Literacy Task Force, City of Boston
Zoom
February 18, 2025, 9:30-10:30 am

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*

<u>Facilitator</u>, Dr. Elizabeth Santiago, *The Untold Narratives*

City of Boston Staff for Task Force
- Mariangely Solis Cervera, Chief of Equity and Inclusion
- Robbie (Deborah) Adams, Training and Development Manager, Mayor's Office of Language and Communications Access
- Brittany Barrett, Executive Assistant, Mayor's Office of Language and Communications Access

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Meeting Goals
By the end of this meeting we will:
1. Continue to build community as literacy task force members,
2. Discuss workplan for 2025 and beyond
3. Discuss Data Gathering needs

Agenda
- 9:30-9:35: Settle in, welcome, quick review of agenda and quick introductions
- 9:35-9:40: Overview of where we are and new liaisons with the City of Boston
- 9:40-9:55: Review of Workplan.
  - **Outcome:** Approve workplan
- 9:55-10:10: Review of data gathering approach
  - **Outcome:** Approve approach
- 10:10-10:20: Final discussion
- 10:20-10:30: Next steps, schedule next meeting, and wrap-up

Attendance (Virtual)
1. Dr. Liz Santiago
2. Melissa Theroux
3. Papa Diop
4. Brittany Barrett
5. Brooke Machado
6. Robbie Adams
7. Nicole Simeon
8. Lori D'Alleva
9. Mario Paredes
10. Stephen Hunter
11. Jeniffer Vivar Wong

Minutes
1. 9:33 Dr. Liz Santiago begins meeting
   a. Recap of work
      i. Subcommittees' work to target all aspects of ordinance culminated in workplan, which was shared at last meeting in November
      ii. Dr. LS has been working with Office of Language and Communications Access (OLCA) to solidify this plan
   b. Discussion of changes in staffing for City of Boston liaison
      i. Reintroduction of BB and introduction of RA
2. 9:37 Dr. Liz Santiago provides a more in depth recap of subcommittee work
   a. Data and Storytelling was developed to determine ways to get more voices heard from City of Boston residents that may not be able to participate in surveys regarding literacy or have access to services. They came up with the grassroots storytelling and survey idea to build momentum of work within

communities.   Their final report has been previously shared with the task force.

b. The Data and Equity subcommittee (members - EB and LRM) focused on children's literacy. Their approach focused on the work of the Boston School Committee - wanted to work in tandem to identify and address gaps.

c. The Adult Literacy Subcommittee realized there was a significant lack of data regarding adult literacy rates. They determined that there was some data already available through Program for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC) and the Barbara Bush Foundation (BBF) that could give a good start, along with data from storytelling work. BM introduced Dr. LS to Sarah Soroui (Worker Empowerment); they met to discuss an approach to look at this data. What came out of this meeting is the Gathering and Analyzing Data document 📄 Gathering and Analyzing Data.pdf .

   i. Dr. LS wants to bring in an expert to analyze data
      1. BM and Sarah Soroui recommended an approach with a request for proposals for this expert

d. OLCA and Dr. LS reviewed this information and workplan to see what could be reasonably done between now and June and within budget

3. 9:42 Dr. Liz Santiago shares Gathering and Analyzing Data document 📄 Gathering and Analyzing Data.pdf .

a. Reiteration of goals in the ordinance (study rates of literacy, develop an action plan and boost opportunities)

b. Description of how task force might approach the study of literacy rates
   i. Task force currently has PIAAC data and new data from BBF
      1. BM - PIAAC and BBF give county-level data, up-to-date statistics on literacy rates by age group that cut across different demographics, but not specific to Boston

c. List of other data sources - mix of information, not just programmatic data sources, but population data sources - goal is for whoever is hired for data analysis to have all of this information at their fingertips

d. Plan for moving forward (in response to information provided by Northeastern folks, subcommittee work)
   i. Review existing data and determine if further quantitative data gathering efforts are needed
      1. Hire someone to look at data - tell task force whether they have enough information to move forward or no, don't have enough and don't feel confident in rates
   ii. Design survey

1. Was worried that task force is not going to count everyone, such as people that don't normally participate in surveys due to things like lack of internet access, documentation status, etc., so developed a qualitative survey and storytelling plan

iii. Deploy survey
   1. Build a presence on task force website and build momentum for initiative
   2. Talking with LRM and BPS to partner for city-wide approach around literacy, such as a campaign

iv. Analyze responses

v. Follow up if needed
   1. Survey should be anonymous, but task force may need further information - have to figure out how to get that information if necessary

4. 9:48 Dr. Liz Santiago opens conversation up for discussion on thoughts regarding data-gathering approach
   a. BM - thanks for laying out document and recapping work, appreciation of listing goals of task force at the top of the page, have a feeling that task force has been stuck on first item (review existing data and determine if further quantitative data gathering efforts are needed)
      i. BM - After conversation with Sarah Soroui, left with thought of what the Adult Literacy Subcommittee had been saying - this data is not easily accessible and gathered, not a City of Boston problem, but a state, national and international issue, finding that there is just no investment made in research of adult literacy rates
         1. BM - Can we move forward with something that is good enough? Can we move forward with the idea that some of the data sources just preliminarily show that there are lower than acceptable literacy rates among residents of Boston? Can we take what we have and move forward, especially with the wisdom of task force members?
            a. Dr. LS - have landed here, question is what is good enough at this point, was looking for data expert to help task force feel confident that what is there is good enough

5. 9:51 Dr. Liz Santiago asks for feedback on BM's comments
   a. SH - in full agreement, there are many echoes to political data, such as polls for voting - they can be inaccurate, even with organizations that do this for a living with statisticians - at a certain threshold, you can see general accuracy

- this is a monumental task and believe that looking at qualitative data in addition to quantitative data would provide a more holistic approach to understanding the shortages
    - i. SH - It's accurate to understand that literacy rates are lower than we want them to be but we will never truly know what exact rate is, especially in adults, as adult literacy rates are too difficult to obtain - no single place to get this information
        1. Dr. LS - agrees with SH and seems that those who are speaking are in agreement and are okay with idea of existing data being "good enough"
            a. Would still like to bring someone on board to look at data, but may be within a few months, given budget
            b. Please share any additional thoughts with Dr. LS
6. 9:57 Dr. Liz Santiago reviews the 2025 Draft Workplan 📕 Draft Workplan 2025.pdf
    a. Met with OLCA to refine the workplan
    b. Identified areas that task force could make progress in from now until June
        - i. Site building - expanding City of Boston website to have more accessibility points, such as a recorded overview
        - ii. Campaigns - reached out to LRM to see if task force can partner with BPS - already planning a campaign, want to work with them to build community interest in task force work and elevate what task force has been doing
        - iii. Research and adult literacy (Gathering and Analyzing Data, spoke with Sarah Soroui)
        - iv. Data and Equity Subcommittee - talked about connecting with Boston School Committee - have existing language around children's literacy that the subcommittee looked at and thought could be enhanced with current work, would like to send a memo as a task force to them for consideration
        - v. Grassroots Survey - finalize and figure out a plan of action on deployment/analyzing data
    c. Will be getting an intern to help research other states' approach to literacy rates, assist with campaign, and work on site building - areas where they would support are noted on workplan document
    d. Holding off on future timeline for July to December because of uncertainty on how long some items will take
7. 10:02 Dr. Liz Santiago seeks feedback on workplan and introduces Jeniffer Vivar Wong

a. NS - thank you for the hard work

b. JVW - GD will be stepping away from seat due to capacity changes in OLCA, RA will be taking her place, JVW will be joining for next few meetings and will be supporting Dr. LS in getting an intern, excited to work together and please reach out if anything is needed

8. 10:04 Dr. Liz Santiago begins to wrap up

a. Goal is to move task force forward in a concrete way in 2025 - put clear deliverables in workplan to accomplish this

b. Any other thoughts?

   i. Dr. LS - if there are no objections, please share any thoughts or questions to Dr. LS, BB, JVW or RA

      1. Will schedule next meeting for late March, hoping intern will be onboarded by then to introduce to task force and have beginnings of some plans for either web development or campaign

         a. Have been watching Reparations Task Force and would like to introduce Literacy Task Force members to public via social media

9. 10:07 Final thoughts?

a. BM - how long would the intern be with the task force?

   i. JVW - trying to get the intern as soon as possible - funds are for this fiscal year - would end June 30th/by July 1st - hoping that task force would be able to get another intern when the new fiscal year arrives

   ii. Dr. LS - will have intern for 15 hours a week, so hoping that they can get task force to a good place so that we have a ramp to build off of

10. 10:08 Next steps

a. Dr. LS will be reaching out to task force to schedule next meeting for late March

b. Please reach out if you have any thoughts - want to hear from you and make sure that your voice is heard in all of this - workplan is accessible to all, so please take another look and give Dr. LS any feedback, otherwise task force will use workplan to keep moving forward

11. Meeting closed at 10:09