



Mayor Michelle Wu

Literacy Task Force, City of Boston

Boston City Hall, Room 801

June 23, 2023, 12-2pm

Task Force Members

- Dr. Edith Bazile, Black Advocates for Educational Excellence
- Yorsalem Brhane, BINCA
- Manuel Coronado, Immigrants Lead Boston alum
- Lori D'Alleva, Charlestown Adult Education
- Xiomara Gomez, Gardner Pilot Academy Adult ESOL program
- Lee Haller, English for New Bostonians
- Stephen Hunter, Boston Chinatown Neighborhood Center
- Nicole Simeon, Bunker Hill Community College, First Literacy Scholar
- City Councilor Julia Mejia, *ex officio*
- Gayana Daniel, Office of Language and Communications Access, *ex officio*
- Papa Diop, Boston Centers for Youth and Families, *ex officio*
- David Leonard, Boston Public Libraries, *ex officio*
- Lesley Ryan Miller, Boston Public Schools, *ex officio*
- Monique Tú Nguyen, Mayor's Office for Immigrant Advancement, *ex officio*
- Trinh Nguyen, Worker Empowerment Cabinet, *ex officio*

Facilitator, Dr. Elizabeth Santiago, *The Untold Narratives*

City of Boston Staff for Task Force

- Mariangely Solis Cervera, Chief of Equity and Inclusion
 - Ân H. Lê, Director of Policy and Research, Equity and Inclusion Cabinet
 - Johannah Cooper, Policy Fellow, Equity and Inclusion Cabinet
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Prework

- Non-*ex officio* Task Force members must swear in prior to the meeting if possible.
- Review [Ordinance](#).



Meeting goals

- By the end of this meeting, task force members will:
 - Get to know other task force members better,
 - Revisit the goals and purpose of the task force,
 - Enhance the goals and tasks through discussion and small group work, and
 - Determine next steps for implementing the work including assignments and timeline.

Agenda

- 12:00-12:10: Settle in and lunch
- 12:00-12:15: Welcome by Chief Mariangely Solis Cervera and Councilor Julia Mejia
- 12:15-12:30: Introductions
- 12:30-12:50: Revisit goals and purpose through a presentation and large group discussion
- 12:50-1:30: Small group discussion to revise and enhance potential tasks and report out
- 1:30-1:45: Prioritize activities and discuss initial timeline
- 1:45-1:50: Schedule follow-up meeting cadence
- 1:50-2:00: Final questions, comments, and wrap-up

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Minutes

1. Chief Solis Cervera welcomed all attendees
2. Councilor Mejia welcomed all attendees and gave history of ordinance and task force formation
3. Chief Solis Cervera introduced Dr. Liz Santiago as the group facilitator
4. Dr. Liz Santiago introduced herself and provided introduction to the goals of the task force
5. All attendees introduced themselves and their work. List of attendees below:
 - a. Councilor Julia Mejia- Participated remotely
 - b. Dr. Liz Santiago
 - c. Joseph Le
 - d. Chief Trinh Nguyen
 - e. Lori D'Alleva
 - f. Stephen Hunter
 - g. Manuel Coronado
 - h. Brooke Machado



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- i. Julisa Curet Rodriguez
 - j. Lesley Ryan Miller
 - k. Gayana Daniel
 - l. Monique Nguyen
 - m. Papa Diop
 - n. Luz Johanna Perez
 - o. Edith Bazile
 - p. An Le
 - q. David Leonard
 - r. Nicole Simeon
 - s. Johannah Cooper
6. Dr. Liz Santiago shared the ordinance that established the Task Force and highlighted key points. She opened up the conversation to the attendees for thoughts.
- a. Joseph - Challenge - embarrassment factor, do we need to do a survey? BPDA Research Division can help with data
 - b. David - We should look at what data already exists first. BPS probably has data. Maybe the bigger gap is for adults.
 - c. Lori - In the adult ed world and her experience, low literacy affects everything (e.g. can't do a math problem if they cannot read it). We should see where people stopped their education.
 - d. Dr. Liz Santiago - Yes, we should see what quantitative data tells us. But we should also look at storytelling and qualitative data to get nuances.
 - e. Papa - HISET test shows that people do not have as high of literacy as they might think
 - f. Councilor Mejia - Reiterated importance of storytelling to understand people's self awareness of their own literacy level, but how do we not stigmatize?
 - g. David - This terminology might mean different things to different people. We should (maybe down the road) break this down into several scenarios.
 - h. Joseph - How to increase awareness that certain words in English do not translate well?
 - i. Dr. Liz Santiago - Be asset driven.
 - j. Brooke - We should remember to center the individuals whose lives we are trying to improve – people usually do not use the term “literacy” – needs are usually tied to something more concrete / tangible goals, e.g. pass a test, get a job, etc.
 - k. Dr. Liz Santiago- Yes, we should make sure voices of those affected are heard through this work.



- 1. Where are some starting points to get quantitative data?**
 - i. Lesley - BPS Data and Accountability
 - ii. Lori/Brooke - state DOE should have data, but it is self-selecting data set; Sarah from OWD can help
 - iii. Lori - can get help getting data from state Houses of Correction;
 - iv. David - ping Boston ORC
 - v. Councilor Mejia - ping MA DYS, speaks to story of school to prison pipeline and how low literacy has affected people
 - vi. Lori - BHA resident survey
 - m. Manuel - We should get data sources before planning tasks ahead
 - n. Nicole - How will we get to people who are not counted in the data?
 - i. Joseph - We need to do on the ground outreach and engagement. Some people do not want to self identify, and some do not have the literacy to fill out surveys.
 - o. Councilor Mejia - We had been thinking about audio and visual ways to conduct surveys. A grassroots approach would also be helpful. Be aware that people do talk to text (tech has made things easier). We will need a budget for this work.
7. Dr. Liz Santiago - First step could be to get data, create an action plan, develop a budget proposal.
8. Small group discussion - questions were handed out and each group reported the outcomes of their discussion
 - a. Brooke- 3 focal points: centering what individuals of target population need/want, support network and case management for individuals who embark on literacy journey, examining what services exist already to make accessing those services easier by understanding what the challenges are to receiving those supports
 - b. Papa - Should be focused on gathering information
 - c. Lori - Always case that target population is the one that is difficult to be reached when collecting information, skewing data. Challenges in collecting data via surveys for those experiencing literacy challenges, undocumented, unhoused and incarcerated populations especially difficult to gather information from often because of fear
 - d. Edith - Literacy struggles are perpetuated often related to parents with limited English who are unable to read to/teach their children, data challenges- what services are individuals not accessing and why- for example public housing applications



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- e. Manuel - gathering data as a starting point, but also how to get access to adult populations to gather information because K-12 is often easier. Storytelling might be easier to reach this population
 - f. Edith - School to prison pipeline is full of students who have struggles with literacy, how can we reach folks before they get involved in these systems
 - g. Dr. Liz Santiago - Important to be clear about the work being done and what the initial goals are because of nuances with this population. Going to present skeleton of roadmap for how to proceed in the work and open for feedback, will try to get out in the next week
 - h. Councilor Mejia - Thanked participants for thought leadership, happy to know members of the public have access to this information. Ask that community members are able to listen in and provide feedback
 - i. Dr. Liz Santiago - Would suggest that this group meet a few times to have a better idea of the work before opening up to public input
 - j. Edith - Reminder to bring in interpreters for those whose native language is not English and ensure that materials are also provided in other languages. Knows that there were previous interpretation struggles during COVID but has seen progress made to address this issue, including sign language interpretation
 - k. Dr. Liz Santiago - Keep each other honest and accountable about basic needs
9. Dr. Liz Santiago - What cadence should we have as a group for meetings? Monthly? Every other month? Virtual or in person?
- a. Edith - Meeting monthly at least to begin, getting off the ground with framing, establishing priorities and could then meet less often with sub-work in between meetings
 - b. Dr. Liz Santiago - Agreement with that suggestion
 - c. Stephen - Would like to meet in person moving forward
 - d. Joseph - In-person meetings have an element that makes connecting much easier, the connections among the group will be reflected in anything produced by the group
 - e. An - We have the hybrid capabilities and can offer that option in the future
 - f. Lori - Preference is to meet in person but having hybrid as an option is important
 - g. David - Would suggest having 4-6 meetings between now and December, because committing to monthly might be more difficult
 - h. Dr. Liz Santiago - Want to ensure meetings are purposeful, we will work to set up times for future meetings
10. Dr. Liz Santiago thanked attendees for participating in the work of the task force to support those with literacy challenges