

**TDSB Task Force on the success of Students of Somali Descent**

**Meeting Minutes**

Tuesday March 19, 2013

<b>Time:</b> 6:00PM	
<b>Location:</b> 5050 Yonge Street – Cafeteria	
<b>IN ATTENDANCE:</b> Abdifatah Warsame, Abubakar Hagi Ahmed Elmi, Ahmed Omar, Ali Mohamed, Fatouma Ahmed, Hamdi Mohamed, Haweiya Egeh, Jim Spyropoulos, Mohamed Abdullahi, Mohamed Sambul, Mustafa Abdi, Rayaan Elmi, Munira Abukar, Mohamed Haji-Nur, Hassan Ibrahim	
<b>Regrets:</b> Idil Burale, Abdi Aidid, Trustees Chris Bolton, Maria Rodrigues, and John Hastings, Patrick Knight, Muna Ali, Faisal Omar, Marja Tiilikainen , Zahra Hassan, Shadia Abess	
<b>Minute Taker:</b>	Munira Abukar (for this meeting taking over Zahra Hassan)
<b>AGENDA ITEMS</b>	
<b>1. Dinner</b>	
<b>2. Welcome</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Ali Mohamed chaired the meeting.</li><li>▪ Meeting called to order at 6:04PM</li></ul>	
<b>3. Approval of Minutes (March 5, 2013)</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Ali Abdullahi brought up a question he had at the last meeting in regards to a suggestion of a youth detention subcommittee (what was the need for it? What is the proposed impact?)- Co-Chair Haweiya responded by explaining that the suggestion was made last committee meeting, and that a total of five people had volunteered to be on the committee. The overall focus as was explained seemed to be that their needed be an inclusion of the voices of young men in conflict with the law.</li><li>▪ Co-Chair Ali Mohamed wished to send along well wishes on behalf of the committee to Trustee Irene Atkinson. Jim Spyropoulos agreed to send along the message along to TDSB</li><li>▪ Co-Chair Ali. M. asked to have minutes moved- Moved by Munira, seconded by Fatouma</li></ul>	

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#### 4. Updates from Sub-Committees

- **Downtown Committee**

- In terms of the downtown subcommittee there has not been much progress, they have been able to the dates from the initial (March 29<sup>th</sup>) to (April 12<sup>th</sup>). The downtown committee plans on using Regent Park (Daniel's residential) space to host their town halls. The subcommittee is currently reviewing logistical issues such as whether or not the town hall will be primarily in Somali or English, and whether or not they will follow Islamic regulations and have the meeting with gender divisive seating. The subcommittee is also waiting on the outreach flyer. **(Fatouma gave update)**

- **East Committee**

- The East committee had a meeting where they agreed on a few things. The date of their town hall has been officially scheduled to (April 7<sup>th</sup>) which is on a Sunday, the projected audience they are looking to have is anywhere between 150-250 parents, and youth attending. Overall the East is progressing well with their mandate, and like the downtown committee they too are waiting on the outreach flyer. **(Sh. Hassan gave update)**

- **West Committee:**

- Has met once since the last meeting, the west has had to push their dates up from the original scheduling in (May) to (April) \* **due to a deadline of April 30<sup>th</sup> for all town halls in order to have recommendations formalized in report back.** The west is looking to confirm locations, times, and dates, and will be updating the larger committee regularly. **(Ali A. gave the update)**

- **Research Committee**

- The research committee ultimately ended up completing their pilot process (*which was using a basketball tournament in Caledon to ask young men questions*) for the questions (interviewed a total of 30 students- 3 groups of 10) and overall had successful feedback that was insightful and useful in restructuring the questions. The committee will discuss the questions in item #6 (

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**Co-Chair Haweiya and Ahmed E.gave the update)**

- **Teachers Committee**
- Will be meeting on Thursday because they have not had the chance to meet prior. **(Ahmed Omar gave update)**
- **Youth in Detention Sub-Committee Members:**
- There was a discussion that followed up with the questions asked in item # and Abdifatah who is committee lead discussed the visit he and Ali A made to the Roy Mcmurtry Youth Centre. The two were briefed about academic and non-academic programs, and this led to the suggestion by Fatouma to include Ibrahim Downey into the conversation as he is a Muslim man who deals with men in conflict with the law. The group overall thought that speaking to young men with legal history would benefit the overall discussion and that recidivism might needed to be tackled. Ali A suggesting to have a sit down discussion with 8- 10 young men and Jim agreed with the gentle reminder as to not have the process too formalized. Ali A also suggested looking at redemption as an option. ***The committee agreed and the motion was passed.***
- **Outreach Sub-Committee Members:**
- Met two weeks ago and will be rescheduling another group meeting in the near future to discuss any other outcomes. **( Munira gave update)**
- ***Action Item(s) Ali A and Abdifatah will follow up with each other and the overall committee in regards to having a focus group that encompasses 8-10 young men in conflict with the law.***

**5. Format of Consultations (i.e. large group discussions? Breakouts? Etc.)**

- Hassan I. stated that in the East they will be using the first hour of their meeting for an introduction (data breakdown, group introduction, questions etc.) which will be followed up by breakout sessions into sub groups- this will be broken down based on people with similar backgrounds i.e. mothers, youth, and so forth. The East would end their town hall by having one large group discussion ( looking for different facilitators for breakout session)

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- Fatouma stated that the Downtown session would also have a similar format, and would be looking at incorporating more Islamic rules during their meetings (i.e. gender segregation) the Downtown committee is also looking at having note takers at every breakout session.
- Ali A stated that facilitators are hard to do in terms of time, and space- 1 facilitator is fine to have who asks two questions from each category.
- Leaning towards having the breakout sessions (it's a reoccurring theme)
- Munira stated she was uncomfortable about having people being categorized into different groups because it limits their freedom into what they want to breakout into. She felt that when you restrict people you create a bias. Hassan. I stated that the questions were designed for a different demographic and that we should respect that when/and if we choose to breakout sessions (also why the East chose to have the format of breakout sessions.
- Co-Chair Ali asked the three high school students in attendance on their opinion of what they believed would be the best format. - no comments were received.
- Haweiya clarified the question of facilitators which Jim said would be provided
- ***ACTION ITEM(S) None were proposed***

#### 6. Consultation questions developed

- Mohamed Haji clarified that the committee had the shorter, unofficial copy of the questions (were missing 3-6 in the Teachers section) this was officially recognized and noted by the committee.
- ***How do you see the questions?***
- The committee pointed out they felt there were missing questions, Munira pointed out an error of Somali students (in actuality it's Canadian students of Somali descent)- Haweiya corrected it.
- Ali A. loved the teachers questions and wished that the students had similar questions (i.e. support, and curriculum reflection questions) Ahmed Omar agreed but stated that it maybe a

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wording ( wanted to look at personalizing the questions and used the student question #3 as an example)

- The need for special education were brought up and Hassan I. said to leave it to the facilitator to prompt that question- will eventually come up in conversation (not needed in these questions)
- Mohamed H. said he liked the free flowing, fluid and consecutive nature of the questions
- Ahmed Omar- said that he would have liked to have a question in there based on mental health, and pressure.
- Superintendent Jim pointed out that the TDSB just completed a census that focused on mental health, and included questions based on anxiety, loss of sleep. (what committee received were in fact end numbers)
- Ahmed Elmi stated that if we go down the route of asking questions about mental health then we could be validating something that we do not want to –important to discuss but could be biasing ultimate findings. The Somali community is already a branded community and we as a committee need to focus on the emotional cost of the Canadian cultural disregard, and the in school experience, by focusing on mental health the ultimate result could give teachers more power with what to do with our students in class (unofficial diagnosis) so we should stay away from mental health)
- Superintendent Jim agreed and reminded the committee that by sticking with our mandate (i.e. finding experiences) would help recommendations.
- Co-Chair Ali asked about looking at race and power as a concern (fairness needs to be looked at) the Co-Chair felt this wasn't covered in the questions.
- Superintendent Jim stated that in fact Somali parents (mothers especially) are involved but the issue is why isn't that working for the community? The standard formula is usually parent involvement=student success in school and this isn't true in the Somali community.

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- Co-Chair Haweiya stated that without giving the students prompts they naturally discussed racism, labeling, power, and how this is a part of their overall school experience and this covers the race and power component (Munira seconded this)
- Abdifatah W agreed that we should cover power and race component. (even more directly than prompting)
- Co-Chair Haweiya said she believes that by keeping the discussion broad and having prompts will have the answers come to us rather than us narrowly seeking the answers with questions
- Ahmed Elmi agreed and stated that certain questions will lead to certain answers and this may leave out a key organic element.
- Ali A. also agreed and stated that because the questions are general the discussion of race and power will come up, and will be free flowing.
- Superintendent Jim agreed and stated that the questions by the Research committee are full proof and that keeping the questions general is great because if the committee had narrowed the focus and geared it towards power and race the research would be considered invalidated.
- Co-Chair Ali asked if the questions geared towards high school students (\*#6) were ok and Rayaan, Hamdi, and Mustafa all said the questions were ok with them and that it gives them a chance to expand on what they like/don't like.
- Abubakar asked a clarification question for #4 of the Students questions on whether the rate was the highest or not? Superintendent Jim stated that he thinks the committee should change it to excessively high because it depends on which context the rates are looked at (i.e. African students, special education etc.)
- Mohamed Abdullahi on #6 of the Students question thinks it should include school climate reflection and how that impacts students
- Ahmed O. - thinks that #5 of the Students questions should be changed to supports and

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resources instead of tools and resources.

- Fatouma A- works at an Islamic school and knew a youth who was suspended and eventually kicked out at the TDSB and suspended at Islamic school → what happens to young people to have them not succeed? (i.e. in their lives) this was specifically to look at the inflexibility of their schedule, and that maybe school is their outlet for break, and fun
- Co-Chair Ali believed it's a defense mechanism of parents because kids are made to look A.D.D/ADHD/RESTLESS/CRAZY etc.
- Abubakar wanted to highlight the experience of parents with the teachers at school, he said that 99% of the time the parents find out about their children's problems at the parent/teacher interviews which is ridiculous considering these parents ask the teacher every day in casual conversations how their children are doing which they (teachers) respond by saying "good, good." These teachers let the problems with their students build up, and do not even use the agenda as a means of communication- proving that the parents aren't involved and the teachers aren't.
- Abdifatah agrees that teachers don't want to discuss their students, and that parents lose out on this choice by teachers. (Schools are hostile and this is a major concern)
- Superintendent Jim believed that the questions were great and that he wanted to highlight the Indigenous community's process of questions and how it was different because they took on the traditional circle approach because they saw structured questions as colonial to their healing. Jim believed this was useful because he sees the Indigenous community and Somali community as similar.
- **Action Item(s): the Research committee will take into consideration all suggestions, specifically Ali. A and Ahmed O's suggestion to personalize the questions. This will be worked and provided to committee at a later date.**

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**7. Outreach ( community flyer)**

- In terms of the flyer Superintendent Jim has spoken to creative services but they haven't produced anything will do so the following day → have a draft by the end of the week. The flyer needs a date, and cannot be sent out before Trustees have a look at the flyer ( which would take about a week's notice) → the Trustees would approve and it would be sent out.
- Hassan I. said he wouldn't like pictures on the flyer
- Fatouma said the Downtown committee came up with a concept of having a Darwinian theme with a child crawling- toddler playing-and ultimately a teen graduating (also Somali with the word Shiir Weyne)
- Abubakar had the idea of a pathway leading to a sun
- Mohamed said having overall human figures without a face was ok with him
- Ali A. said to keep the flyer simple with the date and time including a title " Let's Talk Education
- Munira wanted to incorporate Somali and English and to make sure this was communicated to creative services.

***(Ali A stepped out of the meeting at 7:30pm)***

- Mohamed believed the word Shiir is too political and that if we are going for Somali to make it more conversational.
- Co-Chair Ali stated that if this flyer is posted to let the Co-Chairs to know in the future

***(Ahmed O. Rayaan, Hamdi, and Mustafa stepped out of the meeting at 7:50pm)***

- ***Action Item(s) to have the flyer circulated when drafted via email and have everyone evaluate it.***

**8. Other Business**

- All other committees have agreed to meet up to finalize details
- Team leads must follow up with each other and overall committee ( commitment to circulate notes)

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- Hassan I. made a note stating he will be away until the 3<sup>rd</sup> of May
- Superintendent Jim has made the commitment to provide TDSB facilitators if needed, Jim is able to provide as much as needed but is concerned for facilitators for the parents.
- The committee discussed and came to the consensus that they will internally find members of the Somali community to act as note takers and facilitators
- Mohamed H. made the suggestion to have two facilitators (TDSB and Somali (also translator)
- This was accepted and amended to also include 2 note takers (English and Somali)
- The facilitators would need to be available to either meet on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of April, or pre-send Jim a list of their questions and concerns over the questions which they will receive ahead of time.
- The committee also discussed looking at the student conference set (4/16/2013) to have separate sessions to include the questions)
- Hassan I. asked if someone at TDSB could prepare a presentation of the Taskforce to present at the town hall sessions- Superintendent Jim agreed
- A point of clarification by Ahmed E. who asked if Jim would be presenting this at every town hall to which the response was yes, Ahmed said to be wary because people would be reluctant to open up when a representative from the institution was there and kicking off the meeting.
- The committee took into consideration Ahmed's concerns and came to the agreement that Jim would present the power point at every meeting for 10 minutes and would have a 5 minute window to answer 3 questions from the audience (Co-Chair Ali's idea)
- Abubakar stated that it would be in the group's best interest to make sure none of the questions were leading and debatable because it would throw everything off balance. Make sure to guide the questions and if needed to have the questions clarified
- Co-Chair Ali stated that it was best to let that autonomy to go to the sub-committees
- **Action Item(s) Superintendent Jim said that he would need the dates and locations ahead of time which Co-Chair Ali would do, Also sub committees will follow up with facilitator names.**

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<p><b>Discuss for the next meeting &amp; the Next Meeting</b></p>	<p>The committee believed that there would be no need to meet until all of the town halls are completed ( which is before April 30<sup>th</sup> ) it was due to this and the need to meet before recommendations are made May that the next meeting is scheduled for</p> <p><i>Monday April 29<sup>th</sup> ,2013</i></p> <p><i>5:30pm Dinner and 6– 8pm Meeting</i></p>
<p><b>Adjourned</b></p>	<p>The meeting was adjourned by Co-Chair Ali at <b>8:25pm</b></p>