**Official Minutes of the Remote
English Language Learners Task Force (ELLTF) Meeting**

The English Language Learners Task Force (ELLTF) held a meeting on March 30, 2023 at 5–7 p.m. on Zoom. The meeting was in English with simultaneous interpretation in Amharic, Arabic, Caboverdean Creole, and Spanish. For more information about any of the items listed below, visit the ELLTF website, email jdouglas4@bostonpublicschools.org, or call the Boston School Committee Office at (617) 635-9014.

ATTENDANCE

ELLTF Members

Present: Janet Anderson, Angelina Camacho, Paulo De Barros, Co-chair Suzanne Lee, Katie Li, John Mudd, Co-chair Rafaela Polanco Garcia, Maria Serpa, Fabián Torres-Ardila, Rosann Tung

Absent: Geralde Gabeau, Roxanne Harvey, Marie St. Fleur, Miren Uriarte

Prospective ELLTF Members

Present: Michael Berardino, Ruth Mercado-Zizzo, Sugey Rondón

Absent: Linh Vu

DOCUMENTS PRESENTED

ELL Task Force
- Minutes of the ELL Task Force Meeting, February 9, 2022
- "Language Learning Education (LLE) Program Types in Massachusetts 2022-2023," by Maria Serpa and colleagues

Budget and Planning
- "Update to the English Learners Task Force," Nathan Kuder, Chief Financial Officer and Jamie Racanelli, Director of Planning & Analysis, March 30, 2023

Academics
- "Boston Public Schools Multilingual Learner Programming Update to the ELL Task Force," March 30, 2023

- Work with Racanelli to obtain data on EL/ML students with disabilities (SWDs), including:
  - ELSWDs in Gen Ed, not just in special education programs (i.e., all students with IEPs, in all program settings)
  - ELD1-5s assigned to special education programs, disaggregated by type of disability
  - ELD1-3s, ELD4-5s disaggregated by language
- Set up a meeting between the DLR Group and members of the ELLTF.
- ELLTF members to identify remaining questions about program planning, inclusion, budgeting.

Welcome

Lee called the meeting to order. Interpretation was explained and enabled.

Chairs' Welcome (Suzanne Lee & Rafaela Polanco Garcia)

Lee explained that the meeting would focus on EL programming, and on enrollment data necessary to understand for program planning. She announced that Sugey Rondón will represent the ELLTF on the hiring committee for the OMME Chief, and that John Mudd will represent on the hiring committee for the Office of Special Education Chief.

Polanco Garcia shared that the School Committee approved the budget. She announced that the district needs bus monitors.

Lee invited Linda Chen, Senior Deputy Superintendent of Academics, to introduce new OMME staff member, Sarah Davila.

Budget and Planning presentation – answering enrollment and assignment questions

Racanelli's slide presentation contained a lot of data. The below notes are purposely detailed, in an effort to preserve the verbal explanations shared by Racanelli to help listeners interpret the slides.

Racanelli explained that his presentation would speak to the question, "Why are we seeing a decline in language specific programming at the same time that we're seeing an increase in enrollment in multilingual programs and general education for multilingual learners?" He described two potential drivers of change: one is changes in the population, the other is changes in behavior, whether that is district behavior in the form of policy change or families making different school choices.

ML/EL student enrollment: declining, but to a lesser extent than the district as a whole (slide 4). Over the last 5 years, multilingual plus former multilingual learner enrollments declined by 10% (about 2,000 students) and are up 2% compared to last year. For the rest of the district,

enrollment is down 15% over the last 5 years, and saw further declines of 3% compared to last year.

Relative growth in ELD1-3s as a percentage of all ELs/MLs — "we're seeing real growth in multilingual learners and it's concentrated in the ELD1-3s." While ELD1-5 enrollment dropped by 2,000 students in the last 5 years, ELD1-3 enrollment saw a big jump of 1,300 students between October 2021 and October 2022 and was higher as of October 2022 than any point in the last 6 years (slide 5). Why?

- First is because of <u>rising new enrollments during the school year</u> (slide 6). The number of new students began to rise during SY21-22 after declining for the 3 preceding years.

- Second is because <u>a declining percentage of student progressed ELD levels</u> (slide 7). More students who historically would have been ELD4-5s continue to be ELD1-3s.

ML/EL student program assignment and the shift toward SEI multilingual (i.e., non-language-specific) program assignment: that's "the trend we're trying to understand." Total enrollment across all EL-serving programs is down 7.5% compared to 5 years ago. But language-specific program enrollment is down 14% (553 students), while multilingual program enrollment is up 6.2%. Why?

- <u>For languages other than for Spanish, the student population has declined (slides 13 and 14)</u>. The total population eligible for language-specific programs declined by 625 students (25%) over the last 5 years.

- <u>Spanish-speaking enrollment is increasing while enrollment in Spanish language-specific programs declines (slide 14)</u>. The Spanish-speaking population is up by over 1,000 students over the last 5 years, and the vast majority of that change occurred in the last year (from 5,800 students in October 2021 to 6,700 students in October 2022). Still, SEI enrollment grew over the past 5 years only in the multilingual strand, and SEI Spanish enrollment reversed its decline this school year.

What about Haitian arrivals? That is something the district needs to better understand. Lee asked about enrollment in Haitian Creole programs, saying she expected higher recent arrivals in Boston from Haiti and higher numbers of newly-enrolled Haitian Creole-speaking students in BPS. Racanelli said the enrollment of Haitian Creole speakers has been down over the past 5 years with some growth in the last year. He shared anecdotal evidence of a trend of Haitian students arriving from other countries, and identified the issue as one for the district to learn more about.

What does it mean to be "eligible" for a language-specific program? In the case of SEI programs, it refers to ELD1-3 students who speak one of the languages in which SEI language-specific programs are offered.

Who is assigned to SEI multilingual (BPS program code "BLM")?

By language group (slide 17)

- The majority of the students in SEI multilingual are Spanish speakers. Of all SEI multilingual enrollments, Spanish speakers grew from 44% in SY17-18 to 53% as of October 2022
- The next biggest group is Portuguese speakers (13%), due in large part to growth over the last several years.
- Only 29% of the students in BLM programs are those students whose first language is a language in which BPS doesn't offer a language-specific program.

By grade band (slide 20)

- BLM enrollment was steady or declining for grade bands K0–K1, K2–5, and 6–8. It grew by 185 students in grades 9–12. The majority of that growth in this last year was among Spanish speakers.

At the high school level, for Spanish speakers, some shifts:

- All program types grew (slide 21). There are more grade 9–12 Spanish speakers last year in both multilingual and language-specific programs over the past 5 years, and the growth in language-specific enrollments was the bigger of the two.
- Multilingual assignments grew because of demographic geographic shifts (slide 22). There was growth of Spanish-speaking 9–12 students in the southern half of the city, but Spanish language-specific programs are clustered in the northern part of the city.

Lee raised concerns about how students were counseled at Welcome Centers about program options.

Mudd questioned whether the misalignment of students and programs could reflect the unimplemented commitment to create EL overlays to the Home Based Assignment System. He probed to determine whether the DLR Group, a consultant group charged with working with BPS on the Green New Deal citywide School Design Study, had received the data presented on slide 22 to incorporate in the Master Facilities Plan.

Chen responded that she would like to set up a meeting between the DLR Group and members of the ELLTF.

> **FOLLOW UP:** Set up a meeting between the DLR Group and members of the ELLTF.

The majority of the increase in the number of ELD1-3s assigned to general education settings is driven by an increase in the number of ELD1-3 Gen Ed students whose first language is English or Spanish (slide 24). Is it because there are more of these students, or because they are more likely to be placed in that program setting than they were previously?

- For first language English ELD1-3s in Gen Ed, the explanation is probably because of population growth (slides 24, 25). The percentage of ELD1-3 with first language English

4

who are enrolled in general education declined from 66% to 62%. Thus, the increase in the number of enrollments of group is probably due to an increase in the population as opposed to a change in behavior.

- For Spanish ELD1-3s in Gen Ed, the explanation is also probably because of population growth (slides 24, 25). The percentage of Spanish speakers in general education programs increased from 21% to 24% over the last 5 years.

- Also of note, the percentage of Cabo Verdean ELD1-3 in general education went from 22% to 35% (slide 25), which our quick glance suggests is due to a change in population and geography.

A temporary district policy to move second-year ELD3 students from SEI into Gen Ed during SY21-22 may have had a lingering impact on increasing the percentage of ELD1-3s assigned to the Gen Ed program (slide 26).

- The number of ELD1-3s moved from SEI multilingual into Gen Ed jumped up in SY21-22 then dropped back down, but not quite to SY20-21 levels, so that more ELD1-3s continued to be moved to Gen Ed in SY22-23 than had been the practice prior to that temporary policy. The district is looking into it.

There is growth in the number of ELs/MLs whose first language is English. They are potentially a distinct group of students that may have a distinct set of behaviors as it relates to programming.

- Why do some ELs/MLs have English as their first language (slide 18)? Either they primarily speak a language other than English, even though their first language is English, or they live in a home in which another language is spoken. And they tested with an ELD level of 1 to 5.

- The change is in the early grades. The increase in first language English ELs/MLs starts in K2, and rolls up to higher grades as those students age (slide 27).

- Over half of first language English students are from Spanish-speaking households (slide 28).

There was a 12% increase in the number of multilingual learners assigned to special education programs over the last year, a bigger increase than for non-multilingual learners (slide 30). It may be that the increase in students assigned to special education programs exerts some influence on the decrease in students assigned to EL/ML programs.

- Growth in proportion of special ed students who are ELD1-3s (slide 31). Most of the increase in ML/EL special education program enrollment is by ELD1-3s. ELD1-3s are assigned to special education programs at the highest rates while ELD4-5s are assigned to special education programs at the lowest rates, as compared to never-EL/ML students. The district's early theory is that this bifurcation has a lot to do with the fact that fewer students are progressing ELD levels, thus more of the special education students who would be ELD4-5s are still ELD1-3s (slide 31).

- Growth in percentage of all ELD1-5s assigned to special education programs (slide 32). Five years ago, ELD1-5s had similar identification rates for special education as never-ELs/MLs, and now ELD1-5s are slightly more likely to be referred or assigned to special education programs.

- ELD1-3 growth in substantially separate programs outpaces ELD1-3 growth in inclusion programs (slide 33) as well as ELD4-5 and never-EL/ML assignment to substantially separate programs (slide 34).

- Students in all groups are assigned to inclusion programs at roughly equal rates (slide 34).

Lee observed that it would be important to disaggregate this information by the type of disability, to see what types of special needs ELD1-5s are assessed to have.

Mudd requested data on EL/ML students with disabilities (SWDs) in Gen Ed, not just in special education programs (clarified to mean all students with IEPs, in all program settings including Gen Ed, substantially separate, inclusion, resource room, etc.). He also observed that it would be helpful to disaggregate ELD1-5s receiving special education services by language.

FOLLOW UP: Work with Racanelli to obtain data on EL/ML students with disabilities (SWDs), including:

- ELSWDs in Gen Ed, not just in special education programs (i.e., all students with IEPs, in all program settings)

- ELD1-5s assigned to special education programs, disaggregated by type of disability

- ELD1-3s, ELD4-5s disaggregated by language

Lee observed that this data underscores the importance of the next Chief of Special Education having some knowledge base about language learners.

Lee and Serpa spoke about the importance of adding access to native language to students' IEPs so that their language needs can be addressed.

Approve meeting minutes from February 9, 2022

The Task Force unanimously passed the minutes of the February 9, 2022 meeting.

Presentation and discussion about currently-approved multilingual program types

Linda Chen acknowledged colleagues Isa Walsh, accountability manager, Sarah Davila, coordinating the OMME strategic plan committees, and others.

Chen's slide presentation contained textual information that is not reproduced in these minutes. Instead, clarifying information shared verbally is captured.

Lee questioned whether SEI programs really offer home language supports, as indicated on slide 10. Chen clarified that those supports are "when available." Lee expressed interest in learning what percentage of SEI classrooms provide that support.

Chen expressed the importance of being clear with parents about the program options for ELs/MLs.

Serpa said parents should also understand the outcomes of each program type.

On slide 13 are expectations that BPS is working toward for the whole system, not just inclusion schools.

- Chen clarified that Tier 1 instruction is the grade level standards-based instruction. Because a number of students are not at grade level proficiency, there is a tendency to accommodate and teach at lower grade levels. That creates a big problem for us systemwide, because if you don't teach students at grade level and have them interact with that content, they won't know what it is to be able to perform at that level. We are talking about making sure we have high quality curricular materials in front of the students and teachers that can teach the content differentiated for the students.

- We have multi-tiered support. That means that in a Tier 1 setting, if students need more support (a specific reading intervention, etc.), they should be getting it. For students with disabilities, regardless of what setting they are in, there should be differentiating and quality high quality Tier 1 with specially designed instruction. That's why we have SEI endorsements and ESL specific teams to tailor content such that students can access it as multilingual learners based on their ELD level.

- The district believes some multilingual learners may be misidentified. When a school doesn't have a multi-tiered system of support on top of strong Tier 1 differentiated instruction, then we don't know what the student can do. Referrals tend to be the first line of support, and then students get identified for special education, when maybe they don't need an IEP, they needed all of the additional supports prior to that.

The language needs of the student needs to be also reflected in the IEP, and that has not been a consistent priority across the system (slide 14).

Lee proposed that Task Force members review the remainder of the slides and identify areas where they need more clarify, and make sure they understand the budget implications of implementing programs.

> **FOLLOW UP:** ELLTF members to identify remaining questions about program planning, inclusion, budgeting.

Berardino asked whether MCAS is the only way BPS evaluates if students are at grade level? Chen said MCAS is not the only way we evaluate grade level and we can talk about other types of assessments and data that we use.

Serpa asked whether the district will use universal design for learning (UDL) to train all teachers. Chen indicated that UDL and related training is ongoing.

Polanco Garcia said she was receiving texts from parents wondering whether their school would become an inclusion school. Chen clarified that inclusion is not necessarily what's happening in every school right now. There is the agreement with the BTU to collaborate and to ensure that we have a fully inclusive district which is not the same, as the specific programs being implemented in specific schools, like the Blackstone.

Sugey Rondón asked about language access for meetings. Chen acknowledged that there was an ask from the ELLTF for data on the language capacity of teachers, saying "That is something that we are working to get you." and "Yes, we need to develop more capacity in home language of our students and Spanish being the largest group, and a quickly growing group, as well."

Public Comment

Sonia Medina, a district parent, testified that she notices many kids getting stressed in the classrooms because the teacher doesn't understand them.

Wilmer Jean Pierre, a district parent, testified about the importance of understanding population movements in the city, and said it is very important to think about Haitian Creole right now. Speaking in Spanish, he indicated that he speaks French, Spanish, and Haitian Creole and is learning English. He requested Haitian Creole interpretation at the next ELLTF meeting.

Chen spoke about the plans to add SLIFE social workers and to add bilingual paraprofessionals.

Adjourn

The next ELLTF meeting will be on Thursday, May 4, 5-7 pm.