



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

November 28, 2023

The Boston School Committee Opportunity and Achievement Gaps (OAG) Task Force held a virtual meeting on Zoom on November 28, 2023 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. James Jennings; 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. Hardin Coleman; Dr. Lisa Gonsalves; and Dr. Gil Noam.

Boston Public Schools (BPS) Staff Present: Deputy Superintendent of Family and Community Advancement Dr. Ana Tavares; Chief of Teaching and Learning Lesley Miller; Assistant Superintendent of Achievement Gaps Dr. Yozmin Gay; and Senior Executive Director of the Office of Data and Accountability Apryl Clarkson.

DOCUMENTS PRESENTED

November 28, 2023 OAG Task Force Meeting Agenda

October 23, 2023 OAG Task Force Meeting Minutes

2023 MCAS Data Analysis PowerPoint

Opportunity Gaps Office Updates PowerPoint

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 but joined within moments.

November 28, 2023

Ms. Robinson made brief remarks about the recent resignation of several members of the School Committee's English Learners (EL) Task Force. She expressed appreciation for their years of service and advocacy for multilingual learners. She said that the School Committee will use this moment to reflect on the roles of its task forces and consider how best to move forward in a way that is most impactful for our students. Ms. Robinson will meet with Superintendent Skipper on this issue in December, and looks forward to updating the Task Force about next steps in the new year. She reaffirmed the Committee's commitment to working collaboratively with the community to improve student outcomes.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Approved - With a quorum now present, the OAG Task Force unanimously approved, by roll call, the minutes of the October 23, 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 said that she has been in conversations with Dr. Yozmin Gay, Assistant Superintendent of Opportunity Gaps, about how to refresh the 2016 Opportunity and Achievement Gaps (OAG) policy in a way that incorporates community input. The Superintendent has been holding engagement tours with different affinity groups across our city. Dr. Tavares said that a major theme that has emerged from those conversations is the need for access to mental health support for students and families.

Dr. Gay said that she and the OAG Task Force Co-Chairs will engage with the following groups in interactive feedback sessions to inform the policy refresh between now and March 2024: students; OAG Task Force; teachers; superintendent and deputies; division chiefs and their lead teams; regional superintendents; school leaders; and family and community groups.

Feedback and thoughts so far:

- Consider adding language about accelerating learning, not just closing the gaps
- Consider whether to continue using language about black and brown students or to adjust that language?
- Consider updating language about English Learners to multilingual learners

Mr. Acevedo suggested adding language about Black, Brown and other students of color.

Dr. Jennings and Ms. Rousmaniere suggested gathering input from the community before adjusting terms about groups of people. Ms. Shakur agreed, noting that the Gates Foundation has adopted the phrase "students experiencing poverty."

Dr. Pignato cautioned against using a historically Eurocentric view of categorizing people.

**Opportunity and Achievement Gaps Task Force Virtual Meeting
Zoom**

November 28, 2023

Ms. Shakur proposed measuring the gap between where students are performing and the level of proficiency. She also suggested creating a glossary of terms.

Ms. Robinson said that it's important to see student outcomes of native-born, English speaking Black and Brown students in addition to multilingual learners.

For Policy Goal #1, Dr. Gay suggested clearly naming places of accountability and changing the Racial Equity Planning Tool term impact statement to "proposed impact statement."

In interest of time, Ms. Shakur asked members to review goals 1 - 3 and share feedback at the December Task Force meeting. Dr. Gay spoke about the importance of adding language about microaggressions to the policy.

Ms. Rousmaniere suggested looking at other district's Opportunity Gaps policies. Dr. Gay said that her team has reviewed policies and practices at LA Unified and Oakland school districts.

Dr. Williams asked if the Task Force could utilize a shared document to capture members' feedback in one location. Ms. Shakur asked Ms. Sullivan to explore what is possible under Open Meeting Law.

District Presentation: 2023 MCAS Data Analysis - Senior Executive Director for the Office of Data and Accountability Apryl Clarkson presented an analysis of the district's 2023 MCAS performance data, highlighting the following key points:

- While gaps are not widening, significant and persistent achievement gaps remain in both English Language Arts (ELA) and mathematics achievement.
- BPS is making substantial progress toward targets (51%); however, the number of schools requiring assistance/intervention has increased to 44.
- Post-pandemic performance in literacy is stabilizing and math is rebounding. More work is needed to accelerate outcomes.
- Language acquisition is stagnating across the state and BPS needs to focus on language acquisition for older grades and for students.
- Variation achievement by student groups exists across grade levels and across schools throughout the district, indicating that the district's efforts to boost achievement are not having a consistent impact.
- There is a strong relationship between chronic absenteeism and student performance.

Ms. Shakur asked what non-transformation schools have shown downward trends and what schools with high percentages of Black and Latino students, students with disabilities, English language learners are showing strong results. Ms. Clarkson said she will follow up with additional data. Ms. Shakur asked about the district's process for aggregating data by ethnicity as well as race. Ms. Clarkson said that BPS is now collecting ethnicity data from families upon registration. BPS also collects some ethnicity data through the School Climate Survey. She explained the complexities of collecting accurate ethnicity data from current families, adding that the Office of Data and Accountability is working with the Office of Opportunity Gaps to take data governance clearing steps and will report back to the Task Force.

**Opportunity and Achievement Gaps Task Force Virtual Meeting
Zoom**

November 28, 2023

Dr. Jennings cautioned that data must be carefully interpreted. He shared his own analysis of data from the MA Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) showing continual, wide academic achievement gaps by race and ethnicity in areas such as college attendance, participation in arts courses, absenteeism, suspension rates, and churn/mobility rates. He encouraged further analysis of academic characteristics by sub-group as well as where schools are located.

Mr. Acevedo suggested looking at similar size urban districts to see how they are faring compared with Boston and who is closing gaps. Ms. Clarkson referenced the Council of Great City Schools 2021 Report: *Mirrors or Windows? How Well Do Large City Public Schools Overcome the Effects of Poverty and Other Barriers?* which shows that normatively, BPS is performing fairly well, but not well enough.

Dr. Pignato asked how the district uses social emotional learning (SEL) data. Ms. Clarkson said that currently BPS measures SEL in three different ways, not with one districtwide SEL tool. Dr. Gay added that there are many variables to examine student performance beyond MCAS results.

Task Force Business - Ms Shakur announced that the December meeting will feature a presentation on equitable literacy from Chief of Teaching and Learning Lesley Miller. Ms. Miller invited members to send questions for her team in advance. Ms. Shakur requested that the presentation include information about how BPS is measuring student growth in literacy from early childhood up to third grade. Ms. Robinson asked that the presentation include information on teacher experience and quality.

Ms. Shakur offered suggestions on how the Task Force members can provide feedback on the policy update. One option is to meet with Dr. Gay and co-chairs; another option is to hold working sessions every two weeks; a third option is to submit feedback electronically.

PUBLIC COMMENT

John Mudd, advocate, encouraged the Task Force to examine trend data to see what BPS schools are closing gaps.

Barbara Fields, advocate, noted the disparities in discipline data and encouraged the district to self-correct.

ADJOURNMENT

Approved - On roll call, the Task Force unanimously approved a motion to adjourn the meeting at 5:59 p.m.

Attest:



Elizabeth A. Sullivan

**Opportunity and Achievement Gaps Task Force Virtual Meeting
Zoom**

November 28, 2023

Executive Secretary