Minutes of the English Language Learners (ELL) Task Force Meeting
October 6, 2016

The English Language Learners Task Force of the Boston School Committee held a meeting on October 6, 2016 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.
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Call to Order:
Task Force Members Present: Miren Uriarte, Suzanne Lee, Janet Anderson, John Mudd, Kim Janey, Cheng Imm Tan, Paulo De Barros, Maria Serpa, Alejandra St. Guillen, Michael Berardino - Coordinator.
Other persons and BPS Staff Present: Frances Esparza, Kim Tsai, Faye Karp, Kevin Montoya, Denise Pagan-Vega, Apryl Clarkson, Elena Lanin, Andrea Berasaluce **Members Absent**: Bob Hildreth, Geralde Gabeau, Samuel Hurtado, Abdul Hussein, and Diana Lam.

Michael Berardino opened the meeting in his capacity of Coordinator of the Task Force.

Introductions
The co-chairs of the ELL TF began the meeting with reflections on the direction and the goals of the ELL Task Force for the school year.
Dr. Miren Uriarte spoke first. As we begin the work of the ELL Task Force for the 2016-2017 school year, it is important to build off of the successes of the Task Force last year. The district has seen improvements by ELLs and has seen changes in practices around ELLs. One example is that at the October 5th Boston School Committee meeting, the Office of Data and Accountability for the first time at the School Committee meeting, reported PARCC results for ELLs by ELD Level. Suzanne Lee then offered introductory remarks. As we discuss out work and our goals, it is critical that we learn more about the differences between what is being said and what is happening on the ground. The Task Force must learn more about the Master Plan and the Strategic Implementation Plan in planning and in reality/as it is implemented.

Strategic Implementation Plan
The next topic at the meeting was the district's Strategic Implementation Plan. Dr. Denise Pagan-Vega, the director of the oversight of the Strategic Implementation Plan (SIP) began the conversation by providing background on herself. She was born in Puerto Rico, raised in the South Bronx. Her experiences have led her to place an emphasis on supporting students in acquiring second languages and ensuring that institutions address discrimination. Education starts at home and instruction occurs at school.

Dr. Pagan-Vega sees the work on the development and the implementation of the SIP as a partnership and is really proud that BPS has a SIP. Making sure that they develop a 5-year plan with input from experts, which includes the ELL Task Force. For instance, how do they provide staffing that reflects the needs of the community?

The SIP consists of five Focus Areas. Each Focus Area has "process owners". Dr. Pagan-Vega has met with these process owners and informed them of the need to work with the experts in the ELL Task Force, Opportunity and Achievement Gap Task Force and the Inclusion Task Force. For instance, part of the SIP is ensuring that there is plan to streamline the RETELL process. This will require getting teachers and experts involved with the process. How do we address the problems that the district sees?

[Suzanne Lee]: As the SIP is developed, it is important that the goals of the ELL Task Force has to be embedded in the whole discussion and context of the whole district. This shouldn't just be part of specific initiatives and milestones; this should be part of the mission statement (e.g. cultural and linguistic diversity in the district). ELLs cannot be considered as separate from the rest of the district; they are 1/3rd of the district and should be part of the entire SIP and any district plan.

[Dr. Miren Uriarte]: The goal of this discussion is not to provide the input into the SIP, but rather to establish a plan to provide input and feedback into the development of the SIP. One approach would be to go through the ELL Task Force Goals and Priorities (and the associated ELL Task Force subcommittees) to determine where the SIP and the ELL TF goals align and where subcommittee members can provide input.

ELL TF Goal #1: "Recognize and promote BPS as Multilingual, Multicultural district". It is important that this goal is part of the overall SIP goals. This needs to be part of the underlying message and this needs to be part of the global message and overview. Put this in the core message. This means, we would like to provide input into the Focus Areas. The goals of BPS as a multilingual, multicultural district can't just be owned by OELL; the entire district should own this. How do we ensure that there is explicit mention of multilingual/multicultural in the mission statement?

Dr. Pagan-Vega – this is the goal; to get explicit input into the work of the SIP and to coalesce to make sure the work sticks.

ELL TF Goal #2: "Improve Data Systems and Use of Technology": It is important to ensure that reporting mechanisms are in place. In the SIP, data collection and analysis is embedded in all initiatives.

[Suzanne Lee]: Since Dr. Chang arrived they have made changes in terms of collecting data on ELL by subgroup. But there are still real concerns about teacher data, including racial composition, language capacity, and certification.

[Dr. Maria Serpa]: Another concern is that while the district has multiple mechanisms for collecting data, there are concerns that if there are 3 or 4 data collection mechanisms they do not always talk to each other. Dr. Pagan-Vega then offered that Initiative 4.2 "Ensure that the district's technological infrastructure provides a comprehensive, interconnected foundations for learning and operations" address these concerns. Dr. Uriarte followed up that good data issues remain despite the improvements. We still have a real problem with the data – collecting, disseminating, and analysis. Part of the problem is that data relating to ELLs falls to OELL.

ELL Task Force Goal #2 "Improve Data Systems and Use of Technology" relates to SIP Focus Areas 1 though 5 (all the Focus Areas).

ELL Task Force Goal #3: "Improve student assessment and assignment by improving assessment and assignment of ELL students with greater transparency" is aligned with Focus Area #3 (Engage students, families and community organizations as advocates and partners for equity, access, and results for all students) and Focus Area #4 (Develop and deliver a coordinated system of high-quality support, customer service, and communications centrally and at schools).

ELL Task Force Goal #4: "Expand program quantity and quality" is aligned with SIP Focus Area #1 ("Implement an inclusive, rigorous, and culturally/linguistically sustaining PK-12 instructional program that serves the development of the whole child) and Focus Area #2 ("Attract, develop, and retain highly effective instructional team that is responsive to the diverse racial, cultural, and linguistic needs of Boston youth").

ELL Task Force Goal #5: "Support ELL students with special needs by improving the process of assessment of special education needs for English learners" is aligned with SIP Focus Area #1 ("Implement an inclusive, rigorous, and culturally/linguistically sustaining PK-12 instructional program that serves the development of the whole child"), Focus Area #2 ("Attract, develop, and retain highly effective instructional team that is responsive to the diverse racial, cultural, and linguistic needs of Boston youth"), and Focus Area #3 ("Engage students, families and community organizations as advocates and partners for equity, access, and results for all students").

ELL Task Force Goal #6: "Improve family and community engagement" is aligned with SIP Focus Area #2 ("Attract, develop, and retain highly effective instructional team that is responsive to the diverse racial, cultural, and linguistic needs of Boston youth"), Focus Area #3 ("Engage students, families and community organizations as advocates and partners for equity, access, and results for all students"), and Focus Area #4 ("Develop and deliver a coordinated system of high-quality support, customer service, and communications centrally and at schools").

[Dr. Uriarte]: The financial system is where the rubber meets the road. There is not an ELL Task Force Goal or subcommittee explicitly looking at the budget office or finances. To address SIP Focus Area #5 ("Build a sustainable financial system that invests resources equitably and strategically"), the ELL task Force will create an ah hoc finance subcommittee, which John Mudd, Suzanne Lee, Cheng Imm Tan, and Paulo De Barros volunteered to be part of.

Based on this, Dr. Pagan-Vega and Michael Berardino will coordinate meetings between the SIP process leaders and the corresponding ELL Task Force subcommittees where ELL Task Force members will provide feedback and input into the SIP.

OELL Updates – Progress of EL Longitudinal Study

Faye Karp from OELL and Apryl Clarkson and Elena Lanin from ODA shared an overview of the progress of the EL Longitudinal Study. This is the 3rd longitudinal study as mandated by the DOJ agreement and this is the first of the studies that is being conducted internally. The study compares the educational outcomes and participation in educational program of ELLs as compared to former ELLs and never-ELLs. The study looks at the period from SY2011 to SY2015. The research is being conducted by OELL and ODA with close guidance from the DOJ. The DOJ involvement has produced a long iterative process, where there have been several stages of selecting variables and cohorts to study. At this point, they are only beginning to look at preliminary findings.

The most complicated process was selecting the cohorts for the analysis. The target group is ELLs at ACCESS Levels 1 through 5. However everyone recognizes the massive differences between ELLs at various ELD levels. Through many conversations with the DOJ, they decided to look at ELLs at ELD

Level 1 & 2, with the understanding that these students vary significantly with ELD Level 3, and ELD Level 4 & 5. They decided to follow the cohort of first time ELD Level 1 & 2 (i.e. students entering BPS/MA schools at ELD Level 1 & 2). This changes the research questions slightly as they are comparing this specific cohort of ELLs to former-ELLs and never ELLs. This decision also causes clear issues because they are omitting detailed analysis of students that are at ELD Levels 3 through 5 at the beginning of the study period. However, this decision was made in part because they do not have ELD information on ELD Level 3 students prior to 2011.

[This claim was met with skepticism from Task Force members. The district has information on all students who have been enrolled prior to 2011. However Elena Lanin informed the Task Force that they cannot compare ELD Levels from pre-2011 to post-2011 because the state changed the assessments and there are no conversions in place]

In the end, the comparison groups are (1) first time ELD Level 1 & 2 students, compared to (2) former ELLs, (3) never ELLs, and (4) a special DOJ mandated compensatory group of ELD Level 3 students who opted out of receiving ESL services. They will also be analyzing cohorts starting at different grade levels. Specifically, first time ELD Level 1 & 2 at K-2, elementary (grades 3-5), middle school (grades 6-8), and high school (grades 9-12).

Q: [Dr. Uriarte] This decision to focus just on first-time ELD Level 1 & 2 students is concerning because we are starting to find out that there is a large portion of students that are plateauing at ELD Level 3 and 4 and they are "stuck" there for many years (often longer then 4 years). This research design will not allow the district to better understand the outcomes of these long-term ELLs.

A: [Faye Karp] They agree that this design is not perfect, but this was the decision based on numerous conversations with the DOJ. They had to make decisions because they cannot study everyone. However, because they are looking at first time ELLs at ELD Level 1 & 2, they will be able to offer insight into why students are plateauing (rather than answering the question of if they are plateauing). Elena Lanin offered the information that they are finding that most students are actually plateauing at ELD Level 4, not ELD Level 3 as previously thought. Apryl Clarkson also added that the study will not ignore ELD Level 3 or Level 4 students, they will be able to discuss their outcomes, but in the context of the ELD Level 1 & 2 cohorts (i.e. students that start at Level 1 & 2 and develop to Level 3 or 4).

The research team also had to make the decision to either study only the students consistently enrolled over the course of the study or to include all students in the cohort. They decided to include all students whether they were continuously enrolled or not. This decision reflects the mobility of the ELL population.

The research is being done by program and not by language group. For instance, the comparison will look at students in SEI Cape Verdean vs. SEI Multilingual, but cannot say how do Cape Verdean speakers perform in various programs.

The timeline is aiming for the end of December, but at this point they are still focusing on preliminary findings. The feedback from DOJ has lengthened this process.

[Suzanne Lee]: There are real concerns about the validity of this research being conducted internally.

OELL Updates – Translations and Interpretations Services
OELL then provided information on the changes and additions to the Translations and Interpretations services. Dr. Esparza provided an overview of the changes. When they entered the district, translations and interpretations was house in the Communications Office. However, most of the work they were focused on where publications. They simply did not have the capacity. When they approached central

office, they offered to have OELL take on Translation services. They said, "sure, have it". Dr. Esparza pushed hard to get certified translators and they pushed hard to get staff that are certified. They have new staff that covers (1) Spanish, (2) Haitian Creole/French, and (3) Portuguese/Cape Verdean Creole). But translation services are complicated and expensive. For context, translations for all languages can cost up to $80,000. For example, Orchard Gardens is experiencing problems because there are several documents being sent home that are not translated into Cape Verdean (no capacity in the school or in Communications Office).

One thing they are piloting is iPad translation services with outside vendors. The vendors have experiences in health care services. Administrators, teachers, and even parents can utilize the services to help with interpretations and translations.

OELL shared two documents "OELL – Translations and Interpretation Updates" and "Memo: Announcing the BPS Office of English Learners Translation & Interpretation Services Protocol". The first document shared the genesis of the Translation and Interpretation (T&I) Unit, which went from DOJ and OELL successor agreement in April 2012 to the services and new hires in 2016. Last year, OELL reviewed the translations of Special Education documents including IEPs and other documents. All told, there were 13,212 documents translated for special education.

[Rev. Tan] These are promising developments and we commend OELL for building the T&I office and services. This is certainty already an upgrade. However, having the services offered is only part of the solution. The other part is having PD around the use of the services. PD is needed to educate the schools and the teachers around the use of T&I. PD is currently done by the T&I team which is a lot of pressure and responsibility on them. Once again, it is important that linguistic diversity is owned by the whole district and not just a responsibility of OELL.

[Andrea Berasaluce]: This will take PD but also exposure to the expanded services. An example is from the previous week when she got a call at 9am on Monday for help with T&I for an open house. They were able to help and provided services at the last minute. But now that the school had a chance to see what services they can provide, the next time they will plan ahead and contact them earlier.

[Suzanne Lee] A suggestion is to place an emphasis on schools that have no SEI programs. These are the schools that likely have the least language capacity and need the most help around T&I services from central office.

Q: [Rev. Tan] What is the current capacity for Chinese and Vietnamese language services.
A: Currently, the district utilizes vendors for Chinese and Vietnamese requests. There is a proposal for staff for next year.

[Dr. Pagan-Vega] The goal is to change the behavior of the adults in the district. Make these changes district-wide so it is included in the fabric of the district.

ELL Task Force Goals and Priorities
The ELL Task Force reviewed the ELLTF Goals and Priorities and the subcommittee structure. The discussion began with the Parent Engagement Subcommittee. Suzanne Lee is the subcommittee lead and informed the meeting that their work last year was limited and part of the problem was person power. They need more members to help with the work and to hold meetings. This means thinking about adding new members to the Task Force and to the subcommittee. The work they did do was concentrating on staffing in the district, which is also work being done by the Opportunity and Achievement Gap Task Force. They experienced frustration in trying to access information from OHC, because they do not track the language capacity or current staffing. Therefore, it is impossible to understand if the programs are

properly staffed by teachers with appropriate language capacity (not just SEI/ESL certified). Additionally, there are real concerns around the diversity of the teaching core in Boston. Even when looking at the in-house training programs, the district is losing female teachers of color to other districts. The subcommittee is also looking for the results of the EL Longitudinal Study, which will analyze the program effectiveness to help target the work of the subcommittee.

Next John Mudd and Maria Serpa provided information on the ELL-SWD subcommittee. They submitted proposed language changes to the ELL TF Goals and Priorities. They feel as though the instruction of ELL-SWD should reside in Special Education rather than in OELL. The capacity to instruct SWD lies in Special Education, therefore OEL should provide support but the responsibility should be in Special Education.

[Dr. Esparza] There were ELL-SWD personnel in the district, but there was no movement, just a check-off box for the DOJ compliance. That person then retired and OELL has been brought in to help with experience. There has been a new hire in OELL to focus on the instruction of ELL-SWDs. Dr. Esparza is willing for this person to be housed in either OELL or Special Ed. OELL pays for half the salary and Special Ed the other half, but currently they work under OELL.

[John Mudd] The concern is that there are 3500 ELL-SWD and there is one coordinator. There needs to be a systemic approach to education these students.

[Dr. Uriarte] The ELL TF cannot dictate how the district organizes the departments. We can provide suggestions, which we have done.

The changes to the language of the Goals (Goal #5) were approved and will be updated.

Next Rev. Tan and the Parent Engagement Subcommittee spoke. They had a very active year last year and will continue the work of the subcommittee. At the end of last year, in preparation for the presentation to the school committee, they provided a set of goals recommendations. Rev. Tan suggest that these should be the updated goals for the ELL TF Goal #6.

Next Janet Anderson discussed the work of the Data and Student Assignment Subcommittee. In terms of the ELL TF Goals, we should keep Goal #2 and Goal #3 but the language in Goal #3 needs to be updated. We are now in year 3 of the new student assignment plan and we need to see some evaluation of the process. With Goal #3, there is a discussion about creating a School Quality Task Force and these will be part of the goals of that Task Force. We are also very interesting in keep track of the effectiveness of the overlays. With the overlays, are students making progress? What we heard is that equity has increased for everyone, but actually it is only for the students at the bottom.

It was decided to split the Data and Student Assignment Subcommittee, into just the Student Assignment Subcommittee. This subcommittee will be more ad hoc. The data questions, requests, and organization will be the responsibility of Coordinator Michael Berardino.

The meeting was adjourned.