

THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE OF THE CITY OF BOSTON



Minutes of the English Language Learners (ELL) Task Force Meeting May 17, 2018

The English Language Learners Task Force of the Boston School Committee held a meeting on May 17, 2018 at 10:00am 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, Cheng Imm Tan, Bob Hildreth, John Mudd, Janet Anderson, Paolo DeBarros, Farah Assiraj and Michael Berardino - Coordinator. **Other persons and BPS Staff Present:** Faye Karp **Members Absent:** Alejandra St. Guillen, Geralde Gabeau, Abdul Hussein, Patricia Crain de Galarce, Andres Alonso.

Introductions and Approval of Minutes

The Task Force approved the minutes (4 voted yes, 3 abstentions)

Updates from School Committee

Discussion of Opportunity Index – Miren has formally requested that ODA and BARI include someone to review how the model was constructed and suggested that they consult with Rosann Tung to get a second look. Additionally, OEL and Office of SPED were not at the table when the statistical models were being developed; they need to be part of the discussion moving forward. Miren suggested Faye Karp of OEL should be part of upcoming discussions. Finally, Miren is not sure how the Opportunity Index will be used moving forward; there needs to be further discussion.

Farah Assiraj: Has there been any development in the application of the OI?

Miren Uriarte: Asked but there has not been a clear response. Some response that the OI will be used for food services, but the OI can potentially be used by any office that are looking for more equitable distribution of funds. The School Committee has not gone public with these concerns. They will be meeting with the Superintendent tonight to talk about OI and other topics

John Mudd: We need to get answers because there is a concern that it will be rolled out without review. And we need to make sure the review of the OI is handled carefully; we do not want this to develop into a Black-Latino issue. Concern that they have told us that counting ELL and SPED would be “double dipping”

Suzanne Lee: This again reflects the thinking of the higher ups; the needs of ELLs and SPED students have not penetrated the core conversation.

Miren Uriarte: Discussion of needs. Long-term needs as opposed to short-term needs. This discussion needs to play out.

Farah Assiraj: Suggest using the examples of East Boston schools who did not receive partnership funding even though they are clearly in need of additional resources/high needs. If they are not receiving the opportunity funds for ELs or SPED students and especially EL-SPED students, this is an indictment of the OI. This shows they are looking at the wrong variables or using the wrong models.

Suzanne Lee: Agree with Farah that we have the evidence of the shortcomings of the OI with the implementation of the OI and schools in East Boston.

Cheng Imm Tan: This could have issues even in Chinatown.

Miren Uriarte also shared information on an upcoming study by the Parthenon Group. It is a follow up to a previous study from 10 years ago about off-track youth. The report is in review currently, but the preliminary results show that there has not been progress for off-track youth in the past ten years. One clear finding is that there are specific concerns around the vulnerability of ELSWD students to be off-track (at least 2 years behind grade level and increased risk of drop out). We should be alert to this and ready to respond to the report. This could be an opportunity to help educate the district and the public about the need of this population that the Task Force and Subcommittee has been working on. Additionally, the report shows that there are increased off-track youth for ELs at ELD Level 4 and 5 as opposed to those in ELD Level 1-3. These are students in high school and the kids in Gen Ed in high school do not have the supports/relationships.

Paolo DeBarros: We see that with Gen Ed ELs; they have no relationships to the high school. They decide they are going to get a job instead of staying in school or get a GED.

Farah Assiraj: This is primarily impacting older students. Some kids that go to BATA have the opportunities, but other students are getting shuffled around from school to school. It is important to look at what was happening in BATA and Greater Eggleston this year, because they were giving students “exit slips” because they were “old and far”. This is all connected to understanding what the issues are around the data. There is a requirement that the district provides services for ELs up to the age of 22. There was a Cape Verdean student who was EL and SPED who all of a sudden was given an exit slip.

Paolo DeBarros: One way to address this is by working with assignment. Make sure they are placed in programs that can actually provide services.

Miren Uriarte: We may want to have a finer discussion once we see the data. We also need to look at the recommendations and make sure they reflect the needs we see in the community.

The Task Force discussed the need for more members for the Task Force. It was agreed that the Task Force would benefit from adding someone from the Haitian community, Vietnamese community, Somali community, etc. Additionally, the Task Force needs a new coordinator. Suzanne and Miren have identified a person – Jennifer Douglas, who has strength with data, a history of organizing, wrote her dissertation on gentrification in JP, has been working with Miren and James Jennings, and is a volunteer organizer with City Life.

Preparation for Presentation to School Committee

The Task Force discussed the best time to present to the School Committee: June or September. The Task Force decided to wait until September to present to the School Committee. This will allow the Task Force to meet with Priya Tahiliani, who has been named Assistant Superintendent EL, and get a clear understanding of her long-term vision of OEL and how the ELLTF can work to accomplish these goals. The Task Force also discussed involving community groups in the presentation to the School Committee to make sure everyone in the community is aware of the work of the Task Force and to get their input into the biggest needs facing ELs. The Task Force would like to have a convening meeting between the Task Force and community groups, and to touch base with other organizations (BTU EL group, Citywide Parent Council, DELLAC, etc.).

The Task Force agreed that for the presentation to the School Committee it is best to keep it simple (“Here are the things that keep us up at night”).

Updates on the Work of Task Force:

ELSWD Subcommittee – Small group of committed people. There has been some consciousness raising through their work; there was some tension in the subcommittee last year that was overcome through their work this year, but there has not been enough solid progress.

- They have continued to gather data through the work of Ivonne Borrero. The automated system has not been effective for providing data on the teacher qualification. Ivonne took 3-4 days to go school by school to get these data.
- There has been a commitment from the subcommittee that ELSWDs in BPS need to access to native language services, but they do not know how this actually occurs in a district where ELSWDs are so dispersed throughout the system. The goal was a teacher or para in the classroom that speaks the native language of the student, but with dispersal it is impossible. They are discussing a pilot program with 10 schools with a high-density of a single language to see what it would take to actually provide native language supports.
- Pilot project on examining IEPs – selected IEPs from various levels at various languages, to see if they are orientated towards native language services. But they have no indication that they have an appropriate native language services outline.
- Guidance Document – to look at vision (“north star” teacher in every classroom). Trying to match this with the pilot program to work with 10 schools with high density of single language. They need to identify how the personnel structuring would actually look. Working with Budget and OHC to understand what the necessary steps are to actually work on this vulnerable population.

Miren Uriarte: For the School Committee, it would be great to understand what the key problems are. Get Ivonne’s table to show just how deep the issue is. If you show them that there are only 17 teachers in the entire district with language capacity that are matched with ELSWDs. The other thing that will raise the attention at School Committee would be the IEPs. (Suzanne) The third issue is the massive issue of dispersal. Raise the issue and make sure the School Committee has to address this. DOJ is still pushing that EL parents need to be treated the same as everyone,

but OEL is pushing DOJ/negotiating to make changes to the focus on choice vs. program to address budget and programmatic efficiency and effectiveness.

The issues facing ELSWD involve several other aspects of ELL Task Force work. For instance, the problem with bringing the issue of concentrating/groups ELs to DOJ is that we still have not seen results of HBAP. Janet Anderson also made the point that we still do not have evidence that grouping students is more effective. Furthermore, this also involves issues with Human Capital because we still have an issue with teacher assignment issue. There are teachers that are not being properly utilized in the district. But we still do not have baseline data to properly evaluate how many teachers are “inefficiently” assigned. Janet Anderson suggested creating a diagram of how the various topics/factors impact the education of ELs. Show a slide that show how intertwined all these issues are.

Human Capital Subcommittee – Suzanne Lee shared that the work of the subcommittee started out positive this year with the encouragement from the Superintendent who wanted people from all departments to work together.

- Staffing: challenge has been creating baseline data. There is no idea what the language capacity of current teachers, where they are assigned, and how this relates to retention and recruitment. This makes monitoring impossible. This has been an issue raised by the Task Force since at least 2014 when John Mudd sent a formal letter in 2014 requesting information on the current teacher need is and there is still nothing. Even if this has to be done by hand it is critically important.
- Pipeline and Recruitment: They have been creating innovative pipeline and recruitment projects, but they are tiny. They are not being pushed to change the larger outlook. There are also issues with retention for teachers of color.
- Farah Assiraj proposed a “gap analysis” comparing the number of teachers hired in the past 5 years and those that are actually still in the district 5 years later. How do we put a picture on this?

Parent Engagement Subcommittee: The work of the subcommittee this year was organized around their four priorities:

- “Better train, support, resource and hold school leaders and educators accountable for family engagement for all students, including ELLs.”: There has never been a definition or criteria or metrics of what family engagement actually means. This makes monitoring challenging because they have to come up with their own metrics. Some things to get their hands on. # of trainings that have been done on EL parent engagement. school climate survey – the highest returns have been with schools with highest concentration of ELs. However, these are also the schools with the certified Family Friendly Schools Initiative.
 - a. Janet Anderson suggested looking into the FFSI criteria beneficial for developing criteria for evaluating/measuring quality EL parent engagement.
- “Better train, support, resource and hold school leaders and educators accountable for family engagement for all students, including ELLs.” – earlier this year, the superintendent said they are working on it, but we have not heard details.
- “Increase ELL parent participation and voices at the school and district level”: It is almost impossible to measure this on the district level. The subcommittee had the idea to

use CPC, SPC, etc. participation numbers to get a sense of district-wide EL parent participation. The district has come up with new form that will help them get a sense of who the parents are at the community meetings. This is progress, but there is no current data.

- “Expansion of programs that successfully engage parents” – there has been expansion of successful programs like APPT – there has been more money, expecting expansion of this.
- Recommendation #2: “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 educator accountable to this recommendation.” – the district is in the second year of CLSP training. Year 1 OAG worked with principals and they continued that training. They have no idea of what is being monitored or what the outcomes are.
- Recommendation #3: “Build language capacity at the district and school levels, both oral and written to communicate with parents in schools This has been a big highlight with increased capacity and use of the translations and interpretations. The majority of requests have come from IEPs and are trying to build general requests. They still need to do outreach to schools to know there are resources.
- Recommendation #4: “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 children’s needs”: Report was scheduled for May 18th.
- Subcommittee Concerns:
 - a. There is still difficulty in actually measuring what family engagement looks like.
 - b. OoE has restructured again. Parent liaisons were let go, but 4 were reassigned to Parent University. The jobs look like they are very different. Parent Engagement is centered on educating and supporting. CFCs are placed in schools, but were not given any training or supports for family/community engagement. Who supports the CFCs at the schools? What is the onboarding?
 - c. 3 new positions for community engagement (added probably because of confusion around start times), but still unclear about the positions and the roles.
 - d. Paolo DeBarros – we should focus on the family engagement people within OELL and look at the language specific capacity and needs. The subcommittee need to get better updates.
 - e. Miren Uriarte: The Performance Meter will include “Parent Engagement” but there is not clear definition of what that means. “66%”, but of what?

Data and Student Assignment Subcommittee:

- Still waiting on the results of the HBAP equity analysis. [Lets follow up with Lisa Harvey around the progress, are they including the EL overlay] Faye Karp shared that there is a system for ELs called Home-Based Plus – students get 3 tiers of school, but also get the list of schools with the list of EL programs. This may include schools not in the geographic area/cluster. The design of the clusters was to account for language groups. Student assignment relates to everything and making those connections it critical.
- There has also been a great deal of positive feedback around the opening of the Haitian dual language program – Mattahunt/Mattapan Early Learning has been successful.

- The Task Force has not had the chance to review the DOJ reports this year and will do so before the end of the year.

The Task Force agreed that they would like to focus on the overarching goals of the entire district being more multilingual. This has been a goal of the Task Force for many years and was included in district guidance documents such as the Strategic Implementation Plan, but the Task Force wants to make this a more explicit goal and for the district to look at this topic in a more holistic/comprehensive way. Ideally, this is something that is embedded into the School Committee, so that they ask every presenter to the School Committee how their work is working towards making the district more multilingual or how does their work impact ELs and SPED students and families.

The meeting was adjourned.