



OFFICIAL MINUTES OF THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE'S OPPORTUNITY AND ACHIEVEMENT GAPS TASK FORCE

November 10, 2015

The Boston School Committee's Opportunity and Achievement Gaps Task Force held a meeting on November 10, 2015 at 4 p.m. at the Bruce C. Bolling Municipal Building's Roxbury Innovation Center, 2300 Washington Street, Roxbury, Massachusetts. For more information about any of the items listed below, visit www.bostonpublicschools.org, email feedback@bostonpublicschools.org or call the Boston School Committee Office at (617) 635-9014.

ATTENDANCE

Task Force Members Present: Co-Chair Jeri Robinson; Co-Chair Ayele Shakur; Co-Chair Samuel Acevedo; Jennifer Aponte; Heshan Berents-Weeramuni; Dr. Carroll Blake; Kenny Feng; Kim Janey; Keondre McClay; Liliana Mickle; Dr. Gil Noam; Carline Pignato; Marinell Rousmaniere; Filberto Santiago-Lizardi; Ron Walker; and Sherman Zemler Wu. Suzanne Lee, English Language Learners (ELL) Task Force liaison to the OAGTF, was also present.

Task Force Members Absent: Dr. Vanessa Calderon-Rosado; Dr. Hardin Coleman; Adrienne Level; and Alexandra Oliver-Davila. Dr. Miren Uriarte, English Language Learners Task Force liaison to the OAGTF, was not in attendance.

DOCUMENTS PRESENTED

Agenda

Task Force Meeting Minutes: October 29, 2015

Meeting Schedule for the Opportunity and Achievement Gaps Task Force

Policy Mapping Exercise

Promising Practices and Unfinished Business: Fostering Equity and Excellence for Black and Latino Males

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CALL TO ORDER

Ms. Robinson called the meeting to order.

ACTION ITEM

Ms. Janey, who was not present at the October 29th Task Force meeting, questioned the use of the word align in one of the questions that was raised by members at the meeting (*How do we align with the School Quality Framework?*) Ms. Shakur suggested revising the sentence to better capture the spirit of the question, to now read, “How do we stay mindful of the School Quality Framework so that we are not operating in a vacuum?”

The Task Force then unanimously approved the minutes of the October 29, 2015 meeting with the exception of Ms. Janey, who abstained.

SUMMARY OF DISCUSSION

Dr. Blake provided a brief overview of the Annenberg reports, *Opportunity and Equity: Enrollment and Outcomes of Black and Latino Males in Boston Public Schools* and *Promising Practices and Unfinished Business: Fostering Equity and Excellence for Black and Latino Males*. Dr. Blake noted that former Superintendent Carol Johnson issued a call for these reports citing concerns around persistent achievement gaps in BPS.

Mr. Acevedo then described the process by which the Task Force members would break out into small groups to “distill” or analyze the Annenberg reports.

Following the small group discussions, the Task Force members returned to a large group to debrief.

Ms. Aponte summarized the discussion of her small group, which found the following areas to be important: making students feel welcomed; robust community engagement across schools; high quality after school enrichment programs; school partnerships with community organizations and early childhood providers; culturally competent staff; unconditional high expectations (social emotional as well as academic); and meeting the needs of all students.

Mr. Berents-Weeramuni said that his group discussed the idea of adding an additional weight for Black and Latino male students as part of the district’s Weighted Student Funding (WSF) formula. He described the WSF idea as one way to create an incentivized approach to school leaders to help close achievement and opportunity gaps.

Dr. Blake’s summarized his group’s discussion, saying that we need to assess how much special education placement is based on student behavior. Teachers and school leaders must receive cultural proficiency training. The district should focus on recruiting, hiring and developing teachers of color. The district should also monitor and expand teacher pipeline programs. The

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group concluded that student engagement, cultural sensitivity and relevant curriculum are critical to closing gaps.

Ms. Lee said that the ELL Task Force is already in the process of working with the BPS Office of Human Capital on issues around teacher diversity and cultural proficiency and that the ELL and OAG Task Forces should collaborate on these issues so as not to duplicate efforts.

Ms. Rousmaniere summarized her group's discussion of MassCore and AWC, saying that both programs are of high quality but currently students do not have equitable access. She said that no other major city in the nation uses a high stakes test in the 3rd grade to track students. The group believes that the district must provide engaging and culturally responsive curriculum and enrichment, adding that electives are essential.

Ms. Shakur then proposed the formation of subgroups and suggested the following structure:

1. Each subgroup should have 2-3 people minimum
2. Aim is to have no more than 5-6 subgroups
3. Subgroups will meet on November 17 and November 24
4. Subgroups will follow open meeting rules
5. Half-day retreat in early December (dates to be determined)

The work of the subgroups will be to: (1) craft a policy statement that is actionable with SMART (specific, measurable, attainable, realistic and time-bound) goals; and (2) draw the line at implementation.

Ms. Shakur proposed the following subgroups for group discussion

1. Mapping and benchmarking
2. Bright spots and barriers
3. Policy review (existing and proposed) e.g. AWC and Mass Core, unified enrollment, ELL, Sped, hiring, Social Emotional Learning (SEL)
4. Curriculum review K-12
5. Parent engagement
6. Community engagement
7. Data analysis from BPS

Task Force members suggested the following additional subgroups for discussion:

8. Extended learning/after school programming
9. Student engagement
10. ELL
11. Sped
12. Hiring
13. Social Emotional Learning (SEL)

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Ms. Shakur said that the Annenberg Report recommendations can be grouped into the following categories:

- school leadership and organizational policies
- curriculum and instruction
- school and district culture and climate
- family engagement and community partnerships

Ms. Shakur said that there will be overlap between the new policy recommended by the Task Force and the district's current achievement gap policy.

Ms. Robinson read aloud the Task Force's charge and priority goals as prescribed by the School Committee. She described the group's work as enhancing and updating the current policy with a focus on opportunity gaps.

The Task Force engaged in a dynamic discussion about the best way to move forward.

Following extensive discussion, the group agreed that at the next meeting, members should break up in to small groups to (1) identify what has changed in the educational landscape since the writing of the 2006 policy; (2) create a prioritized list of policy recommendations; and (3) address opportunity gaps.

Ms. Shakur asked the members to come to the next meeting prepared to share what they would like to see in the new policy.

Ms. Rousmaniere said that the Task Force needs strong support from BPS content leaders.

PUBLIC COMMENT

John Mudd, advocate, asked what can be the unique contribution of this Task Force towards closing the gap. He encouraged the Task Force to look for common threads in the research and urged the Task Force to monitor the policy's implementation.

ADJOURN

At approximately 6:38 p.m., the co-chairs adjourned the meeting.

Attest:



Elizabeth A. Sullivan
Executive Secretary