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

April 30, 2024

The Boston School Committee Opportunity and Achievement Gaps (OAG) Task Force held a virtual meeting on Zoom on April 30, 2024 at 4 p.m. For more information about any of the items listed below, visit www.bostonpublicschools.org/gaps, email lparvex@bostonpublicschools.org,or call the Boston School Committee Office at (617) 635-9014.

ATTENDANCE

Task Force Members Present: Dr. Lisa Gonsalves; Dr. Carline Pignato; Filiberto Santiago-Lizardi; Co-Chair Jeri Robinson; and Co-Chair Ayele Shakur.

Task Force Members Absent: Dr. Carroll Blake; Rev. Willie Bodrick; Dr. Hardin Coleman; Dr. Gil Noam; Dr. James Jennings; Marinell Rousmaniere; Dr. Kimberley Williams

Boston Public Schools (BPS) Staff Present: Assistant Superintendent of Achievement Gaps Dr. Yozmin Gay; Senior Advisor for Organizational Development & Equity Dr. Mariel Novas; Assistant Superintendent of Equity Becky Shuster; Cultural Linguistic Sustaining Practices Development (CLSPD) Director, Donna Lashus; Executive Director of Immigrant and Targeted Populations, Felicia Saunders and OAG Policy Director Tamika Estwick Buckmire.

DOCUMENTS PRESENTED

OAG Agenda

OAG Task Force Meeting Minutes: March 26, 2024

Office of Opportunity Gaps Update

OAG Task Force Recommendations to Superintendent and Office of Human Capital

CALL TO ORDER

Ms. Robinson called the meeting to order and welcomed everyone. Ms. Parvex called the roll. A quorum was not present, therefore Mrs. Robinson stated that the Task Force would delay the approval of minutes until a quorum was present.

SUMMARY OF DISCUSSION

Update from the Office of Opportunity Gaps - Dr. Yozmin Gay, Assistant Superintendent of Opportunity Gaps, Executive Director of Immigrant and Targeted Populations, Felicia Saunders, and CLSPD) Director, Donna Lashus presented an update.

Dr. Gay initiated the presentation with a firm commitment to closing the educational gap for historically marginalized students. Additionally, Dr. Gay introduced Tamika Estwick Buckmire as the new OAG Policy Director, who expressed her commitment to building upon existing excellence and guiding policy forward.

Donna Lashes was introduced as the new Director of Cultural Linguistics Sustaining Practices (CLSP), leveraging her successful track record as Lead Manager of Equity and Strategy. She will lead CLSP initiatives district-wide, enhancing professional development for school leaders and promoting a sense of belonging. Ms. Lashes emphasized systematic advancement across the district, prioritizing students' funds of knowledge and cultural learning to improve curriculum access.

Dr, Gay presented the 4 Major Equity Throughlines to Close Opportunity and Achievement Gaps and Advance Learning:

Throughline 1: Every district office executes an OAG Policy Implementation Plan with goals, actions, and metrics to measure progress toward achieving equitable student outcomes.

Throughline 2: OAG Policy Goals, strategies, and metrics embedded in every Quality School Plan to ground school practice in student equity.

Throughline 3: Targeted Equity School Support provided by Managers, Equity & Strategy to advance school-based equity structures and Culturally and Linguistically Affirming Practices.

Throughline 4: Racial Equity Planning Tool (REPT) execution to unearth unintended inequities within BPS policies, programs, or initiatives, and intentionally strategize for equitable student outcomes.

Ms. Saunders highlighted the successes of the 10 Boys Initiative, emphasizing attendance metrics as crucial for student success. Despite its recent implementation, significant improvements have been seen in participating schools. On average, mentees across all schools improved attendance by at least 50%. Notable successes include a 41% increase at Mel H. King Academy and an 18% increase at Sarah Greenwood School, showcasing the initiative's positive influence on student engagement and academic advancement.

Ms. Saunders discussed the Exam School Initiative (ESI), targeting marginalized students' access to exam schools. She noted efforts to boost summer program attendance, with 338 nominations from previously non-nominating schools, including Hispanic and Black students. Of these, 305 students registered for ESI, partly due to targeted marketing led by Ms. Lauren Ainsworth. These initiatives aim to improve academic and social-emotional development, with additional impact

assessments scheduled for August.

Ms. Lashus detailed CLSP initiatives across six schools, including environmental walkthroughs centered on student and family identity. Four schools also engaged in relationship mapping to bolster connections with students and families and a partnership with CEEDS4Change was formed to host culturally affirming learning events.

Dr. Gay introduced a racial equity planning tool with key steps shared across all departments and schools. It starts with defining outcomes, followed by data analysis. The subsequent steps involve developing strategies for racial equity, implementation planning, accountability, and training/communication on the initiative. Dr. Gay highlighted progress on various initiatives driven by the Office of Opportunity Gaps through racial equity planning tools (REPTs).

Creating a new Data Dashboard for the OAG Policy - Dr. Gay introduced policy implementation plans and dashboard reporting for the upcoming year, seeking feedback. She emphasized the implementation plan's role in fostering departmental awareness, particularly regarding inclusive education. The OAG policy helps to inform the inclusive education plan. The dashboard will track progress, strategy implementation, goal attainment, systemic use of the racial equity planning tool, and monitoring of school-based equity roundtables.

Mr. Santiago-Lizardi commended Dr. Gay on the meticulously organized dashboard and inquired about the school-based equity roundtables, particularly regarding a district-wide rollout plan. Dr. Gay acknowledged interruptions in the implementation of school-based equity roundtables, including the need to clarify their purpose. Initially launched during the pandemic to gather parent feedback on ESSER funds, the roundtables are now being refocused to engage families in school decision-making. A revised plan for systematic implementation, including support and accountability measures, is currently being developed.

Ms. Shakur mentioned the dashboard's purpose of tracking key metrics and indicators pertinent, with updates monthly and sharing quarterly. She sought input on specific metrics that people would like to see included on the dashboard.

Ms. Robinson acknowledged updates on strategies and asked about measuring attitude change, especially among school staff. Dr. Gay stressed the importance of staff feeling connected to a greater purpose and building knowledge, She also stated that ensuring CLSP moves beyond theory into teacher practice is essential for changing attitudes towards the work.

Ms. Lashus highlighted the successful OAG and Teaching & Learning partnership. She discussed integrating CLSP practices into the academy retreat, emphasizing the importance of students accessing curriculum points to apply their knowledge and cultural learning.
She emphasized initiatives for teachers and leaders to succeed in CLSP, including ongoing literacy and math curriculum adoption, integrating CLSP into educators' courses, stipends, professional learning communities, and collaborating with the telescope network for coaching and development.

Ms. Robinson highlighted the disproportionate representation of Black and brown boys in Special Education and asked about support for teachers in fostering inclusive classrooms. She stressed the crucial impact of adult behavior on student success, urging action against biased practices. Dr. Gay highlighted the overrepresentation of Black and Latinx students in special education, particularly for emotional issues. She emphasized the need for systemic and school-level changes. The Office of Opportunity Gaps is leading efforts to address this through research and partnerships, aiming to recommend comprehensive strategies using the Racial Equity Planning Tool. Dr. Gay also stressed initiatives like CLSP for systemic change and emphasized including student identity and assets in learning while committing to ongoing equity work.

Ms. Shakur asked about a dashboard collaboration between the Office of Opportunity Gaps and the Office of Data and Accountability. Dr. Gay mentioned they're in the early stages, identifying metrics with various departments to measure progress. She stressed the importance of jointly determining metrics to close gaps, adding that a dashboard model and quarterly reporting will be ready next month.

Ms. Shakur stressed the importance of clear metrics for each BPS department, specifically tied to policy. She requested that metrics related to increasing teacher diversity be presented at the June meeting. Dr. Gay agreed to provide academic metrics, focusing on CLSP implementation.

Dr. Pignato proposed using the previously approved draft dashboard as a starting point for revisions. The members discussed the content of the previous dashboard and explored options for obtaining the data.

Dr. Goncalves proposed gathering more data on various gaps, focusing on special needs, social-emotional needs, and socioeconomic status. Dr. Pignato stressed a strategic approach to collecting social-emotional data, considering biases and misinterpretations, and recommended including early literacy data for primary grades as a predictor of academic readiness and success.

Mr. Santiago-Lizardi suggested including graduation rates and staff demographics on the dashboard, emphasizing the need to grasp dynamics across elementary, middle, and high school levels despite the K-6 and 7-12 setup. He also underscored the significance of attendance policies for graduation rates.

Ms. Pignato inquired about monitoring priorities in the inclusive education plan. Dr. Gay highlighted the importance of equitable student outcomes, particularly in reading proficiency. She proposed systemic goals for reading proficiency across departments, stressing the need for department-specific strategies aligned with equity.

Ms. Shakur advocated for streamlining the dashboard data to focus on the top 10 to 15 metrics. Mr. Santiago-Lizardi stressed the value of soliciting input from public comments to generate fresh ideas and maintain focus and effectiveness.

Drafting Recommendations to the Office of Human Capital - Ms. Skakur presented the recommendations for submission to the superintendent and the Office of Human Capital to increase teacher diversity, notably striving for 25% representation of Black teachers, coinciding with the 50th anniversary of the Garrity Order. She emphasized the significance of both linguistic and racial diversity. Despite the Garrity Order's emphasis on Black teachers, she underscored the necessity of a diverse teacher workforce. She also highlighted the importance of accountability in diverse hiring decisions, especially from regional superintendents overseeing school leaders.

Ms. Pignato noted a focus on completing hires over diversity. She highlighted concerns that prioritizing experienced teachers might impede diversity goals and underscored the impact of race and bias in hiring.

Dr. Gonsalves highlighted the need for BPS to learn from past successes and partnerships instead of always pursuing new initiatives. She suggested better collaboration with partners to address challenges and improve communication across leadership levels.

Mr. Santiago-Lizardi suggested setting annual goals to reduce diversity gaps in schools, tracking progress on the OAG dashboard, and adjusting reports to address fluctuations in hiring.

Ms. Robinson emphasized evaluating partnerships for effective teacher training, supporting teachers of color, and collaborating with training institutions. She also highlighted district-wide cooperation for initiatives like the paraprofessional-to-teacher pipeline and advocated for clear school-specific targets and support for all teachers.

Dr. Pignato suggested reconsidering diversity criteria given the demographic trends in student enrollment. Ms. Shakur suggested including student demographics alongside teacher demographics in the document.

Mr. Santiago-Lizardi proposed adding a bullet point for teacher input, suggesting Panorama surveys. Dr. Gay emphasized data-driven retention and recruitment strategies, highlighting the importance of measuring program effectiveness and gathering teacher feedback through climate surveys.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment.

ADJOURNMENT

Approved - On roll call, the Task Force unanimously approved a motion to adjourn the meeting at 5.42 p.m.

Attest:

Lena Parvex
Executive Secretary