

THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE OF THE CITY OF BOSTON



**English Language Learners (ELL) Task Force
English Learner Students with Disabilities Subcommittee
Remote Meeting**

Friday, February 4, 2022

3:00 pm – 4:00 pm

Zoom

Join Zoom Meeting: <https://k12-bostonpublicschools.zoom.us/j/83555011457>

Meeting ID: ID: 835 5501 1457

OR Join by phone: +1-312-626-6799

Public Announcement of Meeting: <https://www.boston.gov/public-notices/15807246>

MINUTES

ELLTF Member Participants: Roxanne Harvey (member pending), John Mudd (ELSWD Subcommittee Co-chair), Maria Serpa (ELSWD Subcommittee Co-chair)

BPS Staff Participants: Farah Assiraj (OEL/BPS)

Public Participants: Dave Burt, Charlie Kim, Susan Ou (FCSN and community participant in ELSWD Subcommittee), Roger Rice (META), Katherine Wrightington (Emerson)

1. Welcome

2. Review work-in-progress and set priorities for Spring 2022

- Who is now leading the Office of Special Education; is that person aware of ELSWD issues and coming on March 4?

The subcommittee will request that the staff person (Dr. Nadine Ekstrom) stepping into a new role at OSE – see shared email memo at the end of these notes – be properly oriented to the work of the ELSWD subcommittee.

- What is the status and timetable for developing a short and longterm ELSWD plan? (We have repeatedly suggested that BPS contract with Claudia Rinaldi, or other experts, to develop a draft plan. What has happened?)

The subcommittee will follow up with this question when they meet with staff in March.

Questions about two types of funding:

- What is happening with the \$10 million Drew said was given to OEL to develop new programming and how is it being used to promote innovation for ELSWD students? (In discussions about implementing their commitment to giving priority to access to native language and implementing the LOOK Act for ELs, BPS officials only mention dual language and heritage language programs, as happened again at School Committee last Wednesday. There is often no serious planning around TBE, use of paras, or other approaches. What more should they be considering?)

- What is happening with the \$40 million in ESSR funding going to schools this year, and the \$50 million budgeted for next year, in promoting new strategies for ELs and ELSWDs and how can it be used for this in the future? (We should be able to see each of the approved plans in order to understand how they are meeting the needs of ELs and SWDs, as well as ELSWDs.)

Perhaps members will raise these questions when they meet with staff next month.

- How many vacancies are there for EL teachers this year (especially single language SEI), and how are school leaders being instructed in hiring teachers with dual language capabilities? (What happened with the survey of teachers on their language competence?)

Subcommittee members including Serpa, Harvey, and Ou raised issues and shared examples of families and students who are struggling because of the lack of support for native language maintenance and the lack of native language instruction in classrooms. Ou described instances where parents and children have lost shared language and parents don't know how to support children who are reaching adulthood and dealing with challenges including mental health and more, and family communications may rely on google translate and similar tools. Harvey referenced instances when students are placed with a bilingual teacher but the teacher's languages don't match the student's languages, so the fact of a bilingual staff person is not yielding any gain for the students.

Mudd spoke about the subcommittee's desire to see the numbers of ELSWD students by school and program, and the difficulty they have had in getting that information.

What else? How should we prioritize our concerns?

Harvey reminded members that the checklist they worked on with OSE for the IEP process has now been implemented, per a report they received previously. She suggested that they request information about how that is going.

3. Public Comment

Charlie Kim spoke about the Horace Mann school with about 200 deaf students, all of them under OSE, and about 80% also ELs. He also encouraged recognition of deaf culture, that speakers of ASL are not just engaged in language learning but they are also part of the culture among deaf people.

Roger Rice encouraged an audit of the IEP process.

4. Adjourn

Meeting Materials Circulated to Members Via Email

From Drew Echelson:

Please see communication from Supt Cassellius

Hello Team BPS,

I am excited to announce some additions to our staff. As we continue to manage through this pandemic and focus our efforts to accelerate recovery, we need a strong team to help solidify our policy and practice.

First, **Megan Costello** has stepped into a new role as Senior Advisor of Strategic Initiatives. Megan has been an integral member of the leadership team and an amazing thought-partner to me. In this new role, Megan will continue to advise me and the district on critical projects and initiatives as well as support our contract negotiations with our union partners and our response to the on-going COVID-19 pandemic.

Next, **Annie Qin** has joined the team as Executive Director of Government Relations. Annie brings a diverse set of experiences to this role, recently completing her MBA at Stanford and her MPA at the Harvard Kennedy School. She served in Boston Public Schools as an AmeriCorps member with City Year and as a Fellow in the Office of the Superintendent. Annie has experience in policy and press work from her time in the Office of then City Council President Michelle Wu. Annie will supervise our Director of Intergovernmental relations, Liz Sullivan, and will support the Mayor's office, City Hall, School Committee, City Council and all other elected officials.

As previously discussed, **Denise Snyder** has returned to Boston Public Schools as our Acting Chief of Family and Community Advancement. Denise came on as Deputy and has stepped right in and graciously agreed to serve as Acting Chief until we finalize the search process.

Additionally, **Dr. Nadine Ekstrom** is joining the team as Senior Advisor. She will principally work with me and Deputy Superintendent of Academics, Drew Echelson, to accelerate our work to ensure all students with disabilities are accessing excellent service and learning opportunities with the Office of Special Education. Dr. Ekstrom has served as an Executive Director for an educational collaborative, Superintendent of Schools, Director of Special Education and Student

Services, Director of Teaching and Learning, Special Education Team Chairperson, Special Education Teacher, Regular Education Teacher, and Paraprofessional.

Lastly, **Ethan d'Ablemont Burns** will continue to serve the Boston Public Schools as he supports and develops district strategy for inclusion. He will provide technical assistance to school leaders, lead Universal Design for Learning (UDL) investments and professional learning and ensure equitable deployment of inclusion coaches to schools. He will also work to ensure inclusion is at the center of the academic design for new builds and renovations that will be planned as part of Build BPS. As we formally launch FY23 budget season and Probable Org reviews, Ethan will provide invaluable support to our school and district teams as we plan for next school year. Ethan will continue in his role as Assistant Superintendent, reporting to Deputy Superintendent of Academics, Dr. Drew Echelson.

I am grateful for the service of these amazing leaders and for their commitment to our work at Boston Public Schools.

In partnership,

Brenda