

## THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE OF THE CITY OF BOSTON



### Minutes of the English Language Learners (ELL) Task Force Meeting October 9, 2018

The English Language Learners Task Force of the Boston School Committee held a meeting on October 9, 2018 at 9:00am at Bruce Bolling Building. For more information about any of the items listed below, contact Jen Douglas, ELL Task Force Coordinator, at [bpselltaskforce@gmail.com](mailto:bpselltaskforce@gmail.com).

---

#### ATTENDEES

**ELL Task Force Members present:** Janet Anderson, Jen Douglas (coordinator), Geralde Gabeau, Bob Hildreth, Lisette Le, Suzanne Lee, Julia Mejia, John Mudd, Alejandra St. Guillen, Cheng Imm Tan, and Miren Uriarte (co-chair)

**BPS Staff present:** Lisa Harvey (Deputy Director of Evaluation and Programs, Office of Engagement), Faye Karp (Director of Data and Fiscal Accountability, OELL), Nate Kuder (Deputy Chief Financial Officer), Monica Roberts (Deputy Superintendent of the Office of Engagement), Priya Tahiliani (Assistant Superintendent, Office of English Learners)

**ELL Task Force Members absent:** Andres Alonso, Farah Assiraj, Patricia Crain de Galarce, Paulo De Barros, Ana Solano-Campos (proposed), Marie St. Fleur (proposed)

#### Handouts

##### *From ELLTF*

- Minutes of the ELLTF Meeting on September 13, 2018
- "BuildBPS Update Part II: Presentation to Boston School Committee," Tommy Welch, Ben Vainer, Brian McLaughlin, January 24, 2018.
- "BuildBPS Update: Presentation to Boston School Committee," Rob Consalvo, Monica Roberts, Nate Kuder, September 26, 2018
- "Increasing Diversity in Boston's Exam Schools, Joshua Goodman and Melanie Rucinski, Rapport Institute for Greater Boston, October 2018.
- "2018 State Assessment & Accountability Results," Mary Dillman, Interim Executive Director, Office of Data and Accountability, October 10, 2018

*From BuildBPS team*

- “BuildBPS Update: Presentation to OEL [sic] Task Force,” Nate Kuder, Monica Roberts, Priya Tahiliani, October 9, 2018.

*From Office of English Learners*

- “OEL Compliance Update for EL Task Force,” Priya Tahiliani, October 9, 2018.

*From Office of Engagement*

- Untitled spreadsheets listing data points and notes – these are draft ideas toward creating a tracker to observe and monitor parent engagement.

## 1. Welcome

- **Approve meeting minutes.**

Skipped — will do this next time because TF members didn’t have a chance to read in advance.

## 2. Chairs’ Report

Miren Uriarte, Co-Chair of the Task Force, opened the meeting: Focus today on the process of engagement of linguistic minority communities for BuildBPS. We are taking a close look at BuildBPS because the process talks about the future of the district and its footprint going forward. There is a lot of debate about how to put new schools in the places where they’re most needed and a lot of concern about closing schools. And it comes in light of all we have found out in the last few months about how geography matters in the city in terms of access to high-quality schools. We have to participate in this discussion with our eyes wide open.

About 1/3 of all children in the BPS are ELLs (English Language Learners). Students cannot be swept under the rug. ELLs are a large constituency of the system and need to participate actively in the process, so it doesn’t happen *to* us but we are part of the process.

One of the things that will be presented today is the report that will be presented tomorrow in the School Committee meeting on student assessment. I call your attention to the slides on changes in the way accountability is measured. It’s a long read and I encourage you to do it. Look at page 13 to start to see outcomes for ELLs.

*See handout, “2018 State Assessment & Accountability Results,” Mary Dillman, Interim Executive Director, Office of Data and Accountability.*

John Mudd: Where’s the ELLSWD disaggregated data? Also data disaggregated by ELD level.

Uriarte: See appendices. She then walked attendees through key aspects of the report as relates to ELLs. Have things gotten better or worse since last year? See change from 2017

column. Former ELLs have some of the strongest performances in the district, but ELLs declined almost 2 points. See page 20 where they have lumped those two together, gives a strong upward line. [See report in meeting attachments for more details.]

Suzanne Lee, co-chair: Our presentation to the School Committee is not going to take place tomorrow, it will be rescheduled, date as yet unknown. Jen and I will revise it so it's less of a bureaucratic update and conveys a stronger message about the urgency of the issues and the frustrations of doing this work. We will pare down all the details about the lists of accomplishments.

Mudd: Posed question about superintendent search.

Uriarte: Named people on search committee that are informed about ELLs.

Alejandra St. Guillen, to Miren: Do you have a recommendation of whom we should be pushing?

Uriarte: I could come up with people. The membership of the search committee is set. Everyone should follow the process closely.

Mudd: Emphasized importance of knowing whether interim superintendent plans to apply.

Uriarte: Regarding my replacement on this task force, the mayor has my letter of resignation and the committee on the school committee that deals with appointments is now looking for a replacement. If anyone is interested now is the time to throw your hat in the ring.

### **3. Questions, suggestions and recommendations for reaching linguistic minority communities in the BuildBPS process**

- **Update on plans of the Office of Engagement for involvement of non-English speaking parents and communities in the Build BPS process – Monica Roberts, Rob Consalvo, Nate Kuder**

Monica Roberts: Walked attendees through PowerPoint presentation.

*See handout, "BuildBPS Update: Presentation to OEL [sic] Task Force," Nate Kuder, Monica Roberts, Priya Tahiliani, October 9, 2018.*

Nate Kuder: BuildBPS refers to all capital dollars spent over a 10-year period, regardless of when the project initiated. Capital projects are kind of a loser, because they straddle mayoral administrations with their long cycles. It's kind of a remarkable commitment to commit \$1 billion right now. It will be 6, 7 years out before we start enjoying the ribbon-

cutting. Our plan is to get to a place where we are launching new building projects every year because we have so many needs.

Julia Mejia: Where is Boston Arts Academy?

Kuder: It is moving into where Dorchester Academy was; DA was moved for its own reasons (poor outcomes and other unspecified problems). What we see is all of the schools that have been broken apart are struggling.

Lee: When you talk about BuildBPS most people think this is a master plan. But in the meantime you have all this other stuff happening, and the community doesn't know what is happening. For example at Quincy Upper where people don't know what is going on with the site – how is that possible to decide by the summer? What is that process?

Kuder: We have a tale of two budget processes. Our operating budget is rules-based, transparent, predictable, runs on an annual cycle that people know what the steps are. We publish a lot of documents online. Then we have our capital process which has been murky and ad hoc. Public in the sense that we have to let people know every year what we do, but not in the sense of engaging the community. Monica and I are working toward a predictable, engaged process. We are getting a lot of emails that reflect a belief that to get what you want you have to be the loudest. We have to move away from that, let people know what things look like very year, every time. Because we have not been engaged the first year is going to be the hardest. The best time to plant a tree is 20 years ago, the next best time is today. We know we will feel rushed this year but we are also laying the groundwork for what we will do the year after.

Uriarte: I don't have an understanding of where you are going, and I think that's what people are concerned about.

Mejia: What can you tell us about the demographics of the people who spoke up [at a recent meeting]?

Roberts: The meeting had 450 participants, not a lot given the numbers in the district. They looked through the high level themes from that. There was no data presented to inform people's ideation. They looked for those high-level themes and tried to match it to process.

Tan: Please track ELL parent participation.

Uriarte: We have a lot of experience around this table. Maybe there's a way we can help guide you.

Mudd: What I'm worried about is I've never seen an education vision which the physical facilities are supposed to serve. I'd like to put that forward. In ELL students we have a huge issue about grouping, non-grouping. In the BARI analysis they said they have the data on the

ELL overlay, I'd love to see it. The goal is not the bricks and mortar, though of course it has to be safe and is important, but what are the goals around this?

Roberts: The challenge is that we've had a long time without any information. We are coming with a plan and will present it next week. See slide 11 for a list of community-engagement communications that are planned. We are not asking people to love the plan nor endorse the plan. We are asking that we get every part of our community that will be impacted by this plan involved and on the same page so we can understand it and plan together. How do we make sure it is clear for people? Who can host activities? I have a team of 4, but that's not a big enough army for what we are trying to do. And we need people who have the trust of their communities. We are going to train our BPS team to be able to go out and facilitate. We do plan to track our data so as we're going through we can see what we are missing. And see whether the ways in which we are presenting the information is helpful. Then we will figure out how to better push forward to with our engagement.

Tan: That sounds wonderful. How do you plan to track?

Roberts: Not just in our office. Making plans. Need to be sensitive to concerns of undocumented families.

Mejia: How will we capture those who don't know how to read or write?

Roberts: Staff will be trained. They will be there.

Gabeau: We are asked to do so much with so little. How will you support the community organizations that are asked to support this process?

Roberts: I understand that I'm going to be asked for food, childcare, interpretations. We are planning for those things and also supports for facilitation, someone else who understand the content.

Gabeau: Not quite what I'm asking. A while ago we had to do outreach for a meeting with the superintendent. That took time, we had to go on the radio, etc. We need your support to strengthen our infrastructure and go and do that work. We want to work with you but need your support to build ourselves so we can do that.

Roberts: Would be helpful to know what you are asking for. Are you looking to be reimbursed for staff time? What it is.

Lee: You say there is a community advisory group?

Roberts: I thought that was one you had been invited to. We can talk. I do think there have been some missteps. I'm looking for a new staff member. It's come to my attention that there may have been problems.

Mejia: There are other groups missing.

Roberts: There are some groups who are waiting to decide whether they want to sit at the table.

Uriarte: There are concerns about the relationships between BPS and the community. You have more resources than they do even if you don't have a penny. I know when I used to work with organizations we had a specific stipend we would give people. Whatever we felt was fair for what we were asking them to do. You also have to think about privacy – are they going to do the mailing or are you? That costs money. I'm seeing that the meetings are to start on 10/22 and we don't have a budget.

Mejia: In terms of equity you would be sending a strong message out to the community by seeing us as an equal thought partner and collaborator. This is an important step to think about how BPS will be doing business going forward.

Gabeau: I need to see where the money goes, that's how I know what you mean. You cannot achieve those great results by not investing in those communities. Sending the message that we are in this together.

Le: The point around monetizing the work we're going to contribute is important. Also, have you talked with BPDA or DND? There are many planning processes, they are all the same thing, it's exhausting to do it. What is the city going to look like? Who is going to be engaged? How are people seeing whether they're going to be able to stay in the city? We can't ask people to come to 10 different meetings to hear the same tangential data over and over.

Kuder: Everything from new library construction to changes in parcel usage, they all interact. As other departments make plans it shifts things for us. The biggest example is Suffolk Downs, they are now in the parcelization process so they can go out and start to develop. An entire town is going to go in there. It could be very impactful to BPS enrollment patterns.

Le: To be transparent the engagement process around land use is pretty bad. People aren't going to want to do it. When you combine that and BuildBPS, it's tricky.

Kuder: . . . [some missing] For example, we've talked a lot in the past about middle schools. You have to look at where you can send the flow of 6<sup>th</sup> graders who currently come into middle schools – can elementary schools accommodate them? Where will 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup>

graders go and can the high schools accommodate them? In many places we don't have that path laid out, we have to establish.

Tan: In terms of news getting out about the meetings, I hope you are using the Parent Councils as well? And that you are thinking about interpretation. You have a very challenging job.

Roberts: We always use ethnic media, always rely on the OELL.

Tan: The right message is very important. People will come once, and if they feel that the right message is not used, they're not coming back.

Mejia: This is such a huge undertaking, I want to applaud you for taking that on. How many ELLs are you hoping to target? What is your strategy and numbers?

Le: Written materials should really be translated before the meetings. Please check with us about how you translate certain things. For the Vietnamese community there is the academic way and the colloquial way, and for our community there is the pre- and post-1975 way. Please run things by us, a lot of things, depending on what way you came to this country, you speak differently.

Uriarte: What I hear is that you're getting feedback on the nitty-gritty on-the-ground aspects. But I also imagine that you're wanting broader engagement. You want taxpayers in the city to be behind this. You want it broad. I had talked with you about the work done in the election for Ayanna Pressley as an example of the kind of work that needs to be done, the channels it needs to go through. It's not just about the 20 people who come to the meeting at VietAID, it's about the broader Vietnamese community that needs to be engaged. I'm going to ask you about that at the meeting, what kind of budget you need, please come up with a number.

Lee: for all of us who want this process to be successful, it needs to be a whole city process.

Uriarte: BPS does not need to carry the water for the development folks, to be making decisions about whether or not we are gentrifying Mattapan. Then, addressing Rob Consalvo, who just came in: What we're saying Rob is that this cannot be done nickel and diming the community organizations. It has to be done wisely because there are some areas of City Hall that are not as well loved as BPS (laughter).

Roberts: I have been working with Josiane [Martinez] as a thought partner, I didn't mention that. We just posted a communications and outreach position yesterday we are also looking to bring on someone to help project-manage.

Rob: We are looking for a BPS project manager to help coordinate with the planning team and other core individuals. Previously this was a position at City Hall under Rahn Dorsey's

team. My team manager Ellen McDonough, she does an amazing job keeping us linked across different city departments and the electeds. The project manager will be housed here in the bolling Building. Like any project manager that person will keep the core team meeting deadlines, moving the process forward. We got some amazing resumes.

Uriarte: Get somebody that is really rooted in the city, who understands the different communities. The learning curve is very long.

Gabeau: Is there any part of this process that is about opening up BPS facilities for broader use by community organizations? For example our summer program serves 150 kids in a very tight facility and could use the space that is available in the schools that are closed.

Consalvo: Gave an example of the use of a building as an election site for Brazilians. There was a Haitian group that wanted to use the Chittuck in Mattapan over the summer.

Uriarte: One of the mysteries here is the whole question of the engagement of parents in the education of their children. Is there a defunding of that work?

Kuder: What Gabeau just described is not part of the infrastructure of BuildBPS. The summer uses remains part of the facilities process. And as an aside we need our buildings empty for the summer because that's when we do most of the maintenance. And when they are used the reason we have the hours so short is to avoid paying overtime.

Gabeau: Yes, but when we think about what the research tells us about the importance of summer learning for the children. Is there a way we can think differently to avoid their learning loss?

Lee: I know when I was a principal our building was a community facility used 24-7. Why should that only fall on the BPS budget?

Roberts: When we did the reorg last year we used to have 8 liaisons. Now that body is cut in half. The superintendent has expressed a lot of concern and is looking to rectify. I don't know what that will look like. In the interim what we've tried to do is a couple of things, we have one former school leader, one former teacher. We are working closely with the academic superintendent to think about how to provide support. Thinking about how we can prioritize schools especially those that are low-performing. Professional development with school leaders, try to say wherever you start is a good place because at least you're starting. Focusing some of our funding on academic parent-teacher teams and home visiting. We really want to do some team-building with, first, school leaders and then their staff. People love the idea of home visits until they realize they have to go everywhere in the city. They need some experiences to build their confidence, to go with a mentor, to learn that it's not scary to go to an unfamiliar neighborhood. We need a safe space for our educators to practice engagement.

Tan: You've heard me and I'm sure I'm going to sound frustrated. I'm sure you feel frustrated too. It's budget but it's also a vision and a system of accountability. I don't think it's enough to say to principals to start wherever you want and do whatever you want. I understand that principals have very difficult jobs. I just did outreach in my school in a way that's never been done. ELL parents respond when I do outreach because they could relate to me.

Uriarte: I have to communicate my frustration too. We've been talking for 4 years and we've gone back not forward. We are talking about outcomes, it's not good news. The more we abandon connections with parents and families, it's not going to get better. Even if you have 4 superwomen or 4 supermen on staff.

Mejia: Your budget is a value statement. Depending on how many dollars you're willing to allocate to make sure that families are engaged, we know if we are valued. We know that when families are engaged that outcomes improve.

Roberts: I think that the issue of accountability is important. [Missed some details about strategies.] With all the recent shifting I think we need a little time to have those conversations and be as honest as possible. Also more money isn't the only solution. We used to have school-based funds. We didn't find a relationship between dollars and what was happening. It has a lot to do with the school leader. It starts with the school leaders making a value statement. Then we have to have the educators who buy in. It's a both/and.

Mudd: The whole issue of what is at the core of principal evaluations we need to look at. You can be proficient without doing well at engagement and without staff diversity.

Roberts: You're preaching to the choir.

Several TF members: What can we do to help you?

Roberts: I am on the same page. We need to figure out how we make this a requirement for proficiency. Whether an interim is going to be comfortable making such a shift I'm not sure. I'm going to present it again. But we have a new person coming in who we really should have the conversation with.

Uriarte: What you just said has to be communicated to the [superintendent] search committee. We need someone who has this vision, who understands family and community engagement. How are you going to communicate that to the search committee?

Roberts: I need to find out what's the proper protocol.

Tan: Can we write a letter? We could.

**FOLLOW UP.** Letter from the ELLTF to the superintendent search committee.

Consalvo: If the group does do a communication like that I'd be happy to make sure it gets in the right hands.

Anderson: I'm going to take it down to a very practical level. When you talk about the school leaders, it's a carrot/stick approach. When you talk about the evaluations it's a sticks approach. When you talk about the 5 leaders who are recently lifted up for [something], I'm not sure any of them are in our four family-friendly schools.

Lee: When you look at how you've judged a principal it's on those results. Are students achieving?

Anderson: I know, it matters what you measure.

Lee: I have this bucket of things to do. Where do I put my energy? What skill does the principal have and are they getting the right support?

Tan: To have accountability you have to have the will and the resources.

Roberts: There is research that says you need 5 things for a good school and community engagement is one.

Lee: I'm one of the people who developed the framework that we don't use anymore that said just that.

Uriarte: Some talk about the return of assistant principals. We need to think about that.

Kuder: As we're designing the plan, the need for ELL programming is central to the planning process. My belief is that you start with the students who are the highest needs. When you build a system that works for them it will work for all learners. I hope what you see in the expression of our core values in the BuildBPS report that's coming out next week is that EL students and students with disabilities are at the forefront. We need to design a system that works for them. If it's not coming out clearly enough it's because I haven't spoken clearly.

Uriarte: When the superintendent was here at the last meeting we talked about the question of the student assignment study and how it did not have information about ELL overlays. She asked us to come back and go to her with what we need. We are going to put forward some specifics about what analysis needs to happen. The critical issue here is balancing the choice parents have with the need to group kids where programs can be most effective.

Roberts: Asked that we include Lisa Harvey on that.

**FOLLOW UP. Include Lisa Harvey in discussion about student assignment ELL overlay analysis.**

Roberts, Kuder, and Consalvo left. Task Force debriefed – what did we find out?

Several: I didn't hear a real commitment.

TF member: Writing a letter to the SC is important – search committee focuses on commitment to parent engagement, someone who knows ELLs. Not just a commitment but a track record.

Lee: I would recommend an open letter.

Mudd: Maybe we can aim for an op-ed.

Miren will start drafting this letter.

Mejia: For the record, I think Monica has worked really hard. In that letter I think we should stress how important it is to support her and her work.

Uriarte: One word to those of you from community organizations. The BPS staff are going to come to you and you are going to need to figure out how much it costs you to give what they need.

- **Update on plans of the Office of English Language Learners related to BuildBPS – Priya Tahiliani**

Included in Roberts presentation above.

- **Discussion of best ways to encourage participation of linguistic minority communities in BuildBPS process (45 minutes)**

Held concurrent with Roberts presentation above.

#### **4. OELL Director's Report – Priya Tahiliani**

- **DOJ Update, including intro to DOJ data for new members**

*See handout, "OEL Compliance Update for EL Task Force," Priya Tahiliani, October 9, 2018.*

Tahiliani: The slides start with some background on DOJ data and reporting requirements. Slide 5 addresses the question, "Are EL students receiving their required services?" On slides 6–12 is overview of the reports that OELL provides, with numbers indicating the paragraph in the DOJ decision. Slide 8 is what Yvonne collects in a phone call-by-phone call and school visit-by-school visit manual manner, all self-reported data.

Lee: None of these requirements focus on language specifically. Reflecting on slide 19: There is no requirement for teacher language skills. How can we hop on HR to hire people when there is no requirement anywhere?

Tahiliani: Just because DOJ doesn't require it doesn't mean BPS can't require it.

Anderson: Are all schools in here? We had calculated that almost 20% of ELs were in schools that weren't part of the report.

[Other questions about which students are captured in the report.]

Faye Karp: The DOJ tracking is for K2–12, whereas we had presented other data to you on K0–12. Also certain programs don't fall under what the DOJ covers, so that explains some of the differences in numbers that you are asking about.

Tahiliani: We are going through a whole process to certify schools. It is going to end up being a school-by-school choice. We also have the dual language application process, where schools can express an interest in immersion programs.

Uriarte: Riley came to present to us and has a let a hundred thousand flowers bloom, all different, and I'm like, "Please don't do this in Boston. We need to think about the balance, the LOOK Bill, where you want to go, think about the case that can go to the DOJ. [She named three elements, not captured here.] If we are going to go back to transitional bilingual education, that is not good news."

Tahiliani: The first thing we are going to ask to be released from those reports we haven't gotten feedback on for 5 years.

Lee: I would be interested to brainstorm and get together on what we can do with the LOOK Bill, there are some aspects that work for some groups, like Cape Verdean.

## **5. Subcommittee Concerns/Updates**

- **Presentation and discussion of the work of the Parent Engagement Subcommittee in SY18–19 (30 minutes)**

*Handout, Untitled spreadsheets listing data points and notes – these are draft ideas toward creating a tracker to observe and monitor parent engagement in four recommendations areas.*

1. *Recommendation: District-wide recommendation to better train, support, resource and hold school leaders and educators accountable for family engagement for all students, including ELLs.*

2. *Recommendation: Build Culturally and Linguistically welcoming school environments and culturally relevant curriculum that affirms our diverse student body and families. Commitment to better train, resource and hold school leaders and educators accountable to this recommendation.*
3. *Recommendation: Build language capacity at the district and school levels, both oral and written to communicate with parents in schools.*
4. *Recommendation: Ensure adequate information and outreach to familiarize new immigrant parents with the school registration process (including the registration timing and schedule) and help parents understand how to pick schools that best meet their child/ren's needs.*

Tan: We have been solidly working on the four recommendations. After one year of working on these recommendations we realized that it was very difficult to track progress because we lack data. So we are trying to figure out to see what data we do need and how we can get access to it.

One thing they are trying to track, which is a Title I requirement to do, is school-level participation.

Focusing on four schools: JQUS (where Rev. Tan has access), the Curley. They are invited to talk with parents at two events.

Le: What does Family-Friendly Schools mean?

Lisa Harvey: The designation is for schools that have at least 50% school climate surveys by parents returned and have done [other things related to engagement]. Certified by those 4 staff people in OE. Two of the four currently-certified schools are in East Boston.

St. Guillen: How many schools meet that 50% [returned parent school climate surveys] threshold?

Tan: As I recall the one that had the higher returns were the places where ELLs are concentrated.

Gabeau: If you got them all back, what would you do with them?

Tan: Wants to add tracking for translation and interpretations at high ELL schools. So we are working together with OE and schools to try to bring more knowledge to how engagement is behaving.

Harvey: The data that is sought is not collected. To obtain it is a massive effort, at least a full-time job for somebody.

Various ideas offered about other data sources for engagement: Maybe we do a sample to start, make sure we have schools across different categories. Start with a pilot study. Another mentioned a one-page report that schools do.

TF agreed that the next step was to circulate the spreadsheet to collect feedback.

**FOLLOW UP.** Collect ELLTF member input on a matrix from the Office of Engagement listing data points and data sources for tracking family and community engagement.

#### **6. Public Comment (10 minutes)**

None given.

#### **7. Adjourn**