

TDSB Task Force on the success of Students of Somali Descent

Meeting Minutes

Thursday January 31, 2013

OOTime: 6:00PM

Location: 5050 Yonge Street – Committee Room A

IN ATTENDANCE: Abdi Aidid, Abdifatah Warsame, Abubakar Hagi, Ahmed Elmi, Ahmed Omar, Ali Abdullahi, Ali Mohamed, Faisal Omar, Fatouma Ahmed, Haweyiya Egeh, Jim Spyropoulos, John Hastings, Maria Rodrigues, Marja Tiilikainen, Mohamed Abdullahi, Mohamed Haji-Nur, Mohamed Sambul, Muna Ali, Patrick Knight, Shadia Abess, Zahra Hassan.

Minute Taker: Zahra Hassan

AGENDA ITEMS

1. Dinner

2. Welcome and Introductions:

- Three trustees joining the Task Force
 - Trustee John Hastings – Ward 1-Etobicoke North
 - Trustee Maria Rodrigues –Ward 9-Davenport
 - Chis Bolton -Chair of Board of Trustees
- Update:
 - The head of TDSB research will present data during next meeting.
 - Today the Task Force needs to create a list of people you want to hear from and list of questions/reports/readings needed in order to make recommendation.
 - Plan on what community outreach would look like.
- Reach out to the community through
 - Online survey
 - Community meetings
 - Student forum
- Recommendation from board of trustees
 - Action oriented
 - Cost associated
 - Measurable

3. Overview of Research

(Overrepresented Somali young men in detention centers)

- **Summary of Research**
 - 5616 students of Somali descent in the TDSB (83% born in Canada).
 - Most of these students go to schools in areas experiencing poverty.
 - 75% of Somali students graduated or working towards graduation (vs 86 of total student

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population).

- 25% drop out of high school (vs 14%).
- 47% of Somali students confirmed post-secondary (vs 61%).
- Both Somali males and females are at higher risk of dropping out.
- Special Education questions around how we identify students -Gifted vs Behavior special Ed.
- EQAO -strong correlation between grade 6 EQAO results and graduating high school.

▪ **What the TDSB has done so far:**

- Youth access to jobs- TDSB is the second largest youth summer employment agency in Toronto. Around 50 Somali youth were hired last summer through the Focus on Youth program.
- Increase of Community Support Workers. There are about 24 Community Workers supporting parents in most needed communities (5 of them are of Somali descent).
- Somali language added to the TDSB online employment services.
- Special session for recent Somali graduate/qualified teachers will be scheduled.
- Somali student conference to be held in April.

▪ **Minutes:**

- Everything will be added into the minutes unless otherwise specified.

▪ **Suggestion:**

- Have a bio and a blog access on the Task Force website-**All in favor.**
- Send brief bio to Zahra to be added to the Task Force website.

4. Debrief of Research

▪ **Questions for Dr. Brown, head of TDSB Research:**

- Community organization research
- Data on grade 10 literacy results
- Date on which grade students dropout
- Results and recommendations from Portuguese / First Nations task force
- Why the grade 3 EQAO results were not included in this report
- Results from another cohort
- How the TDSB collects and presents data - internal self-reflection
- At which grade you are classified as Special Education student and what classification puts you in Special Ed
- Early warning flags we miss from grade 3-5 suspensions including day suspensions and behavior problems
- Clarifications around Special Education -including information on how to get children out of Special Ed
- What has been transpiring with Somali youth to get them where they are
- History of racism, oppression, and how it manifest itself in our education system and how that affects our youth's academic performance

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- Examination of what the system/teachers are doing to oppress Somali youth and other racialized youth of African heritage
- Issues of mastering language; IEP/Special Ed
- Feeling of exclusion experienced by parents - what they should/should not sign off -issue of legality
- Islamaphobia vs dropout rate
- Access to anti-racism / equity training by educators
- What happens within the classroom with Somali students –classroom structure –who is included/excluded
- Parent/teacher relationship and if they use interpreters
- Intersectionality - Somali/Muslim/Refugee
- Research of different learning styles to engage students in the classroom
- Re-engagement rate within the system once students dropout
- Academic/applied/locally developed streams information and options parents/students have with respect to moving to different stream
- Do we have cohort of Somali community members that schools and parents can turn to in order to support struggling students (financially compensate these individuals). Is it possible to illicit that support for Somali Students
- Date on transferred vs promoted students
- TDSB study/date on systematic bullying
- What type of information the TDSB shares/excludes in their report
- Safe Schools Act/data in regards to Somali students
- Date on schools that over suspend Somali students and any consequences for the principles/schools
- What does the TDSB do internally with suspension data
- Background date on Somali students that are doing well? Family information, education, et cetera.
- Bullying suspension procedures - consequences of false accusations of bullying? Investigation while on suspension?

▪ **Further Research/Items to consider:**

- Somali students study done by York University student (MRP) -results on what Somalis found about themselves
- "I am Canadian" study what will be sent by Jim
- Recommendations from UofT center for Urban Schooling to the TDSB
- Ministry of Children/Youth Services study
- Canadian Black Legal Clinic education on parent's rights
- Having three town hall meetings- East/West/Central
- Request to have the superintendent of Special Ed come and present to the Task Force
- Request to have the Principle of Safe Schools come and present to the Task Force
- Meeting with Somali descent teachers and non-Somali teachers who teach in schools with high Somali student populations
- Will the task force have access to research / co-produce the research?

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- Factory Model - are Faculty of Education still persisting on this model? Has there been innovation on teaching?

5. Committee Mandate

- Suggestion moving forward:
 - Take advantage of Somali students conference in April -construct questions for students and teachers: **All in favor**
 - 2 community consultations
 - 1 student consultation
 - 1 teacher consultation
 - Create a subgroup that will meet more frequently to ensure work is on track
 - Recommendation ready by April due date
 - Members suggested to push this date to the summer - **All in favor**
- TDSB Interim Director Donna Quan reiterate her /TDSB support for the work of Task Force (7:30PM)

6. Schedule of "Task Force Work

- Next meeting: Wednesday February 13, 2013
 - 5:30PM-Dinner
 - 6:00-8:00PM-Meeting
 - Dr. Brown will present to the group
 - Get started on creating a plan of action
- Following Meeting: Tuesday February 19, 2013 at 5:30PM

7. Selection of Task Force Chair

- Committee suggested on the select of two co-chairs - **All in favor**
- Ali Mohamed and Haweiya Egeh were unanimously selected as co-chairs.

8. Other Business

- No other business

Next Meeting:	Wednesday February 13, 2013 5:30PM Dinner 6:00PM-8:00PM Meeting
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ADJOURNED:	8:42PM
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