



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

January 30, 2024

The Boston School Committee Opportunity and Achievement Gaps (OAG) Task Force held a virtual meeting on Zoom on January 30, 2024 at 4 p.m. For more information about any of the items listed below, visit www.bostonpublicschools.org/gaps, email esullivan3@bostonpublicschools.org or call the Boston School Committee Office at (617) 635-9014.

ATTENDANCE

Task Force Members Present: Dr. Carroll Blake; Dr. Hardin Coleman; Dr. Lisa Gonsalves; Dr. Gil Noam; Dr. Carline Pignato; Marinelle Rousmaniere; Filiberto Santiago-Lizardi; Dr. Kimberley Williams; Co-Chair Jeri Robinson; and Co-Chair Ayele Shakur.

Task Force Members Absent: Rev. Willie Bodrick; and Dr. James Jennings.

Boston Public Schools (BPS) Staff Present: Senior Deputy Superintendent of Academics Dr. Linda Chen; Senior Advisor, Organizational Development & Equity Dr. Mariel Novas; Chief of Office of Multicultural and Multilingual Education (OMME) Joelle Gamere; Deputy Chief of Instruction, OMME, Carolina Armstrong; Deputy Chief of Compliance and Operations, OMME, Brittany Baggett; Assistant Superintendent of Achievement Gaps Dr. Yozmin Gay; Assistant Superintendent of Equity Becky Shuster; Manager of Equity & Strategy, OOG, Donna Lashus; and Boston International Newcomers Academy Head of School Dr. Tony King. Boston School Committee Members Rafaela Polanco Garcia and Dr. Stephen Alkins were also present.

DOCUMENTS PRESENTED

OAG Task Force Meeting Agenda: January 30, 2024

OAG Task Force Meeting Minutes: December 19, 2023

Office of Multilingual and Multicultural Education Update to the OAG Task Force, January 30, 2024

Office of Opportunity Gaps Update, January 30, 2024

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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.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Approved - The OAG Task Force unanimously approved, by roll call, the minutes of the December 19, 2023 meeting.

SUMMARY OF DISCUSSION

Update from the Office of Opportunity Gaps - Dr. Yozmin Gay, Assistant Superintendent of Opportunity Gaps, presented an update. Dr. Gay and the OAG Task Force Co-Chairs will engage with a broad array of groups in interactive feedback sessions to inform the OAG policy refresh between now and March 2024. Dr. Gay provided an update on the expansion of the Exam School Initiative (ESI), school region support data, Office of Data & Accountability updates on ethnicity data, and plans for Black History Month. Dr. Gay said she would like to have more time and a later meeting, to dig deep around our presentation to get more reaction and feedback, to refine the work. OOG Manager of Equity & Strategy Donna Lashus provided a school climate survey update.

Ms. Shakur asked about ESI enrollment. Dr. Gay said that pre-pandemic ESI enrollment was about 500 students, adding that the team is looking to expand recruitment strategies. Ms. Robinson asked why satisfaction rates decreased at some schools in the climate survey. Ms. Lashus explained that the team is doing a root cause analysis, including causes of absenteeism.

District Presentation: Office of Multilingual and Multicultural Education - Chief of Office of Multicultural and Multilingual Education (OMME) Joelle Gamere presented an update on the work of OMME. She was joined by Deputy Chief of Instruction, OMME, Carolina Armstrong; Deputy Chief of Compliance and Operations, OMME, Brittany Baggett; and Boston International Newcomers Academy (BINcA) Head of School Dr. Tony King.

The Office of Multilingual and Multicultural Education envisions a community where all multilingual learners feel a sense of belonging and joy for learning in a multicultural learning environment; have the opportunity to be academically proficient in at least two or more languages; and graduate with the Massachusetts State Seal of Biliteracy. Across the Boston Public Schools, 16,000 students are current Multilingual Learners (ML), which comprises one-third (34%) of the student population. An additional 14% of students are classified as former Multilingual Learners. The majority of multilingual learners in the district speak Spanish as a first language. More than 4,000 students are dually identified as English Learner students with Disabilities, which is 8% of the overall BPS population.

Between 2018 and 2023, the percentage of MLs meeting/exceeding expectations in ELA and math decreased. The percent of students who made progress (i.e., met their target scores on the

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ACCESS test) in 2023 decreased by 8 percentage points from 2022 to 34%. The percent of students making progress declined in all grade levels 1-12 from 2022 to 2023

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 SWDs and MLs.

Improving Multilingual Learners Experience:

- Refining entry and exit criteria of existing programs
- Ensuring access to grade-level tier 1 instruction
- Strengthening existing dual language programs
- Build the District's capacity to sustain bilingual programs
- Creating clear guidance, training, and resources for the effective use of native language to support student outcomes
- Increasing opportunities for all MLs to participate in language programs including MLs with disabilities (MLWD)
- Students' home language is seen as a resource for learning
- MLs feel a sense of belonging because teaching is asset-based and culturally affirming
- English as a Second or additional Language (ESL) and meaningful access to content with appropriate scaffolds
- MLs are engaged in rigorous activities with high expectations for learning in relevant topics and themes When MLs are not making progress, they know their learning targets and receive interventions and supports for academics and social and emotional learning
- Trauma-informed practices as needed

BINcA Head of School Dr. Tony King spoke about his school's partnership with OMME.

Dr. Gonsalves thanked the OMME team for including such useful data in the presentation.

Dr. Williams stated that she is representing the Black Educators Alliance of Massachusetts (BEAM). She asked Ms. Gamere to share any experience she may have had working with the English Learners (EL) Task Force. Ms. Gamere said Yes, I am aware that we had an EL task force and we currently have members of the Yale task force. Ms. Gamere said that she has met with School Committee Member and EL Task Force Chair Rafaela Polanco Garcia and that she welcomes feedback from all constituencies.

Dr. Noam applauded the work and expressed concern about the MCAS and ACCESS data. He asked how BPS is measuring progress. Ms. Gamere said that OMME is working with instructional and accountability leaders to measure student achievement regularly and make adjustments as needed.

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Ms. Shakur asked Ms. Gamere about plans to expand native language instruction. Ms. Gamere said that native language instruction is a great lever of change for students. She said that BPS has submitted proposals to the MA Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) to expand native language instruction programs.

Ms. Polanco Garcia had technical difficulties that prevented her from sharing comments during the meeting.

Task Force Discussion - Ms. Robinson shared a proposal to amend the School Committee's bylaws with updated guidelines for the establishment of School Committee Task Forces, as well as an update to requirements for Task Force member appointments. To best incorporate the expertise and support of external partners who have a particular expertise in an area or field related to the District's work, the Superintendent would develop special advisory groups to advise her on specific matters. Under this framework, the District would establish advisory groups on English Learners (EL); the Opportunity and Achievement Gaps (OAG) and the School Quality Working Group to advise and monitor the District's work in these specific areas that currently falls under the charge of Task Forces. A task force of the School Committee would have a specific charge and timeline, including a specific end date, while an advisory group would provide the Superintendent with implementation monitoring that is ongoing. She said that the intent of the proposal was not to diminish the importance of the OAG Task Force but rather to be more focused and have measurable outcomes. She, Vice Chair Michael O'Neill and Superintendent Skipper plan to meet with current task force co-chairs to discuss the matter further. She invited the OAG Task Force members to provide feedback on the draft bylaws.

Ms. Shakur said that she has heard concerns that the proposed structure would give the perception that the School Committee is retreating from its commitment to closing gaps. She said that the OAG work should not be tied to a superintendent and her leadership, which can change frequently, but rather to the School Committee. Dr. Gonsalves agreed. She said that the Task Force needs to examine data and work streams and questioned whether that would be more difficult to do as an advisory group. She said that the OAG Task Force could be smaller and should be more focused on deliverables. Ms. Shakur said that members have a two- or three-year term limit with an option for renewal.

Dr. Gay said the task force structure provides both support and accountability. She suggested holding meetings every 6-8 weeks.

Dr. Williams spoke about the difference in power and impact between a School Committee Task Force and a Superintendent's Advisory Group. She agreed that the current OAG Task Force should be more effective. She cautioned against meeting less frequently.

Ms. Robinson said it's important to both include underrepresented voices and improve outcomes for students. She said that the OAG Task Force needs more members with expertise in multilingual learners and students with disabilities

Dr. Blake said that the Task Force should continue reporting to the School Committee as a monitoring body.

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Ms. Rousmaniere, who co-chairs the School Quality Work Group, spoke about the importance of having a clear charge and transparency.

Mr. Santiago-Lizardi expressed concern about the proposal.

Ms. Shakur noted that a 2020 DESE report highlighted the OAG Task Force as a bright spot in BPS. She said that the district staff person overseeing the OAG policy should report directly to the Superintendent.

Dr. Noam spoke about the importance of implementation.

Dr. Alkins thanked the members for their input. He said that as a Committee member, he would be more inclined to listen to a task force if it were reporting directly to the Committee. He asked for clarification on whether Committee members who serve on a task force can vote on policy recommendations.

Dr. Gay said that OAG work throughout the country is under attack and expressed concern that without positionality, this work will die.

Ms. Robinson thanked members for their feedback and encouraged them to send any additional comments.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Barbara Fields, advocate, recalled how the OAG Task Force was established and expressed concern that the work is being dismantled.

John Mudd, advocate, said that transitioning the OAG Task Force to a working group would be a profound shift. He urged the Task Force to demand accountability.


Harold Miller said that the Council of Great City Schools has commended the work of the OAG Task Force and that the OAG Task Force should maintain its current structure as a task force of the School Committee.

ADJOURNMENT

Ms. Robinson reaffirmed her commitment to closing gaps.

Approved - On roll call, the Task Force unanimously approved a motion to adjourn the meeting at 6:27 p.m.

Attest:



Elizabeth A. Sullivan
Executive Secretary