



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

September 28, 2021

The Boston School Committee Opportunity and Achievement Gaps (OAG) Task Force held a remote meeting on Zoom on September 28, 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 Sam Acevedo; Co-Chair Jeri Robinson; Co-Chair Ayele Shakur; Dr. Carroll Blake; Rev. Willie Bodrick; Dr. Hardin Coleman; Dr. Lisa Gonsalves (joined after roll call); Dr. James Jennings; Dr. Gil Noam (joined after roll call); Dr. Carline Pignato; Marinell Rousmaniere (joined after roll call) and Filiberto Santiago-Lizardi (joined after roll call); and Kimberley Williams. Dorian Levy, Boston Student Advisory Council appointee to the OAG Task Force, was also in attendance.

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

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

DOCUMENTS PRESENTED

[Agenda](#)

OAG Task Force Meeting Minutes: [May 25, 2021](#); and [June 29, 2021](#)

PowerPoint: [Entry Plan, Office of Opportunity Gaps, September 28, 2021](#)

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CALL TO ORDER

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

SUMMARY OF DISCUSSION

Ms. Robinson invited the Task Force members to introduce themselves to Yozmin Gay Draper, the newly appointed Assistant Superintendent of Achievement Gaps. Members briefly introduced themselves and spoke about their passion for and commitment to closing gaps.

Dr. Grandson introduced Ms. Gay Draper and thanked the search committee that hired her. Ms. Gay Draper comes to Boston Public Schools with 20 years of successful experience in teaching and learning, school and system leadership; as well as non-profit leadership and community advocacy. She specializes in studying, assessing, and designing programming that advances academic and career success for Black and Brown students and their surrounding communities. As the Co-founder and Vice President of Flight 22 Foundation, Yozmin led the execution and scaling of entrepreneurship education programming in predominantly Black and Brown schools across the state of Maryland. She strongly believes that the difference between success and failure is an opportunity and that every student deserves quality opportunity regardless of race, culture, gender complexity, or zip code.

Ms. Gay Draper also served in the roles of Director of School Support with Achievement Network and Project Coach with Insight Education Group partnering with Empowering Educators to Excel (E3) school districts to provide targeted support for educator effectiveness, leadership initiatives, and student learning. She has served as an Elementary School Principal where she was awarded the Mayor's Attendance Award for the most improved school attendance of all the schools in Baltimore City. She also served as a School Support Network Lead where she led a multidisciplinary team that provided academic and operational support for a network of 17 schools in BCPSS. Ms. Gay Draper received her undergraduate degree from Stevenson University and a master's degree in education from the University of Maryland Baltimore County. She is currently pursuing a doctorate in Leadership and Learning in Organization at Vanderbilt University Peabody where she was appointed member of their Leadership, Policy, and Organization Department Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion committee.

Ms. Gay Draper spoke about her experience working in Baltimore City Public Schools and as the vice president of the non-profit Flight 22 Foundation. She said that often the difference between success and failure is opportunity. She expressed a sense of urgency to close opportunity gaps for children.

Rev. Acevedo welcomed Ms. Gay Draper to Boston. He asked her to share her observations about the differences between Baltimore Public Schools and Boston Public Schools when it comes to their approach to closing gaps. Ms. Gay Draper said that Dr. Grandson challenged her to begin her work in BPS by spending 30 days listening and learning about the district, then creating a 90-day entry plan. She spoke about the lack of opportunity being a common theme

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throughout districts. She emphasized the importance of first taking time to learn in order to maximize the effectiveness of implementation.

Dr. Gonsalves asked Ms. Gay Draper if she had previous experience worked with university partners. Ms. Gay Draper spoke about her previous work with Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), adding that university pipelines are critical to closing gaps.

Mr. Levy, who served on the hiring committee that led to the appointment of Ms. Gay Draper, praised her commitment to honoring student voice.

Dr. Pignato asked Ms. Gay Draper what issues she would like to address and what areas she views as promising. Ms. Gay Draper cited troubling pre-COVID data from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) as an area of concern, cautioning that numbers only tell part of the story. She praised BPS' commitment to anti-racist pedagogy and school-based equity roundtables. She spoke about the need for traction around theoretical frames as well as the need for quality data that tells the narrative.

Dr. Jennings spoke about the value of parents as learning partners. Ms. Gay Draper echoed the importance of parental involvement.

Dr. Blake spoke about the importance of supporting black and brown boys. Ms. Gay Draper said that black and brown children are dealing with external threats in the learning space.

Ms. Robinson asked Ms. Gay Draper if she had learned anything surprise since arriving in Boston. Ms. Gay Draper said that she has felt very welcomed and wants to help make Boston the example for anti-racist beliefs and practices.

Ms. Williams spoke about the challenges of working across central office and schools and asked Ms. Gap Draper how she plans to find a balance between policy work and programmatic work. Ms. Gay Draper spoke about building cohesiveness so that the Division of Equity, Strategy, and Opportunity Gaps has an opportunity to vet curriculum and create joint accountability. School superintendents and district leaders continue to use Anti-Racist Leadership Equity Roundtables (ALERT) to discuss equity issues as they relate to policy and practice.

Rev. Bodrick spoke about the importance of interdepartmental accountability.

Dr. Grandson then presented an update from the Division of Equity, Strategy, and Opportunity Gaps (ESOG), which is composed of four offices: Opportunity Gaps; Recruitment Cultivation and Diversity; Equity; and Strategy & Innovation. He thanked the OAG Task Force for creating a rubric to guide district presentations to the Task Force. He spoke about the Superintendent's organizational reorganization as of July 1st. He spoke about the Racial Equity Planning Tool bringing accountability to the district and said that BPS plans to post equity analyses on the website to be more transparent. He also discussed how BPS is providing Racial Equity and Leadership (REAL) Training to 11,000 BPS employees as part of a larger professional learning strategy around racial equity. He said that BPS vetting its policies with anti-racist lens. He also provided a brief update on ESSER funding.

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Ms. Shakur asked Ms. Gay Draper how the Task Force can be helpful. Ms. Gay Draper responded that she is eager for feedback about where gaps exist and what should be emphasized. She spoke about using the teacher-leader model to stabilize school-based equity roundtables. She also spoke about the importance of moving from theory to action. Ms. Shakur spoke about the need to revise the 2016 OAG policy and review department plans. She expressed concern about the implementation and operationalization of the current plans. She spoke about the need to be intentional about operationalizing the plans so that there is shared agreement and buy-in between central office and schools. Dr. Grandson spoke about challenges, areas of disconnect and implementation barriers including leadership turnover. Ms. Shakur suggested that the Task Force more closely examine and discuss academics. She requested that at the next Task Force meeting, Dr. Grandson present the Task Force with specific suggestions on where it can have the most value and drive impact.

Dr. Jennings said that there are a number of partner agencies on the front lines of this gap-closing work. He suggested that the Task Force hear from partner organizations.

Dr. Blake spoke about support, freedom, and accountability.

Dr. Pignato encouraged Dr. Grandson and Ms. Gay Draper to identify some “quick wins.” Dr. Grandson suggested planning the larger work through a smaller subset of the group.

Rev. Acevedo spoke about the role of the Task Force serving a monitoring body, describing it as both a partner and a gadfly.

Rev. Bodrick suggested revisiting the OAG policy tracker. He proposed that the Task Force review the work already done and be intentional to move the work forward. Dr. Grandson offered to show goals from the tracker as part of district presentations to help inform the next set of goals and metrics to be monitored.

Mr. Levy asked about school-based equity roundtables which he says need more student involvement. Dr. Grandson said new coaches will provide targeted support to school leaders to help in this effort. Mr. Levy spoke about the importance of collaboration.

Ms. Shakur summarized the key points of the discussion.

Key Takeaways & Goals for the Task Force:

1. Revise the 2016 Policy – subgroup needed
2. Help solidify the strategy and goals for the OG Office, serving in an advising role for Dr. Grandson and Ms. Gay Draper – subgroup needed
3. Identify external partners who can help move the work forward
4. Serve as a Monitoring and Accountability Body for the District (“Part Friend and Part Gadfly”)

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- a. Look to the Task Force for institutional knowledge on what has transpired over the past six years and to members individually for historical knowledge over the past 20 years.

Additional Points from the Group:

- Create space for Ms. Gay Draper to listen, observe, and innovate
- Continue with a sense of urgency
- Revisit existing data dashboard with metrics on each department.
- Activate student voices – the voices of the participants is critical

Dr. Noam spoke about the importance of capturing the voices of stakeholders, particularly students. He advocated for using an evidence-oriented approach.

PUBLIC COMMENT

John Mudd, advocate, urged the Task Force to adopt a stronger advocacy role. He expressed concerns about language gaps and programmatic gaps, as well as racial gaps. He spoke about support for English Learners and English Learners with Disabilities and the importance of using adequate assessments and data.

ADJOURN

Approved - On roll call, the Committee unanimously approved a motion to adjourn the meeting at 6:11 p.m.

Attest:



Elizabeth A. Sullivan
Executive Secretary