Literacy Task Force, City of Boston
Committee: Adult Literacy Rates
Zoom Link
October 4, 2024, 11:00 am-12:00 pm

Sub-Committee Members
- Lee Haller, English for New Bostonians
- Stephen Hunter, Boston Chinatown Neighborhood Center
- Brooke Machado, Worker Empowerment Cabinet

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

City of Boston Staff for Committee
- TBD

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Notes from initial committee meeting on September 18

As a reminder, the purpose of the Task Force on Literacy Rates is to:
- study literacy rates across the City of Boston,
- develop an action plan that may be undertaken by the City of Boston in order to help both adults and children who are not able to read or write in any language to access education and city services, and
- help boost opportunities for adults and children to learn how to read through actionable policy and programming recommendations.

In our meeting, we discussed how having better adult literacy data will help us serve our current and potential students better. Unfortunately, the way we collect data at our individual programs is not streamlined, which makes it challenging to use collective data to make guesses or estimates. We discussed the most effective ways to collect the data we need, but it's a complex task given how many programs there are and how many residents who have need but are not seeking services for a variety of reasons. We want to be sure as many people as possible are counted.

Our goal is not to streamline the collection of data (that may be a recommendation we make), our goal is to make strong recommendations around how we study adult

literacy rates to develop a city-wide action plan for addressing needs. We discussed replicating the 2003 study of adult literacy rates the American Institute for Research (AIR) but making it a more useful tool for the City of Boston by including a component of resource mapping by neighborhood– including a visual display – highlighting neighborhood level need. We decided to schedule a second meeting to give members time to review the AIR report, the storytelling and data committee report and a recent one-pager released by Massachusetts Coalition for Adult Education (MCAE) on the state of adult education in Massachusetts.

Meeting Goals

By the end of this meeting, we will:
1. Determine the next steps for gathering the data we need to make an accurate assessment of the adult literacy rates in the City.
2. Make recommendations for gathering the data we need.

Agenda

11:00-11:05: Settle in, welcome, quick review of agenda

11:05-11:15: Discuss any questions related to the documents sent as a follow-up to our last meeting. Those documents include:
- MCAE one-pager
- AIR Report
- Data and Storytelling committee report

11:15-11:35: Discuss considerations for how to approach a City of Boston data gathering effort. For example, AIR's report actually tested three areas of literacy: Prose, Document and Quantitative. They opted not to go with self-reporting, which is what some of the questions Northeastern had drafted had done. AIR took a sample of students and administered a demonstration assessment in the three areas. Do we want to replicate that, or do we have opinions or ideas about how to approach this new data collection effort?

As we discussed, having a better understanding of the data and the rates will help us as a field advocate for our more services for our

students. What specifically would you want to know to better serve your students?

11:35-11:50: Discussion of securing a vendor. Questions to consider:
- How do we see this process unfolding?
- What recommendations should we give to the City for this undertaking?

11:50-11:00: Set goal for the write-up of recommendations to larger task force, and wrap-up