



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

October 23, 2023

The Boston School Committee Opportunity and Achievement Gaps (OAG) Task Force held a virtual meeting on Zoom on October 23, 2023 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: Dr. Hardin Coleman; Dr. Lisa Gonsalves; Dr. Carline Pignato; Marinelle Rousmaniere; Filiberto Santiago-Lizardi; Dr. Kimberley Williams; Co-Chair Sam Acevedo; Co-Chair Jeri Robinson; and Co-Chair Ayele Shakur.

Task Force Members Absent: Dr. Carroll Blake; Rev. Willie Bodrick; Dr. James Jennings; Dr. Gil Noam.

Boston Public Schools (BPS) Staff Present: Senior Deputy Superintendent of Academics Dr. Linda Chen; Deputy Superintendent of Family and Community Advancement Dr. Ana Tavares; Assistant Superintendent of Achievement Gaps Dr. Yozmin Gay; Chief of Specialized Services Kay Seale; Chief of Teaching and Learning Lesley Miller; and Deputy Chief of Instructional Support for the Office of Multilingual and Multicultural Education Carolina Armstrong.

DOCUMENTS PRESENTED

October 23, 2023 OAG Task Force Meeting Agenda

June 27, 2023 OAG Task Force Meeting Minutes

Opportunity Gaps Office Updates PowerPoint

Boston Public Schools Inclusive Education PowerPoint

CALL TO ORDER

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

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APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Approved - The OAG Task Force unanimously approved, by roll call, the minutes of the June 27, 2023 meeting.

SUMMARY OF DISCUSSION

Update from the Division of Equity, Strategy and Opportunity Gaps - Deputy Superintendent of Family and Community Advancement Dr. Ana Tavares gave brief introductory remarks saying that while the district's work to expand inclusive education is being led by Senior Deputy Superintendent of Academics Dr. Linda Chen and her team, the district is taking an "all hands on deck" approach to this critical work using equity as a throughline. She said that the Office of Opportunity Gaps is a central part of these conversations.

Assistant Superintendent of Achievement Gaps Dr. Yozmin Gay provided an OG Office staffing update. Exam School Initiative (ESI) Coordinator Craig Lankhorst and ESI Coordinator of Programming Amber Williams are transitioning out of their roles; she introduced new hires Exam School Initiative Targeted Coordinator Lauren Ainsworth; 10 Boys Initiative Targeted Coordinator Emily Hunter Coleman; and Director of Opportunity & Achievement Gaps Policy Carla Valezquez.

Dr. Gay shared her team's first quarter goals for SY23-24:

Goal 1 - By the end of quarter 1, the Office of Opportunity Gaps in partnership with the Office of Family Engagement and the Division of Schools will have established professional learning in all 9 school regions around year 1 of the SBERT 3-year plan to establish strong School-based Equity Roundtable (SBERT) implementation practices.

Goal 2 - By the end of quarter 1, the Office of Opportunity Gaps will have completed 1 coaching interaction with every division around their opportunity and achievement gap goals and metrics to close opportunity and achievement gaps with our historically marginalized student populations.

Goal 3 - By the end of quarter 1, the Office of Opportunity Gaps School Support Team will have provided CLSP and Sense of Belonging professional learning for Equitable Literacy coaches and Content Directors in the Teaching and Learning Office

Goal 4 - By the end of quarter 1, the Office of Opportunity Gaps Targeted Programming Team will have trained all mentors for the 10 Boys Mentoring programing and identified students in all 20 schools.

Dr. Gay provided updates on targeted programming, targeted school supports, and professional learning. Community Equity Round Tables (CERTs) have been reimaged, with the next virtual session scheduled for Thursday, November 2, 2023 from 6-8pm. The Black Student Success Initiative takes both a systemic and targeted approach that centers the district's work around Black student academic recovery and acceleration. 2023 ELA MCAS scores show persistent achievement gaps and slow recovery from the pandemic.

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Mr. Acevedo expressed frustration that gaps have not closed since the establishment of the 2016 OAG policy. He asked Dr. Gay about the greatest obstacles to closing gaps. Dr. Gay said that the district must do a better job of executing and monitoring its plans and strategies and support teachers with implementing effective practices. Dr. Tavares said that in order to be successful we must all work in collaboration.

Dr. Coleman asked Dr. Gay about the process variables that she would like to be different in the district and what actions are being taken that the OAG Task Force can monitor.

District Presentation: Inclusive Education - Ms. Robinson gave opening remarks about the Inclusive Education Plan that BPS recently submitted to the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE), fulfilling a requirement of the Systemic Improvement Plan (SIP). The plan serves as a roadmap for the district to deliver on the promise of providing an excellent, inclusive and equitable education in the least restrictive environment for students with disabilities, especially Black and Brown students and Multilingual Learners with and without disabilities. Data shows that Black and Brown students with disabilities and Multilingual Learners with and without disabilities are more likely to be educated in a substantially separate classroom. Research shows that students with disabilities and multilingual learners who are educated in inclusive settings have better in-school academic outcomes and improved post-graduate outcomes. BPS will use this data to shift practices from an old model to one that improves student outcomes. Ms. Robinson described the expansion of inclusive education as complex, urgent, gap-closing work.

Senior Deputy Superintendent of Academics Dr. Linda Chen; Chief of Specialized Services Kay Seale; Chief of Teaching and Learning Lesley Miller; and Deputy Chief of Instructional Support for the Office of Multilingual and Multicultural Education (OMME) Carolina Armstrong presented an overview of the district's Inclusive Education Plan. Inclusive education in the Boston Public Schools (BPS) is rooted firmly in the BPS Opportunity and Achievement Gap policy where "every student, in every classroom, in every school... has the same opportunity to achieve the greatness within them as anybody else. Every child should have unfettered access to every conceivable tool to unlock the greatness with them."

Dr. Chen shared sobering data about the current state of BPS:

- Black male students are 3.13 times more likely to be identified with an emotional impairment and placed in a substantially separate setting than their peers.
- Multilingual Learners are 2.5 times more likely to be identified with a communication disability and be placed in a substantially separate setting.
- Students in grades K2 - 6 enrolled in specialized programming travel farther to get to school than students in general education.
- English learners (EL) are making limited progress in English language acquisition, with only 34% of students in 2023 making progress. This differs by grade level, with

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approximately 50% of students in grades 1 through 4 making progress, compared to approximately 15% of students in grades 5 through 10.

- 3,338 ELs (25% of all ELs) are Long Term ELs-They have been in Massachusetts for 6 or more years and have not met exit criteria.

Inclusive education is situating students for learning by leveraging their identities and assets to support their entry into high quality learning experiences that results in advancing student achievement, particularly for our Students with Disabilities and Multilingual Learners.

The BPS Inclusive Education Plan aims to provide all students access to grade-level instruction that is culturally and linguistically responsive, and create a continuum of services that disrupts historical over-representation, particularly for Black students and multilingual students in special education. To make the changes needed, four key shifts in current practice must happen across the district:

Shift 1: Increase Access to Grade-Level Learning

Shift 2: Ensure the Inclusive Delivery of Interventions, Supports, & Services

Shift 3: Engage in Team-Based Planning and Collaboration

Shift 4: Reset District Infrastructure with Systems of Support and Accountability

The implementation of the Inclusive Education Plan will happen in phases at various grades levels through SY27-28.

Ms. Armstrong that DESE has informed BPS that the district is currently not educating multilingual learners in the least restricted manner. The OMME team is focusing on leveraging the LOOK ACT by focusing on the expansion of dual language programming and increasing access to native language. Ms. Miller said that equitable literacy is the intersection of research-based best practices and culturally affirming and responsive instruction.

Ms. Rousmaniere commended the district's inclusive education, calling it a vision and strategy still in need of a plan. She said that implementation, while complicated, will be critical.

Dr. Pignato expressed support for the plan, which she described as compelling and bold. She asked why the plan doesn't include specific goals.

Dr. Williams noted that she serves on the OAG Task Force as a representative of the Black Educators Alliance of Massachusetts (BEAM) and as a BPS parent. She spoke about the importance of accountability and long-term commitment. She said that adults must be aligned in order to best support students.

Ms. Shakur echoed earlier comments about the importance of implementation. She asked how the district plans to increase staffing to meet the increased needs. She also asked for clarity about the pace of implementation across schools and grade levels.

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Mr. Santiago-Lizardi noted that he is representing the Boston Teachers Union (BTU). He said that inclusion done right requires adequate technology.

Dr. Chen said that in its review of BPS special education services, the Council of the Great City Schools recommended that BPS expand inclusive practices gradually and thoughtfully. BPS now has inclusion planning teams at each school as part of its collective bargaining agreement with the BTU. She agreed with members that implementation is important. She said that the district is working to leverage technology to individualize instruction for students.

Ms. Shakur asked when there will be more implementation information available. Dr. Chen said implementation information will be shared in another document. Each planning team is using a tool to determine their readiness for implementation. Every school will map out how every student is currently serviced, grade by grade, and then map out the resources they're going to realign to provide students with more inclusive services. That will result in alignment with the probable org process as part of the district's budgeting process to identify if additional resources are needed.

Ms. Shakur asked if the district will be sharing any best practices with schools. Dr. Chen said that the biggest shift is in service delivery. Both OMME and the Office of Specialized Services are providing schools with support in the areas of staffing, professional learning, and technology. Ms. Shakur invited members to email outstanding questions to Ms. Sullivan for follow up by Dr. Chen and her team.

- ***Task Force Business: Refining Task Force Data and Accountability and Teacher Diversity Subgroups; and Updating OAG Policy Goals*** - Ms. Shakur thanked Task Force members for completing a survey indicating their areas of interest to participate in subgroups (Data & Accountability and Teacher Diversity), developing a Black Student Agenda, and updating the 2016 OAG policy goals. She shared the results to date, noting that a couple of members had not yet responded:
- Data & Accountability Subgroup: Dr. Coleman; Dr. Pignato; Dr. Gonsalves; Ms. Rousmaniere; Mr. Santiago-Lizardi; Dr. Noam; and Dr. Jennings
- Teacher Diversity Subgroup: Dr. Williams; and Dr. Gonsalves. Ms. Shakur urged more members to join the Teacher Diversity Subgroup.
- Developing a Black Student Agenda: Dr. Blake; Dr. Williams; and Ms. Shakur. Ms. Shakur said this will be an ad hoc group that will convene two or three times to develop an agenda. The Task Force will invite members of the community to be part of this group.

Ms. Shakur shifted the discussion to the process for refreshing the 2016 OAG Policy Goals. She said the OAG Task Force co-chairs are in the process of scheduling meetings with central office leadership and teams to refresh the 2016 OAG Policy and create a greater sense of buy-in, noting that many current staff were not in BPS when the 2016 policy was developed. Meetings will begin with Superintendent Mary Skipper, followed by Deputy Superintendents, Chiefs, Department Heads, Regional Superintendents, the EL Task Force, SpEdPAC, community groups through CERT, parent and caregiver groups, and the Boston Student Advisory Council (BSAC) for student input.

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Goal 1: Implementation and Oversight: Dr. Coleman; Dr. Gonsalves; Ms. Rousmaniere; Dr. Noam; and Ms. Shakur.

Goal 2: District-wide focus on Cultural Proficiency: Dr. Blake; and Mr. Santiago-Lizardi.

Goal 3: Diversity and Cultural Proficiency in Leadership and Human Capital: Dr. Williams; Dr. Blake; and Mr. Santiago-Lizardi.

Goal 4: Holistic, Culturally Affirming Approach to School and Teacher Quality: Dr. Pignato, Dr. Gonsalves, and Mr. Santiago-Lizardi.

Goal 5: Dismantling Structural Barriers: Dr. Pignato; Dr. Blake; Dr. Williams; and Mr. Santiago-Lizardi.

Goal 6: Family, Student and Community Engagement: Mr. Santiago-Lizardi.

Dr. Coleman asked how the School Committee's School Quality Working Group (SQWG) connects to this work. Ms. Robinson said that she will connect with the Superintendent about the SQWG. Ms. Shakur asked Dr. Gonsalves to review MCAS data and Dr. Gay to convene the Black Student Agenda meetings. She asked Ms. Sullivan to email the OAG Policy and today's meeting presentations to the Task Force. Ms. Robinson said it would be helpful for the Task Force to receive an update on the district's progress on each of the OG policy goals.

PUBLIC COMMENT

John Mudd, Cambridge resident and advocate, said that the English Learners Task Force is opposed to the vision and direction of the BPS Inclusion Plan. He called for the district to provide more access to native language instruction and support services.

Barbara Fields, advocate, expressed concern about widening gaps and the role of the OAG Task Force. She encouraged the Task Force to focus on implementing the existing policy rather than refreshing it. She agreed with Ms. Robinson that the Task Force should receive an update on the district's progress on the existing policy goals.

ADJOURNMENT

Approved - On roll call, the Task Force unanimously approved a motion to adjourn the meeting at 6 p.m.

Attest:



Elizabeth A. Sullivan
Executive Secretary