

THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE OF THE CITY OF BOSTON



MEMORANDUM

To: Boston School Committee members

From: Michael O'Neill, Chair *Michael O'Neill*
Dean Hardin Coleman, Vice Chair

Re: Opportunity and Achievement Gaps Task Force

Date: July 15, 2015

At our last meeting, we proposed a draft Charge and draft Goals for an Opportunity and Achievement Gaps Task Force. Based on the feedback from our fellow members at that meeting, subsequent feedback and involvement from the three suggested co-chairs, as well as input from the District and the Mayor's Education office, we are pleased to present these revised proposed Charge and Goals for your consideration and potential approval this evening. We believe it captures the feedback from members on June 24th. It clarifies the expectation of recommendations to the full Boston School Committee to adjust our existing policies. It then calls for an on-going advising and monitoring role with the District on the implementation of the policies, similar to the current work of both our English Language Learners (ELL) Task Force and our Inclusion Task Force.

Additionally, we have recommended that the Task Force be co-chaired by three experienced and knowledgeable individuals: Ms. Jeri Robinson, our fellow Boston School Committee member and Vice President of Early Learning Initiatives at the Boston Children's Museum; Ms. Ayele Shakur, Regional Executive Director of BUILD Greater Boston and chair of the NAACP Education Committee; and Mr. Samuel Acevedo, Executive Director of Boston Higher Education Resource Center (HERC). We respectfully request approval of their appointment this evening as well.

If approved, we would then work with the three co-chairs in the coming weeks to fill out the proposed membership of the Task Force, incorporating suggestions from School Committee members and others in the community, based on the final approved Charge and Goals. We envision a Task Force of 12 additional members (beyond the three co-chairs). Inclusion of the teacher, school leader, parent, student, community, early education and higher education voice, among others, is critical to a successful Task Force. A full slate would then be presented for approval at our next meeting on September 9th.

Additionally, we envision a “National Advisory Group” of between three-to-five nationally known and highly respected researchers, educators and thought leaders on this subject to agree to advise the three co-chairs on the role and direction of the Task Force as it moves through its work. The membership of this Group would also be presented at our next meeting. Lastly, Dr. Chang is equally committed to this work and has agreed to assign several District leaders to work with the Task Force (not as voting members), similar to the excellent close cooperation the ELL and Inclusion Task Forces have shared with their respective responsible senior District leaders.

Proposed Charge and Priority Goals for the Opportunity and Achievement Gaps Task Force

Proposed Charge

The Opportunity and Achievement Gaps Task Force is charged with investigating and recommending to the Boston School Committee (BSC) and the Superintendent of Boston Public Schools (BPS) system-wide policies, programs and practices designed to eliminate achievement and opportunity gaps for Boston Public Schools (BPS) students, including potential adjustments, improvements and additions to the existing BPS Achievement Gap Policy and Goals. Thereafter, this Task Force will provide on-going leadership and monitoring, including direction, metrics and support, for the implementation of said policy by the District, with regular reporting to the BSC on actual results.

Proposed Priority Goals

1. Provide a thorough review of the existing BSC Achievement Gap Policy and Goals, in order to develop additions, adjustments and improvements to include a more explicit focus on opportunity gaps for recommendation to the BSC by December 31, 2015. This review will include examining recent data and reports, including national best practices across urban school districts, as well as an analysis of where the District has done well - so-called “bright spots”, existing barriers for replications of said “bright spots” and past challenges within BPS.
2. Upon revision of said Policy and Goals, provide input, support, and resources to BPS staff for the development of implementation plan, including plans for aligning practices and operations at all district levels, in order to embed Opportunity and Achievement Gaps Policies and Goals comprehensively and systematically throughout the district.

3. Provide the BSC with recommendations for ongoing monitoring and accountability of the implementation plan, including specific recommended metrics, as well as recommendations for sustainability through adequate funding, staffing and resources.
4. On an on-going basis, review existing BPS policies and programs targeting the elimination of opportunity and achievement gaps, and provide (i) an assessment to the BSC regarding the efficacy of the policies and programs in closing the *gap(s)*, and (ii) recommendations for ongoing monitoring by the BSC of *gap-* related programs.
5. Provide recommendations to the BSC regarding the metrics and associated weights for the *Access and Opportunity* domains of the School Quality Framework.
6. Coordinate with ELL and Inclusion Task Forces in eliminating achievement, performance, and opportunity gaps for students receiving ELL and special education services.
7. Identify additional city-wide efforts (beyond BPS) that are focused on elimination of Opportunity and Achievement gaps and assist in strengthening cross-initiative efforts between the City of Boston, BPS and community organizations.