



English Language Learners (ELL) Task Force Remote Meeting

May 5, 2020

10:00 a.m. – 12:00 pm

Zoom

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NOTES

ATTENDEES

ELLTF Members and Staff: Janet Anderson, Farah Assiraj, Angelina Camacho, Jen Douglas (ELLTF Coordinator), Geralde Gabeau, Lisette Le, Suzanne Lee (ELLTF Co-chair), Katie Li, John Mudd, Lorna Rivera (ELLTF Co-chair), Fabian Torres-Ardila, Rosann Tung

BPS Staff: Faye Karp, Director of Data & Fiscal Accountability; Dr. Eileen de los Reyes, Interim Assistant Superintendent, Office of English Learners; Dr. Charles Grandson, Chief Equity & Strategy Officer; Andrea Zayas, Chief Academic Officer

Public: Keith Hellmold, James Racanelli, Peggy Wiesenber

HANDOUTS

Office of English Learners

- “ELL Task Force LOOK Act Program Implementation Plan,” Office of English Learners, May 5, 2020
- Boston Public Schools, Assistant Superintendent for the Office of English Language Learners (SY20-21) (00022318-SY2021) (Job Description, Spring 2020)

ELL Task Force

- ELLTF Response to Superintendent's Strategic Operational Plan - 4-2020 - FINAL

DISCUSSION

1. Welcome

Roll call of ELLTF members:

First	Last	Present?
Janet	Anderson	yes
Farah	Assiraj	yes
Angelina	Camacho	yes
Paulo	De Barros	no
Geralde	Gabeau	yes
Lisette	Le	yes
Suzanne	Lee, Co-chair	yes
Katie	Li	yes
John	Mudd	yes
Lorna	Rivera, Co-chair	yes
Maria	Serpa	no
Marie	St. Fleur, J.D.	yes
Alejandra	St. Guillen	no
Fabian	Torres-Ardila	yes
Rosann	Tung	yes
Miren	Uriarte	yes

2. Chairs' Report

The ELLTF has a date for our annual presentation to the School Committee

- May 27—ELLTF presentation to the School Committee
- June 10—SC decides whether to reauthorize ELLTF for the next year

Chairs' brief reports

- Lorna shared brief notes on district decision-making for remote learning. All students are to be promoted. Many concerns remain about students, especially immigrant children. There have been some issues impacting English learners in terms of school policy on data sharing. The Strategic Plan was passed. The Operational Plan we will hear a little more about—that's where the TF has been raising some great goals and objectives.
- Suzanne shared that she has been hearing a number of concerns about the ability of the system to meet the needs of ELs.

Search for OEL Assistant Superintendent

See handout: Boston Public Schools, Assistant Superintendent for the Office of English Language Learners (SY20-21) (00022318-SY2021) (Job Description, Spring 2020)

- It is supposed to be a national search. We need a strong leader, but there is a short timeframe to fill the position, especially if a person would need to move.
- Geralde shared importance of OEL director being inside the community, really understanding the communities they serve and the challenges that immigrants face so they don't have to start from scratch.

Members' Responses

- I am concerned with a lot of the ways things are being handled. Just passing the students along means our kids get left behind. We need to get out there and shape the application pool, we need to save ourselves. They'll still probably do something different but at least we'll have a pool we can talk about. Identify the people we know and can send in and keep track of the list.
- Agreed. We should generate contacts. We can forward the job description to members of our networks.

3. Office of English Learners Director's Report and LOOK Act implementation and program planning

See handout: "ELL Task Force LOOK Act Program Implementation Plan," Office of English Learners, May 5, 2020

Dr. de los Reyes walked members through slides in the OEL presentation named above.

Marie: Thank you Eileen, appreciate the history and the concrete framing for where we've been and where we need to go. Am interested in how this is being received and if it will also be shared with school committee

de los Reyes: How is this being received? We have been telling this story and the answer is blank eyes. The only way they understand is that because the federal government is still involved so they figure there must be a reason. But how about the school committee? At this point the only member who is still involved / are not new to what you represented is Michael O'Neill. Note that I made sure to cite the Gaston Institute at each instance to show the public intellectual leadership that went into this work.

We have openings. First is the LOOK Bill. It got into the Strategic Plan. The challenge has always been that on the operations side and in the structure of the district there are obstacles every step of the way. All gears are aligned to produce something else that is not in the benefit of ELLs. The inequities are built in the structures. That needs to be said out in the open. We need a clear directive that this needs to stop and all gears need to realign.

Marie: What 3 or 4 levers within the bureaucracy do we need to think about to impact policy, program, practice? Within practice you have to look at your workforce that's going to be implementing, and what kind of impact analysis do we need? We need to perhaps do analysis on those 1, 2, or 3 levers.

de los Reyes: Those levers include program seat assignment. I want to recognize Daphne Germain from OEL. She understands the gears at the seat level. The reason we could

respond so quickly to the invite to present to you is because some people have been keeping the data and the understanding. The story has been kept. Programs have been completely undermined in a way that is hard to explain. The accountability in terms of seat assignments has been understood for a long time and continues today. Second, is money follows ELs and when it can be stopped it is stopped in the pipeline. With those two we can run. The academics we know, it has been done a million times. We keep putting it in place and it keeps being undermined.

Member: I would love to switch the narrative and the responsibilities a bit. One thing I have discussed is our role and responsibilities as a TF to make sure students receive the best and that we are at the table to negotiate on behalf of them. I believe the ELLTF should be a powerhouse in fighting for those students. And even should lead the search for the next OEL Assistant Superintendent. How is it that we can make sure the work is being done and the resources are being allocated? For me, it is on us.

Member: Who are the key program directors and staff that impact seat assignment?

Miren: Seat assignment is controlled by Enrollment folks, specifically Nate Kuder.

Janet: I appreciate the clarity and focus of your presentation, especially the last two slides.

John: What about ELSWDs?

Member: What role is being given to OEL in terms of the office itself in the strategic plan?

de los Reyes: We are moving to Academics, under Andrea. SPED also is moving there.

Member: But no direct link to the superintendent?

de los Reyes:

Yes, possibly we will have a direct link. Lately, some of the meetings that were happening with the superintendent haven't happened as much since we've been dealing with remote concerns. We met with her this morning.

Member: When is the meeting when OEL will present to the SC and would it help to have us there?

de los Reyes: It would help to have the whole universe there. It will be on June 10. When the ELLTF presents to the SC on May 27, please lay the groundwork.

FOLLOW UP. Create calendar invites to be sure ELLTF members will attend the 5/27 and 6/10 SC meetings. DONE

Miren: I can help to pull together the ELLTF's report.

FOLLOW UP. Reach out to Miren for help putting together the ELLTF report. DONE

Member: How does Kuder's decision-making work? He does both the enrollment projections and the budget.

Miren: A lot of the assignment happens outside of Nate's area because it's done by the people who interview families and assign kids to schools. Sometimes there's not a connect between the specific needs of the kids and the availability of seats, so they go to whatever seat is available. Nate's role is related to the budget because he controls the size of classes where the kids are. He tells the schools "If you have more than 20 kids, you're going to need a second teacher." Sometimes kids who need an ELL program end up in the general program because the school doesn't want to add a second EL class. It was happening a lot and leading to underpredicting the number of ELs. His job is really around the budget and that is how he controls where kids go.

Janet: The challenge is that it's the combination of a number of systems that interplay. Program model, enrollment, and space in the buildings. I thought the opportunity we would have is with BuildBPS because we are thinking about long-term enrollment patterns and planning accordingly. When I've looked at the operational plan, I see program models that include ESL, SLIFE, and dual language but not SEI. I was interested to see SEI on your slide, Eileen. Program model is an important piece of the puzzle and a lot of it is driven by space, so that is the foundational piece to get at. And to Eileen's good suggestion, we've talked about how to create space in high-performing schools. I feel like there was some movement last year to do some of that as part of BuildBPS, but we seem to have lost momentum.

de los Reyes: The idea is to align the program plan with BuildBPS. We should not as a district eliminate program strands, whatever name we call it. SEI program specific was a name we gave it when bilingual education was lost. We need to preserve the strand.

Member: Thank you for the conversation about the structures. The policy conversation we can resolve, we always do. The oversight and implementation and issues around equity are the challenges. My recommendation is that we begin to take a look at those intersected systems. How do we influence that? How can we prevent all this good work that's been done for years not get lost?

de los Reyes: Another lever we might have in addition to BuildBPS is the BPS-DESE MOU. It does not address EIs in the moment but is mentioned as something to be considered over the next year. It's another tool in the toolbox. I don't know the how yet but want to put it out there as a possibility.

FOLLOW UP. Share a link to the DESE MOU with this group after the meeting.

Dr. Grandson has joined the meeting. He is extending an invitation for ELLTF members to join him in a planning process

Grandson: I will be using your recent memo on the Operational Plan and working with Eileen, Andrea Zayas, and others to have a back-and-forth process to look at that. Time is tight. We need to wrap into a concrete plan by June 30, then focus on deeper planning in July and August. We'll be building and flying at the same time over the next two months. A lot of these things are articulated as a vision in our strategic plan. The conversation we must have are about the budget implications of bilingual education. We have to understand and go through a process to see what we can implement right away. It calls for full-scale reevaluation and reconfiguring. How we educate ELs is urgent and needs a deep process. We are aiming for a detailed action plan to respond to the needs of English learners within BPS.

We can start with the idea of doing two meetings. Take what the ELLTF put in the recent memo as a framework and put it into an action plan of sorts. Review and revise. Come back again for another look. Then go to the full TF for review. We want to make sure we have very authentic feedback from the ELLTF.

I will try to get something to you by Monday, 5/11, as a starting point. I am also working to get on the calendar of OEL and Academics. There will be two meetings in May, probably 90 minutes long each.

FOLLOW UP. Follow up with Dr. Grandson about next steps.

Members who are interested in participating:

- Angelina
- Fabian
- Farah
- John
- Katie
- Miren
- Suzanne

Member: Will there be baseline data about EL programs and staffing made available to participants in this process? Yes, it will be internal information.

de los Reyes: The next steps are today's meeting and the June 10 SC meeting. In between, we need to figure out how the larger group can implement. We are just gathering momentum. The next steps will be hard, but we have done hard things before. All the previous gains for ELs started with enormous hurdles.

Grandson: There are many moving parts at the same time, including remote learning, the MOU, the strategic plan, the work we are doing on bilingual infrastructure. There are dangers and opportunities. We are looking for opportunities to connect the bilingual infrastructure work to the larger picture.

Katie: This OEL program planning looks language-focused. What about culture?

de los Reyes: It is concentrating on the bilingual space that emerges through the LOOK Act. It came about as the result of a failure of the prior system to create academic results for ELs. The plan we are working on uses language to connect to content. I see language in culture and as a result of culture, not separate. In terms of ethnic studies, that is just one other component to tie history and culture to curriculum.

4. Public Comment

Peggy Wiesenber: Concerns about disruption. I have the historical memory. For example, a Somali program kicked out of their school and BPS gave the building to White Lyndon parents who wanted to expand near their library, YMCA, etc. Would urge you to consider, “what is the effect of constantly reorganizing?” I’m wondering if the ELLTF will consider the EL/SPED overlay in the Home-based Assignment Program. Since then we’ve seen more segregation, more gentrification, which also undercuts equity.

5. Adjourn