

**ICAC Meeting Minutes
December 14, 2011**

In attendance –

Trustees Howard Kaplan, Chris Glover and Sheila Cary-Meagher, Aim Mujib, Sharlene Bourjot, Nathan Gilbert, Jann Houston, Jeffery Kugler, Anne Sheppard, Cheryl Skovronek, Monica Etzler, George Martell, David Clandfield, Laurie Green, Chris Penrose, Michael Kerr, Bob Spencer, Lesley Johnston, Nanci Goldman

Regrets:

Vicky Branco, Donna Quan, Graham Hollings, Tanya Senk, Nadia Heyd, Lisa Watson, Sejal Patel, Darcy MacCallum, Marjolein Winterink, Alejandra Bravo

Guests:

Anna Furfaro-Monjezi, Mohammed Ahmed, Michael Kerr, Shirely Kim, Adana Anucha, Natasha Burford, Andrew Newsome, Saida Sabrie

Staff:

Gillian Parekh, Rob Brown, Karen Forbes, Dave Johnston, Cindy Burley, Manon Gardner, Cassie Bell

1. Introductions and Announcements –

- Michael Kerr (EPAC- Equity Policy Advisory Committee) reminds everybody to keep the upcoming **FUTURES** conference in mind (May 3-5th, 2012) – many intersections with work ICAC does – check TDSB website for information: www.tdsb.on.ca and click on “FUTURES”
- Jeffery Kugler (CUS – Centre for Urban Schooling, OISE U/T) announced 2012 William Waters Symposium; Keynote will be James Banks, Equity educator, and the symposium will be facilitated by activist and pundit Judy Rebick
- CBC’s Metro Morning program this morning - Host Matt Galloway spoke to *Chris Penrose*, director of the *Success Beyond Limits* Education Program. He shared his reaction to yesterday's police raids and Project Marvel, a gang investigation that started in the Jane-Finch area. (runs 6:26)
- <http://www.cbc.ca/metromorning/episodes/2011/12/14/community-reaction-1/>
- Chris spoke to Matt about the raids and made the point that not all youth arrested are guilty, but the inference in the media is that they are criminals. He also linked potential negative impacts of city cuts in inner city communities, particularly for youth who are already ‘at risk’. Kudos to Chris!
- Request for approval of new ICAC member – Natasha Burford
- Natasha is currently a teacher (on a leave of absence) in the Rexdale area and is currently engaged with a local advocacy group, “Educational Attainment West” (or, EAW), for marginalized and racialized youth who have dropped out of school
- ICAC member Chris Penrose moves that Natasha be approved as an ICAC member, seconded by Jeffery Kugler, approved unanimously.
- Welcome Natasha!

2. Draft Agenda approval – moved by N. Gilbert, seconded by H. Kaplan, approved unanimously.

3. Previous Meeting Minutes Approval (November 10, 2011) – moved by C. Skovronek, seconded by B. Spencer, approved unanimously.

4. ICAC Co-ordinator's Report –

- **Handouts:** “City budget Watch 2012”, “More unequal, less complacent” (Toronto Star, December 10, 2011), Campaign 2000 – “Revisiting Family Security in Insecure Times 2011 Report Card on Child and Family Poverty in Canada”, “Joyce Peason prepares another Christmas Feast for 300 kids at Sprucecourt School” (Toronto Star, December 11, 2011)
- **Action Items and Motions from Previous ICAC Meetings**
- *Page 6* – Trustee Glover’s motion re: joint statement by two school boards to city on impact of cuts on children
- Trustee Glover reported he spoke to his TDSB colleagues and some from TCDSB
- In Trustee Glover’s Ward, model was to convert parks and recreation programming into schools – great model and we stand to lose 6-7 of these programs if city cuts are approved as they stand
- TDSB Chair Bolton sent a letter to the Mayor – waiting for response and then both letter and response will be made public
- Some councilors are starting to backtrack, i.e., Thistletown Community Centre now off the table
- Some ‘enlightened’ councilors are holding community meetings to inform public about proposed budget and gather feedback
- Suggest that trustees meet jointly with councilors – the more local the more real
- TDSB Staff are collating data from superintendents now, i.e., numbers of kids using ten targeted community centres etc. to determine impact; this data will be shared with trustees
- One parent advocate shares strategy in her ward – parent and student with address in ward which is selected for cuts to visit councilor personally and take in petitions, letters etc.
- Goal is to visit councilors January 9th through 11th, 2012 as City Executive Committee will meet to approve budget on January 12th.

ACTION ITEM

ICAC parent advocate will share letter and petition templates for other ICAC members to use – will forward through ICAC Co-ordinator.

- **ICAC Deputation at City Budget Committee**
- Outlined MSIC program and areas of the city it covers which correspond to areas where budget cuts are focused; impact on cuts on our children and youth
- Questioned accuracy of figures – according to reports, fiscal pressure is approximately \$250 million; while budget surplus is \$139 million and rising-why are these cuts are being made?
- Urged councilors to consider the consequences of their decisions – some cuts may have a very serious impact on the well-being of many children and youth who depend on political leaders to look out for them

- Referenced MSIC website, and LOI as a tool for reflecting external challenges of students and tells stories of students in our inner city communities

5. MSIC Resource Team Update –

- Staff are currently busy working on data for “All Day Learning” program so Board is able to evaluate potential impact of city cuts
- Data includes capital repairs needed to expand All Day Learning and gap between funding and need, “shoulder” programs etc.

ACTION ITEM-

Staff will invite Superintendent Ennis and Deputy Director, Operations, Penny Mustin to January ICAC to provide details of this “All Day Learning” programs scan.

- ICAC points out that most helpful would be for staff to address– “what does the TDSB need (financially etc.) to *fully* implement Charles Pascal’s All Day Learning program?”
- More parents attending Ward Councils and bringing forward concerns regarding implementation/funding of “All Day Learning” programs
- Staff have hard copy of MSIC newsletter but due to missing item will correct and send link for soft copy

ACTION ITEM-

MSIC newsletter will be circulated by Staff as soon as possible to ICAC Co-ordinator in soft copy for circulation to ICAC members.

- Newsletter contains information regarding amazing work done by MSIC this fall – Fall Classic, launch of new MSIC website (www.tdsb.on.ca/modelschools) AGO partnerships (link to Grade 4 curriculum), Equity Continuum, Community Faith Walks etc.
- CAT4 (Canadian Achievement Test) -- all schools have now completed, some schools are sharing with parents at parent/teacher interview sessions
- Gandhi’s Glasses very well received throughout the system, in the media etc.
- One MSIC Cluster doing focus on mental health with Chief Academic Officer, Program Support and Focused Intervention, Karen Gravitis
- MSIC program has had many visitors from various countries, Australia, China etc. Word is spreading!

6. Special Education Discussion – (see discussion paper attached)

A sincere “thank you” to the ICAC Special Education “work group”, especially Dr. David Clandfield and Dr. Laurie Green, who have worked hard over email and at meetings to develop this discussion paper, and to Special Education staff who have taken the time to attend today’s meeting: Karen Forbes, Senior Superintendent, Special Education and Section 23 Programs, Dave Johnston, Senior Manager of Professional Support Services, and Cindy Burley, System Superintendent, Special Education Services.

- David Clandfield introduces discussion paper – has been a work in progress, first version was 32 pages!
- Paper will continue to evolve as discussion continues to evolve
- David worked in Ministry’s office in 1992 on many of these issues – not a lot has changed since 1980s!
- Research Department’s report: “Special Education: Structural Overview and Student Demographics” December 2010, opened up many more questions for this work group, so had to try and focus on certain aspects
- Also, questions will be answered (and more posed) by a variety of departments, ministries, staff etc., i.e., Ministry of Education (MoE), Ministry of Children and Youth Services (MCYS), community agencies, Parent Involvement Advisory Committee(PIAC), Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC), Equity Policy Advisory Committee(EPAC), Special Education Department, TDSB, external agencies, medical experts etc.
- Laurie points out that focus of ICAC work group was income and race and where these factors drive placement and impact of private assessments
- Karen Forbes thanks ICAC for invitation to attend and participate in discussion; might also be valuable to have a SEAC member attend next meeting?
- Agreed – especially as there are eight newly appointed parents at SEAC
- Community involvement was key to these appointees

ACTION ITEM:

Invite SEAC (and other advisory committee members) to next ICAC where Special Education is discussed. (Responsibility: Staff and ICAC Co-ordinator)

- **Page 3** – Early Development Instrument (EDI) – discussion
- EDI performed at Kindergarten level by teachers
- Teachers look at kids in classroom, but it is not student specific – data gives school overall sense of trends

Q: How did the Research Department get this data then? It appears to be on the individual student level?

A: Through partnership with McMaster University; MCYS (Ministry of Children and Youth Services) oversees and funds EDI; philosophy is that EDI is done on a school level; generally done every five (5) years

A: Note that Model Schools (MSIC) does EDI *every* year at both JK and SK levels; data is completed, put into a sealed envelope and sent directly to Research and then onto McMaster University

Q: Years ago (1970s) it was possible to track ‘flow through’ (i.e., Gr. 1 -12, success rates of special needs students etc.) – is this still done?

A: Yes, but tracking began in 1999-2000 cohort year – these kids are now Grade 12 so upcoming report this year will reflect trends; we have lost track of many students through mobility (if kids move to another TDSB school we can still track through student number, but if they drop out or move to another board we cannot)

Q: Isn’t teacher developing a perception of child which might be biased? Doesn’t this raise the question, how do we look at our children?

A: Yes, but teacher would develop a perception of child whether they were doing EDI or not; issue really is that with EDI we are looking at what children *aren't* doing as opposed to what they *are* doing, i.e., deficit model of thinking

Q: Is there potential for subjective bias?

A: Yes. EDI really reflects a deficit model, but the Offord centre tries to make it as objective as possible.

Q: Looking at Special Education and moving onto post secondary, where do kids go if they drop out? Do we do 'exit interviews'?

A: We (TDSB) have no ability to go beyond our own system, however the province is beginning to do long term assessments which we will be able to access eventually

- Need to re-focus discussion – three big areas this discussion paper addresses:
 - (i) Individual Education Plans (IEP) – increase in number and “informal” IEPs
 - (ii) Congregated classes
 - (iii) Increase in gifted identification (demographically) and rise in private assessments (demographically)

A: No such thing as an “informal” IEP – have IEP with or without IPRC (Identification, Placement and Review Committee)

- Significant increase in number of students with IEP, but not IPRC'd initiated response by province to address concern that too much time being spent on paperwork and not with students
- Parents and students agreed this would/might help rid system of bureaucracy – now equal number of IPRCs and IEPs
- IEPs provide students and parents accountability from teacher and other staff and is generally perceived in and of itself to be a positive thing

Q: Question regarding IEP process- what is the role of the parent in an IEP? Are there translations/interpreters made available? Parent should be apprised that IEP is being considered and parental signature obtained

A: IST (In-School Support Team) and parent are *usually* present to discuss IEP, however, there is no provincial mandate that parents attend; problem-solving discussion around child by all involved; result is sometimes an IEP, which really equates to writing down specifically what the child needs to learn (i.e., could mean extra time to complete tests, specific modifications etc.)

- It is important to note that final decision regarding IEP is up to the principal, as well as what part of consultation is included; this decision can be challenging for parents sometimes ¹
- TDSB regulations concerning ISTs clearly state that the expectation is that parents/guardians/caregivers and students (age 16 years+) be involved in the IEP process: “Active involvement of parent(s) etc. and students enhances the effectiveness of IST/SST process. *Parent(s) etc. should be encouraged to feel that their contributions are valued as part of the process.* The SST also makes the parent(s) etc. aware of their rights to request an IPRC meeting about their

¹ From the Ministry IEP Standards document: “**Although the IEP is developed collaboratively, the principal is ultimately responsible for each student’s plan.** The principals must sign the IEP to indicate his or her assurances that the plan is appropriate to the student’s strengths and needs and that it meets all of the standards outline in this document.” p.27, TDSB Special Education Plan 2009

child. This request should be in writing through the school principal.” (p. 17, TDSB Special Education Plan – italics + bolding mine)

- **Staff** – Key question is – what does Ministry mean by “collaboratively”? For example, administrators are expected to understand individual student’s needs, but have the responsibility to check with teachers and others to understand student’s strengths and challenges
- It is generally understood that staff support parent(s) etc. as much as possible in this process, but we are hearing this may be an issue
- IEP document is initially a draft document and is sent home to parents for review

ACTION ITEM:

(i) Staff to forward link to Ministry of Education Special Education Resource document

(ii) Trustee Cary-Meagher requests that overall central costs for interpreters and translations for Special Education Department be forwarded to the Model Schools for Inner Cities Steering Committee

Q: Concern raised that IEPs may seriously circumscribe some students’ lives?

A: We are hearing different viewpoints here – actually we (staff) consider IEPs to be an advantage for students

Q: Why are provincial IEP statistics at odds with TDSB’s?

A: “Local” IEPs are not being recorded in schools; there appears to be no difference in achievement whether a local IEP or not

- Doesn’t appear to be an official IEP process and it is a great tool if used perfectly, however, research seems to indicate there is a higher percentage of poor and racialized students in this sector; this is a key issue
- SST (School Support Team) process is that teachers goes to administrator first; s/he can also invite specialists if they deem necessary (i.e., speech and language therapists, psychologists etc.); this means IEP is not just filtered through eyes of teacher but is a cross-disciplinary process
- IEP also follows student via Ontario School Record (OSR) which helps support student’s transitions to other schools

Q: Role of parent is critical; child should be assessed in front of/in collaboration with parent(s) etc. and community and they must have a say; if not, kids end up going into Special Education and finding out in high school that they have been marginalized and, often, they drop out

Q: Does being in Special Education stigmatize kids? Need to look at this data

Q: Please make distinction between learning and social needs; issues which sometimes motivate IEPs are not only academically motivated but also due to social needs – two are not unrelated; we as educators recognize that IEP is meant for good, but some communities fear it and don’t trust it – how do we overcome this?

Q: We all have different ideas of what supports kids best; as a former administrator in a poor school, I saw that what policies “say” and how they play out on the ground can be very different; at wealthier schools parent involvement tends to be greater and parents know their rights, i.e., bring advocates in with them to IEP meetings; in a poor school, often filled with newcomers and refugees, there are many barriers to

their involvement at this level; parental involvement in IEP/SST meetings should be a rule, not a suggestion; hard to make this a rule, but it is already happening at richer schools!

- Class distinction and racialization exists in Toronto which marginalizes some parents and can lead to unplanned outcomes for their children

A: There is a quality check process in place; all processes and documents are now on the web and a web-based browser allows staff and departments to track them – it's not just a case of 'now you have the rules so you're on your own'

Q: Need to look more closely at what is controlled by TDSB, MoE etc. and agree that distinction should be made between academic and social needs, in other words, if you haven't looked at whole child, are you really his/her needs through these IEP/IPRC processes?

A: To go to an IPRC, you must have a professional assessment (defined as psychological, speech etc. assessments); this is mandated by the TDSB, but not legislated by the MoE

Q: Would also like to emphasize the importance of parents being involved *early* in all these processes; every kid has special needs and parents need to be actively involved as "expert" of their child and his/her needs; *every* child has special needs at one time or another

Q: An identifier question at registration is needed; paths are being set for these children and systemic discrimination comes into play early

A: We hear the concerns, suggest one more meeting is needed as we would like to continue this discussion – we are happy to come back, if invited!

Q: Thank you, this is an equity question for the ICAC, and likely for other advisory committees as well

Q: Should we invite MoE and MCYS to the table at this point?

A: No, not yet – we need to discuss "exceptionalities" thoroughly first (p. 11 of discussion paper) with TDSB Staff

ACTION ITEM:

ICAC Co-ordinator to send Special Education Staff dates of January ICAC.

A: Happy to come back and discuss parent involvement, gifted assessments; according to TDSB Psychologists there has not been an dramatic increase in the number of private (i.e., paid for) assessments; these are more likely to be for gifted designations; the real issue is when the TDSB disagrees with an outside assessment

Q: Is it possible to get a breakdown of private assessment numbers?

A: No, there is no connectivity with this data.

ICAC Co-chairs thanked Special Education staff sincerely for participating in this important discussion and wished them all a very happy holiday.

ICAC Special Education Work Group Discussion Paper's Recommendations:

Whereas the data in the Brown-Parekh report of December 2010 reveal certain demographic patterns that may have implications for the human rights and educational prospects of the poor and racialized students forming an important focus of the Inner City Advisory Committee's work,

IT IS RECOMMENDED

(i) THAT the work group make a presentation to the Programs and School Services Committee of the Toronto District School Board as soon as possible to bring forward ICAC's concerns about patterns of access and exclusion for students of poor and racialized backgrounds as these are identified in the Brown-Parekh research report of December 2010, and

(ii) THAT the work group continue to work together and gather information and consult with appropriate bodies on the following key issues, among others:

- *the assignment of Individual Education Plans to students who have not been identified with an exceptionality through the Identification, Placement and Review Committee process in view of the disproportional representation of students of poor and racialized backgrounds;*
- *the extensive use of congregated classes for Special Education programming whose demographic composition shows disproportional representations of students of poor and racialized backgrounds;*
- *the significant rise in the numbers and percentage of students identified as Gifted, a group in which students of poor and racialized backgrounds are significantly under-represented;*
- *the apparent growth in parental recourse to privately conducted psychological assessments; and*
- *different approaches in other jurisdictions with respect to Individual Education Plans, congregated classes and accommodations in regular classrooms, assessment techniques and standards;*

and report to the ICAC on its findings and conclusions in the Spring of 2012.

Item (ii) moved, item (i) deferred by D. Clandfield,

Discussion –

- Critical exchange with staff; other committees deal with these issues other ways – glad we are inviting SEAC and EPAC and PIAC to the table
 - Agree that more work needs to be done on item (ii) before taking recommendations to PSSC (Programs and School Services Committee) and need to incorporate responses and discussion heard today into next iteration of 'discussion paper'
 - Possibility of quadruple (4!) joint advisory committee meeting on these issues?
 - Imperative that we look more closely at recommendation that parents participate in SST (School Support Team) meetings etc.
 - Seemingly 'accidental' composition of SSTs determines outcomes of initial conversations and direction of next steps due to lens through which child is viewed; this needs to be a more thoughtful and intentional process
- **Motion seconded by R. Spencer, approved unanimously.**

7. Trustee Updates

Board Organizational results –

- Trustee Chris Bolton voted in again as Chair of the Board, Trustee Sean Chen as Vice-Chair

ICAC Trustees Membership –

- Trustees Smith, Glover, Cary-Meagher, Kaplan and Tonks
- More trustees than any other advisory committee!
- Welcome to Trustee Smith who is new to ICAC

Meeting Adjourned

Next Meeting –

Thursday January 12, 2012

6:30 – 9:30 pm

5050 Yonge Street, Executive Meeting Room