



## **OFFICIAL MINUTES OF THE SCHOOL COMMITTEE'S OPPORTUNITY AND ACHIVEMENT GAPS TASK FORCE**

**November 17, 2015**

The Boston School Committee's Opportunity and Achievement Gaps Task Force held a meeting on November 17, 2015 at 4 p.m. at the Bruce C. Bolling Municipal Building, School Committee Chamber, 2300 Washington Street, Roxbury, Massachusetts. For more information about any of the items listed below, visit [www.bostonpublicschools.org](http://www.bostonpublicschools.org), email [feedback@bostonpublicschools.org](mailto:feedback@bostonpublicschools.org) or call the Boston School Committee Office at (617) 635-9014.

### **ATTENDANCE**

Task Force Members Present: Co-Chair Ayele Shakur; Co-Chair Samuel Acevedo; Jennifer Aponte; Heshan Berents-Weeramuni; Dr. Carroll Blake; Dr. Vanessa Calderon-Rosado; Dr. Hardin Coleman; Kenny Feng; Kim Janey; Adrienne Level; Keondre McClay; Liliana Mickle; Dr. Gil Noam; Alexandra Oliver-Davila; Marinell Rousmaniere; Filberto Santiago-Lizardi; Ron Walker; and Sherman Zemler Wu.

Task Force Members Absent: Co-Chair Jeri Robinson and Carline Pignato. Dr. Miren Uriarte and Suzanne Lee, English Language Learners Task Force liaisons to the OAGTF, were not in attendance.

### **DOCUMENTS PRESENTED**

Agenda

Task Force Meeting Minutes: November 10, 2015

2006 BPS Achievement Gap Policy

### **CALL TO ORDER**

Ms. Shakur called the meeting to order and welcomed everyone.

*November 17, 2015*

## **ACTION ITEM**

Ms. Shakur noted that Ms. Sullivan would make corrections to the attendance of the November 10, 2015 meeting minutes, noting that Ms. Mickle was present and Ms. Level was absent. The Task Force approved by unanimous consent the corrected minutes of the November 10, 2015 meeting.

## **SUMMARY OF DISCUSSION**

Ms. Shakur presented an overview of the process by which the group would break down into small groups to review the 2006 BPS Achievement Gap Policy, asking members to think about what revisions should be made to the existing policy.

The members divided into the following three groups:

1. District Goals, Policy, & Operations - Goals 1, 9, 10, 11, 12 : Mr. Acevedo, Ms. Rousmaniere, Ms. Level, Mr. Feng, Ms. Janey, Mr. Berents-Weeramuni
2. Leadership and School Culture - Goals 2, 3, & 4: Dr. Blake, Mr. Wu, Mr. Walker, Ms. Aponte, Ms. Calderone-Rosado, Mr. McClay, Ms. Oliver-Davila
3. Teaching and Learning – Goals 5, 6, 7, 8: Ms. Shakur, Ms. Mickle, Dr. Noam; Mr. Sanitago-Lizardi, Dr. Coleman

Guiding questions:

Where have we made progress?

What has changed since 2006?

What needs to be different?

What new pieces should we add?

What data or further analysis do we need?

Are there goals we can condense or combine?

What resources do we have? Do we need?

Following lengthy small group discussions, the members reconvened and debriefed.

Group 1 highlights (District Goals, Policy, & Operations):

- Every SC policy should have achievement gap impact statement attached to it
- Goals should not be too aspirational
- Need SMART goals
- Hiring teachers of color, not just compliance but belief that it has educational value.
- Get questions to BPS content leads that the Task Force received answers by the next meeting; consider inviting them to meetings.
- What were obstacles to implementation of 2006 policy?
- Implementation is key

## Opportunity and Achievement Gaps Task Force Meeting

Bruce C. Bolling Municipal Building  
School Committee Chamber

*November 17, 2015*

- Goal 1 - Overarching goal for the work. Feedback for all the others. The language "as evidenced by" was missing all around. What's the metric? How do we know it's happening?
- One member identified that there was an achievement gap impact statement that accompanies every policy to School Committee, was adopted later after the Achievement Gap policy, never implemented.
- Absence of the word opportunity gap and of the concept of an opportunity gap
- Is there an intrinsic goal of an opportunity gap?
- Value statements from the 100-Day Plan are the place to pin ourselves, and perhaps the connected projects are the only place to look there.
- AWC - Why hasn't this happened: is the problem with the words on paper or is there something else? Is this an overarching question we should be asking – are we just rearranging the deck chairs or getting to the heart of the issues? Are there structural issues that got in the way?
- If the goals are all aspirational and extremely difficult to achieve will they go by the wayside? All of these need to be anchored BY - by when, by how much, by whom, SMART goals.
- Goal 9: Recognition of all of our students being able to achieve at high levels not here – issue of mindset. Have we tapped the pool of candidates of color – do we tap them? If we tap them do we keep them? At this pace, we have to do exponentially more.
- Language of human capital
- How should we be using the district offices and engaging with them in the conversation; e.g. task OHC with getting information, feedback and information on can address, how to address.
- A bright spot since 2006: School Committee has explicitly stated it wants a teaching force that reflects the diversity of the district. Also the Equity Office monitoring hires around racial diversity around school level, power had been taken away from the equity office and had been given back.
- More has to be done through the alternative pipelines: e.g. Boston Teacher Residency, paras, second career, and accelerated community to teacher programs. Still losing teachers of color, particularly black teachers at a faster rate.
- Did schools not tap into the pre-screened cadre of teachers: Recruitment Fellows program.
- Urban youth: be explicit about children of color.
- One other lens to look at: tend to view as HR/Ops problem, needs to be viewed equally as an academic/instructional problem: everyone has a role to play, principals, principal leaders – responsibility and accountability – part of your core role – it is an instructional issue nothing more important than who is teaching.
- Needs to be more explicit about diversity: include linguistic and cultural.
- Equity lens is central to hiring – what is the micro level lens: central goals to close opportunity and achievement gap.
- No one is specifically accountable.
- Viewed as a compliance issue – do people really believe that hiring teachers of color will help close the achievement gap? How to message that it is about closing the achievement

## Opportunity and Achievement Gaps Task Force Meeting

Bruce C. Bolling Municipal Building  
School Committee Chamber

**November 17, 2015**

gap and that it is a beneficial choice around academics/diversity of workplace etc. for schools? Less about compliance and more about the right thing for students and the educational outcomes for students.

- Reference most recent updated policy on hiring reflection of diversity of students

Group 2 highlights (Leadership and School Culture):

- Goal #2 – still relevant. Goal #2 can be combined with Goals 3 & 6
- Very little has changed. No consistent definition. No consistent implementation across the system starting with School Committee all the way down to classroom.  
Accountability.
- What needs to happen: Clear definition that includes the roles of everyone, including community-based organizations. Alaska model noted.
- Hiring of principals: need to include behavioral set of questions.
- Training/professional development: work with higher education to ensure this is part of teacher prep; consistent professional development in the system
- Human Capital lacks the resources for full implementation
- Culturally proficient teaching is good teaching
- Goal #3 needs to be written into Goal #2. If you're culturally proficient, you believe every student can learn.
- Goal #4: Culture of high achievement and high expectations is foremost and stepping stone to create culturally proficient environment and belief that every student can learn.
- Goal #8: Oregon has done a great job in engaging the entire community, including families, community-based organizations, etc.
- Cultural proficiency is critical to accomplish this.
- Resources:
  - Increase resources – it has to be staffed and measured
  - Cultural proficiency should be part of every agenda of the School Committee, principals and leadership, etc.
  - BPS has to start modeling this behavior based on the clear definition from the top: School Committee, BPS Central, etc.
  - Establish accountability measures
  - Engage higher education
  - Provide incentives for principals and teachers for most culturally proficient/responsive.
  - Consistent community-wide dialogues on race, achievement gap. Start at the school level.
- Schools need to be culturally proficient and responsibly environments, with culture of high expectations
- What does good teaching look like? What are model behaviors?
- The evaluation process should include culturally competency ratings
- Need clear definition of cultural competency.

**November 17, 2015**

Group 3 highlights (Teaching and Learning):

- Goal 5: Rigorous, culturally relevant teaching and learning
  - Engagement
  - Relevance
  - Belonging, strong community
- Merge goal 6 into 5. Goal five relates to engagement, relevance, and rigor tied to curriculum and instruction
- New goal 6 related to social emotional learning, trauma informed instruction, civic engagement, 21<sup>st</sup> century goals
- Goal 7: professional development on highly engaging, relevant instruction
- Need to define cultural proficiency and cultural relevancy
- Do we have evidence that school culture needs to be culturally relevant to be effective school culture?
- Students need to feel a sense of belonging
- Most charter schools do not have explicit cultural approach
- Need rigorous, culturally relevant curriculum. With more autonomous schools, much of the curriculum is determined at the school level.
- Do the “bright spot schools” have culturally relevant curriculum?
- Safe, student centered schools thrive.
- Building relationships, building community.
- Theory of action- instruction closes the gap. Professional development gives teachers the skills to get there.
- Communities of concentrated poverty likely have higher levels of untreated trauma. BPS must have civically engaged and socially competent graduates.
- Students need 21<sup>st</sup> century skills.
- District should catalog instructional strategies.

Dr. Coleman stated that he hasn't seen data which proves that cultural proficiency closes the gap. He asked what instructional strategies are closing the gap. Ms. Janey expressed concern about the question. Responding to the question of “does cultural relevancy matter?” Dr. Noam stated that not everything has to be evidenced based.

Ms. Shakur thanked the members for the rich discussion and said that the group will continue the conversation at its next meeting on November 24.

Nicole Wagner Lam said that as long the district has an achievement gap, we should be trying bold strategies.

Ms. Shakur announced the dates of upcoming Task Force meetings:

Nov 24<sup>th</sup>, 4-6 p.m.

Dec 8<sup>th</sup>, 4-6 p.m.

Dec. 11<sup>th</sup>, 2-6 p.m.

**Opportunity and Achievement Gaps Task Force Meeting**  
Bruce C. Bolling Municipal Building  
School Committee Chamber

*November 17, 2015*

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

Fran Smith, advocate, said that the elephant in the room is structural racism and systems of white privilege. She suggested that the group consider itself an action team rather than a task force.

**ADJOURN**

At approximately 6:20 p.m., the co-chairs adjourned the meeting.

Attest:



Elizabeth A. Sullivan  
Executive Secretary