TDSB Task Force on the success of Students of Somali Descent
Meeting Minutes
Wednesday February 13, 2013

Time: 6:00PM
Location: 5050 Yonge Street – Executive Meeting Room

IN ATTENDANCE: Abdi Aidid, Abdifatah Warsame, Abubakar Hagi, Ahmed Elmi, Ahmed Omar, Ali Abdullahi, Ali Mohamed, Trustee Chris Bolton, Fatouma Ahmed, Hassan Ibrahim, Haweiya Egeh, Idil Burale, Jim Spyropoulos, Trustee John Hastings, Marja Tiilikainen, Mohamed Abdullahi, , Mohamed Sambul, Muna Ali, Munira Abukar, Mustafa Abdi, Rayaan Elmi, Dr. Rob Brown, Zahra Hassan.

Regrets: Faisal Omar, Hamdi Mohamed, Trustee Maria Rodrigues, Mohamed Haji-Nur, Patrick Knight, Shadia Abess.

Minute Taker:	Zahra Hassan

AGENDA ITEMS

1. **Dinner**

2. **Welcome and Introductions:**

   ▪ Quick introductions
   ▪ Chair of Board introduced by Jim.

   ▪ Chris Bolton:
     • Real commitment from the Board for the work of the Task Force.
     • We need, as a group, to bring together people from across the community to represent the diversity of the Somali community.
     • More data came forth yesterday that needs be analyzed.

   ▪ Jim Spyropoulos
     • With respect to the Task Force Website, to what extent do people outside of the committee have access to the work of the Task Force before it goes back?
     • As requested, Opportunity Gap Action Plan and Recommendations/Action Plan for Task Force of Portuguese Students provided to the group.
     • Fortunate to have access to vast majority of data – some of the data shows optimism while others reveal areas of concern.

3. **Approval of Minutes (January 31, 2013)**
     • Minutes approved

4. **Presentation of Research Data from Dr. Robert S. Brown**

Dr. Brown
   ▪ 1st census was conducted in 2006 from students in grade 7-12
   ▪ 1/2 of the information is from the census and the other ½ from student data
     • The data includes language and country of birth

Somali students

- Students who identified themselves as Somali speaking are about 5700 in total. This is one of the largest non-English speaking groups in the TDSB.
- This is a stable population and there have not been much movements.
- The vast majority are born in Canada. In the 1990's almost all students were born outside Canada.

Student achievements

- Looking at high school achievements
- Recently started looking at elementary achievements
- Gap in achievements increases as grade increases. This manifests itself in grade 8 and higher. The problem is that by the time you identify struggling students it is almost too late for meaningful intervention.
- Passing the OSSLT (Grade 10 literacy test) is not a strong indicator of if the student is doing well or not. You can re-take the test over and over and there is also the option of taking a class as a substitute.
- The most important indicator is the number of students who are eligible to take the test the 1st time. The portion of students who are eligible to take the test and who have taken and passed it, are more likely to graduate and more likely to attend post-secondary.

Why do students leave school?

- The particular data on this is not very useful
- Student exit information is not accurate and does not say why they drop out
- The information is only from students who transferred to different Boards or attended post-secondary
- If a student is absent 15 consecutive days, they are taken out of the system
- Students do not leave in a particular way – it is a revolving door
- From the first cohort studied, 30% of students who dropped out returned – some 2 or more times
- Today there are more and more ways to get into colleges – OSSD is not the only option
- Process of disengagement is one that is long and gradual

5. **Debrief and discussion of Research Data**

Haweiya E: Has there been statistics to track what is behind the disengagement?
- Dr. Brown: There are three indicators that are important
  I. EQAO results in grade 6
  II. Suspension rate – at least once (the 1st study in 2006 coincided with the zero tolerance policy)
  III. Special education
    - 41% of students with one of the above factors graduated
    - 15% of students with two of the above factors graduated
    - 5% of students with all three of the above factors graduated
  Absenteeism rate is also considered an indicator of academic engagement. If you have a high absenteeism rate in grade 9, you are less likely to go to post-secondary

- **Fatouma A**: What programs has the TDSB put into place to support/reduce the dropout rate?
  Dr. Brown: That is more of a programming issue. There is more funding for summer schools for students in grade 7-8.
  Jim S: We can arrange to have a staff from programming come talk to the Task Force.

- **Munira A**: Is religion part of the reason for the disengagement? Has there been a study on religion since Valley Park?
  Dr. Brown: We don't keep data on religion. Religion can play a role in the process of disengagement but without information that can't be said.

- **Ali A**: At what grade do most students drop out?
  Dr. Brown: Students drop out many times so it is hard to say. The better indicator would be what percentage stays long enough to finish high school.
  *Suggestion: to use the term early leave instead of dropout

- **Ali A**: How many are under 18 years?
  Dr. Brown: Theoretically you are not supposed to leave school until 18 years. But most students leave around 17+

- **Abdi A**: What are the distributions of program of study data and are Somali students over represented in any category?
  Dr. Brown: In the TDSB, 72% of students are in academic; 22% in applied, and 5% locally developed, no program, ect. Somali students have the same % as the overall TDSB however they have lower % in academic stream.

- **Abubakar H**: Is there any study that connects student survey to dropout rate? East African students reveal they do not like/connect with the school environment – is there a way to connect this information with the dropout rate?
  Dr. Brown: We are working on it

- **Abubakar H**: When will this information be available?
  Dr. Brown: Around this Fall

- **Abubakar H**: We have seen issues with streaming and we know the huge relationship it has to dropout rate. Is there a study on the impact of streaming on students?
  Dr. Brown: The biggest difference in streaming is not graduation but rather that students who are taking applied will graduate but most likely not go to post-secondary.

- **Mohamed S**: How is this statistic used by the programming department? What is done with the numbers by the Board?
  Dr. Brown: This new data is not public yet but the people who have seen it are taking it very seriously.

- **Jim S**: Based on the data we have is there an overrepresentation of Somali students in Special-Ed non-gifted? In behavior?
  Dr. Brown: Yes. With regards with students with IEP only and Speciality, Somali students are
  -Underrepresented in LD
  -Overrepresented in MID

-Overrepresented by 2.5x in IEP Only (without formal process)
IEP – based on conversation between educator/parents which lead to IEP creation

Group: Get someone from Special-Ed → **All in favor**

- <u>Ahmed E</u>: How do we bring these numbers to life? And how do we make sense of that? Interpreter? And make sure kids get a fair shot at education?
  <u>Dr. Brown</u>: That comes from the analysis process. Maybe this can be one of the roles of the Task Force.

- <u>Ahmed E</u>: Is there room for the Task Force to co-produce? Have input on the report?
  <u>Dr. Brown</u>: That would be my hope.

- <u>Marja T</u>: How do you define Somali students? Do they self-identify as Somali speaking even though they were born in Canada? Do we need to modify this for the 3rd generation, ect?
  <u>Dr. Brown</u>: The data comes from the student info system. This information is collect in JK/SK when students first enroll in the system. The data is regularly updated. Around 30 years ago there was no language code for Somali speaking. We also get the data from the student census which asks where parents were born.

- <u>Haweiya E</u>: Any plans to change this self-identification for the 3rd, 4th, ect generation Somalis?
  <u>Dr. Brown</u>: The student census captures student information which is consistent and will likely not change.

- <u>Ali M</u>: Based on research available, can we pinpoint which schools/students that are not doing well? Individual schools data of achievement/dropout
  <u>Dr. Brown</u>: Yes, we can get that information. But we need to be careful how we phrase it.

- <u>Muna A</u>: Is there data on technology/resource gap in schools that have high Somali student population in comparison to other schools.
  <u>Jim S</u>: Schools are funded by a particular formula – this information can be produced.

- <u>Trustee Hasting</u>: What have the schools done in terms of students suspended? Is race an identifier? Can we get someone from Safe Schools to come and provide data?
  <u>Dr. Brown</u>: Suspension data has race identifier. However the data is not in a form that can be used.

- <u>Abdi A</u>: Do we have grade 8 promoted/transferred data?
  <u>Dr. Brown</u>: We do not have the data for the 2006 cohort.

- <u>Abdi A</u>: What was the dropout rate prior to the Safe Schools Act in regards to Somali students?
  <u>Dr. Brown</u>: There`s not a huge effect.

- <u>Abdi A</u>: Do we know the number of students who start in academic and switch to applied?
  <u>Dr. Brown</u>: This is a subtle process. The students that attend university, 90% of them were in academic in grade 9. The major shift is that more and more students in academic are going to college.

- ▪ <u>Abubakar H</u>: Do we have the data on grade 9 students who are in locally developed?
  <u>Dr. Brown</u>: Yes, we can find that information.

- ▪ <u>Ahmed E</u>: Is there data on identities coming from the board that is linking particular identities to students?
  <u>Dr. Brown</u>: There is no such data by the TDSB – it is part of the politics of research.

- ▪ <u>Hassan I</u>: Is there data on the performance of Somali students throughout the year ie, including the summer?
  <u>Dr. Brown</u>: No, we do not have such data.

  <u>Jim S</u>: The bulk of the information will come from the people we will interview – the TDSB data is institutional.

Group Request: Get research ahead of the meetings.

6. **Begin to Create Task Force's Plan of Action**
   - ▪ Deferred to next meeting
   - ▪ Next meeting –decide on where we want to go from here?

7. **Other Business**
   - ▪ No other business

Next Meeting:	Tuesday February 19, 2013 5:30PM Dinner 6:00PM-8:00PM Meeting
ADJOURNED:	8:15PM