

THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE OF THE CITY OF BOSTON



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

**February 25, 2020**

**3:00 pm – 5:00 pm**

**Via Zoom**

**NOTES**

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**ATTENDEES**

**ELLTF Members and Staff:** Janet Anderson, Farah Assiraj, Angelina Camacho, Geralde Gabeau, Roxann Harvey, Lisette Le, Suzanne Lee (Co-chair), Katie Li, John Mudd, Maria Serpa, Fabián Torres-Ardila, Rosann Tung, Jen Douglas (Coordinator)

**BPS Staff:** Ibrahim Byiringiro (Research and Data Analyst, Office of English Learners), Danisha Dumornay (Senior Project Manager), Daphne Germain (Director of EL Program Planning & Implementation, Office of English Learners), Faye Karp (Executive Director, Office of English Learners), Nate Kuder (Chief Financial Officer), Brian Marques (Senior Director, Opportunity Youth), Genevieve McDonough (Dual Language/English Learner Instructional Specialist, Office of English Learners), Ahmed Noor (Director of EL Community Outreach), Josefina Peralta (ELL Family Resource Specialist, Office of English Learners), Silvia Romero-Johnson (Assistant Superintendent, Office of English Learners), Miriam Rubin (Budget Director), Claudia Willis (English Learner Instructional and Support Specialist, Office of English Learners), Andrea Zayas (Chief Academic Officer)

**Public:** Catherine De Jesus Martinez (prospective ELLTF student member), Olga Gjika (prospective ELLTF student member), Roxanne Harvey (Chair, SpEdPAC, and prospective ELLTF member), Alan Jay Rom, Roger Rice, Jessica Tavares, Claudia Willis, Meg Woolhouse (K-12 Education Reporter, WGBH News); plus, one attendee by phone (name unknown)

**HANDOUTS**

*ELL Task Force*

- Minutes of the ELL Task Force Meeting, January 21, 2021
- “Boston School Committee Priority Setting” (a.k.a. “Goals and Guardrails One-Pager”), Boston School Committee

*Office of English Learners*

- “Office of English Learners Assistant Superintendent Report: Presentation to the EL Task Force,” Dr. Silvia Romero-Johnson, Assistant Superintendent, February 25, 2021

*Budget Office*

- “FY22 Budget: Update to English Learner Taskforce,” Nathan Kuder, Chief Financial Officer and Miriam Rubin, Budget Director
- “Account Detail for Programs, Departments, and Accounts Supporting English Learners: FY2021–FY2022 All Funds,” Budget Office, February 3, 2021

**CONSOLIDATED FOLLOW-UP LIST**

Below is a consolidated list of the action items coming out of this meeting.

- ELLTF members will submit comments to the SC on their Goals and Guardrails document.
- Lee requests draft of planning document for summer programming.
- Ensure ELLTF input on OEL programming plans before they are submitted to DESE.
- Send written comments and questions to Kuder and Rubin about the budget.
- ELLTF to follow up with SpEdPAC on the issue of access to ASL.
- ELLTF to request a report at the next meeting about ACCESS testing and what was communicated to families.

**DISCUSSION**

**1. Welcome**

**2. Chairs’ Welcome**

- **Roll call.**

		<b>Present?</b>
Janet	Anderson	y
Farah	Assiraj	y
Angelina	Camacho	y
Paulo	De Barros	n
Geralde	Gabeau	n
Lisette	Le	n

		<b>Present?</b>
Suzanne	Lee, Co-chair	y
Katie	Li	y
John	Mudd	y
Lorna	Rivera, Co-chair	n
Maria	Serpa	y
Marie	St. Fleur, J.D.	n
Fabian	Torres-Ardila	y
Rosann	Tung	y

		<b>Present?</b>
Miren	Uriarte	n

John Mudd raised the need for an ELLTF statement regarding the School Committee’s Goals and Guardrails.

**FOLLOW UP:** ELLTF members will submit comments to the SC on their Goals and Guardrails document.

**3. Approve meeting minutes from January 21, 2020**

Camacho: Motion to accept.

Anderson: second.

In favor: unanimous.

**4. OEL Presentation**

Update from Andrea Zayas:

1. Budget does not include federal funds that are coming as part of the stimulus package. District would like to hear thoughts on how best to use those funds.
2. LOOK Act – what levers need to be pulled to reverse the devastating impacts of the English-only laws that had been put into place?
3. Out-of-school time programming (OSP) and summer programming – lots of planning coming into focus to meet needs of all learners, especially ELs.
4. If you missed the meeting last night about supporting ELs and ELSWDs please go back and listen. We are implementing an approach connected to becoming fluent readers. It is cross-departmental work, and reflects why OEL is within Academics. Wanted to highlight cross-departmental work in service of ELs.

Romero Johnson presented *“Office of English Learners Assistant Superintendent Report: Presentation to the EL Task Force,” Dr. Silvia Romero-Johnson, Assistant Superintendent, February 25, 2021* – see that slide deck for details of the information shared.

Lee: What happened to the blueprint Eileen de los Reyes had put together for implementing the LOOK Act?

Romero-Johnson: That blueprint included a lot of good context. We needed a document that had goals and metrics.

Camacho: Concerned about summer planning, has been a pain point. Don’t want to run into patched-up ideas to spend money down.

McDonough: OEL team working with cross-departmental team on coordinated approach. Will have EL-specific, 5<sup>th</sup> quarter programs (community- and school-based), early childhood. Working on structure to various offerings and to ensure all ELs have access to programming.

**FOLLOW UP:** Lee requests draft of planning document for summer programming.

Serpa: For me it's not enough to reduce the achievement gap. We know if we have dual language then kids can achieve at grade level. What is the plan to eliminate the gap? Also, the dollars allocated to dual language programming is small in comparison to the district size, is there a possibility of really increasing the focus on dual language (including for students who speak English and want to learn another language)?

Romero-Johnson: I completely agree. I will ensure that is addressed.

Torres-Ardila: Clarifying question, see page 10. We know that we are strong supporters for the LOOK Act here, but without the funding it's not going to happen. Is there anything we can do? Someone we can write to?

Lee: We have to raise that to the right people. The next presentation is the budget.

Tung: My question is about parents helping parents. From what part of the budget does that come? What languages do those 8 positions represent? How are you recruiting? What is the job?

Noor: Position was posted on BPS website. Candidates underwent interviews and are now in process with OHC. We have one each in Arabic, Cantonese/Mandarin, Somali, Vietnamese, Cabo Verdean, Haitian Creole, and two in Spanish. Screening questions were: Are they able to do technology support? Do they have the language skills? We will be providing training on technology and other things.

Anderson: Looking at slide 15 on participation data. Is it on your team's radar about flexibility on the student retention policy? The proposal seems to allow for a lot of flexibility for the school leader.

Assiraj: Academic goals and instruction of QTEL. Where is the doing that goes along with the thinking, the projects, etc.? How did you arrive at this decision? Years back we tried this and knew it wouldn't be effective.

Romero-Johnson: The feedback that I received around how the work had been implemented was that the work had been very positive. My experience with this work in a different context was also very positive with QTEL. They are not strategy-based. They start with a philosophy of language learning, and also look at practice and reflection—a well-integrated way of providing professional development for teachers. The challenge is to do implementation that has integrity, that is continued over time, etc. I was actually excited

to hear there were people who had worked on it at BPS. The WETA ELD standards kind of stands on its own given that Massachusetts is a WETA state. But we don't want to do it by itself, it has got to be integrated with content standards, so that all teachers know how to integrate both content and language standards.

Lee: Perhaps that is a question the program subcommittee wants to go deeper into.

Mudd: He asked for more detail on the proposed plan to DESE before it goes to them for remarks and reactions from us.

Romero-Johnson: We do need more stakeholder engagement, especially with parents, students. The direction we have to go in needs more student feedback on what has and hasn't worked for them.

Harvey: Could you explain the terms BIH, BIM, BIS used in the presentation?

Karp: These abbreviations are program codes for seat assignment in BPS record-keeping systems; they are not acronyms that stand for something.

BIH = SLIFE Haitian Creole

BIM = SLIFE Multilingual

BIS = SLIFE Spanish

<b>FOLLOW UP:</b> Ensure ELLTF input on OEL programming plans before they are submitted to DESE.
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## 5. Budget Presentation with Nate Kuder and Miriam Rubin

Kuder presented *"FY22 Budget: Update to English Learner Taskforce," Nathan Kuder, Chief Financial Officer and Miriam Rubin, Budget Director* — see that slide deck and an accompanying spreadsheet (*"Account Detail for Programs, Departments, and Accounts Supporting English Learners: FY2021–FY2022 All Funds," Budget Office, February 3, 2021*) for details about the information he shared.

Kuder: We reserve money centrally in our weighted student formula (WSF) reserve and it is not tagged EL, so it won't show up. But the Strategic Enrollment Action Team does reserve those funds for EL students who enroll mid-year. The budget reflects expenses related to reopening schools in and as we move through the pandemic. These expenses that are part of the "new normal" include: expanded internet access for students, tech supports, additional cleanliness standards.

Lee: The information you presented does not include Title I, yes?

Kuder: External funds includes Title I money, but not private funding.

Mudd: How should we think about what is equitable for ELSWDs?

Kuder: There are various approaches including WSF and an equity analysis.

Mudd: We are eager to see a systemic change, moving from SEI to developmental bilingual or other models that includes access to native language. It may cost money.

Torres-Ardila: My question is for the ELLTF. Are we going to say something pushing for what Silvia would need to move forward? She is estimating 2.4 million and 80% of that is not confirmed here. Nate will know what is possible but my question is, what are we going to do?

Lee: I would encourage all of us to delve into this information more and follow up with written comments and questions.

Li: How are you thinking about money being allocated to each of the schools and making sure it is done equitably, given that parents may not know how to access various resources?

Kuder: Despite the fact that some schools are more expensive and that we spend the same amount of money per student, things aren't always even. On a per-pupil basis we spend the least per student at BLS as compared to other schools, for a range of reasons. We expanded the definition of minimum budget per school to include a liaison and a social worker (one or both are part-time). If we allocated that on a per pupil basis some schools could not afford a family liaison. For each position there is a minimum allocation and then a school gets more as the enrollment goes up.

Assiraj: My question is about the Partnership Fund and the Opportunity Index. I don't see those funds showing up on this data sheet. What are schools receiving and how are those funds allocated and purposed?

Kuder: Those funds are now baked into the WSF. For any school you can go into their budget template, on our website, and look at Opportunity Index and Partnership funding.

Rubin: We tried to keep things as stable as possible from past practice for each of those funds. Go to <https://www.bostonpublicschools.org/oi> for more info.

<b>FOLLOW UP:</b> Send written comments and questions to Kuder and Rubin about the budget.
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## 6. Public Comment

Harvey: An issue that has been raised with SpEdPAC is about access to ASL for students/parents at the Horace Mann School. A lot of parents have Spanish as their first language. Is the access to that home language of ASL the least restrictive setting? What I'm asking here and would like further discussion about is how students who use ASL are supported in our district and how OEL supports these students. The issue that's coming up is denial of being able to go to that school for students for whom ASL is their main language.

Lee: Let's explore that and figure out how we can discuss that issue.

**FOLLOW UP:** ELLTF to follow up with SpEdPAC on the issue of access to ASL.

Rice: Do I understand correctly that the district is terminating the Haitian program citywide?

McDonough: We are not terminating the program. We currently have two classrooms of 30 students, but each has 4 students. We will convert the classroom to multilingual to allow for more students.

Rice: What if you subsequently get more students?

Germain: This is a strategic shift that has occurred to ensure we have capacity for Haitian students as well as learners speaking other languages. There have been impacts from Trump's anti-immigrant policies as well as Haitian politics. There will still be capacity for Haitian SLIFE students at the Taylor. One of the concerns flagged for us by families was that the program in the Allston-Brighton area was inaccessible to families in the southern part of the city.

Rice: Two years ago, when I monitored at the Taylor, I met a group of students in a classroom who said the principal wouldn't let the teacher speak Haitian Creole even though she spoke the language. Priya and Sunita defended the program. Now they're gone and the program is going. Also, COVID—there hasn't been entry screening and language testing, no one has really been able to screen kids. What I'm seeing here is the realization of a process of getting rid of a program that began 4 years ago. COVID can be a cover to do a lot of different things.

Rice: How will you deal with ACCESS testing for families who have kids remote? Will they have the option without punishment or penalty of not sending students for in-person testing?

Romero-Johnson: It's coming. The decision was just made to make the test available for remote families. I will err on the side of giving families the decision to make. We will not coerce or threaten anyone. It is such a difficult situation and they do need to make the best decision for their children.

**FOLLOW UP:** ELLTF to request a report at the next meeting about ACCESS testing and what was communicated to families.

## 7. Adjourn