

THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE OF THE CITY OF BOSTON



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

May 6, 2022, 3:00 pm – 4:30 pm

MINUTES

Participants

ELLTF Members: Roxanne Harvey, John Mudd, Rafaela Polanco, Maria Serpa

Community Participants in the ELLTF's ELSWD Subcommittee (non-members):

Susan Ou (Federation for Children with Special Needs (FCSN))

Interpreters: Randolph Dominguez (Spanish-English Interpreter), Joseanne Lopes (Caboverdean Creole-English Interpreter)

BPS Staff: Ivonne Borrero (Program Director, Behavioral Health Services), Rainelda Borrero (EL Family Resource Specialist, Office of English Learners), Ethan D'Ablemont Burnes (Assistant Superintendent, Office of Special Education), Jen Douglas (Coordinator, ELL Task Force), Nadine Ekstrom (Senior Advisor), Faye Karp (Executive Director, Office of English Learners), Josefina Peralta (ELL Family Resource Specialist)

Public: Estephany Banos, Kathleen Boundy (Center for Law and Education (CLE)), Susana Gonzalez, Sonia Medina, Maria Mejia, Maria Moura, Griselda Polanco (Staff, City Councilor Julia Mejia), Roger Rice (Multicultural Education, Training & Advocacy, Inc. (META)), Claritza Rodriguez, Sughey Scannell (parent), Yanina _____ (last name not provided), iPhone (unidentified participant)

Consolidated Follow-up List

- Obtain data/list from Ivonne Borrero pertaining to social workers, school staffing, native language access. Make sure that the information is disaggregated by language.
- Obtain information from OEL about how the office provides native language support to students with disabilities who are participating in summer programs.
- Follow up with D'Ablemont-Burnes about receiving draft documents for ELLTF feedback.
- ELLTF members will review the IEP drop-down tool.

- Put it on an upcoming ELSWD Subcommittee agenda for staff to come with a deeper dive into the data on ELSWD enrollment by school, including student language, so that ELLTF members can provide feedback.
- ELLTF to receive update from OSE about data on staff linguistic needs at schools, and school focus groups on that topic.

Materials

ELL Task Force

- Agenda as posted ([English](#)) and with details/notes ([English](#), [Spanish](#), [Caboverdean](#))
- ELSWD Subcommittee Meeting Minutes DRAFT, March 4, 2022 ([English](#), Spanish coming soon)
- Data requests from the ELSWD Subcommittee to the Offices of Special Education and English Learners ([English](#), [Spanish](#), [Caboverdean](#))
- EL Teacher Vacancies SY22-23 & Teacher Language - April 2022 ([English](#), [Spanish](#), [Caboverdean](#))
- “Exploring Home Language Access Options at BPS,” version 2-2, Maria Serpa and John Mudd, January 11, 2022 ([English](#))
- EL Programs and ELSWD Assignment, All BPS Schools, April 2022 ([English](#), [Spanish](#))

Discussion

1. Welcome

2. Review meeting minutes from March 4, 2022

Not discussed.

3. Native Language Access

- Immediate implementation action steps on suggested ways to provide access to native language for current ELSWD students**
- Status update of ELSWD long-term strategic and operational plan and planning stage**
- Student outcomes families are able to see the impact of for their ELSWD**

Serpa: spoke about the importance of interpretation in this meeting and access to native language at BPS. Request that Faye Karp answer how the district is using the mandate to provide native language access to ELSWDs. Shared a quote, “Many things we need can wait. The child cannot. Now is the time his or her bones are formed, his or her mind developed to him or her.”

Mudd: Clarification that the responsibility in this case lies with the Office of Special Education, not the Office of English Learners.

D'Ablemont-Burnes: Yes, these are all our students. We met 3-4 times to prepare for this meeting. We understand that we need to show the same leadership that OEL has historically shown in this area.

Ekstrom: Steps we have been taking include:

- 5 new staff members: at Hurley, Hernandez, Quincy, two other schools still to be determined.
- We have revised ELSWD job descriptions to emphasize native language. We met with partners to discuss practices.
- We're looking at data distribution to see what languages are at which schools and tailor our hiring.
- We are working with principals on native language access.
- We have arranged school visits in May to look at best practices alongside outcome data.

Karp: Introduced herself and the other BPS participants in the meeting.

Serpa: Importance of access to home language for self-validation and a sense of belonging. Request for information about summer programming and ELSWD program planning.

Asked whether the memo Serpa and Mudd shared with this body in December 2021 (listing ways of providing native language access) is being used.

Ekstrom: Yes, we read the memo. Some alignment.

I. Borrero: We will be providing mental health counseling for students over the summer and some of that will be in native languages. During the school year, if mental health counseling is in a student's IEP and if it is available at the school level —if there is a social worker who speaks the language — it is provided. It isn't provided in all major languages.

Mudd: Where are you in the development of a short and long-term strategic plan? In the minutes of the last meeting, it said you were consulting with the national experts.

D'Ablemont-Burnes: As you know we have leadership transitions at multiple levels and that makes it a hard time to do this kind of planning. We're going to have to wait until we have a permanent assistant superintendent in OEL before we can nail this down.

Listed six priorities they have established:

1. Improve policies and procedures with regard to IEP meetings.
2. Improve native language instruction with regard to ELSWDs. "Those 5 paraprofessionals is not a small investment with regard to at least trying to get started."

3. Recruit, hire, retain teachers, paraprofessionals, and administrators up and down the organization so students get native language instruction.
4. Data about where students are placed, what language they speak, how they match up with what teachers are there.
5. Speak with national experts about best practices.
6. Have a coherent vision.

Serpa: We have an emergency. We have a lot more kids beyond the number who can be served by 5 aides. Dr. Ivonne Borrero is an expert right here in your own district. Her priorities:

1. Getting an emergency plan going.
2. Using the expert whom you have.

Borrero: **I'll share with you the data on our social workers.** We have 158 social workers, and I know that Carmen O'Hara was very thoughtful in hiring bilingual staff. **The list I can share.** They are very purposeful in providing services for ELs. Every school has a social worker, and most are bilinguals.

FOLLOW UP: Obtain data/list from Ivonne Borrero pertaining to social workers, school staffing, native language access. Per Harvey comment below, ask that the information be disaggregated by language.

Serpa: What structure is in place to bridge between OEL and OSE?

Karp: I've scheduled a meeting with colleagues next week with a focus on **how we provide native language support to students who are participating in summer programs and may have disabilities. We can update you on that.** It is a priority of both of our offices.

FOLLOW UP: Obtain information from OEL about how the office provides native language support to students with disabilities who are participating in summer programs.

Karp: The two shared positions between our departments have been vacant this year. We have revised the positions to incorporate the LOOK Act and native language instruction into their responsibilities.

D'Ablemont-Burnes: Karp is joining our Inclusive Practices Workgroup (meets weekly on Fridays) so we can work cross-functionally. There are some ways we limit access to the least restrictive environment because of language issues.

Mudd: How far along is the planning ?

D'Ablemont-Burnes: It is in outline form, related to leadership transitions underway.

Mudd: Access to native language is now the policy of the School Committee. If I were coming in as a new superintendent, I would appreciate a detailed draft of a plan that I could use as a starting point. Is that possible?

D’Ablemont-Burnes: We got close to a strategic plan to OSE. We worked on a strategic plan for OEL. We are developing documents. We hope to get beyond “big rocks” by June 30. **We can put together an outline next week about which documents we think we’d like your input on.**

FOLLOW UP: Follow up with D’Ablemont-Burnes about receiving draft documents for ELLTF feedback.

Harvey: It’s urgent that we put together a summary for the next superintendent about the areas where we have agreement and alignment, so they know they’re coming into a district where the communities and families have agreed on immediate needs.

When we talk about language and about bilingual social workers and paras, whether from central office or school-based, I’d like to hear that disaggregated by language.

2. Student Assignment

- a. Disaggregated data on ELSWD by school (with language, disability, grade if possible)**

Not discussed.

3. EdPlan IEP Drop-down Menu

- a. Status/Update on IEP checklist and dropdown menu for ELSWD students**

Mudd: What’s the status of the dropdown menu? How is it being monitored?

Karp: A prototype may go live in June. The next big piece is the guidance for how to use it. **We will tackle it jointly, perhaps with your support.**

Serpa: **I would love to join.**

FOLLOW UP: ELLTF members will review the IEP drop-down tool.

Mudd: Two suggestions. One, if this is getting close to being a live prototype, could you share that with Maria and Roxy to receive their comments? Second, what is the process and timeframe for implementation, what is the guidance, who will be responsible, and how we can help?

Borrero: This is a huge undertaking bringing hundreds of services people, COSE, LATFs, psychologists, etc. together. There will be a meeting in the fall.

Mudd: The implementation guidance is the crucial part.

D’Ablemont-Burnes: The specifics of the drop-down are not substantially changed from when your subcommittee was involved in developing it.

Borrero: Once people check that box and say, “I need an Arabic-speaking counselor,” we don’t have that. We probably can address our counseling needs in Spanish. But I am not comfortable saying that we have people to do that in other languages. People are going to assume we have all kinds of special education services in languages other than English, and we don’t.

4. Educator Vacancies

- a. Data on current vacancies for: Special Education teachers and paras**
- b. Guidance to School Leaders on current hiring to support ELSWED students**
- c. How will this hiring be monitored and how will schools be held accountable**

Mudd: We have data now on vacancies and an outline school-by-school of ELSWD enrollment. If you look at where the educator vacancies are, and where ELSWDs are enrolled, what lessons do you learn? What actions can you take to improve student : teacher language match?

Speaker: We need to dive deeper and understand the primary language of those students. **I think it would be helpful at our next meeting to for us to come with some data and then to hear your reflections.**

FOLLOW UP: Put it on an upcoming ELSWD Subcommittee agenda for staff to come with a deeper dive into the data on ELSWD enrollment by school, including student language, so that ELLTF members can provide feedback.

Speaker: I'm working weekly on linguistic diversity with the Office of Human Capital and the Recruitment, Cultivation, and Diversity programs office, looking at in-depth data on vacancies, student population, and program language. We're matching up data sets and will reach out to a focus group of schools to work with over the next year.

Mudd: Please share with us the focus group, what kind of schools you're focusing on, and why and how.

FOLLOW UP: ELLTF to receive update from OSE about data on staff linguistic needs at schools, and school focus groups on that topic.

5. Budget Issues

- a. Data ESSR funding for ELSWDs (2021-2022 & 2022-2023)**
 - i. Usage and plans for year 1-3**
- b. Guidance given to schools for ELSWD funding support**

Not discussed.

6. DESE Review

- a. Request Access to see the initial DESE review section and BPS responses for Els, Special Education students and any material covering ELSWDs**
- b. Opportunity to submit comments back to BPS**

Not discussed.

7. Next Superintendent Transition

- a. Request opportunity to see and provide comments on the transition materials being prepared for the new superintendent on Els, Special Education, and ELSWDs**

Not discussed.

8. Updates/ Unresolved Data from Previous Meetings

- a. OEL & OSE Workflow**
- b. Student Assignment overlays**
- c. Policy changes since 2020 to allow ELSWDs to participate in dual language programs**

Not discussed.

9. Public Comment

Rice: This is what happens in special ed. We don't have the providers today but once the IEP team says "this student is going to need a native speaking para/coach/whatever," the district has to provide it.

Boundy: I was told the other day not to worry that the parent of a ten-year-old ELSWD can change their mind when he gets to be in tenth grade and see if he can take the regular MCAS. You know what harm we're talking about. How many ELSWDs — by disability, type, language — have access to native language? I'd like to see the numbers. The COSEs control the teams.

Ou: I'm a parent of a child in an SEI inclusion class and also on staff at the Federation for Children with Special Needs. Children need access to home language and also need the least restrictive environment. Urges that parents call BPS and ask if they have a policy to support home language to please put that in the mission.

Scannell, via chat: *Es importante que el plan para los IEP, lo dejen por escrito bien detallado.* [It is important that the plan for IEPs be put in writing in great detail.]

10. Adjourn