

TO: The BPS ELL Task Force
FROM: Suzanne Lee, Andres Alonso and Diana Lam

RE: Program Quality Sub-Committee Update
DATE: September 10, 2018

From the very beginning we had difficulty synchronizing our schedules to be able to meet in a regular and predictable way. And, as this topic is not technical in nature, it needs more time and attention to be able to move forward. As background, it is also important to acknowledge that last year Priya was the Interim Assistant Superintendent while a national search was going on for the position. And, Karla Estrada's departure in April followed by Tommy Chang's departure in June contributed to a sense of disorientation both at the OELL Office and at the District itself.

The committee shared the attached document with Karla Estrada, a year ago last summer, to make sure we were thinking strategically and serving the district in the right way. At the request of Karla Estrada, she wanted to meet with Priya herself and share the document with her before the subcommittee meeting with Priya. All the questions in the document were designed to understand whether there was purpose and coherence in how the office guided, supported and held it and the field accountable (see attached document)

As early as last November, we asked Priya to look at the document thoughtfully and, based on the work that the department was already doing, determine the questions that she wanted to focus on for the year. We asked her to connect the dots between the work selected and the questions that the subcommittee had framed to guide the work.

At no point did we get an integrated response that answered the questions and showed how the efforts of the system worked in an integrated and purposeful way that predicted success. What we got were disconnected presentations and reports, and evidence of initiatives that pushed the needle in some areas. We could not understand how these initiatives would ever go to scale or how staff thought about impact. We didn't see clear thinking about accountability - a commitment to a specific, quantified outcome - anywhere. We do not think that there is a "system" in place that responds to a clear statement of a problem, nor sufficient resources and authority in the office dedicated to the needs of ELL to allow the system to make significant headway on the issue of quality other than in stand alone places led by invested, capable and dedicated school leaders.

We understand that people are working honestly and very hard. We don't think that is enough. We recommend that the office pick one initiative and priority, articulate how it and BPS will be held accountable for its success with specificity, use these efforts to transparently pose problems of coherence in the system, and go from there.

We don't think that the committee should be picking a priority on its own because we are so conscious that we should not be asking the office to do what is not equipped to do, given its multiple focus and insufficient authority in relation to school leaders and other system line leaders, as well as other central departments.

But a focus is necessary, as well as thinking about scale.