

THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE OF THE CITY OF BOSTON



English Language Learners (ELL) Task Force Remote Meeting

September 23, 2021

3:00 pm – 5:00 pm

NOTES

ATTENDEES

ELLTF Members and Staff: Janet Anderson, Angelina Camacho, Ernani DeAraujo (Co-chair), Paulo De Barros, Roxann Harvey, Lisette Le, Suzanne Lee (Co-chair), Katie Li, John Mudd, Maria Serpa, Fabián Torres-Ardila, Miren Uriarte, Jen Douglas (Coordinator)

BPS Staff: Farah Assiraj (Deputy Chief Academic Officer), Dr. Brenda Cassellius (Superintendent), Ceronne Daly (Managing Director, Office of Recruitment, Cultivation, and Diversity Programs), Drew Echelson (Deputy Superintendent of Academics), Faye Karp (Executive Director, Office of English Learners), Jasny Vasquez (Special Assistant, Academics)

Public: Kathleen Boundy (Center for Law and Education (CLE)), Sky Kochenour (CLE), Roger Rice (Multicultural Education, Training & Advocacy, Inc. (META)), Alan Jay Rom (META, Inc.)

HANDOUTS

Office of English Learners

- “Office of English Learners Report: Presentation to the Boston School Committee English Learner Task Force,” September 23, 2021

ELL Task Force

- Minutes of the ELL Task Force Meeting, May 21, 2021

CONSOLIDATED FOLLOW-UP LIST

- Consider repeating ELTF’s recommendations on student access to native language to each of the members of the School Committee and to other elected officials, via letter/email or calls. (*Post-meeting update: ELLTF message has been heard; others are moving now to advance this advocacy.*)
- Send Echelson a copy of the vision statement from the LOOK Act Subcommittee. (*Post-meeting update: draft shared with Echelson on September 29, 2021.*)
- Request the ESSER funds guidance document, and data on allocations to schools. (*Post-meeting update: documents received on October 26, 2021.*)
- Send a memo about the vacant position that was previously occupied by Kelleher. (*Post-meeting update: sent October 1, 2021.*)

- Request information from Echelson to better understand how the DOJ guidance may conflict with the implementation of the LOOK Act. Any conflicts will be important to understand as the Roadmap is redeveloped. (*Post-meeting update: request shared as part of data requests for October 28, 2021 meeting.*)

DISCUSSION

1. Welcome

2. Chairs' Welcome (Suzanne Lee and Ernani DeAraujo)

- Welcome, Ernani
- School Committee update
- Roll call

DeAraujo: Introduction. Worked in Menino administration as the East Boston liaison. English is his third language after Spanish and Portuguese. He attended public school and Head Start, and learned English in Kindergarten. He spoke in support of importance of native language access at school.

Mudd: What can we do to raise importance of access to native language?

De Araujo: Speaking about it at the School Committee puts the issue in front of all the stakeholders, including parents, etc. You can raise it up in other places, for example to Councilor Mejia and to Mayor Janey while she is in office; reach out to all the elected officials and anyone that touches these policies.

FOLLOW UP: Consider repeating ELTF's recommendations on student access to native language to each of the members of the School Committee and to other elected officials, via letter/email or calls.

Roll Call

Member	Present?
Janet Anderson	y
Angelina Camacho	y
Ernani DeAraujo	y
Paulo De Barros	y
Geralde Gabeau	n
Lisette Le	y
Suzanne Lee, Co-chair	y

Member	Present?
Katie Li	y
John Mudd	y
Maria Serpa	y
Marie St. Fleur	n
Fabián Torres-Ardila	y
Rosann Tung	n
Miren Uriarte	y

3. Approve meeting minutes from May 21, 2021

Mudd: Motion to approve the meeting minutes from May 21, 2021.

Uriarte: Second.

Unanimously approved. DeAraujo abstained (because was not part of the ELTF when the May 2021 meeting occurred).

4. Instructional planning, the OEL “Roadmap”, and the new school year (Drew Echelson)

- **Leadership and staffing**
- **Next steps for the “Roadmap for Multilingual Learning” (“Roadmap”)**
- **DOJ and DESE updates**
- **Attendance data**

See OEL presentation, “Office of English Learners Report: Presentation to the Boston School Committee English Learner Task Force,” September 23, 2021.

Echelson presented updates about the status of the Roadmap (see above presentation), including a summary of the feedback OEL had received from the ELTF, the US Department of Justice (DOJ), the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE), and Multicultural Education, Training & Advocacy, Inc. (META). He presented three options for moving forward: start over and work with well-informed “community elders” to create a new roadmap; work with the ELTF to revise and resubmit; or go back to the WestEd consultants and ask them to revise and resubmit. Echelson asked members to reflect in small groups on the information he had shared and the options for moving forward.

In report-backs from the break-out conversations, first, members expressed appreciation for hearing how other key stakeholders responded to the Roadmap, and discussed additional key considerations, including social emotional learning, the need for more urgency around the needs of English Learner students with disabilities (ELSWDs), and the import of making use of home language as a resource. Second, they did not see it as an option to return to WestEd with a revision request, and preferred the option of creating a new plan. Several members expressed the need for both short- and long-term plans to stage the work over time. Finally, they recommended that ELTF share with Echelson and OEL the draft vision statement for what BPS students should attain by graduation, written last year by the ELTF’s LOOK Act Subcommittee.

Echelson: Described his deep love for BPS, as well as his awareness that the district often falls short on implementation. He said that he can hold two truths and proposed that the next step be a statement of vision, because there is strong agreement on the values we hold. The complicated part of this story is around execution. He would like to talk with Eileen de los Reyes and others, to see if they could work with the district to develop an execution plan, an implementation infrastructure, and then bring it back to this group and to the School Committee in multiple phases. These steps feel consistent with the themes that emerged from the small discussions.

Lee: I'm okay with that as long as we get to see the vision piece, the policy piece before we move forward, and if we get to see a timeline for how long we would wait until we move forward.

Camacho: Is there anyone else we should be talking with about implementation who may not be the usual suspects?

Echelson: We are open to that.

Li: Last year the LOOK Act subcommittee had worked on a vision statement about what we want students to leave BPS with.

Echelson: I would love to see a copy of that when the team feels it's ready.

Mudd: Getting further agreement – from the School Committee, partners, all stakeholders will be important. As will a very informed implementations plan, developed by someone who knows BPS politics.

Echelson: Next step will be to write a memo to the ELTF to communicate next steps and the direction we are headed. We don't have time to waste.

<p>FOLLOW UP: Send Echelson a copy of the vision statement from the LOOK Act Subcommittee. (Post-meeting update: draft shared with Echelson on September 29, 2021.)</p>
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Karp: Presented attendance data (see slide presentation).

Mudd: Wants to receive the ESSER instructions that were distributed to schools about how to spend the infusion of federal funds.

Uriarte: Could you comment on MCAS outcomes?

Echelson: The outcomes are totally unacceptable and we will be prepared to share more about that in the coming weeks. We are disappointed about where we stand.

Camacho: What's the focus of these mini-grants to help with attendance success? Are families clear on the changes to the attendance policies (tardy marks being converted to absences, etc.)?

Karp: That work is being led by the Office for Opportunity Youth within the district. We can get info to you.

Assiraj: Spoke about stepping newly into the role of Deputy Chief Academic Officer. Spoke about her high regard for Echelson, and how he leads with multilingual learners as the lens for all our conversations about priorities, that he is going to make sure BPS hires the right leader for OEL and will be a solid placeholder for that priority in the meantime, and that she supports

the direction in which we are headed. “He has the heart and mind to move this work for us.” I support. She also noted that OEL is very short-staffed at this moment, wants to work with the ELTF, and to please give them some grace in this work.

FOLLOW UP: Request the ESSER funds guidance document.

5. ELLTF priorities for the school year

- **Break-out groups**
 - **What motivates you to serve on the ELTF?**
 - **What are you most proud of that the ELLTF worked on over the past 2-3 years?**
 - **What is your top priority for the ELLTF this year?**

Members are motivated to serve on the ELTF. . .

- To give students what they need
- Because they are frustrated with the slow pace of change in the district
- To be part of addressing the achievement gap
- To promote the development of a multilingual society through the education system
- To bring EL families from the margin to the center to address inequity
- To overcome pushback from the system to accomplish goals for ELs
- To effect change that results in changing practices in the classroom

Members named more frustrations than they did points of pride. They described. . .

- Not seeing much progress over many years; not seeing end results
- Frustration over not seeing much progress and change over time
- Seeing that good and knowledgeable people serve on the ELTF and yet still face great difficulty in making changes

For the current school year, members’ priorities include. . .

- Advising and informing the development of the Roadmap and a plan to implement it (being mindful that the work is implemented at the teacher and principal/school level), including ensuring that financial and human resources are sufficient and well-aligned with the plan — this priority received several mentions
- Monitoring the district’s use of ESSER funding
- Continuing to monitor staffing issues
- Pushing for a policy on native language access for ELs and ELSWDs
- Continuing to advocate for ELSWDs
- Building a better mousetrap on parent engagement/supports for students
- Advancing priorities serving distinct student communities (including the priority of starting a Cape Verdean strand)

6. Public Comment

There was one comment from an ELTF member and one comment from a member of the public.

Serpa: She made an announcement to alert members of the need to take action to fill a vacancy in the only position that straddles both OEL and OSE. Ellen Kelleher left the role and at present there is not one to take her place. “Kids are being harmed because no action is being taken. I want everyone to know.”

Lee: We can send Drew Echelson a memo.

FOLLOW UP: Send a memo about the vacant position that was previously occupied by Kelleher.

Rice: Rice spoke on four topics:

- I heard Echelson say that DOJ is requiring things that would make a robust LOOK Act implementation impossible. Maybe I misheard. I have heard the claim made over the years, “We can’t do x, y, or z because of DOJ.” And then when I ask DOJ I hear “We never said that.” The ELLTF may need a person who is an attorney to tease out what is true related to LOOK Act implementation.
- Second, bringing in a panel of experts to advise was mentioned and I have no opinion. However, someone who was mentioned is not necessarily a fan of the SLIFE program and that should be considered.
- Third, ESSER was mentioned. I had to file a public records request to ask what the guidance was on ELs with ESSER and I was told that there were no plans because they are not due until October 1. And I said, “But, the superintendent was in a Zoom meeting where she talked about getting money out the door.” And I was told that that was about *emergency* ESSER funds. I haven’t gotten a response yet, but it’s due.
- Finally, there are literally millions of Title I dollars that should have been used for ELs in the past 3 school years and we don’t know where that money went. I’m not asserting theft, just naming the issue. Where has the federal Title I money gone? I’d like to know.

FOLLOW UP: Request information from Echelson to better understand how the DOJ guidance may conflict with the implementation of the LOOK Act. Any conflicts will be important to understand as the Roadmap is redeveloped.

DeAraujo: He indicated having also heard that there is not guidance about ESSER expenditures. “We can work on getting better information.”

Adjourned at 5 pm.