



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

April 25, 2023

The Boston School Committee Opportunity and Achievement Gaps (OAG) Task Force held a virtual meeting on Zoom on April 25, 2023 at 3:45 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: Dr. Carroll Blake; Rev. Willie Bodrick; Dr. Hardin Coleman; Dr. Lisa Gonsalves; Dr. Carline Pignato; Marinelle Rousmaniere; Filiberto Santiago-Lizardi; Kimberley Williams; Co-Chair Sam Acevedo; Co-Chair Jeri Robinson; and Co-Chair Ayele Shakur.

Task Force Members Absent: Dr. James Jennings; and Dr. Gil Noam. Student Representative Khasim Saeed was also absent.

Boston Public Schools (BPS) Staff Present: Superintendent Mary Skipper; Deputy Superintendent of Family and Community Advancement Ana Tavares, Senior Advisor of Organizational Development and Equity Mariel Novas; Chief Equity and Strategy Officer Charles Grandson; and Assistant Superintendent of Achievement Gaps Yozmin Gay.

DOCUMENTS PRESENTED

[Agenda](#)

[OAG Task Force Meeting Minutes: March 28, 2023](#)

[Office of Opportunity Gaps Update PowerPoint, April 25, 2023](#)

CALL TO ORDER

Ms. Robinson called the meeting to order and welcomed everyone. Ms. Sullivan called the roll. A quorum was not present at the time of roll call but a quorum was reached in the meeting prior to the approval of minutes.

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SUMMARY OF DISCUSSION

Ms. Robinson introduced Senior Advisor of Organizational Development and Equity Dr. Mariel Novas who will be supporting the Opportunity and Achievement Gaps Task Force along with Dr. Tavares, Dr. Grandson and Dr. Gay.

Ms. Shakur suggested that at the May meeting, the Task Force receive an update from the Data and Accountability subgroup, as well as a presentation on the Racial Equity Planning Tool and Black student agenda from Dr. Grandson. She recommended receiving an update on transformation schools in May or June. Dr. Blake suggested receiving an update on the 10 Boys/10 Girls Initiative or similar targeted programming. Dr. Pignato suggested that the Task Force receive updates on inclusion and transportation.

Superintendent Mary Skipper joined the meeting and presented an overview of her organizational chart, which she said provides clear lines of accountability. The Superintendent affirmed her commitment to advancing racial equity and eliminating opportunity gaps. In an effort to bring more accountability, clarity and transparency to the district, the Superintendent adopted a distributive leadership model and a regional network model to ensure that schools receive the support they need to serve students, particularly those who haven't been served well. Three deputies report directly to the Superintendent: Senior Deputy Superintendent of Academics Linda Chen; Deputy Superintendent of Operations Sam Depina; and Deputy Superintendent of Family and Community Advancement Ana Tavares. Dr. Tavares has spent many years in the community as a school leader, school superintendent, and advocate for culturally and linguistically affirming practices. She leads three divisions: Equity, Strategy and Opportunity Gaps; Family Advancement; and Community Engagement.

The regional network model comprises nine regions. Each region is supported by a school superintendent and an operational leader who flags issues and concerns that school leaders may be experiencing for a group of 10 -12 schools. Each region has key liaisons serving to connect and support the region of schools in areas such as Human Capital, Finance, Special Education and Family Engagement. The Superintendent is committed to expanding liaisons from the Opportunity Gaps office to the nine regions to support the schools in this work as Equity and Strategy Managers.

The Superintendent explained that BPS has experienced challenges in the past such as equity being siloed, a lack of capacity leading to unsustainable workloads, attrition, and churn, the creation of plans that are not fully executed, and many families not feeling authentically engaged. She said the goal of the org chart is to address those issues, ensuring that equity is a throughline throughout the organizational structure. She said that she is meeting bi-weekly with her leadership team to ensure cross-departmental collaboration.

Ms. Williams expressed support for the Superintendent's rationale for the organizational structure and offered to be an active partner in operationalizing the work.

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Mr. Acevedo asked the Superintendent how she plans to measure success. The Superintendent responded that improved student outcomes will demonstrate success. She suggested working with the Task Force to set performance indicators.

Dr. Blake expressed concern that moving the Office of Opportunity Gaps further from the Superintendent on the org chart could make it less effective. He suggested that the OG Office report to Academics rather than Engagement. The Superintendent said that there are already many big initiatives under the purview of Academics, and that all issues need to be given appropriate attention. She said that as superintendent, she is ultimately held accountable for gap-closing work.

Rev. Bodrick asked the Superintendent how she plans to create a healthier culture in the central office for black and brown employees. The Superintendent said that she received concerns about the issue when she took the role and hired an outside investigator whose work is ongoing. She said that her team is focused on the recruitment and retention of educators of color.

Dr. Coleman applauded the Superintendent's comments that BPS must be a school system and not just a system of schools. He said that he views the Task Force as having three roles: developing solutions, holding the district accountable, and acting as a sounding board for ideas. He asked that the Superintendent and co-chairs provide recommendations to the Task Force on how it can be most helpful.

Before she departed from the meeting, the Superintendent introduced Dr. Mariel Novas as her new Senior Advisor of Organizational Development and Equity. Dr. Novas shared her personal and professional background as a Boston native and former BPS teacher with experience in instructional leadership, organizing, and policy making. She pledged to be transparent and affirmed her commitment to strengthening anti-racist systems and structures. Dr. Novas said that she will be holding one-on-one meetings with each Task Force member. Ms. Williams welcomed the collaboration.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Approved - With quorum present, the OAG Task Force unanimously approved, by roll call, the minutes of the March 28, 2023 meeting.

SUMMARY OF DISCUSSION

Assistant Superintendent of Achievement Gaps Yozmin Gay presented an update from the Office of Opportunity focused on staffing, ongoing work, and goals. She was joined by Executive Director of Immigrant & Targeted Populations Velecia Saunders who provided an update on School-based Equity Rountables (SBERT), and Manager of Equity & Strategy Donna Lashus who provided an update on Culturally and Linguistically Sustaining Practices (CLSP).

Ms. Rousmaniere explained how EdVestors partners with BPS to expand equity at the school-level.

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Dr. Coleman spoke about the value of research practice partnerships which are collaborative, long-term relationships between researchers and practitioners designed to improve problems of practice in education.

Dr. Gay spoke about the importance of evaluating implementation before effectiveness. Ms. Lashus explained the value of SBERTs as a family engagement strategy.

Dr. Gay announced that Emerson Moniz has been hired as a data scientist supporting the Office of Opportunity Gaps and Office of Data and Accountability.

Dr. Grandson said that he will provide additional information about the roles and responsibilities of Equity and Strategy Managers at the next Task Force meeting. Dr. Tavares said that the new positions will support learning communities to help close gaps.

Ms. Shakur summarized the discussion and discussed next steps. She said that the next Task Force meeting should include an introduction to the new data scientist, Emerson Moniz, an update from the data and accountability subgroup, a presentation on the Racial Equity Planning Tool, and the Black student agenda. She proposed a presentation on special education for the June meeting.

Dr. Coleman suggested inviting regional superintendents to a future meeting to provide a SWOT Analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) regarding the progress on equity in their regions.

PUBLIC COMMENT

None.

CLOSING AND ADJOURNMENT

Approved - On roll call, the Task Force unanimously approved a motion to adjourn the meeting at 5:58 p.m.

Attest:



Elizabeth A. Sullivan
Executive Secretary