



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

**February 22, 2022**

The Boston School Committee Opportunity and Achievement Gaps (OAG) Task Force held a remote meeting on Zoom on February 22, 2022 at 4 p.m. For more information about any of the items listed below, visit [www.bostonpublicschools.org/gaps](http://www.bostonpublicschools.org/gaps), email [feedback@bostonpublicschools.org](mailto: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; Dr. Carroll Blake; Rev. Willie Bodrick (*joined after roll call*); Dr. Hardin Coleman (*joined after roll call*); Dr. James Jennings; Dr. Gil Noam (*joined after roll call*); Marinelle Rousmaniere (*joined after roll call*); and Filiberto Santiago-Lizardi (*joined after roll call*).

Task Force Members Absent: Co-Chair Sam Acevedo; Jennifer Aponte; Dr. Lisa Gonsalves; Dr. Carline Pignato; and Kimberley Williams. Student Representatives Dorian Levy and Catherine DeJesus were also absent.

BPS Staff Present: Dr. Charles Grandson, Chief Equity & Strategy Officer; and Yozmin Gay, Assistant Superintendent, Office of Opportunity Gaps.

**DOCUMENTS PRESENTED**

Agenda

OAG Task Force Meeting Minutes: January 25, 2022

**CALL TO ORDER**

**February 22, 2022**

Ms. Robinson called the meeting to order and welcomed everyone. Ms. Sullivan called the roll. Because a quorum was not present, Ms. Robinson announced that she would delay the approval of meeting minutes.

## **SUMMARY OF DISCUSSION**

Ms. Gay provided a brief budget update, explaining that she, Dr. Grandson, and the Task Force Co-Chairs recently met with the Superintendent to discuss the budget for the Office of Opportunity Gaps. She said that budget conversations are ongoing.

Ms. Robinson provided a brief update on the superintendent search process. Mayor Michelle Wu, Superintendent Cassellius and Chair Robinson reached an agreement that the Superintendent would depart at the completion of the School Year in June 2022. As is common with all new administrations, the Mayor has been assembling her leadership team and recruiting individuals who will help implement her vision for Boston. Ms. Robinson thanked the Mayor and the Superintendent for how intentionally they have approached this agreement. Both the Mayor and the Superintendent care deeply about Boston and about our students, it is with respect for each other and the important work we do that we came to this mutual decision.

Superintendent Cassellius has an employment contract with the School Committee. To determine the appropriate next steps for Superintendent Cassellius' transition, the Committee has engaged the City of Boston's Corporation Counsel to assist in drafting a separation agreement. The Corporation Counsel has provided a proposed separation agreement that adheres to the terms of the Superintendent's contract and is consistent with similar past agreements. The School Committee was briefed in an executive session on February 15 on the potential terms of the separation agreement and will hold a special School Committee meeting to focus on the Superintendent search on March 2nd. During that meeting, the Committee will publicly share the details of the Superintendent's separation agreement and Ms. Robinson will ask the Committee to authorize her as chair to agree to and sign the agreement.

The School Committee looks forward to engaging the public in the conversation about the qualifications of the next Superintendent. Ms. Robinson agreed with the Mayor that the Committee needs to move quickly and should look for someone who has educational leadership experience and is familiar with the city of Boston or Boston Public Schools.

Identifying someone who knows and understands the district and our community is going to be important given the expedited timeline. There is also urgency to this process because there are many large districts that are currently searching for a Superintendent. There are currently at least 18 vacancies among the 76 largest urban public school districts. Boston is widely regarded as a place where a lot can be accomplished and there is a lot of interest nationally in the leadership of Mayor Wu and the work of the Committee. Higher education, business, nonprofit, and philanthropic communities in Boston are ready to continue stepping up to support students and staff as true partners in the work.

The School Committee will hold a special meeting on March 2 that will focus on beginning the Superintendent search process. At that meeting, we will identify the search committee, which

**Opportunity and Achievement Gaps Task Force Remote Meeting  
Zoom**

**February 22, 2022**

will be made up of community members that represent, for example but not limited to Students, Families, BTU, School Leaders, BTU, members of the School Committee, and our task forces. The School Committee will vote on the membership of the search committee.

Also at its March 2 meeting, the School Committee will share plans for the community meetings that it will host to seek input from the community on desired characteristics for the next Superintendent. Based on the Requests for Qualifications utilized in the 2014 and 2018 search processes, BPS will draft an RFP to invite proposals for a superintendent search firm. The School Committee will then vote on the selection of the search firm.

- Ms. Robinson clarified roles and responsibilities:
  - **The Community** will support the process by sharing their input with the School Committee and Search Committee. In addition to hosting listening, the Search Committee will also provide space for community members to share their ideas. Once the School Committee announces final candidates, it will seek the community's support and input in the public interview process.
  - **The Search Committee** is responsible for hosting community meetings that will lead them to drafting a job description, and reviewing resumes and interviewing candidates, ultimately, narrowing the candidate pool to a few finalists for recommendation.
  - **The School Committee** will attend Community Listening sessions, vote to approve the job description and selection of the search firm, participate in the final interview process with the final candidates, and ultimately vote on the selection of the next Superintendent.

Dr. Jennings spoke about the importance of drafting the desired characteristics for the next superintendent. Ms. Robinson spoke about community meetings being held remotely on Zoom which is expected to expand access to the community. She emphasized the importance of hearing from diverse voices. Ms. Rousmaniere asked about the process to select a search firm. Ms. Robinson said that the firm will need to understand Boston and be able to identify a diverse applicant pool.

Rev. Bodrick expressed concern about the diversity of the superintendent search committee. HE also asked about the community listening sessions. Ms. Robinson said that four two-hour sessions are planned during which the community can provide oral comment. Written commentary is unlimited and encouraged.

Ms. Shakur asked if a member of the OAG Task Force would serve on the search committee. Ms. Robinson said that is the goal. She invited Task Force members who are interested in serving on the search committee to reach out to her. She pledged that the search process will be transparent.

Dr. Noam asked about the Mayor's vision for BPS and the superintendent. He also encouraged the Task Force to consider what its priorities are for the next superintendent. Ms. Robinson

**Opportunity and Achievement Gaps Task Force Remote Meeting  
Zoom**

**February 22, 2022**

explained that BPS is a dependent school district and that the strong partnership between the mayor and superintendent is essential.

Dr. Coleman said that even if Boston voters opt for an elected school committee, BPS is still a dependent school district, therefore the budget dynamics will not change. He asked how the Mayor would reprioritize the district's strategic plan.

Ms. Shakur asked if Mayor Wu plans to have a Chief of Education. Ms. Robinson said she is still in the process of learning about Mayor Wu's education vision, adding that tomorrow the Mayor will announce the creation of the City's Office of Early Childhood.

Ms. Shakur said that after a meeting between the Task Force co-chairs and the Superintendent, she sees a clear philosophical difference between the way the Superintendent views the OG Office as an accountability and monitoring body vs. the way the Task Force views the work of the office. She recommended that the Task Force partner with the OG Office to compile an equity report card/needs assessment on outcomes on black and brown students. The report should include data and clear recommendations for the incoming superintendent. She also encouraged the Task Force to focus on coaching and support for school-based and district-wide equity roundtables and to revamp the racial equity planning tool. Ms. Shakur said that the OG Office can only serve as an accountability and monitoring body when all departments are operating at a high level. She noted concerns about issues with professional development and Excellence for All. Ms. Robinson said the Task Force and the district need to prioritize its work for the next four months. Dr. Grandson suggested that the equity report card include the many bright spots from the past three years and highlight the support received from the Office of Equity. Ms. Gay spoke about the importance of implementation, which must be done in concert with monitoring. She said that there has not been much coaching related to the Racial Equity Planning Tool.

Dr. Blake expressed frustration with the district's lack of progress in closing gaps. Ms. Shakur echoed the frustration. Dr. Jennings encouraged the Task Force to take proactive actions that go beyond the OG Office. He suggested creating a statement or endorsement of an agenda detailing the Task Force's priorities for the superintendent search and the desired characteristics. Ms. Robinson said that that could be helpful, particularly for the newer School Committee members. She said that the School Committee is planning to receive a joint presentation from the OAG Task Force and the OG Office this spring. Ms. Shakur expressed a sense of urgency to create the report card. She invited Task Force members to help move the work forward on an expedited timeline. Ms. Rousmaniere spoke about the intention of the Task Force to not have the work be siloed but embedded throughout the departments. Rev. Bodrick said that it's important to highlight institutional history so that the past is not repeated. He said that the Task Force should make it clear that it is a separate body from the OG Office. Dr. Blake spoke about the importance of fully funding the OG Office. Ms. Robinson said the Committee's March 1st FY23 budget hearing is focused on the central office budget. Ms. Gay said that Superintendent Cassellius wants to make sure that the OG Office's budget proposal is aligned systemically. She spoke about this being a critical time in the budget process, and that the district needs to show a clear commitment to the work. She said that the OG Office does not currently have the budget to implement the Exam Schools Initiative (ESI), which is mandated by the School Committee. Ms. Gay said that there is not a cohesive effort around equity and that BPS needs a systematic

**Opportunity and Achievement Gaps Task Force Remote Meeting  
Zoom**

**February 22, 2022**

understanding of equity. She said that the needs assessment/report card will force a process of self-reflection. Ms. Shakur expressed concern about possible unfunded mandates such as ESI. She encouraged Ms. Robinson to communicate to the Superintendent that anything less than full funding for the OG Office is unacceptable. Ms. Rousmaniere and Rev. Bodrick encouraged more transparency. Dr. Blake agreed. Rev. Bodrick offered to help draft a letter to the School Committee communicating the concerns raised by the Task Force. Dr. Jennings offered to help draft the letter. Ms. Rousmaniere also offered to support the draft.

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

John Mudd, advocate, expressed concerns about the diversity of teaching hiring and the OG Office budget. He encouraged the Task Force to examine the previous superintendent job descriptions and the strategic plan and identify areas that should be updated. He said that he sees the role of the OG Office as the executive arm of the superintendent in coordinating departments to lead systemic change in implementing the OAG policy.

Barbara Fields, advocate, questioned the Superintendent's commitment to the OAG TF and to closing gaps. She faulted the School Committee and appealed to Ms. Robinson to use the power of her position as chair to drive change.

**ADJOURN**

Ms. Shakur asked Ms. Sullivan to clarify what's legally permissible in terms of members collaborating to draft a letter.

**Approved** - On roll call, the Committee unanimously approved a motion to adjourn the meeting at 6:04 p.m.

Attest:



Elizabeth A. Sullivan  
Executive Secretary