

THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE OF THE CITY OF BOSTON



Minutes of the English Language Learners (ELL) Task Force Meeting June 1, 2017

The English Language Learners Task Force of the Boston School Committee held a meeting on June 1, 2017 at 9:00am at Bruce Bolling Building. For more information about any of the items listed below, contact Michael Berardino, ELL Task Force Coordinator, at bpselltaskforce@gmail.com.

Call to Order:

Task Force Members Present: Miren Uriarte, Suzanne Lee, Janet Anderson, John Mudd, Hildreth, Samuel Hurtado, Cheng Imm Tan, Kim Janey, Diana Lam, and Michael Berardino - Coordinator. **Other persons and BPS Staff Present:** Colin Rose, Frances Esparza, Faye Karp, Kim Tsai, Geri Robinson (Boston School Committee member) **Members Absent:** Alejandra St. Guillen, Paulo DeBarros, Bob Geralde Gabeau, Maria Serpa, Abdul Hussein.

Introductions

Michael Berardino, Coordinator, of the Task Force opened the meeting. The Task Force members unanimously approved the minutes from the April 13th meeting.

Office of Opportunity and Achievement Gaps – Presentation on Culturally Linguistically Sustaining Practices

Miren Uriarte, co-chair of the ELL Task Force began by providing background on the ELLTF for Dr. Rose, sharing that the ELLTF was created to monitor the initiatives that the BPS put forth to meet the needs of ELLs in the district in response to the DOJ. The ELLTF differs from the Opportunity and Achievement Gap Task Force (OAGTF), because the ELLTF was created with guardrails and guidelines in conjunction with the federal guidelines. The focus of the ELLTF has expanded to monitor and support the initiatives, including focusing on data, parent engagement, program quality, student assignment, ELL-SWDs, teachers, and PD. Suzanne Lee, Co-Chair, also offered the difference that when the ELLTF was formed, OELL already existed. The ELLTF was created to help support the work of OELL and other departments in the district. The OAGTF started without a direct Office to work with. The Office of Opportunity and Achievement Gaps was formed after and they work closely together.

Assistant Superintendent Dr. Colin Rose shared information about the work of his office around Culturally and Linguistically Sustaining Practices. His office operates under the following mission: “to attack cultural and structural barriers and orient culturally sustaining practices for students who have been historically marginalized so that they can fully engage in rigorous curriculum and pedagogy in our schools and thus, create the opportunities and access needed to eliminate performance gaps. We create/push the equity innovations that move the district towards more equitable structures.” Historically marginalized

students include Black, Latino, SPED, ELL, and low-income students. To achieve this mission, the Office of Opportunity and Achievement Gaps has three strategic priorities: 1) capacity building, 2) programming, and 3) systemic oversight.

The first priority, Capacity Building has three components. First, Dr. Rose identified that there was a great deal of discussion of cultural proficiency and culturally and linguistically sustaining practices (CLSP) in the district. However, there was very little PD to actual support and implement the CLSP. They began this school year with providing ongoing PD for school leaders, which will expand next year. In this PD, OOAG worked with principals on the CLSP competency of “Awareness: Understanding One’s Lens and Bias”. These discussions cover the “analysis of one’s own culture to understand the lens that one brings to his/her role; familiarity with one’s cultural and racial biases along with knowledge of where to find compensatory resources; and the ability to recognize and disrupt the effects of his/her personal bias(es).” Based on this work this year, principals are working on developing their own action plans. Principals use OOAG as a resource in the development of the action plans, providing literature and experience.

Q: [Miren Uriarte] Conducting PD where Principals and other educators unpack their racial identity and racial biases is critical, but what about discussions of immigration?

A: [Colin Rose] Race cuts across everything including immigration, but the awareness training also discusses xenophobia, implicit bias

[Frances Esparza] They had principals watch videos of students sharing stories and information on how they have experienced discrimination based on race and language.

Q: [Kim Janey] None of these topics are one-off checklist. You do not have one conversation about race and solve the issue. How do principals deal with the ongoing issues that they are experiencing at their schools?

A: [Colin Rose] The goal this year was to create a base of understanding. They had five 3-hour sessions with principals where they asked “where am I as a principal?” and “what can I do to continue this work?”. The goal is to systematize a reflective process. OOAG is the ultimate sign-off of the principal’s action plans, but they are providing them with 5 books to help guide their action plans. They choose which book to use, but OAG provides guidance.

Q: [John Mudd] The goal of this work is to expand CLSP. If a principal wants to know about developing pedagogy or engaging curriculum based on specific culture, is there support/expertise for this?

A: [Colin Rose] OAG has books and resources, but the principals need to want CLSP. They need to reward critical consciousness.

Q: [Cheng Imm Tan] Given that BPS is so diverse, what is OOAG’s capacity to provide guidance and expertise on many cultures? What can they tap into? There are experts and community groups that can help with this work.

A: [Colin Rose] They can provide guidance, literature, and other resources, but if there are specific people or other resources that can help, they are welcome to learn more about this.

The second component of Capacity Building is “Collaboration with ASSET Team”, who includes leaders from OELL, Special Ed, Academics, and Social Emotional Learning & Wellness. These leaders participated in roundtables so that all developments are not top down, but synthesized centrally. This group met two times a week.

Q: [Suzanne Lee] Are the Instructional Superintendents involved with these roundtables?

A: Yes. They are not on the ASSET Team, but they are involved in these roundtables.

Q: [Kim Janey] Are the Instructional Superintendents involved with the PD Development? Seems important since they are responsible for making sure schools are implementing the PD?

A: They are in the meetings.

The third component of the Capacity Building at the OAG Mini-Grants, which is money given to schools to pilot best practices. They are collecting data on measurable goals. A example is ACC for high school students; parallel curriculum aimed at developing critical consciousness. The goal is also to encourage more CLSP across the district.

The second priority iPrograms. There are five programs:

- a) Curriculum for Boys and Young Men of Color: They have expanded this program, which provides PD and implemented Social Emotional Learning Measures. They are adding cultural assets and working on vertical alignment. There are now 300 boys in this program and they are piloting a program with 10 girls.
- b) Success Mentors Initiative: Part of the My Brother's Keeper initiative
- c) Early Warning Indicator Systems: MTSS practices around using data, not just reporting on the system, but implementing change aligned with the data.
- d) Excellence for All: Model for best practices and is the flip of AWC. The UDL access points around all students. For instance developing a STEM program that works with LEGO Robotics.
- e) Exam School Initiatives and ISSE Access: One of the first steps taken by Dr. Rose was to address the alarming disproportionality in ISSE Prep participation. The Prep programs serve 70% White and Asian students. They have reformed to keep 300 seats open for students for Black and Latino students. The goal is to take down the barriers for entry to the programs. In the past, the system would invite students to the ISSE prep based on TerraNova scores alone. They are changing this system.

The priority is "Systemic Oversight" with two components:

- a) Implementation Plan for Opportunity and Achievement Gap Policy: OOAG and the OAGTF is working with every department in the district to create SMART Goals. They have done a crosswalk with department heads to find out how the OOAG goals will work with SIP and other pieces of policy. They wanted to ensure that each department could actually do this work and implement these goals. Department leads made a series of presentations to the OAGTF and there was a system of feedback and revisions with the goal of finally finishing in June 2017.
- b) CLSP measures for schools and the district: Worked w/ Annenberg and CCE using the Boys of Color Report to identify best-practices, which they could measure and evaluate.

To build CLSP in the district, OOAG has developed a CLSP Continuum, which spans from cultural pre-competence to cultural proficiency. The continuum has three competencies outlined in the document "Culturally and Linguistically Sustaining Practices (C.L.S.P) Continuum"

- Competency #1: Awareness – Understanding One's Lens and Bias. Creating awareness of the biases in society and within ourselves. Identify cultural value and self values. This process is continuous and iterative.

- Competency #2: Cultural Learning/Relationship Building: Who are the people school leaders are actually working for? Who are the families, the community that they are educating. How are the key practice to get to know students. PD will look like support for what the community they are serving.

Competency #3: Culturally and Linguistically Sustaining Practices: What should our practices look like? Once we know who our students are, what do they want to do? This is where the "rubber hits the road". The goal is to continually build awareness.

Q: [Samuel Hurtado] Serves on the school-wide council at a Level 1 School. All the parents are very proud of their school, but when you look at the outcomes for subgroups at the school, there are gaps. What can the principals do? What can a parent expect from this work? Should this start with the principal?

A: [Colin Rose] Hopefully, these conversations will bubble up to the surface. This is what Instructional Superintendents will be looking for. This is what parents will be looking for. How will we bring CLSP to the district? How will we let parents know this is a priority? The model of PD is that working with principals to build awareness and action plans will then be spread and developed with the ILTS who will then help the teachers implement the new practices. These goals and the principal's action plan need to be proactive and prescriptive. The goal is to address the subgroups in the district. According to the Annenberg Institute's report, the district is at best color-blind.

Q: [Kim Janey] First, the Exam School Initiative is good and overdue. Second, When looking at the implementation of CLSP, there is a major challenge in working with the principals. Many principals probably feel like they are already doing this type of work. They might think this is something other principals need to catch up on. In Competency #1 "Awareness" there is a bullet point that says "understands the power dynamics between dominant and marginalized culture and/or persons from different social locations as well as the historical and sociological context of these dynamics." This is important, but how do you make sure that principals acknowledge these contexts and their biases?

A: [Colin Rose] This is what the awareness competency and PD training is about.

Q: [Diana Lam] This is an excellent framework and architecture for CLSP. Some feedback – If I were a principal, I would be very excited by this, but I would go back to my school after the 15 hours of PD and do nothing because it is too much, too overwhelming. How long will it take to go through this continuum? 3 years? I would limit options without being too prescriptive. Like the IPP, it is a massive and daunting task. First – you need to address the issue of time. Second – clearly identify what the allocation of resources are. What is considered as part of the toolbox? Third – are you providing a self-assessment tool?

A: [Colin Rose] Thank you for the feedback. OOAG is building the PD by level. Principals will be placed in one of three levels based on their experience with CLSP and this type of work.

Q: [Miren Uriarte] This is exciting, but I wish we were here in 1967 not 2017. The district is 45% ELL or former ELL; CLSP need to be already implemented., it is frustrating. It is important to consider the narrative existing in district – there is a difference in the experiences at the district level and experiences at the school level. We see this time and time again. Two pieces of feedback: First – concern about capacity and knowledge of principals to actually make changes. How do we build in accountability to systemize these changes? Second - What else do we have to put in place besides CLSP to ensure that achievement gaps are addressed?

A: [Colin Rose] We are sitting down with leaders to change the evaluation. This isn't just part of a rubric, this should be embedded in all parts of the rubrics. Moving towards these competencies. Second – the achievement gap isn't just about cultural proficiency, but this is the first step; had to get this out there.

Q: [Cheng Imm Tan] How will CLSP competency help with accountability? If that can be done, would love to see expanded list of attributes in the standards (i.e. parent engagement).

A: [Colin Rose] We are looking for feedback on the evaluations. If there are gaps in the evaluations, they need to know. The state creates the framework, but the district can change what they are looking for in the principal evaluation. This could mean engagement. The Instructional Superintendents set the accountability levels.

Q: [Cheng Imm Tan] It is important that OOAG has power to evaluate and hold principals accountable.

A: [Colin Rose]: At this time they are trying to focus on creating and building relationships with principals. It is challenging to be the hammer and the resource at the same time. They want the Instructional Superintendents to be the “hammer”.

Q: [Gerri Robinson] Want to focus on the Exam School Initiatives. The ISSE is a test to see if kids can get into the exam schools, but this exam does not evaluate what is in the curriculum. How can this be fair? When looking at the success stories, the Black and Latino students that get into the exam schools, we should look at what the experiences of these students from birth until to acceptance. [Suzanne Lee added that the School Committee has the power to change to the entrance requirements to the exam schools].

A: [Colin Rose] In some ways, he is uncomfortable with the focus on the Exam Schools. What does this say about our district, that we are fixated on these three schools. The Exam School Initiative is a 2-week program, it is not a solution, not a systemic change. The larger issue is a huge ecological issue that is complex. The initiative is just one approach to meet one glaring need observed in the district.

[Frances Esparza] There are massive achievement gaps in terms of access for ELLs to the exam schools. They are working with the awareness of teachers and principals around the eligibility of ELLs to attend the exam schools. There are built-in prejudices in the district; they have heard stories that teachers and administrators have told ELLs that they cannot attend the exam schools. There are 35 ELLs in the exam schools: 32 are at O’Bryant, 3 at BLA, and none at BLS.

Q: [Bob Hildreth] It is important that OOAG gets easy victories. Push to shift the racial/ethnic composition of the exam schools – this will look great

Q: [John Mudd] Some feedback – The theory (or logic) of action for professional development (that depends on OOAG doing workshops for Principals, and then Principals, training ILTs, and then ILTs and teacher leaders training the teachers) is not adequate/sufficient to prepare teachers and others to be culturally proficient and meet BPS’s CLSP goals. There needs to be much more investment especially in on-going classroom coaching and support, for example. (And leadership/coordination among the various central departments (and schools), since PD is now so fragmented among so many different actors. (It was also not clear how the curriculum, how Universal Design for Learning or Cognitively Rigorous Tasks, would be developed/adapted to ensure culturally sustaining practices for the multiple cultures in BPS.)

2. Accountability of Principals (and Instructional Leaders) needs to be strengthened by including priority measures for cultural proficiency (and staff diversity) in their evaluations.

3. The recruitment, hiring, and development of Principals needs much more focused attention in BPS, since the change that made principals part of management in the 1992 education reform law has never been fully taken advantage of.

A: [Colin Rose] Good feedback. It is important to involve the Instructional Superintendents in the entire process.

Q: [Suzanne Lee] At the end of the day, it is all up to the principals. What will be the best lever to see to the ends you want. For principals to buy in, they need to see improvements in student outcomes. CLSP is not being tested.

Q: [Janet Anderson] Two tactical points. First – We didn’t hear much about OHC. How do you hire for that are interested in CLSP. Bring in people to help make this change. Second – build these levels for where principals sit – low, middle, and high- for cultural competence.

Gerri Robinson, who is a Boston School Committee member and a co-chair of the OAG Task Force discussed the work of the OAGTF this year and to move towards systemic collaboration between OAGTF and ELLTF. The time this year has been spent going through and seeing what departments are actually

doing to address achievement gaps. Is it business as usual? Through the work of Colin Rose, they are making sure that people are actually moving towards the goals of closing gaps. These are the kids we have in the district, that isn't changing. How do we make sure that district and school leaders are prepared to serve these kids. They ask "Where is the gap and where are we moving to address this?". Good education no matter where you go to school in the district.

Miren Uriarte noted that there are many areas of overlap, but Human Capital is an area that both task forces are focusing on. Suggestion that we make a plan to have joint meetings to discuss the matters of Human Capital in the district.

ELL Task Force Co-Chairs Report on Meeting with District Leaders

Miren Uriarte and Suzanne Lee reported on their meeting with Superintendent Chang and other district leadership. They received a request from the Superintendent to meet to discuss how we build priorities moving forward. There were two parts of the impetus for this meeting. First, this is the second year of the Superintendent's tenure. They know more about the opportunity and problems in front of them. Second, the ELLTF is working in a different way now, with the work of the multiple subcommittees. The subcommittees are driving very deep into topics and the subcommittees are finding that the challenges are so much more complex than we initially thought. This has created some disruption and friction.

The conversation was open and very honest, focusing on the importance of more transparent conversations. For example, with the Parent Engagement Subcommittee, district staff would come to meeting and say "Yes, yes, yes" to requests, but then nothing would get done. They were afraid to say no, but didn't have the authority or the ability to actually fulfill the requests. Moving forward this means that sometimes the district will tell the Task Force no or they can't do that right now. This is challenging for the Task Force because we want change "yesterday" because this is an issue of civil rights. The district cannot cross that civil rights line again. But change is a process and we need to understand that. The ELL Task Force was created to monitor. Moving forward we will work with the district to develop priorities and measurable; SMART Goals. The development of the SMART Goals will be collaborative.

Suzanne Lee added that the meeting also focused on continuing to build trust. The ELLTF is not here to say "gotcha". We have goals and we have ability to get the district where it wants to go. The Task Force has deep connections with the city and communities.

Dr. Frances Esparza added that the development of the SMART Goals will be collaborative. They will bring all departments together to make sure these district leaders have a clear idea of what the ELLTF is doing. In the past ELLTF would make requests to different departments and the departments would turn to OELL and ask why we were making the requests. The goal is to have OoE, ODA, OHc, etc. working with everyone to make sure the goals are taken by everyone, across the district and departments.

[Diana Lam] We are a challenging group. And in our work there has been "mission creeping". New goals with an established timeline will help. Limiting the goals of Task Force might help too.

[Cheng Imm Tan] I agree. It will be helpful to clarify where we are putting our energy. There has been "lip service" from the district, but no movement. There has been a disconnect. We understand that education in BPS is a political situation and this isn't always the best for the children. We need to have an honest conversation. We would rather have a frank discussion about why things are not moving. Transparency is critical.

[Samuel Hurtado] Part of this is bringing up systemic issues and we need to bring in more people from other parts of the district. There are many ELLs in East Boston, but they are not represented in the Task Force or in our conversations. It is critical to monitor at the ground level.

[John Mudd] The ELL-SPED has had broad representation from multiple BPS departments at the meetings. This has allowed conversations about issues of data, IEPs, but they still need to address issues of teachers and paras. The ELL-SPED issues become very heated and uncomfortable. One possible solution to the wide-spread issues being addressed by the ELL-SPED subcommittee is to create a Human Capital Subcommittee, which can focus on the capacity of staff and the recruitment of staff that can serve the needs of the students in the district. This will allow the ELL-SPED subcommittee to address the foundational issues like data and IEPs.

[Miren Uriarte] The issues are so complex because they have tentacles. Looking at the issue of the language capacity of SPED teachers and paras in the district, this is fundamentally an issue of student assignment as well. The issue as we saw in April, is that ELL-SPED are being assigned across the city without consideration for the capacity in that school or the resources needed to serve these students throughout the city.

The members present voted to approve the creation of a Human Capital Subcommittee, which will be headed by Suzanne Lee and John Mudd and Maria Serpa will be subcommittee members. Diana Lam will lead the Program Quality Subcommittee, but asked that the title include not just Program Quality but also Program Implementation.

Preparation for June 21st Presentation to School Committee

On June 21st, the ELLTF will present to the Boston School Committee sharing the work that the Task Force has done this year, identifying the work of the subcommittees, individual members, as well as laying out the bright spots and continuing challenges facing the Task Force. The Task Force decided that they would also present to the School Committee at the end of September to discuss the development of the SMART Goals with OELL and the rest of the department leads.

The meeting was adjourned.