



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

May 21, 2024

The Boston School Committee Opportunity and Achievement Gaps (OAG) Task Force held a virtual meeting on Zoom on May 21, 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. Dr. Gil Noam; Dr. Kimberley Williams

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

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](#) and [April 30, 2024](#)

[Office of Opportunity Gaps Update](#)

[Transformation Schools Presentation](#)

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 March 26, 2024 and April 30, 2024.

SUMMARY OF DISCUSSION

Update from the Office of Opportunity Gaps (OOG) - Dr. Yozmin Gay, Assistant Superintendent of Opportunity Gaps presented an update.

Dr. Gay outlined four key areas of focus for the upcoming year based on discussions with Superintendent Skipper:

- Improve and accelerate literacy proficiency. (Proficiency/Mastery & Access)
- Expand targeted programming in Transformation Schools and Alternative Education to increase access and opportunity. (Opportunity & Access)
- Advance Culturally Linguistically Sustaining Practices (CLSP) in curriculum, instruction, and professional learning for meaningful and relevant student learning experiences. (Access & Belonging)
- Increase recruitment and retention of Black, Latinx, and Multilingual Teachers for student representation, access, and belonging. (Representation, Belonging, & Access)

Dr. Gay discussed the practical implementation of their strategy with departmental partnerships, focusing on the four key areas. She said this approach aims to set clear goals and metrics, emphasizing regional literacy initiatives, professional development, and equity tools like early warning systems. Regular quarterly reporting will monitor progress in these vital initiatives.

Dr. Gay emphasized continuing partnerships with departments to implement their strategy effectively for the upcoming year. This includes collaborating on family and community engagement, designing dashboards with the Office of Data and Accountability (ODA) to track progress, and launching an Anti-Racist Schools by Design Leadership Cohort to address equity issues in schools.

Ms. Shakur sought Task Force feedback on presented focus areas and asked Dr. Gay about the interaction between school-based equity roundtables and the proposed community of practice. Dr. Gay clarified that equity roundtables empower families in school planning and include newcomer families in decision-making. The community of practice fosters collaborative learning among educators to improve problem-solving skills. She said that these initiatives would work together to facilitate ongoing discussions and activities.

Dr. Pignato asked about the alignment of the four focus areas with the draft policy and their prioritization. She also inquired about the strategy for measuring and improving literacy proficiency across diverse student needs and grade levels, as well as the baseline criteria for district-wide improvement. Dr. Gay clarified that these focus areas were identified through data-driven discussions to meet policy needs, focusing on closing the literacy gap in BPS. She outlined plans to enhance literacy through strategic assessments like MAP and to better integrate transformation schools into core curriculum strategies for marginalized students. Ms. Shakur noted ongoing revisions to the policy, emphasizing alignment with goals including oversight, cultural proficiency, teacher diversity, literacy focus, and family/community engagement. She

highlighted the integration of these priorities with the current policy and anticipated updates.

Dr. Williams asked about the alignment of the four focus areas with the district's strategic plan and their representation of main priorities. Dr. Gay mentioned the current plan spans 2020-2025 and is nearing revision. She sees the new focus areas as clarifying specific actions to implement and measure over time, aiming to improve upon past challenges in measuring effectiveness.

Dr. Williams asked if the superintendent's upcoming strategic plan will include initiatives beyond the identified levers and if these levers will be the main focus for the OOG across schools and departments. Ms. Shakur noted that the current discussion focuses specifically on the Office's priorities and objectives for the year, unlike the broader aspects in the previous document.

Dr. Williams supported continuing CLSP at the district level and asked if it would be a key part of the upcoming strategic plan. Dr. Gay mentioned she hasn't been involved in strategic planning yet but stressed integrating the four levers into future plans. She highlighted CLSP's importance next year, especially in professional development for school leaders and teachers across different initiatives. Dr. Tavares confirmed the alignment between Dr. Gay's initiatives and the superintendent's priorities, stressing continued support for CLSP. She emphasized the crucial partnership between OOG and the academic department, especially in literacy, as a key expectation from the superintendent.

Ms. Shakur asked about the timeline for the strategic planning process. Dr. Gay emphasized using the current discussions to inform the strategic planning process.

Department Presentation: Transformation Schools - Michael Sabin, Executive Director of Transformation Schools within the Division of Schools and Accountability presented an update.

Mr. Sabin highlighted the focus of their presentation on the challenges faced by transformation schools, particularly in literacy, supported by demographic and performance data comparisons between transformation and non-transformation schools. Mr. Sabin showed that the mid-year MAP data for this year, growth in transformation schools is consistently lower across almost every subgroup compared to non-transformation schools. He noted that while math data shows some improvement, literacy remains a critical challenge affecting student performance.

Ms. Sabin stressed the need for transformation schools to achieve at least 50 points of growth on MCAS to close achievement gaps, with 60 points representing the level where significant progress begins. While some schools perform above state and district averages annually, the aim is for broader systemic improvements that have yet to be fully achieved.

Dr. Gonsalves suggested that it would be insightful to include all schools, not just transformation schools, to understand where those performing well are positioned compared to others.

Mr. Sabin emphasized his department's strong focus on data, essential for continuous improvement and driven by school accountability. He also highlighted key metrics such as chronic absenteeism and student achievement and growth as focal points of their monitoring efforts.

Mr. Sabin outlined a strategic approach tailored to high-needs schools, emphasizing simplicity to avoid adding undue burden.

District Literacy Improvement Strategy for Transformation Schools:

- Equitable Literacy practices promote effective instruction
- HQIM (district curriculum) ensures grade-level curriculum and standards
- Regional Structure provides support and guidance
- Progress Reviews and Instructional Rounds strengthen continuous improvement cycles
- Transformation Instructional Coaching and Regional Liaison support connect strategy to classroom improvements
- Transformation Office provides extra support and guidance
- Monitor school progress in academics, culture, and operations
- Provide school-facing and district-facing interventions as needed

Mr. Sabin concluded by saying that they are focused on accelerating literacy growth to eliminate performance gaps, seeking input on further support and investment to achieve this goal.

Ms. Robinson asked about disaggregating data to differentiate between student groups, including native English speakers and those with diverse educational backgrounds or language challenges. She emphasized the importance of identifying specific, effective strategies tailored to different student needs rather than using a uniform approach. Mr. Sabin noted two main findings: overall lower growth across all student groups, suggesting a need for systemic solutions, and varying growth rates among schools, with some English learners showing accelerated progress while others faced challenges. He underscored ongoing analysis to explore these insights further and develop effective strategies going forward.

Dr. Williams asked about the impact of culture and climate in schools, drawing on her experience with race and culture initiatives that improved student outcomes. She inquired about the alignment of CLSP and similar initiatives with successful school strategies. Mr. Sabin agreed about the importance of CLSP and cultural efforts, citing Dearborn and Holmes schools as examples where these initiatives boosted literacy, highlighting their direct link to academic success.

Dr. Noam questioned the statistical data, especially regarding differences between transformation and non-transformation schools. He emphasized the need for clarity on these disparities and suggested a unified strategy to tackle challenges across all schools. Dr. Noam also highlighted the importance of setting clear improvement expectations and defining meaningful change. Mr. Sabin reiterated the district's commitment to improving data analysis and student performance, aiming for all students, particularly those most vulnerable, to exceed district growth standards and avoid academic setbacks.

Dr. Gonsalves highlighted the importance of school culture and climate in driving improvement, citing Holmes School as a model of successful teacher collaboration and leadership. She highlighted the challenge of addressing poverty's impact on students and advocated for comprehensive support, including social-emotional care and family engagement. Mr. Sabin emphasized strong culture, social-emotional support, and high academic expectations as crucial

at schools like Dearborn and Holmes. Despite acknowledging poverty as a challenge, he aimed for above-average growth across all transformation schools.

Ms. Shakur asked about how schools like the Homes, which are more successful in literacy and achievement, prioritize family and community engagement to effectively support their educational strategies. Mr. Sabin recognized the need for stronger connections between schools and their parent communities to integrate family input more effectively into the educational mission.

Mr. Santiago-Lizardi pushed for more STEM technology investment in all schools to foster curiosity and inquiry. He highlighted the need for broader implementation beyond specialized STEM schools to benefit all students. Mr. Sabin agreed, emphasizing the need to transform schools to inspire students and develop their leadership potential, a focus for future discussions.

Ms. Shakur asked about adding online tools for differentiated instruction and accelerating learning. Mr. Sabin noted that while technology can personalize learning, effective instruction relies on strong interpersonal engagement between adults and students. He emphasized the importance of technology that fosters exploration and creativity.

Ms. Lashus highlighted positive changes in Region 3 schools with increased sense of belonging and cultural initiatives like multilingual signage and student identity displays. She mentioned that the Ellis and the Greenwood schools had received awards for cultural competency because of the hard work they had done in this area. She emphasized revitalizing family engagement in transformation schools and improving support for marginalized populations in school decision-making.

Ms. Shakur emphasized the crucial role of family involvement in literacy, highlighting it as a missing piece in fostering a sense of ownership and partnership with the district. She also suggested that partners are an underutilized resource that could support literacy skills and called for coordinated efforts focusing on literacy among district partners.

Mr. Sabin recognized the strong cultural foundation in the Ellis and Greenwood schools, anticipating future improvements in literacy performance with ongoing efforts. Dr. Gay stressed understanding social barriers to learning in low-income areas, focusing on targeted programs and the Hub School model. She emphasized using data to identify and eliminate barriers specific to each school within the transformation model, aiming to replicate successful strategies across other schools.

Finalizing Recommendations on Increasing Teacher Diversity to Superintendent Skipper and the Office of Human Capital - Postponed

Finalizing Recommendations to the Boston School Committee on the future structure of the OAG Task Force - Ms. Shakur highlighted a significant change: previously, the Task Force included members from both the English Learner Task Force and SpedPac. After feedback, they've agreed not to interfere with the EL Task Force or SpedPac. Instead, the Task Force aims to include diverse expertise without taking a formal stance.

Composition: Task Force Composition will include 24 members as follows:

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- 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 the Boston Student Advisory Committee (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
- l. 2 specialists in Achievement for Students with Disabilities

Ms. Shakur presented the proposed term limit and highlighted that no Task Force member is allowed to serve for more than a total of 5 years.

Dr. Tavares raised concerns about members holding dual roles and emphasized the need for explicit language on linguistic representation within the Task Force. Ms. Shakur highlighted the addition of two bilingual members to enhance diversity. Dr. Williams emphasized that linguistic representation should also consider cultural aspects, not just languages spoken.

Dr. Williams expressed concern about potentially becoming the only Task Force as they expand their memberships to include more diverse representation. Ms. Shakur said the membership was supposed to always include more diverse representation.

Ms. Shakur elaborated on the OAG Task Force calendar, outlining quarterly meetings scheduled for October, December, March, and June, with subcommittee meetings planned in alternate months. The members discussed when would be the best time to have the quarterly meetings.

The members continued reviewing the Task Force composition. Ms. Shakur emphasized the nominating process and the required steps for new members to join. Ms. Robinson added that people could nominate themselves.

Ms. Shakur emphasized that the criteria guiding the recommendations will shape the proposals put forth by the body. Nominations will be solicited through an open call, with the formal process set to commence in the fall. Ms. Shakur quickly overviewed the remaining points of the document. Ms. Shakur said that members would review the Proposal on the Future Structure of the OAG Task Force and vote on it at the June meeting.

Soliciting recommendations for possible future OAG Task Force members - Ms. Shakur mentioned that she would email the OAF Task Force members to solicit their recommendations for future nominations.

PUBLIC COMMENT

No public comment.

ADJOURNMENT

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Approved - On roll call, the Task Force unanimously approved a motion to adjourn the meeting at 5.50 p.m.

Attest:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Lena Parvex", written in a cursive style.

Lena Parvex
Executive Secretary