

THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE OF THE CITY OF BOSTON



MEETING MINUTES English Language Learners (ELL) Task Force Meeting

**Bruce C. Bolling Municipal Building
Room 2-13 A+B
Roxbury, MA 02119**

**December 17, 2019
10:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.**

Handouts

Office of English Learners

- DOJ and LOOK ACT Program proposal Updates for EL Task Force, December 17, 2019

Superintendent's Office

- Boston School Committee Update Strategic Planning 2019, December 11, 2019 – Draft – Final Development in Progress
- Equity Impact Statement for Strategic Vision Draft Presentation

ELL Task Force

- Minutes of the ELL Task Force Meeting, November 19, 2019
- ELLTF Strategic Plan Recommendations: Fall 2019 – DRAFT
- “An Act relative to language opportunity for our kids” (LOOK Bill summary), Massachusetts Language Opportunity Coalition

Attendees

ELLTF Members and Staff: Janet Anderson, EdVestors; Farah Assiraj; Angelina Camacho, Parent; Paulo A. De Barros, Cape Verdean Association of Boston; Jen Douglas, ELLTF Coordinator; Suzanne Lee, ELLTF Co-chair; Katie Li, BTU/BPS; John Mudd, Advocate; Fabian Torres-Ardila, Gastón Institute; Lorna Rivera, ELLTF Co-chair, School Committee Member, Gastón Institute; Marie St. Fleur; Rosann Tung, Independent Researcher / Parent

BPS Staff: Faye Karp, Director of Data & Fiscal Accountability; Genevieve McDonough, Dual Language/English Learner Instructional Specialist, Office of English Learners

Public: Bianca Vázquez Toness, Reporter, *Boston Globe*; Peggy Wiesenber

1. Welcome

2. Approval of meeting minutes from November 19, 2019

See “Minutes of the ELL Task Force Meeting, November 19, 2019.”

Mudd: motion to approve minutes.

Camacho and Tung: seconded.

Members approved minutes.

3. Chairs’ Report

At last SC meeting reviewed strategic plan. Also recognized Julia Mejia’s service on the ELLTF, lots of applause. Also response on report about conditions of bathrooms in schools—commitment was made to hire 25 custodial staff for the coming school year.

Kim Janey, one of the founding members of the ELLTF, will be City Council President.

“Strategic plan” now being called “strategic action steps.” Without action steps we are nowhere. Do you have a sense of the timeline? Has heard January 15 and then consultation period, but elsewhere has seen February.

Same timeline as was presented at the meeting, next draft in early January.

Please communicate to superintendent that the community needs room for input on strategies, not just themes. That is not consultation.

Unless there is a systematic way to listen and collect /use the input, then you are free to only listen to what you want to.

We keep hearing that the budget is going to be very different. Make sure that Nate is going to give us an overview of the whole budget and what the impacts are. I’ve heard there are a lot of changes in approach in the way it was done this year and I think a lot of the priorities will be previewed in the budget.

FOLLOW UP. Request that an introduction to the budget changes be included in Nate Kuder’s presentation in January.
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4. Office of English Learners Report

See “DOJ and LOOK ACT Program proposal Updates for EL Task Force, December 17, 2019.”

DOJ Reporting

Slide 2: May recall last month’s numbers showed a dip in compliance with DOJ requirements. Reporting now that those numbers are back up and are higher than last December. Consistent with previous seeing more compliance at elementary than secondary level. Have received statement of support from superintendent about serving ELs.

Slide 5: Question about the schools that DOJ selected to visit, on the basis of them not having ELS information reported in Aspen. Answer is that it is often a data entry problem—the services that a student is receiving have not been entered. Data entry is the school’s responsibility (principal is responsible for all school compliance, including this). At most schools the Language Access Team Facilitator (LATF, a teacher who receives an additional stipend to perform various difficulties related to ELs) is responsible for this data entry.

Members recall that at least some of the schools on this list have had this problem repeatedly over time, for example the Dearborn, particularly impacting the Cape Verdean community. What is the intervention?

In places like Madison Park, the sense is that it’s not a matter of data. There has been a discussion at the SC with the superintendent talking about the issue of autonomy versus accountability for schools and principals.

You can’t wait for the system to change but you can change practice on the ground. Can we get that information from the schools to understand whether it is truly data? This information does not tell us how to help Madison Park.

FOLLOW UP. Shall we request this information? Where does it fit in future agendas? Ask for some longitudinal data from each of these schools (past 5 years, outcomes and all the different pieces) and then bring the [district high school people?] into an ELLTF meeting.

My concern and my comment is that everywhere I’m going to hear this new team talking it’s about the future, it’s not about what the kids need right now. Where is the short-term plan?

I observe from this slide that the DOJ is starting to raise questions about whether and to what extent BPS can monitor itself. They have been pulling back from oversight in some ways / exploring that, and haven’t come in December for awhile, but I suspect they came this year in response to the October numbers. The district itself is exploring how to exit out of this agreement.

FOLLOW UP. Is there a number of how many IEPs are not translated?

FOLLOW UP. Let’s ask budget to share with us the budget guidance that they provided to principals. And then maybe some of us can attend the probable org meetings.

FOLLOW UP. I would like the ELLTF to take a look at the issue of self-monitoring. I take a lot of comfort in knowing that we have the federal oversight.

LOOK Act Program Proposals

PLC=Professional Learning Community

Slide 9: Thinking of Somali and Cape Verdean afterschool heritage language programming in partnership with community-based organizations. Working to reorganize the grade bands for HILT for SLIFE (not for next year, maybe the one after).

FOLLOW UP. What happened to Arabic? They have a family resource specialist who speaks Arabic.

Vietnamese both heritage language and dual language are on the table. The community has been advocating for dual language. We are exploring all the options. In addition, some of the principals the group has met with believe in language programming and don't have space for dual language so want to explore a heritage option with a specialist teacher who teaches a few times per week in the classroom.

FOLLOW UP. Charlestown applied several times for Chinese language and Spanish language heritage program and never heard back from OEL. Where does that go? What happens?

Once there's approval from DESE we can work with the individual schools.

Isn't the deadline for DESE that proposals are due January 1? So that they would need to be ready in December? Yes, and those proposals need to be language-specific but don't have to be school-specific.

FOLLOW UP. Who has applied for and made proposals for heritage language and dual language programs? Can we get that list?

FOLLOW UP. When will the Cape Verdean community get an answer for what we have proposed? The community is getting pushback over many years to what they are requesting—what is the reason for the pushback?

FOLLOW UP. How come no Spanish heritage language programs? For second generation Spanish that is a critical piece. The majority of ELs are still Spanish, I would like to see some action on that.

Another speaker: it is an absolute shame that it is not prioritized. Saying that these are being explored is a crumb for the community and is not responsive to the public effort to say what we need. People in general are not considered professional partners in our children's education.

As you know SEI was jammed down the throats of many people in this community because we did not vote for it. And many people here have worked hard to get the LOOK Bill passed to give us the flexibility. I don't understand this, I really don't.

FOLLOW UP. Request for three items:

1. What is the list of programs you are applying for?
2. How many students will that effect, compared to the number of students in SEI?
3. And we have talked for years about the importance of transitional bilingual language and I don't see that being considered even though it is something that was approved. What is the story there?

FOLLOW UP. Chinese is many many dialects. Can you be more specific about which one? Can you tell us what the rollout plan is for the community-based Chinese dual language K1s?

FOLLOW UP. How many programs have been closed, especially dual language and SLIFE. It behooves us to look at closings and openings and who is being impacted. [Follow up with Farah on the specifics.]

FOLLOW UP. What is the plan to transition from community-based K1s into BPS dual language programs?

Members are to email all additional ideas to the ELLTF coordinator who will compile them.

5. Strategic Planning

Superintendent's Strategic Plan Draft

See "Boston School Committee Update Strategic Planning 2019, December 11, 2019 – Draft – Final Development in Progress."

This is a planning to plan document. It is not earth-shattering, most of this we've seen before. What's interesting is that EL issues came up as a community feedback issue, and it came up in a good way—closing the gaps, improving programming, that's ok.

Summary: There are no strategies in the strategic plan.

There wasn't specific EL mention in there prior to us saying that they are the majority of students in the district, naming that as a target population.

At the last SC meeting there was a presentation about school quality, what specific schools need extra love and funding and intervention. When you look at those schools it was English learners who are the primary populations. "We are going to increase these outcomes in specific schools that have to be held more accountable." How is that going to be reflected in the strategic plan? See the School Performance Data presentation that was on the SC website for the 12/11/19 SC meeting. This is Hardin Coleman's committee. I think what they're working on is, "What are the metrics for schools?" We need to follow that.

There is a focus on working with HBCU as a teacher recruitment. I support that. But it also is not realistic totally for who our students are, and we have so much possibility with the students who are in our local colleges. The focus is on race and not on linguistic or cultural

diversity. If they're not hiring none of this gets done. I hope we can get some specific metrics.

We also need to be thinking about succession if Priya leaves her position. We haven't been able to make progress for several years and now need to think about that.

My sense is that we are now at 2 years without any clear leadership on issues related to ELs in Boston. We need somebody at a high level with very strong background in that. We need people who can actually do it. If Priya goes then with her goes the top level of expertise in the district.

At the next SC meeting the focus will be HC. We need testimony. Others say no, not testimony, that conversation / decision-making about leadership for ELs will happen behind closed doors.

Report-back on Meeting with Dr. Elia Bruggeman

Four ELLTF members met with the two HS superintendents yesterday, Bruggeman and Lindsa McIntyre. We thought she was going to tell us something about it. She thought we were going to come with the agenda. She's asking for us to trust. She told us a lot about the plan for the plan. I didn't see anything specifically addressing the needs of ELs as a salient point.

They are trying to roll out things like Mass CORE, other things. But there wasn't a plan for how that would be rolled out. We asked about the goals of the HS redesign, but she didn't mention anything in specific. She talked about the implementation of the vision, and we didn't really know what that was.

It was remarkably vague. Whether there will be four or seven high schools. Some ad hoc taking from Minnesota experiences, some ad hoc meetings with Harvard professors. Mass CORE, rigor, skepticism around autonomy.

I am smelling a mandate to do rigorous Mass CORE across the system. When asked about adapting schools to the needs of the students they serve, using CLSP, the answer was that that was academics. I am deeply worried. This reinforces the importance of what we are trying to get to with our strategic planning.

I didn't see people from ELs there in a plan, people who are bilingual and bicultural themselves. And I am also concerned about news that there will be major structural change in the OEL office.

ELLTF Recommendations — Section 1: Big Picture

See "ELLTF Strategic Plan Recommendations: Fall 2019 – DRAFT."

TF members reviewed a draft version of ELLTF recommendations for the superintendent on her strategic plan.

Goal: get that document in a place where it can be handed over to the superintendent and her planning team. "If we can get one or more recommendations into her plan then that will be something we have accomplished this year."

We hear that they are waiting for us to give them ideas, so we are going to give them ideas.

FOLLOW UP. Preamble: Revise using language from an earlier version, one of several vision statements for the ELLTF. Request it from Miren if can't find it elsewhere.

Basically what we're saying is we need leadership, people at the top who know what they are doing.

I would put somewhere in the beginning the absolute numbers of ELs, not just the percentages.

The policy statement is important. Particularly access to native language. If it's part of the Common Core then we can assert it.

ELLTF Recommendations — Sections 2–9: Focal Areas

Members did small group work to edit the document collaboratively.

ELLTF Recommendations — Report-back

Comments and edits were recorded within the document.

What is our next step? How are we getting this to the superintendent? We will send it to her and request a meeting to her.

Two questions: 1. Does the ELLTF have norms for meeting behaviors, that we've previously come up with? Can we resurrect/approve/post it? Rosann volunteers to facilitate a section on creating norms. Yes, can we include within that an item about how we will handle public comment—sometimes it has been at the end and sometimes welcoming it as part of the discussion.

2. How does the ELLTF interface with the DELLAC? What are the overlapping priorities? How do we work together? Go to each other's meetings? It is only a few years old, we have had some conversations, it is a work in progress.

FOLLOW UP. Rosann will draft some norms and send them for Jen to distribute to the group via google doc. Perhaps we can go into executive session at the beginning of the next meeting?

FOLLOW UP. Come back to the goal of scheduling a meeting with SpedPAC.

FOLLOW UP. Reach out to DELLAC.

6. Public Comment

None.

7. Adjourn