

THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE OF THE CITY OF BOSTON



**English Language Learners (ELL) Task Force Remote Meeting**

**January 21, 2020  
3:00 pm – 5:00 pm**

**NOTES**

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**ATTENDEES**

**ELLTF Members and Staff:** Janet Anderson, Farah Assiraj, Angelina Camacho, Suzanne Lee (Co-chair), Katie Li, John Mudd, Lorna Rivera (Co-chair), Maria Serpa, Marie St. Fleur, J.D., Fabián Torres-Ardila, Rosann Tung, Miren Uriarte, Jen Douglas (Coordinator)

**BPS Staff:** Ethan D'Ablemont Burnes (Assistant Superintendent, Office of Special Education, 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), Ahmed Noor, Chi Nguyen, Ellen Kelleher

**Public:** Alan Jay Rom, Roger Rice, Roxanne Harvey (SPED PAC), Peggy Wiesenbergh, Catherine De Jesus Martinez, Jessica Tavares

**HANDOUTS**

*Office of English Learners*

- "Office of English Learners Assistant Superintendent Report: Presentation to the EL Task Force," Dr. Silvia Romero-Johnson, Assistant Superintendent, January 21, 2021

*ELL Task Force*

- Minutes of the ELL Task Force Meeting, December 10, 2020

**CONSOLIDATED FOLLOW-UP LIST**

**FOLLOW UP:** Learn how the double allocation for ELSWDs will be handled.

**FOLLOW UP:** Request answers to questions for next meeting:

- Do you know whether the school-family liaisons that have been hired have been making a difference?
- Is there a particular subgroup of students that are not attending regularly?

## DISCUSSION

### 1. Chairs' Welcome

Zoom protocols were announced. Roll call was taken.

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

First	Last	Present?
John	Mudd	y
Lorna	Rivera, Co-chair	y
Maria	Serpa	y
Marie	St. Fleur, J.D.	Y
Fabian	Torres-Ardila	y
Rosann	Tung	y
Miren	Uriarte	y

Lee: Welcome, Catherine De Jesus Martinez. Catherine is one of two students who may join us as ELLTF members. We are also looking for teachers, particularly from the Haitian and Cape Verdean communities. Please let us know if you have recommendations. We will also nominate Roxanne Harvey to join as a SpedPAC member.

I am in discussion with Nate Kuder to determine when he should come back and how we can best have impact on the capital planning, budget process, BuildBPS.

Rivera: School Committee will be organizing listening sessions. There is an open seat on the School Committee and applications are being accepted. We would like another member that advocates for ELs.

### 1. Approve meeting minutes from December 10, 2020

3:15 – 3:20

(5 minutes)

*See handout: Minutes of the ELL Task Force Meeting, December 10, 2020*

Mudd: One thing that is not minor on page 10 regarding probably org and budget guidance. I think OEL already had someone committed, maybe Daphne Germain. With that change, motion to approve.

Camacho: Second

All approved. No objections. No abstentions.

Lee: We'd like to cancel the February meeting and leave that time for subcommittee work.

Several members spoke in favor of keeping the meeting, and having a report from Budget at that time. Silvia confirmed that OEL should have their preliminary budget at that time and can provide a report. John Mudd requests that we hear how the double allocation for ELSWDs will be handled.

**FOLLOW UP:** Learn how the double allocation for ELSWDs will be handled.

## 2. OEL Presentation

3:20 – 3:45

(25 minutes)

*See handout: "Office of English Learners Assistant Superintendent Report: Presentation to the EL Task Force," Dr. Silvia Romero-Johnson, Assistant Superintendent, January 21, 2021*

Member: Do you know whether the school-family liaisons that have been hired have been making a difference?

Romero-Johnson: We'll have to ask Lori Greenwood's team.

Member: Is this information you have to report to DOJ?

Romero-Johnson: No, we don't report class attendance.

Torres-Ardila: Is there a particular subgroup of students that are not attending regularly? I remember in May we heard a bit of data that 50% of Latino ELs were not connecting online in the peak of the crisis when remote schooling was beginning last year.

Karp: Attendance management and outreach is really handled at the school level and the classroom level. We can follow up to see what they are looking at in terms of chronic absence for ELs and see if we can get that data.

Mudd: Is there some analysis of what's happening with HIP students? They are most in need and we want to make sure they get the most attention. Especially given the openings on 2/1.

Planned community engagement around LOOK Act / programming will be for February through April. The goal will be a plan through 2025.

Mudd: Are you looking to make a transition that reforms the SEI system?

Yes. The system right now is perfectly aligned and any changes will have impacts. To make changes the whole system has to be addressed, not just the name or location of a program. We also have to differentiate between elementary and secondary, and the role of newcomers at the secondary level. Some things are going well and need to be enhanced and improved; in other areas we may need a different model to serve students well.

Lee: It's great you want to engage the community. How does your timeline fit with the School Committee wanting to do the same thing?

I totally get it. I will adjust the plan based on that.

Mudd: Will ELSWDs be part of this?

Yes, absolutely.

Uriarte: Is your sense that participation of schools in the reporting is getting better or worse?

Karp: Better. One challenge is that there is a difference of opinion between the district and the UPs about whether the agreement that applies to them.

Nguyen: There's been a change for ELD3s—this year they tended to receive services in gen ed classrooms.

**FOLLOW UP:** Request answers to questions for next meeting:

- Do you know whether the school-family liaisons that have been hired have been making a difference?
- Is there a particular subgroup of students that are not attending regularly?

Harvey: There is a lot of confusion from families about what is happening. For example, I'm hearing from families who think they can take the ACCESS test on a Chromebook. People have heard different things. As far as the option for in-person, we are just starting to get information. ELs fall into different places depending on characteristics, for example if they are homeless. Families have the option now to change their status if they have had a change in need or preference: <https://www.bostonpublicschools.org/reopening>. February 1, HIP students, which does include ELD1-2, SLIFE, EL4 with special needs, perhaps others, unless the Public Health Commission tells us differently. The City has committed to working with BPS to get alerts out in families' preferred languages.

**3. Update from the subcommittee on ELLTF priority #1: LOOK Act implementation and EL programming**

3:45 – 4:25  
(40 minutes)

Tung: It's hard to plan without a vision for multilingual learner (MLL) student success. What should our students know and be able to do when they leave BPS? We would like to co-create that with this group. Today we will collect your reactions to our draft version, through a structured conversation. We think that once we do this work the other work will flow out of it.

Li: MLL is a term in substitution for ELL. ELL centers English, and MLL reflects the reality of a student body that is often bilingual and multilingual.

Question for the group: What should MLL students be able to do when they graduate BPS? What should be in the vision? Free-write: Jot down what you would like to see in a vision of a multilingual language learner. We will have 2 minutes.

Tung: Reflect silently on the draft vision you see on the screen: "Multilingual learners feel a sense of belonging in safe and welcoming schools that employ staff who have cultural and language capacity for their communities; are healthy socially and emotionally; have pride in their identity, culture, and language; and perform at grade level in content and in habits of mind. Multilingual students honor and are academically fluent in their home languages as well as in English." To clarify, this is a vision of what we want *students* to know and be able to do, not focused on the district or human capital, etc. We are focused on students.

Tung: Now to discussion. Are your top points already here? What is missing? What needs clarification?

Assiraj: Can you talk more about what it means to be academically fluent in one's own language? For instance, I speak a mother tongue language not accessible in writing.

Tung: We are reflecting on what tends to happen, that as students learn English, they may lose aspects of their first language(s).

Camacho: I'm stuck on the academically fluent part.

Li: One way to think about it is the Academic Seal of Biliteracy. That is something they could obtain.

Torres-Ardila: I concur that we need to be clearer about what we mean.

Anderson: Pride in identity, culture, and language resonates for me. I think we need to wordsmith the last sentence but I agree that we want that fluency in multiple languages.

Tung: Did anyone have comments about emotional and social well-being?

Assiraj: Wondering about where social and emotional well-being falls in the logical flow. Appreciate the part about pride in their identity, culture, language. I'd like a revision that tells more of a story, not just a series of catch phrases.

Camacho: Something I expect from all graduates is that they feel confident they have skills to either enter the workforce or enter college. Most kids are not graduating with that confidence.

Anderson: I also thought what was missing was any future orientation, the “so what?” I wrote about students being prepared to make choices for career and college, trying to put some power in the student choice. I also wonder about “perform at grade level in content,” I’d want to know why that is important, and really, it’s part of that future piece, for them to master content so they can make choices and succeed after high school.

St. Fleur: Is this what schools (teachers and staff) are supposed to help students with or a subjective description of how students should feel? The main objective for me is that all students develop as inquisitive learners with confidence in their capacity to perform *competitively* in post-secondary experience. When they leave BPS, they are going to be in places where they have to be competitive and they need to be able to deal in that world they are going to walk into. I see a need to figure out what’s “love to have” and what’s “must have,” and I want them to get an education that allows them to be competitive.

Torres-Ardila: The shift in paradigm, the definition of MLL, that needs to be there.

Lee: I want students to be able to participate in society; to be critical thinkers.

Torres-Ardila: Do we want students to be committed to fight discrimination and racial injustice?

Li: I want to observe that preparing students to be competitive is in opposition to preparing students to fight for justice. Competition is about who is on top and who is on bottom.

Lee: This is a great discussion. I also want to raise something for people to think about. We all have different ideologies. As an educator and someone who lives in this real world, sometimes what we have to do for our students is not what we believe in. For example, I don’t believe in standardized testing but I have to prepare my students. I cannot stand in their way if that’s the only means they have to get ahead.

Tung: So, lots to talk about. We really appreciate your feedback and take it very seriously and will revise the current vision to reflect your ideas.

De Jesus Martinez: As a former EL myself, I definitely agree with these points and would like to graduate with all of these skills.

Assiraj: For students to find joy in learning. Maybe that’s part of the SEL (social-emotional learning) piece.

Tung: We are a diverse group with many viewpoints. The goal is not to all agree but to come up with a vision we can all work off of.

**4. Update from the subcommittee on ELLTF priority #3: monitoring and advocating**

4:25 – 4:50  
(25 minutes)

Torres-Ardila provided an update about efforts to prioritize the monitoring work and assign action steps. A revised version of the subcommittee's chart of priorities, that lists some of those steps, is included with these notes below.

**3. CONTINUE TO REGULARLY MONITOR AND ADVOCATE.**

<p>● <b>Monitor EL and ELSWD access to and participation in hybrid and remote learning.</b></p>	<p>Guide Advocate Monitor</p>	<p>Monitor district services to ELs and do it through a collaborative relationship with OEL.</p> <p><i>Reach out to parents of ELSWD:</i></p> <p><i>Citywide Parents Council</i></p> <p><i>National Parents Union</i></p> <p><i>St. Stevens Youth programs</i></p> <p><i>DELAC</i></p>	<p>Advocate for clear expectations for teachers around communicating with students and families.</p> <p>Attend DELAC meetings and invite DELAC members to ELLTF meetings to learn more about family needs.</p> <p>Identify ELLTF members willing to attend other existing parent/family meetings.</p> <p>Ensure a member of the ELLTF attends the Equity Roundtables on Fridays.</p>	<p>- Quarterly meetings with parents' groups that involves OEL office.</p> <p>- Get reports being presented by Monica Hogan during Equity Roundtables at least twice a month.</p> <p>- Monthly reports to ELL taskforce.</p>	<p>Angie Suzanne Geralde Lisette John</p>
<p>● <b>Monitor BuildBPS planning and implementation.</b></p>	<p>Guide Advocate Monitor</p>	<p>Monitor BuildBPS planning for inclusion of EL programming needs. Monitor EL decision-making and implementation for impacts on ELs, with a focus on student assignment.</p> <p><i>1. Reach out to people in charge.</i></p> <p><i>2. Investigations of relation to student assignment.</i></p>	<p><i>[Need to enumerate the action steps to be taken.] Consider partnering with a district group working on BuildBPS [a member noted that Megan Wolf and Barbara Field coordinate a group.]</i></p> <p>QUEST(?)</p>	<p>Priority – How we can insert ourselves on this task?</p>	<p>Janet John</p>
<p>● <b>Student outcomes</b></p>	<p>Guide Advocate Monitor</p>	<p><i>Focus on achievement gap:</i></p> <p><i>0. Contact Corey/Monica</i></p> <p><i>1. Assess what is available.</i></p>	<p>Contact: Chief accountability officer for the district: Corey Harris – Monica Hogan: Data and Accountability office</p>	<p>Biannually reports to the ELL task force</p>	<p><b>Fabián</b></p>

		<p>2. How is being used? Review past reports.</p> <p>3. List of data that we want.</p>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Request report and provide feedback on proposed budget.</li> </ul>	<p>Guide</p> <p>Advocate</p> <p>Monitor</p>	<p>Monitor district services to ELs.</p>	<p>Devote February ELLTF meeting to budget conversation.</p>	<p>-</p> <p>Guiding role</p>	<p>Lorna</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue to monitor in areas where BPS is not meeting the minimum legal requirements, i.e., assessment in native language.</li> </ul>	<p>Guide</p> <p>Advocate</p> <p>Monitor</p>	<p>Monitor district services to ELs.</p> <p>Continue to review BPS' reports to the Department of Justice to ensure that minimum requirements for students' access to services are being met.</p>	<p>[Need to list these areas and then prioritize the ones on which ELLTF will focus for this year. For each area, the action step is to request and receive reporting.]</p>	<p>Did ELLTF receive a report on each area / have we created documentation about how BPS is responding?</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Student assignment</li> </ul>	<p>Advocate</p> <p>Monitor</p>	<p>Monitor impact of Home-based Assignment System on ELs and EL programs.</p> <p>Advocate for better information systems for families and parents.</p> <p>Revision of evaluation process for classification.</p>	<p>[Need to enumerate the action steps to be taken.]</p>	<p>How do we measure the effectiveness of system?</p> <p>Are they picking the best schools?</p> <p>Are they sent to the best schools?</p>	<p>Miren</p>

<b>● Teacher assignment</b>	Advocate Monitor		<i>[Need to enumerate the action steps to be taken.]</i>	Long-term goal	
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## 5. Public Comment

4:50 – 5:00

(10 minutes)

Rice: We had one conversation with Silvia and I heard her speak earlier. She is at a point in BPS “employee-dom” where she is fresh and honest and you believe her. I hope she can be like that in a year or so. Silvia, I loved your report. On the million-plus that was supposed to be spent last year, keep the receipts, we’ll want to see how the money was spent.

The ACCESS tests, it’s a matter of choice for the parents, how will they be informed and will it be in their own language, will they be pushed into making a decision that puts them at risk or will they be able to choose what is right for their families? The WIDA company has said it is optional, and they get \$25/student. The reality is that there is no law that requires anyone to send their kid into a school building to take a test if they don’t feel it’s safe. DESE knows that, but do parents know that. As of today, there are radio and TV spots in the Denver area to inform parents in Spanish about that. We may need to do that in Boston.

BPS has been less forthcoming with us this year with information as compared to last year. They have provided less related to SLIFE. It seems to us that there are many fewer SLIFE kids this year than in prior years. Might be because of COVID, but we will track that.

## 6. Adjourn