.

Lee: You mentioned that this money can be carried over? I'm aware that we're already half way through the year.

Mitchell: Yes, the funds can be carried over to the next year.

Mudd: I would still be interested to see any guidance on ESSR spending for ELs and ELSWDs.

Mitchell: Happy to come back to present again. We could spend a whole session on this.

Kapur: Please do send your follow-up questions to us. We want to be accountable and open.

<p>FOLLOW UP: Collect feedback from members with their follow-up questions about ESSER funding.</p>
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Public Comment

Rice: I'm encouraged by Aketa's presentation that seems to take us well beyond the Roadmap from last year, and encouraged by the \$10 million that Drew said was available to support some of the goals.

If we can go now from the world of ESSR to the world of Title I, there is money that was not spent in FY21. We estimate it to be \$2 million not spent by schools and another \$5 million not spent by the district for ELs. We are waiting to hear the real amounts from the district. There are reasons for that, I understand, I'm not pointing fingers at anybody. But I'm saying there is money there that can be spent today to help kids. I've been making this comment to the ELTF for 4 or 5 years. You might remember years past when superintendents came up with \$1 million and another time \$2 million for ELs in response in part to ELTF advocacy. If BPS can't show that it spent money it was required to spend under court order, and then the reins under ESSR are much more loose, there is a concern. I'm putting a reality check out there.

I noticed in the presentation on declining enrollment especially in the years 2019 to 2020 it hit me that those were the key years of the Trump immigration crackdown at the border, when kids were in prison camps at the border. That profile could be part of a data presentation on the impact here. Those numbers stabilized in 2021 didn't they. That was interesting.

I've noticed that in other states other districts that are trying to recruit bilingual personnel they are giving bonuses under the rubric "hard to find."

Adjourn