



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

May 25, 2021

The Boston School Committee Opportunity and Achievement Gaps (OAG) Task Force held a remote meeting on Zoom on May 25, 2021 at 4 p.m. 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 Jeri Robinson; Co-Chair Sam Acevedo; Co-Chair Ayele Shakur; Jennifer Aponte; Dr. Carroll Blake (joined after roll call); Rev. Willie Bodrick (joined after roll call); Dr. Hardin Coleman (joined after roll call); Dr. James Jennings; Dr. Gil Noam (joined after roll call); Dr. Carline Pignato; Marinell Rousmaniere; Filiberto Santiago-Lizardi; and Kimberley Williams. Dorian Levy, Boston Student Advisory Council appointee to the OAG Task Force, was also in attendance.

Task Force Members Absent: Dr. Lisa Gonsalves; and Sherman Zemler Wu. Carolyn DeJesus, Boston Student Advisory Council appointee to the OAG Task Force, was also absent.

BPS Staff Present: Superintendent Brenda Cassellius; Dr. Charles Grandson, Chief Equity & Strategy Officer; Harold Miller, Interim Assistant Superintendent, Office of Opportunity Gaps; and Eva Mitchell, Chief Accountability Officer.

DOCUMENTS PRESENTED

[Agenda](#)

[OAG Task Force Meeting Minutes: April 27, 2021](#)

[Proposed Rubric Tool for OAG Task Force](#)

[Campus Without Walls Power Point, April 27, 2021](#)

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[Community Engagement: Federal Relief Funding Planning May 2021 Update PowerPoint](#)
[Office of Opportunity Gaps 2016-2020 and Beyond PowerPoint](#)

CALL TO ORDER

Ms. Robinson called the meeting to order and welcomed everyone. Ms. Sullivan called the roll. A quorum was present.

APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES: APRIL 27, 2021

Approved - On roll call, the Committee unanimously approved the minutes of the April 27, 2021 OAG Task Force meeting.

SUMMARY OF DISCUSSION

Ms. Shakur, Boston Opportunity Agenda Executive Director Kristin McSwain, and Campus Without Walls Director Jasmine Toussaint presented an overview of Campus Without Walls (CWW), the Open Opportunity – Massachusetts (OOMA) initiative to create space to connect, coordinate and align existing efforts across the education field. Through a network approach, OOMA connects grassroots with grassroots organizations while placing community expertise and leadership at the center of improvement efforts. By 2021, OOMA aims to invest in demonstration sites across the Commonwealth to remove barriers to effective partnership, identify innovative approaches to advance racial equity and prepare underserved youth for work and life as well as inform local and state policy for systems-wide change. A pilot of the initiative has started involving 10 BPS schools, some non-BPS schools, and 13 community partners serving over 1,500 students. Opportunities vary across schools.

Dr. Noam praised the initiative. He asked about the role of the teacher as a mentor. Ms. Shakur explained that lead teachers meet twice a month and collaborate with partner teachers in a community of professional learning. She said that CWW has trained and matched volunteers with students and plans to expand the mentoring component next year.

Ms. Robinson asked about the role of student agency. Ms. Shakur explained that as part of the pilot program, teachers opt in for their class, starting with 4-6 week mini-units.

Ms. Aponte spoke about the importance of reliable internet and access to technology. Ms. Shakur said that technology is provided in school, adding that CWW received a donation of laptops for this school year.

Dr. Pignato asked how CWW plans to support and monitor student success beyond high school as well as plans to expand for teachers. Ms. McSwain said that CWW is using the same measures and goals as the School Committee for College, Career, and Life Readiness.

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The Superintendent noted that today is the anniversary of George Floyd's murder. She said that BPS is using an anti-racist lens on all of its work from policy to practice. She spoke about addressing systemic barriers by revising district policies such as the MassCore graduation policy, attendance, and retention. The Superintendent and her team will present an update on the district's grading policy to the School Committee tomorrow night. The Exam Schools Admissions Task Force is working on recommendations for a permanent policy.

The Superintendent provided the Task Force with a brief update on BuildBPS. The FY22 Capital Plan includes \$78 million in capital improvements and district-wide initiatives. The guiding principles for the updated plan are to achieve equitable access to educational opportunities and programs; provide excellent buildings that promote health, enhance learning, and motivate students; and ensure predictability and transparency in the district's facilities master planning process. The capital planning and BuildBPS update includes several clear components to bring greater transparency to the process for building and renovating school buildings and a clearer pathway of learning from early childhood to high school graduation. BPS will continue its family and community engagement through October when the Superintendent will provide additional updates to the plan and request votes from the Committee.

The plan includes the following recommendations:

- 5 new school buildings: Construction of brand new school buildings in each of the neighborhoods of Allston/Brighton, Dorchester, East Boston, and Roxbury, as well as a new school for the Horace Mann School for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing;
- 4 major school renovations: Following the approved closure of the Edwards Middle School at the end of the 2020-21 school year, the current merger of the BCLA-McCormack 7-12, and the proposed closures of the Irving and Timilty schools at the end of the 2021-22 school year, all three middle school buildings will be renovated as part of the long-term strategy to provide clear, predictable educational pathways for students and their families; and
- A timeline and plan for continued maintenance and upgrades of all school buildings.

The Superintendent said that she is in the process of restructuring her executive team. She is searching for a Deputy Superintendent and a Chief Academic Officer. Indira Alvarez has been appointed as Chief Operating Officer, Eva Mitchell has been appointed as Chief of Accountability, and Corey Harris has been appointed as Chief of Schools. BPS is expected to receive \$400 million in Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) funding, some of which will go to schools and bring greater equity to centralized support. She said that early childhood literacy should be pushed to all elementary schools. Twenty percent of the funding must be spent on recovery. Some of the funding will support partnerships. She expressed optimism that BPS will return to full in-person learning in the fall if social distancing restrictions are lifted.

Ms. Shakur expressed concern about disparities in current MassCore offerings and asked how the district will deliver to all students. The Superintendent said that 100% of students will receive MassCore because it is now policy, noting that the new policy will impact current 7th

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graders. She said that it is incumbent upon the district to build systems to support MassCore implementation, including making improvements to the Student Information System (SIS), course catalog, and hiring new teachers.

Dr. Jennings spoke about the importance of school partnerships and the value of smaller non-profit organizations.

Mr. Acevedo spoke about the Boston Higher Education Resource Center (HERC), where he serves as executive director, having partnerships with 10 BPS high schools. The Superintendent said that ESSER funding will provide an opportunity for BPS to invest in partnerships.

Dr. Noam praised Chief of Schools Corey Harris and his team for supporting Hub Schools. He suggested that some ESSER money be spent on designing systems, not just services. The Superintendent agreed. She spoke about the city's investment in BPS of \$100 million over three years which is being used to support Transformation Schools and add family liaison and social worker positions.

Dr. Pignato asked how schools will be allotted ESSER funds. The Superintendent said that no decisions have been made yet and that funding will be distributed equitably based on need.

Ms. Robinson asked about the vision for the OAG Office moving forward. Dr. Grandson said that he will respond later. The Superintendent departed the meeting.

Chief Accountability Officer Eva Mitchell presented an update on federal ESSER funding. BPS is applying for nearly \$400 million from the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security Act (CARES) and the Elementary and Secondary Schools Emergency Relief fund (ESSER) over the next three years. Grounded in the community-driven strategic plan, BPS will invest these one-time federal relief funds to return well, recover strong, and reimagine what's possible for students.

Superintendent Cassellius has formed a Commission to advise her and BPS on the key focus areas for these new investments, with a commitment to allocating the funding in an equitable and sustainable manner. BPS will leverage the new funding over three years and ensure the new opportunities can be supported for years to come. The Commission will have five meetings, twice monthly over the next two months with the final meeting to be held on July 1, during which the plan will be presented and posted for a formal 30-day public review and comment period. BPS is working towards a filing deadline in July with the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. More information is available at <https://www.bostonpublicschools.org/Page/8678>.

Ms. Mitchell said that BPS is looking for feedback from the OAG Task Force on investments and allotments. Ms. Shakur asked if the \$400 in funding is guaranteed. Ms. Mitchell said that BPS has been allotted that money. Ms. Shakur asked if the Task Force could send her its recommendations after its next meeting in late June. Ms. Mitchell said yes.

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Ms. Mitchell clarified for Mr. Acevedo that decisions around funding distribution within the district have not yet been made.

Dr. Pignato asked how the commission will know what every school needs. Ms. Mitchell explained the public engagement process that will take place through July, followed by a 30-day public comment period. The Commission will consider measures of impact, effort, and sustainability, among others.

Ms. Robinson asked how BPS will help schools create the infrastructure to support MassCore (e.g. libraries, art, etc.) from Pre-K through high school. Ms. Mitchell said that BPS has secured a \$10 million grant from the state to support high schools.

Mr. Miller presented an update on the Office of Opportunity Gaps from 2016-2020 and beyond. He spoke about the OAG policy as a logic model with a focus on cultural proficiency across the district.

Key Accomplishments 2016-2020:

- Systematic focus on the Implementation of the 2016 OAG Policy
- OAG Policy Goal Tracker System
- Culturally and Linguistically Sustaining Practices (CLSP)
- Culturally Responsive Instructional Observation Protocol (CRIOP); operationalizes CLSP competencies 2-3
- School diversity hiring targets
- CLSP Pilot with Boston Student Advisory Council (BSAC)
- Creation and implementation of BPS Racial Equity Planning Tool (REPT)
- Updated process for Racial Equity Impact Statement submissions INNOVATION & PROGRAM
- 2020 Exam School Admissions Policy
- Excellence For All; demographics mirror BPS student population
- Expansion of Universal Pre-K
- Student facing racial equity embedded practices and initiatives including and not limited to: 10 Boys/10 Girls, Peer Group Connection (PGC), Early Warning Indicator Systems (EWIS), Building Assets Reducing Risks (BARR), Success Mentors, William James College (WJC) Child and Adolescent Mental Health Initiative (CAMHI) and more
- Opportunity Index
- Opportunity Portfolio - vetting and analysis process of current BPS partners and PartnerBPS Profiles; aligned with Opportunity Index and also includes elements of CLSP

High Level Goals for Next Phase 2020-2025:

- OAG Policy & Policy Review
- Implement 2020-2025 OAG Policy Goal setting process in BPS Divisions, Departments AND Schools

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- Lead, facilitate and organize teams, processes, and timelines to vet, revise and/or create new district AND school level policies
- Work with Superintendent and Office of Special Education to ameliorate the disproportionate referral rate of Black and Latinx students in substantially separate settings PD & Coaching Capacity
- Develop team and clear, shared, vision, calendar and arc of learning for BPS CARES (CLSP/CRIOP, Anti Racism, Racial Equity Planning, EWIS, School Based Equity Roundtables)
- Develop team and shared vision for the implementation of CLSP Badge/Endorsement Innovation & Programming
- Ensure funding and capacity for expansion of Exam School Initiative (ESI) and development of Strategies 4 Success (S4S)
- Locate sustainable funding to improve upon current programming and/or develop new programming based on direct feedback from stakeholders pre/post pandemic (10 Boys/10 Girls, BARR, PGC, Success Mentors, William James College CAMHI Initiative, Boston Rookies (Elementary School Athletics/Academics), Social Histories of Indigenous Peoples and Peoples of the African Diaspora, Hip Hop Agora, and more

Capacity Considerations for Next Phase 2020-2025

- OAG Policy & Policy Review
- Goal setting & monitoring for 8 division chiefs, 53 departments heads, and 125+ school teams
- Equitable Policy Review: 15 new policies scheduled to be developed next year with an antiracist lens
- 200+ district policies and circulars overall PD & Coaching Capacity
- 125+ schools - supporting and monitoring School-based Equity Roundtables, implementation of CLSP/CRIOP in alignment with OAG Policy and REPT
- 40+ racial equity analysis writing in progress - monitoring and coaching district offices
- Continued CLSP & Anti-racism training - for 125+ school leaders and 150+ central office staff, Executive Team, and School Committee
- 33+ Transformation Schools require targeted, systematic, pedagogical strategies to ensure optimal teaching and learning Innovation & Programming
- Exam School Initiative (ESI) scheduled to serve over 750 students year around and expand to 4th grade
- Strategies 4 Success (S4S) scheduled to serve 1300+ 7th & 9th graders at each Exam School
- Need to sustain funding and programming in over 40 BPS schools
- Have earned nearly \$500,000 in grant funding 2017-2020 to implement some of our current programming

The Task Force discussed the draft rubric developed by a subset of members (Dr. Blake, Dr. Pignato, Ms. Williams and Dr. Jennings) in response to the Task Force's collective desire to

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develop a framework for district presentations to the Task Force. Ms. Shakur explained how she and her team used the rubric in her Campus Without Walls presentation.

Ms. Rousmaniere asked how the rubric connects with the racial equity planning tool. Mr. Miller explained that the tools are aligned, adding that the rubric developed by the Task Force will only be used for district presentations to the Task Force.

Members suggested that district presentations consist of 5-10 slides that are based in the rubric.

PUBLIC COMMENT

- John Mudd, advocate, advocated for district reports to contain disaggregated data.
- Barbara Fields, advocate, spoke about the importance of funding and maintaining focus on systemic changes to close gaps. She advocated for the expansion of Excellence for All.

ADJOURN

Approved - On roll call, the Committee unanimously approved a motion to adjourn the meeting at 6:09 p.m.

Attest:



Elizabeth A. Sullivan
Executive Secretary