



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

March 26, 2024

The Boston School Committee Opportunity and Achievement Gaps (OAG) Task Force held a virtual meeting on Zoom on March 26, 2024 at 4 p.m. For more information about any of the items listed below, visit www.bostonpublicschools.org/gaps, email lpavex@bostonpublicschools.org, or call the Boston School Committee Office at (617) 635-9014.

ATTENDANCE

Task Force Members Present: Dr. Carroll Blake; Dr. Hardin Coleman; Dr. Lisa Gonsalves; Dr. Carline Pignato; Filiberto Santiago-Lizardi; Dr. Kimberley Williams; Co-Chair Jeri Robinson; and Co-Chair Ayele Shakur.

Task Force Members Absent: Rev. Willie Bodrick; Dr. Gil Noam; Dr. James Jennings; and Marinell Rousmaniere.

Boston Public Schools (BPS) Staff Present: Senior Advisor, Organizational Development & Equity 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; Manager of Equity & Strategy for the Office of Opportunity Gaps, Donna Lashus; Managing Director, Department of Recruitment, Cultivation, and Diversity Programs, Rashaun Martin.

DOCUMENTS PRESENTED

[Agenda: March 26, 2024](#)

[OAG Task Force Meeting Minutes: February 27, 2024](#)

[Office of Human Capital - Recruitment, Cultivation, and Retention Update March 26, 2024](#)

Office of Opportunity Gaps Update, March 26, 2024 (*POSTPONED*)

[Outline Continuing the Discussion on the Proposed Future Structure of the OAG Task Force](#)

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[OAG Policy Driver Diagram](#)

CALL TO ORDER

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

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Approved - The OAG Task Force unanimously approved, by roll call, the minutes of the February 27, 2024 meeting.

SUMMARY OF DISCUSSION

Chair Robinson announced a revision to the agenda to accommodate scheduling requirements and she stated that the Update from the Office of Opportunity Gaps had been tabled.

Update from the Department Presentation: Office of Human Capital (OHC) - Recruitment, Cultivation, and Retention- Rashaun J. Martin, Managing Director presented an update on the ongoing efforts within BPS regarding the hiring season. He provided an overview of several key metrics being closely monitored, highlighting a decrease in external candidates of color over recent years while noting that internal candidates of color still make up over half of all candidates.

Efforts have been intensified on early hiring pools, with 337 candidates, 55% of whom are candidates of color. Support is offered to candidates including resume assistance and targeted recruitment events to enhance diversity, both ethnically and linguistically. As of March 26, 2024, there were 846 vacant positions, with 28% Black, 22% Latinx, and 4% Asian representation among filled positions. Demographics of teacher applicants showed 24% Black, 13% Hispanic, and 8% Asian representation. Mr. Martin elaborated on Teacher Pipeline Programs and discussed initiatives such as the Bilingual Educator/Accelerated Community to Career (BE/ACTT) Program and BPS Teaching Fellowship (BPSTF). He also outlined the timeline for obtaining a Master's degree within BPS and explained the BPS ParaPro Test Support program. Additionally, retention strategies and ALANA Programming were addressed.

Dr. Blake inquired about diversity percentages in individual schools. Mr. Martin explained that diversity goals were assigned to all schools at the start of the hiring season's outset, with oversight now resting with the school office. Mr. Martin mentioned the recruitment team would assess support for schools with 10 or more vacancies, ensuring they leverage available assistance and swiftly fill positions.

Dr. Coleman emphasized the importance of engaging a diverse array of Higher Education stakeholders, beyond just school representatives. He emphasized the need to prepare graduates for culturally proficient learning environments and to actively boost diversity in candidate pools. This includes collaborating with provosts, presidents, the Mayor, and the Superintendent to promote accountability and forge effective partnerships.

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Dr. Williams inquired about segregating teacher and counselor data, which Mr. Martin confirmed he could provide. Dr. Williams also raised concerns about the impact of budget cuts on program outcomes. Mr. Martin highlighted efforts to support teachers of color in years three or four to prevent displacement due to excess educators. He emphasized the importance of proactive measures to retain diverse educators.

Dr. Gay highlighted the University of Massachusetts Boston as a significant partner in recruiting candidates of color for Boston public schools. She acknowledged Dr. Gonsalves for leading the program. Dr. Gay emphasized the importance of a holistic approach to recruitment and retention. She advocated for collaboration with city officials and organizations to provide resources like housing vouchers, aiming to make BPS not only an attractive place to work but also to live and engage fully.

Dr. Pignato discussed provisional educators and licensure, along with efforts to maintain connections with them for insights into their school experiences. Mr. Martin outlined tracking provisional educators' status, offering tailored support, and understanding their journeys to provide effective assistance. This includes assessing experiences and relationships in schools to inform decisions on professional development and potential transfers. The office employs various methods such as ALANA events and one-on-one meetings to uphold communication and build trust with educators.

Ms. Shakur questioned what it would take to overcome barriers to reaching the goal of 25% representation of Black teachers, as mandated by the Garrity order from the 1970s. Mr. Martin acknowledged the predominance of white educators and emphasized the need for positions to be available. He suggested that additional pressure on school leaders might be necessary to prioritize hiring diverse candidates and to support their professional development, rather than solely focusing on experienced educators. He stressed the importance of coaching and retaining young Black educators, even if they lack extensive experience, and called for more accountability from school leaders in this regard.

Dr. Coleman emphasized the importance of breaking down data indicators to assess progress toward increasing the percentage of Black educators. He expressed a preference for data broken down into three-year intervals for better analysis. Additionally, he noted that turnover due to retirements could provide opportunities to increase diversity among educators.

Dr. Williams discussed the importance of decision-making by school leaders and screening committees in hiring educators. While acknowledging the existing pool of recommended candidates, she questioned how to address schools with lower diversity percentages. She proposed a recommendation for principals to screen specific candidates of color, emphasizing the need to interview these candidates to increase the likelihood of hiring them. She suggested that schools historically lacking diversity should adapt their screening practices to attract and hire more diverse educators.

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Dr. Gonsalves pointed out that the Massachusetts Tests for Educator Licensure (MTELs), pose a significant challenge for educators, particularly those of color. She also noted that many schools are losing teachers of color due to these requirements, highlighting a broader systemic challenge within the education system.

Dr. Pignato asked about Transformation schools not meeting diversity targets and suggested involving school superintendents in screenings and interviews as a coaching opportunity for school leaders. Ms. Shakur proposed issuing an official memo from the OAG Task Force outlining these recommendations to support implementation.

Memo for the Outline of Proposed New Structure: Ms. Shakur outlined the recommendations to be presented to the Boston School Committee.

PROPOSED CHANGES:

1. The Opportunity and Achievement Gaps Task Force will become the primary standing Task Force for BPS. The OAG Task Force represents Black students, Latinx students, English Language Learners, Students with Disabilities, and Students Experiencing Poverty. These are the populations with the greatest needs in BPS and where the gaps are persisting.
2. Reporting: The OAG Task Force will continue to report to the Boston School Committee.
3. Composition: Task Force Composition will include 24 members as follows:
 - a. 2 Boston School Committee Members, with 1 serving as Co-Chair
 - b. 2 School Administrators
 - c. 2 Teachers, with 1 also being a BTU Rep
 - d. 2 Student Reps from BSAC
 - e. 2 Parents serving on School Site Council, School Parent Council, or School Based Equity Roundtable
 - f. 2 Nonprofit Partners or Community Based Orgs working in partnership with BPS
 - g. 2 Higher Education Partners
 - h. 2 Community Advocates (i.e. BEAM, NAACP, Black Student Achievement Network)
 - i. 2 specialists in Social Emotional Learning (SEL)
 - j. 2 specialists in Black Student Achievement
 - k. 2 specialists in Multilingual Learner Achievement, with 1 chairing the ELL Subcommittee
 - l. 2 specialists in Achievement for Students with Disabilities, with 1 chairing the SWD Subcommittee
4. Term Limits: Task Force members will serve for a 3 year term. At the end of 2 years, the term can be renewed for an additional 2 years at the discretion of the BSC, based on the TF member's solid attendance and contributions. No Task Force member shall serve for more than 5 years total.
5. Quarterly Meetings: The OAG Task Force will meet on a Quarterly Basis, four times each year in October, January, April, and June.

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6. Subcommittees: All Task Force members will be required to serve on at least one Subcommittee, Working Group, or Superintendent Advisory Group which will meet in September, November, December, February, March and May. This will help ensure that TF members remain firmly grounded in gap-closing work, in partnership with the District.
7. Nomination Process: Task Force Members must be nominated by the BSC Chair and Vice Chair, as per BSC Chair Jeri Robinson's Proposed Amendment to BSC ByLaws. Members of the community will have the opportunity to apply to participate on the Task Force so that the process is more transparent and clear to all BPS constituents. Current TF members will also be asked to recommend new members.
8. EL Task Force: The remaining members of the EL Task Force should be invited to join the OAG Task Force.
9. Focus Areas Will Be Time Bound and Assigned Annually by the BSC: Each year the BSC should identify 1-2 specific "Focus Areas" for the Task Force, with input from the Superintendent and Task Force members. Focus Areas could be issues like Literacy, Inclusion, Attendance, Grading Policy etc. Content Experts could be added to the Task Force as needed. Focus Areas should be Time Bound, with a term of 6-12 months, and a Report or Deliverable presented to the BSC with Key Recommendations at the end of the term.
10. Monitoring Role of the OAG Task Force is as follows:
 - a. Monitoring and Supporting the Work of the OG Office: A primary role of the OAG Task Force is to monitor, advise, and support the OG Office in overseeing OAG Policy Implementation Plans. This includes providing guidance on department focus areas and priorities, and providing thought-partnership to help eliminate any barriers to Policy implementation.
 - b. Thought Partnership with Department Leaders on their OAG Policy Implementation Plan: Going back to our pre-pandemic process, each Department will have 1-3 SMART Goals tied to the OAG Policy Implementation Plan to eliminate gaps, which will be monitored by the OG Office. These are not necessarily "new" goals, but goals that each department is currently working on with a targeted focus to close gaps. Task Force Working Groups will meet with Department Leaders on an as-needed basis to provide thought partnership on roadblocks, problems of practices, and other issues hindering Implementation. In this way, the Task Force will support the OG Office and Department Heads in monitoring and accelerating progress while also providing thought-partnership on closing gaps.
 - c. Vetting Process for New District Plans and Initiatives: As part of the Racial Equity Planning Tool (REPT) process, all presentations for the Boston School Committee should first come before the OG Office, the OAG Task Force or Subcommittee, and the Community Equity Roundtable (CERT) before the issue can be placed on the BSC Agenda. This 3-Step Process will allow for proper vetting of any District proposals by a team of content experts as well as by community members
 - d. Annual Task Force Presentation to the BSC: As stated in the OAG Policy, there must be an Annual Presentation by the Task Force and OG Office to the BSC on progress towards eliminating gaps, and any barriers to closing gaps.

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11. Ad Hoc Task Forces: In addition to the OAG Task Force, the BSC can create new ad hoc Task Forces on other topics as needed. These Ad Hoc Task Forces should be Time Bound with a clear end date.

The members discussed term limits, reaching an agreement on a maximum of five consecutive years. Additionally, they deliberated on consolidating the OAG and EL Task Forces. Ms. Shakur mentioned that the policy was designed to cover English language learners (ELs) and students with disabilities as well. She said this consolidation would improve the staffing and composition of the Task Force. The goal is also to address any disconnect between the two task forces and streamline recommendations under one unified structure with subcommittees.

Ms. Robinson said that the OAG's work encompasses all areas, including Special Education and ELs, suggesting it would operate as an umbrella for collaborative efforts. She stressed the importance of aligning and organizing to ensure effective collaboration between subcommittees. Ms. Robinson noted the challenge of consistent representation from ELL or Special Education, proposing a unified task force structure with subgroups to facilitate more effective dialogue.

Dr. Gay emphasized the importance of considering the intersectionality of students, particularly those who are Black and Brown and may also have multilingual backgrounds or require special education programming. She highlighted that aligning efforts in these areas makes sense as it addresses the diverse needs of students, reflecting the data available.

Dr. Williams urged caution against solely incorporating the EL Task Force without careful consideration of broader implications. Dr. Blake expressed concern about the potential for the focus to be overlooked or diluted within the subgroups.

The members engaged in a robust discussion regarding the structure of the Task Force and how best to address various areas. Ms. Shakur suggested transitioning to quarterly meetings. The members were in favor of the suggestion.

Dr. Pignato emphasized the importance of focusing on the quality of work and utilizing data to impact decision-making, rather than solely focusing on the frequency of meetings. Dr. Williams stressed the need to ensure everyone is informed and that updates are balanced. Dr. Williams also suggested considering including non-BSAC students on the Task Force to broaden perspectives. The members discussed the composition of the Task Force. The members also agreed on 1-2 SMART goals.

Drivers in Equity in BPS: Ms. Shakur provided an overview of the OAG Policy Driver Diagram, which aims to illustrate how equity grounds all work within BPS. The OAG Driver Diagram consists of the following:

Aim - The 2024 Policy to Eliminate Opportunity & Achievement Gaps and Accelerate Learning for Black Students, Multilingual Learners, Students with Disabilities, & Students Experiencing Poverty directs what we want to accomplish by what, who, and when.

Primary Driver - What we need to focus on to achieve the OAG Policy goals.

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Secondary Driver - Where in our system we should cohesively focus our energies as a district to effect the primary driver(s) (i.e. Inclusive Education Plan)

Change Actions - Committed actions that we must implement as a district for student improvement and advancement (i.e. Mandatory professional learning and coaching for school leaders and teachers around CLSP instructional practices)

Dr. Pignato inquired about the inclusion of LGBTQ groups in the presented groups. Ms. Shakur clarified that they were not specifically mentioned and that data isn't tracked in that manner. Dr. Williams highlighted concerning data regarding LGBTQ students, suggesting a need for policy updates to address their specific needs.

Ms. Shakur suggested tabling the discussion for a later time, due to time constraints.

Agenda for the remaining meetings this school year.

The members discussed the agenda items for the remaining OAG Task Force Meetings. These were Transformation Schools Update, Targeted programming, Drivers Document, OAG Update, New Green Deal, Update on Immigrant students, Update summer planning, and Exam School Initiative Program.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Kim Emery, BPS parent asked about a handbook of best practices to improve family engagement.

Peggy Wiesenbergh, Community advocate, asked if the subgroups versus girls in achievement.

ADJOURNMENT

Approved - On roll call, the Task Force unanimously approved a motion to adjourn the meeting at 6.05 p.m.

Attest:



Lena Parvex
Executive Secretary