



**OFFICIAL MINUTES OF THE BOSTON SCHOOL COMMITTEE
OPPORTUNITY AND ACHIEVEMENT GAPS TASK FORCE VIRTUAL MEETING**

February 27, 2024

The Boston School Committee Opportunity and Achievement Gaps (OAG) Task Force held a virtual meeting on Zoom on February 27, 2024 at 4 p.m. For more information about any of the items listed below, visit www.bostonpublicschools.org/gaps, email esullivan3@bostonpublicschools.org or call the Boston School Committee Office at (617) 635-9014.

ATTENDANCE

Task Force Members Present: Dr. Carroll Blake; Rev. Willie Bodrick; Dr. Hardin Coleman; Dr. Gil Noam; Dr. Carline Pignato; Filiberto Santiago-Lizardi; Dr. Kimberley Williams; Co-Chair Jeri Robinson; and Co-Chair Ayele Shakur.

Task Force Members Absent: Dr. Lisa Gonsalves; Dr. James Jennings; and Marinell Rousmaniere.

Boston Public Schools (BPS) Staff Present: Senior Advisor, Organizational Development & Equity Dr. Mariel Novas; Dr. Mariel Novas; Deputy Superintendent of Equity, Community and Family Advancement Dr. Ana Tavares; Assistant Superintendent of Achievement Gaps Dr. Yozmin Gay; Assistant Superintendent of Equity Becky Shuster; and Manager of Equity & Strategy for the Office of Opportunity Gaps, Donna Lashus.

DOCUMENTS PRESENTED

OAG Task Force Meeting Agenda: February 27, 2024

OAG Task Force Meeting Minutes: January 30, 2024

Office of Opportunity Gaps Update, February 27, 2024

CALL TO ORDER

Ms. Robinson called the meeting to order and welcomed everyone. Ms. Sullivan called the roll. A quorum was present.

February 27, 2024

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Approved - The OAG Task Force unanimously approved, by roll call, the minutes of the January 30, 2024 meeting.

SUMMARY OF DISCUSSION

Chair Robinson announced that Liz Sullivan, executive secretary to the Boston School Committee and OAG Task Force coordinator, is leaving her position in mid-March. She will provide an update on filling the position at the next meeting.

Ms. Robinson provided a brief update on the structure of the OAG Task Force moving forward. She thanked Task Force members for their feedback and reaffirmed the Boston School Committee's commitment to eliminating opportunity and achievement gaps. She clarified that the intent of the task force restructuring proposal is to have stronger governance and to better align the work of any task force or advisory group with the district's priorities. She said that her main objective is to have an effective group of engaged members who are committed to helping the district improve student outcomes and close the gaps. There is consensus within the group that it's important to add members who represent multilingual learners and special education. The co-chairs also want to consider term limits. Later this week, the co-chairs will convene a meeting with Superintendent Skipper and the co-chairs of all School Committee task forces to discuss how best to leverage members' expertise in order to best serve students. Ms. Robinson will provide another update at the next meeting.

Update from the Office of Opportunity Gaps (OG) including progress on the 2024 OAG Policy Refresh and Examination of Contributing Factors and Effective Strategies to Address the Gaps - Dr. Yozmin Gay, Assistant Superintendent of Opportunity Gaps, presented an update from the OG Office on a variety of topics, including the expansion of the Exam School Initiative, targeted support for schools, high-leverage strategies to close gaps, and the OG policy revision that is in progress. She emphasized the importance of scaling up the work across all nine regions.

Ms. Williams requested that Task Force members receive presentations to review in advance of meetings. She agreed that the priorities outlined by Dr. Gay are critical. She spoke about the importance of implementation and the need to clarify the work of the Opportunity Gaps Office.

Ms. Shakur expressed concern that gap-closing work is being siloed. She said that the OAG policy must be a districtwide document upon which other district plans are based. Dr. Williams agreed that the work of closing opportunity gaps should be embedded in everything. Dr. Novas noted that the policy update presented by Dr. Gay is in draft form. She offered to follow up with Dr. Williams about any concerns she may have.

Dr. Pignato suggested that the document be simplified in order to be accessible to all audiences. Ms. Shakur said that in addition to closing gaps, the district must also accelerate learning. Dr. Pignato recommended putting more focus on increasing teacher diversity.

February 27, 2024

Dr. Noam applauded the work. He described the document as a logic model that is overly complex. He recommended taking a more prescriptive approach with essential levers that have a ripple effect. Ms. Shakur said that the levers should be cultural proficiency, human capital, ensuring racial and linguistic diversity, family and community engagement and reading at grade level by third grade. Dr. Noam suggested that every student should have an adult to turn to for support, making every child feel more included in BPS.

Dr. Coleman spoke about the importance of using data to adjust practices and hold people more accountable, thus building more effective change,

Dr. Williams spoke about the importance of teacher training and oversight from the Office of Opportunity Gaps.

Dr. Blake said that the OG Office is getting lost in the document. Dr. Gay said that her intention is for the Superintendent's strategic plan to be grounded in the revised OAG policy.

Rev. Bodrick questioned whether the OG Office has the staffing capacity to do its work.

Mr. Santiago-Lizardi said that BPS needs to be specific and intentional about teacher training. He spoke about the need for targeted support for high-needs schools. He said that school climate surveys reveal inequities which should be examined.

Ms. Robinson described Dr. Gay's presentation as a great visual that can help the Task Force understand the enormity of both the problem and the responsibility. She encouraged the Task Force to be focused in its approach.

Noting the time, Ms. Shakur asked Dr. Gay to continue her presentation at the March Task Force meeting beginning with slide 22.

Task Force Business: Discussion on Task Force Working Groups: Data & Accountability and Increasing Teacher Diversity and Retention - Ms. Shakur invited discussion on what should be the topic of the district's presentation at the March meeting. Members agreed that as hiring season approaches, an update from the Office of Human Capital (OHC) should take priority.

Members brainstormed the following list of questions for OHC and the Office of Equity:

- What is the impact of ESSER funding ending in terms of teacher and staff diversity?
- Does BPS have enough highly qualified bilingual teachers?
- What is the data on teacher retention in terms of percentages?
- What are the racial demographics of the teaching staff by school?
- What is the district's strategy for hiring diversity?
- What guidance is the district giving to school leaders and screening committees with regards to hiring diversity and social justice?

February 27, 2024

Ms. Shakur shifted the conversation to the work of the Task Force's working groups: data and accountability, led by Dr. Gonsalves and teacher diversity, which has not yet convened. Dr. Williams volunteered to lead the teacher diversity working group; Dr. Blake, Mr. Santiago-Lizardi and Rev. Bodrick volunteered to serve as members.

Ms. Shakur suggested that the Task Force also create an inclusive education working group to provide the Superintendent's Inclusive Education Planning Team with guidance and recommendations on the district's inclusive education work. She envisions the group would meet two or three times before bringing forth recommendations. Dr. Gay noted that she is a member of the Inclusive Education Planning Team and offered to bring forth the recommendations to the team. Noting that some Task Force members were absent, Dr. Gay offered to conduct additional outreach to Task Force members about serving on the working group.

Dr. Blake requested a report on Black and Latino boys, including an update on the Latinx Achievement Gap Initiative and the Black Student Achievement Gap Initiative. Dr. Gay said that offered to schedule a meeting with Charlie Titus, former UMass Boston Vice Chancellor, and Devin Morris, co-founder and Executive Director of The Teachers' Lounge.

Ms. Shakur suggested inviting city partners to present at future OAG Task Force meetings.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Barbara Fields, advocate, encouraged the OAG Task Force to increase its focus on policy implementation.

ADJOURNMENT

Approved - On roll call, the Task Force unanimously approved a motion to adjourn the meeting at 6:01p.m.

Attest:



Elizabeth A. Sullivan
Executive Secretary