



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

February 23, 2016

The Boston School Committee's Opportunity and Achievement Gaps Task Force held a meeting on February 23, 2016 at 4 p.m. at the Bruce C. Bolling Municipal Building, Roxbury Innovation Center, 2300 Washington Street, Roxbury, Massachusetts. For more information about any of the items listed below, visit www.bostonpublicschools.org/gaps, email feedback@bostonpublicschools.org or call the Boston School Committee Office at (617) 635-9014.

ATTENDANCE

Task Force Members Present: Co-Chair Sam Acevedo; Co-Chair Jeri Robinson; Co-Chair Ayele Shakur; Jennifer Aponte; Heshan Berents-Weeramuni; Dr. Carroll Blake; Dr. Vanessa Calderon-Rosado; Kim Janey; Lilianna Mickle; Dr. Gil Noam; Carline Pignato; Marinelle Rousmaniere; Filberto Santiago-Lizardi; Ron Walker; and Sherman Zemler Wu. Superintendent Tommy Chang and Suzanne Lee, English Language Learners Task Force liaison to the OAG Task Force, were also present.

Task Force Members Absent: Dr. Hardin Coleman; Kenny Feng; Adrienne Level; Keondre McClay; and Alexandra Oliver-Dávila.

DOCUMENTS PRESENTED

Agenda

Task Force Meeting Minutes: January 26, 2016

Update: Office of Opportunity and Achievement Gaps

Dr. Colin Rose: Draft Logic Model 1:15

Proposed Timeline for Completion of Draft Revised OAGTF Policy

The Essential Supports

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Official Statement from the School Committee's Opportunity and Achievement Gaps Task Force to the Boston School Committee Regarding the Superintendent's Proposal to Expand Access to Advanced Work Class, January 27, 2016

CALL TO ORDER

Ms. Robinson called the meeting to order and welcomed everyone.

Superintendent Chang updated the Task Force on the Boston Latin School (BLS) investigation regarding racial tension that was completed last week by the BPS Office of Equity. The BLS headmaster, students, families, and staff were interviewed. The investigation found that of seven instances involving race, six were handled appropriately. One case was not properly investigated or communicated. The Superintendent said he is handling that issue adding that he cannot publicly discuss personnel issues. BPS Equity Circulars have been updated, requiring any staff person who witnesses or is aware of an example of bias to report it to Office of Equity. All district leaders have been recently trained by the Office of Equity, the school climate survey has been updated, and a training session with YW Boston is being planned. Racial climate audits will be conducted district-wide. The Superintendent is also establishing a working group to boost student and teacher diversity at BLS. The district will investigate any new information that is brought forth. Chief Equity Officer Rebecca Shuster added that the district expects to open separate investigations based on information that the district has received in recent weeks.

Task Force members then engaged in a brief question and answer session with the Superintendent. Task Force members asked the district to provide regular updates to the Task Force and the School Committee. They also emphasized the importance of listening to student voice and suggested that the district survey BLS alumni regarding their experiences involving race. Dr. Colin Rose explained that the district must be as transparent as possible. The district is also going to issue a value statement about race.

ACTION ITEM

The Task Force approved by unanimous consent the minutes of the January 26, 2016 meeting.

SUMMARY OF DISCUSSION

Mr. Acevedo led a review of the proposed timeline moving forward. The co-chairs proposed dividing the Task Force into three subcommittees: Teaching and Learning, Leadership and School Culture, District Policy and Operations. The subcommittees will spend the month of March drafting the revised policy with input from BPS department leaders. The Task Force will hold one or two half day working sessions in late March or early April, then spend the remainder of April editing the policy, with the goal of approving a final policy recommendation on April 26th for submission to the School Committee.

Opportunity and Achievement Gaps Task Force Meeting

Bruce C. Bolling Municipal Building
Roxbury Innovation Center

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The co-chairs are considering hiring a facilitator to assist with the next phase of the process. Ms. Lee and Ms. Mickle offered to make recommendations.

Harvard University professor Dr. Ronald Ferguson has agreed to serve as national advisor and will participate in a Task Force meeting in the near future. The co-chairs also plan to hold a community forum about closing opportunity and achievement gaps at the Bolling Building this spring

Dr. Colin Rose, Assistant Superintendent, Office of Opportunity and Achievement Gaps, then made a presentation about his role, the structures and culture in BPS central office, the structures and culture in schools, and community structures and culture. Multiple efforts are underway to strengthen support structures to close opportunity and achievement gaps. Dr. Rose is developing a model for “Opportunity Schools” that aims to close gaps by using a measurement tool for cultural proficiency in schools, conducting culturally proficient professional development, providing rigorous instruction with cognitively demanding tasks, and incorporating young and parent voices in decision making. In addition, Dr. Rose is working with the city’s Health and Human Services cabinet to expand early childhood summer programming and leading the district’s work as part of a White House Initiative to combat chronic absenteeism.

Task Force members thanked Dr. Rose for his work, suggesting that he study pockets of success around the district and learn from these “bright spots.” Members also suggested keeping a focus on accountability and taking a closer look at the BPS Countdown to Kindergarten program. Members asked Dr. Rose to return to the Task Force with more details about his budget and staffing needs.

Ms. Robinson asked the district to present student demographic data by race, grade and school to provide the Task Force with a better picture of how students are performing.

PUBLIC COMMENT

John Mudd, advocate, encouraged district leaders to explain how new initiatives will close opportunity and achievement gaps. He added that teacher diversity efforts need to be expanded and modified, saying more alternative pathways to certification are needed. He also asked the district to disaggregate data on black students.

ADJOURN

At approximately 6:15 p.m., the co-chairs adjourned the meeting.

Attest:



Elizabeth A. Sullivan
Executive Secretary