

ICAC Meeting Minutes
Wednesday February 15, 2012

In attendance:

Nathan Gilbert, Michael Griesz, George Martell, David Clandfield, Laurie Green, Howard Kaplan, Aim Mujib, Sharlene Bourjot, Cheryl Skovronek, Lesley Johnston, Lisa Watson, Vincenza Pietopaulo, Laurie Green, Chris Penrose, Sejal Patel, Heather Johnson

Regrets:

Chris Glover, Sheila Cary-Meagher, Donna Quan, Alejandra Bravo, Jeff Kugler, Jann Houston, Chris Tonks, David Smith, Monika Etzler, Janice Gillespie, Jeff Kugler.

Staff:

Manon Gardner, Cassie Bell, Vicky Branco, Marjolein Winterink, Rob Brown, Gillian Parekh, David Johnston, Karen Forbes, Cindy Burley

Guests:

Saida Sabrie, Ricardo Francis* (PIAC- Parent Involvement Advisory Committee Representative), Bantyeahun Tezazu* (SEAC-Special Education Advisory Committee Representative)

1. Introductions and Welcome

- **ICAC member announcements** – ICAC Community Co-chair congratulated all nine TDSB principals named “Outstanding Principals” for their wonderful work
- Trustee Kaplan added that one of the outstanding principals was from Dublin Heights Elementary and Middle School in his ward – he is very proud of Amina Timol!
- Central Coordinating Principal MSIC added that two of the nine principals are in the MSIC program – Nancy Steinhauer from George Webster ES and Aiman Flahat from John Polanyi Collegiate Institute – bravo!
- ICAC member adds that her work has taken her to many schools in the MSIC program recently and she was struck by the friendly, dynamic atmosphere in each school – great work being done
- Black History celebration being planned by the SPLC (Somali Parents Liaison Committee) on February 25th – request to circulate flyer
- PIAC parent representative gave hi-lights of recent School Council Appreciation Dinner which was very well attended
- Issues discussed at dinner included funding and equity in our schools
- Bottom line? Parents pointed out that we/TDSB cannot deliver services with current funding being allocated therefore the onus is on parents and students to be involved in the discussion for change in the province and in Toronto
- ICAC member suggests that ICAC send a “thank you” letter to Toronto City Council for moving to save many programs for our most vulnerable citizens, including children and their families

ACTION ITEM:

That the ICAC Co-ordinator facilitate writing a “thank you” letter on behalf of ICAC to Toronto City Council regarding the recent City Budget debate.

2. **Draft Agenda approval** – moved by D. Clandfield, seconded by George Martell, approved unanimously.
3. **ICAC Previous Meeting Minutes approval (January 12, 2012)** – amendment added > add CAO (Chief Academic Officer) Manon Gardner to list of meeting attendees; moved by N. Gilbert, seconded by H. Kaplan, approved unanimously.
 - Noted that PIAC’s (Parent Involvement Advisory Committee) motion for PSSC (Programs and School Services Committee) was amended by SEAC (Special Education Advisory Committee) and another motion is being formatted
 - Pointed out that legal document status of IEPs (Individual Education Plans) is currently under debate – important to follow outcome of this discussion

ACTION ITEM

ICAC Co-ordinator to follow up on SEAC/PIAC motion as amended and ‘next steps’ and legal status of IEP issue.

4. MSIC Resource Team Update

(i) MSIC Summer School Program 2012

- Planning of MSIC Summer School Programs for students Grades 1 - 6 are well under way (see attached)
- Approximately 300 students at each site; MSIC program is very popular, but must compete with other camps etc. being offered; try to make program as fun as possible for kids, too
- Students are bussed to school offering program for 9 am start and dropped off at home school at 12 pm
- Some kids stay for afternoon programming as well (more ‘camp-like’ activities) so a seamless day approach
- Curriculum is integrated with social justice lens and Coach is in every class/school to co-teach
- Program avoids split grades so 10 – 15 classrooms in each school
- Kids selected for program are working at “Level 2” or below

Discussion

- Does MSIC fund the summer school program?
- Yes, completely; Ministry of Education funds the Grade 7/8 summer school called “In The Zone”
- Is the afternoon portion of MSIC program funded?
- No, but a partner, “Right To Play” is funding some students for afternoon programming
- Is it integrated with ‘Focus on Youth’ (FoY) program?
- Yes, we try; FoY program provides us with 30 students to help with bus safety, attendance monitoring, liaising, supporting and teaching throughout the day; these students help make the program fabulous!
- How will schools learn about the program?
- Every Model School will get Summer School flyers and teachers can provide parents flyer and discuss program at parent/teacher interviews

- Is it possible to partner/link up with TPL? (Toronto Public Libraries)
- Yes, TPL contact could call principals at each MSIC Summer School and connect them with possible TPL programming

ACTION ITEM:

ICAC Co-ordinator to connect Cheryl Skovronek of Toronto Public Library and CCP Branco regarding MSIC Summer School Programs.

Ms. Skovronek to send ICAC Co-ordinator information re: ELL (English Language Learner) programs for children at libraries this summer (in 10 locations across the city)

- Are there high school summer school programs?
- Yes, credit recovery (but not through MSIC program)
- Is there data around impact from summer programs? Do students start more ready for school in the fall?
- We could but haven't done formal research yet; would mean following kids through OEN (Ontario Education Number), however, informally teachers say curriculum units and structures help bump up standard of teaching and that improvement and change in kids over 19 days of program is amazing
- Other impacts include capacity building for teachers – they get to know MSIC curriculum well, own it and use it in their own classroom during the full school year
- Other goals of program include improvement of social skills, health and activity levels of students, and building positive feelings about their school and its influence
- A lot of feeder schools for Jarvis C.I. are Model Schools and Jarvis is considering beginning a 'transition program' for Grade 8 students moving into Grade 9, similar to *Success Beyond Limits (SBL)* program in the northwest; helps kids acclimatize to high school and gain credit before they even begin Grade 9 – sets them up to succeed
- Suggested that Michael Griesz contact Chris Penrose who is Executive Director of the SBL program to research this possibility

ACTION ITEM:

ICAC Co-ordinator to connect M. Griesz at Jarvis C.I and C. Penrose from SBL program so they can discuss SBL's program further

(ii) Model Schools Profiled

- Many international visitors to MSIC schools this year
- MSIC featured nationally and internationally in various ways – recently two pieces of literature (i) Michael Fullan's recent book and (ii) US Education Weekly magazine article by Sean Cavanagh - visited Crescent Town to see it 'in action'

ACTION ITEM

ICAC Co-ordinator to provide copies of US Education Weekly article for ICAC at next meeting

(iii) "Welcome to Kindergarten" Bags

- Welcome to Kindergarten bags are done in partnership with The Learning Partnership

- Every MSIC school with JK classes gets bags for their JK students
- Contains things to support school readiness, i.e., scissors, alphabet letters, crayons, books etc.
- Teachers are trained on how to ‘unpack’ bag and support parents in supporting their kids to use it; contact is made at Kindergarten registration
- Some schools invite parents to special evening and teachers, kids and parents unpack bag and play together!
- Kindergarten Welcome bag program began in MSIC and is expanding to other TDSB schools
- Note added to minutes from Ruth Sischy, Manager and Policy Advisor, **Parenting and Family Literacy Centres** – “In the 48 MSIC elementary schools that have PFLC, we work in collaboration with the WTK program. All PFLC programs operate for 20 hours/week so the work that is done with families to support a successful transition to school is guided and encouraged on a daily basis. Many of the parents who attend the WTK session also attend the PFLC. Fortunately as we are in the school and have already established relationships with the families the same message is being reinforced. This dual approach gives a more in depth and ongoing introduction to our schools. Parent Workers work very closely with the school staff around kindergarten actually takes place in the centre which is a very welcoming start to school and our message is that ‘school begins tomorrow for the new little one and his/her family. As noted, all PFLC have multi-lingual book lending libraries that are well-used and encourage first language reading.”

Discussion:

- Doesn’t TPH (Toronto Public Health) have a program like this?
- We don’t have our own program, but we’ve been invited to present and participate at parent/child Kindergarten evenings to get to know parents and speak about healthy snacks, vaccinations etc. – great partnership!
- Libraries also participate this way
- A similar program was begun over 20 years ago in legacy boards but funding became an issue until The Learning Partnership stepped up to support
- What about translation issue of materials?
- Website with materials translated and a translated instruction sheet (many different languages) in each bag; school tries to tailor languages used to their school population ahead of time
- MSIC staff met with TLP (Learning Partnership) yesterday to talk about deepening program, including different cultures in various ways which reflect the children involved in program; this year introducing an “Aboriginal” *Welcome bag* which is exciting
- ICAC member suggest volunteers visit child’s home to get to know family and assist with learning strategies 1:1
- Are there dual language books being used for this program?
- Parenting and Family Literacy Centres (PFLCs) use dual language books and schools and TLP are working on this area but the books are expensive; some innovative modification of existing books is being done though!
- We are also using HOLA program (Home Oral Language Acquisition) to support kids’ continued learning in their home language/mother tongue
- How is attendance at these programs?

- Attendance varies site-to-site; JK teachers and principals go to ½ day training and to share best practices but every community is unique; some schools do program in conjunction with PFLCs which already has strong connections to many of the families of children who will attend JK at the school
- Each of the *Welcome to Kindergarten* bags costs \$15, but this has been reduced to \$10 per bag for the MSIC program
- Proof that it works? Kids come to JK in fall and still have their bags!
- ICAC member suggests adding *Gandhi's Glasses* book to program? Shows kids they can write/produce books too – gives excellent message
- Great idea!

Suggestion:

That *Ghandi's Glasses* books be incorporated in *Welcome to Kindergarten* program bags.

5. ICAC Co-ordinator's Report

- (i) Request for ICAC representation on two different committees:
- Two ICAC members to attend the Children Aid's Society of Toronto (CAST) Strategic Planning process table as per invitation from Ann Fitzpatrick, Supervisor Community Development and Prevention Services
 - **ICAC Volunteers:** M. Griesz and N. Gilbert (moved by L. Johnston, seconded by G. Martell, approved unanimously)
 - Two ICAC members needed to sit on Participatory Budget Process (led by Trustee Chris Glover)
 - Participatory Budgeting began in Brazil, everyone in a particular city was invited to set priorities for city budget; this has been replicated in other cities – Chicago, San Francisco and also in Toronto Community Housing Council (TCHC)
 - Developing Grade 10 curriculum unit for Civics course (to be delivered in Trustee Glover's ward)
 - This year is first step in process
 - Can you/the Board 'take on the province' given this year's budget?
 - Trustee Glover – make a plan or it will be done for us!
 - Why do you need an ICAC rep at the Participatory Budget table?
 - Need someone with ICAC's depth of understanding and equity lens
 - **ICAC Volunteer for Participatory Budget process?** George Martell
 - Thank you to ICAC volunteers!
- (ii) **Handouts**
- Special Education Ombudsman – State of Washington, D.C.
 - Copy of the Brown/Parekh report (Demographics in Special Education)
 - December 14th, 2011 ICAC minutes
 - Metcalfe Foundation Report: "*The Working Poor In the Toronto Region Who They Are, Where They Live and How Trends are Changing*"
 - **Article:** (Globe and Mail) "*Why we're seeing the ugly new face of capitalism*"
 - **Article:** (New York Times) "*Education Gap Grows Between Rich and Poor, Studies Say*"

- **Report:** “*Solutions – How the Ontario Government Can Rescue and Ensure the Viability and Quality of the Province’s Childcare System*” (by the Quality Early Learning Network)
- **Report --TPH:** “*The Global City: Newcomer Health in Toronto*”
- **Board Standing Committee Reports** (for perusal only)

(iii) Action Items and Motions Update

- Page 4 – complete – FDK (Full Day Kindergarten) Power Point was circulated to ICAC – thank you to DD Mustin for forwarding and presentation last month
- Page 5: Linking Maytree with MSIC CCP (Central Coordinating Principal) – in progress; however Maytree’s A. Bravo’s attended CPAC (Cluster Parent Academy Committee) meeting last night and connected with parents; connections between Maytree and CPACs are being made
- All previous action items are up-to-date with the exception of financial information (re: fundraising) which will be coming to ICAC at March meeting – Finance Department is working on information

(iv) Upcoming Items of Interest

- TDSB Budget and Staffing process (ongoing)
- Proactive Mental Health Conference at York U (sold out)
- W. Waters Symposium April 25th (OISE U/T)
- Ministry of Education’s announcement of the final policy guideline on fees and fundraising and the consultation on corporate partnerships (overdue – monitoring)
- Futures Conference on Equity – May 3rd to 5th – organizing committee looking at subsidies (writing grants now) for community agencies etc.; Parents will attend through MSIC Program

6. Special Education – Discussion Continued from December 2011 ICAC (55 minutes) – see attached summary document

Led by: ICAC Special Education Work Group Leaders Dr. D. Clandfield and Dr. L. Green

- Introduction and “thank you” to Special Education Staff attending this meeting: Dave Johnston, Senior Manager of Professional Support Services, Cindy Burley, System Superintendent, Special Education Services, and Karen Forbes, Senior Superintendent, Special Education and Section 23 Programs

- **Discussion – Formal Assessment (page 11 in Minutes)**

Q: Is data available on ‘wait lists’ for assessments on a school-by-school basis?

A: Yes, we have this data, number of referrals etc., partly dependent on LOI (Learning Opportunities Index), we use the LOI to determine allocation of services, also factor in other demographics and number of kids; determining variable? High LOI schools; currently, biggest wait lists in southwest and smallest in northeast

- We have not been able to hire a full complement of psychologists since amalgamation (in fact, reached full complement for one week at one point earlier this year!); however, wait lists are ½ today of what they were 7 years ago

Q: How is child identified for assessment?

A: Through SST (School Support Team), including parent and teacher to discuss strategies that can be applied to support student; our expectation is that parents are aware the SST meeting and possibly attend, depending on their work schedules etc.

Q: What about Gifted assessments?

A: Gifted assessments are done during a two-week period every year; this assessment is less onerous and more limited in scope than a psychological assessment; screening for Gifted program is done in Grade 3 because program begins in Grade 4

- Work group has been struck in SEAC (Special Education Advisory Committee) to re-visit process, assess it etc.

Q: What is role (i.e., percentage) of private assessments?

A: We do not ask our parents if they had assessment done privately; sometimes it is obvious it was done elsewhere as it's obvious it does not meet TDSB's standards/criteria

Q: What is relationship to LOI rank and wait time for assessment?

A: Some schools that are number 400 or higher on the LOI have long wait lists. – there are schools across the system, independent of the LOI, that have lengthy waitlists. The allocation of psychology staff to schools is also weighted to reflect the LOI rank. In looking at the 15 schools with the highest wait list from each quadrant, they reflected schools with the lowest as well as the highest LOI ranking

Q: Are there plans to collect data re: non-TDSB assessments?

A: It's possible; a review has just reflected "poor" data management and we are working to improve this and add in what Special Education staff want to know

Q: How many times can students take Gifted Test?

A: There must be at least a 2 year gap between assessments

Q: Question of early interventions?

A: Students identified early through Bloorview Centre; speech and language assessments focus of early years

- Psychologists caution assessing too early; if assessments are done too frequently (i.e., less than every 2 years) may not be valid or reliable in terms of results
- Just because you haven't had an assessment doesn't mean student doesn't get support; support should begin before assessment is done, plus there are ongoing educational assessments too; many pieces of puzzle adding to student support

End of Assessment Q & A Portion

- **Formal Identification of Exceptionalities (IPRC- Identification Placement and Review Committee) – page 12 of minutes**
- Ministry of Education (MoE) has specific criteria of exceptionalities and Boards then must decide how they will manage criteria in implementation
- Decisions are not being made based on SES following MoE criteria
- Auditor General scanned 3 Boards, not just TDSB and concluded: "It is not clear why many students are identified with the exceptionalities that they are given. However, the presence of strong socio-economic factors and their close relation to specific exceptionalities may complicate impressions of student ability. Also, exceptionality categories are broad and often overlap yet they may not be expansive enough to capture the needs of all students" (Auditor –General of Ontario, Annual Report 2008)

Q: How are home language and cultural differences taken into account in the identification of Learning Disabilities in particular, and of Giftedness, Mild Intellectual Disability and Developmental Disability?

A: This was identified with SEAC a number of years ago; changed criteria for both gifted and LD (Learning Disabilities) to compensate for ELL (English Language Learners) and cultural background; we are now starting to see a leveling off and equalizing of gifted numbers

- Re: gifted learners – Special Education staff worked with Rob (Brown/Research) a few years ago and SEAC; 1-2% are gifted in average population using Renzulli method (<http://www.renzullilearning.com/default.aspx>)
- TDSB was at 0.5%; Added a school/home checklist and gifted is now at 2.1% of student population
- (Rob) Two different sources – decline in number of students overall and increase in numbers of gifted students; 5% of population testing as gifted in North America is average

Next Section: Placement in Congregated Classes (page 14 Minutes)

Q: How many students return to regular classrooms after being in congregated classes?

A: Language is problematic... 34% of kids going from Grade 8 to 9 remained in fully contained ISP (Intensive Support Programs)

Q: But some of these programs, once the students are moved into them they never get out – that’s problematic

A: Currently researching this on a particular cohort (analysis happening now)

Q: Review and appeals (IPRCs) – do we have data cross system on these?

A: Yes, two per year (average three) out of 21,000 IPRC’d students

Q: Process of responding to ‘things’ – where are you in process and role of equity? (i.e., Auditor General Report)

A: Currently we have introduced “Demonstration Classrooms” for sharing best practices, and moving to inclusion, lowering primary ISPs; Focus on Success in secondary schools; no behavioural IEPs at secondary level anymore; HSP (Home Support Program) is an attempt to bring kids back to their home school

- In terms of Auditor General’s Report, Department is going through recommendations point by point
- Brigance¹ test is now used as assessment piece; aligning report card language and reporting bit by bit

General ICAC “Question and Answer” Session

¹ *The Brigance Test of Basic Skills, also known as the Brigance Comprehensive Inventory of Basic Skills-Revised, is a criterion referenced assessment that identifies a student's academic level of functioning. It is also used as a tool in standardized assessment for identifying a student's strengths and weaknesses. The Brigance test is administered in a classroom setting. A teacher may administer the test to her own students. The Brigance assesses reading decoding, reading comprehension, writing, listening comprehension and math. Students may be assessed in a group setting or on an individual basis.*

Q: Definitions of how process is done and can we appeal? (Even if we don't like what it says?)

A: Definitions of all processes are on line; parents are involved from the beginning; before report moves forward, parents gets report and is invited to discuss it prior to its submission

- Use of IEP to identify strengths and challenges of students long before assessment is done as students may never get assessment

Q: How do you accommodate a student if s/he is 2-5 years behind academically?

A: There is a difference between “accommodations” and “modifications” –

- Wearing glasses is an accommodation and student is still working at appropriate grade level (other examples include – giving student longer to take test, access to assistive technology etc.)
- Modifications include a modified curriculum if child is 2-3 years behind and, sometimes, accommodations too
- Part of equation includes teachers differentiating their teaching
- Not always a Special Education issue from the beginning

Q: Appreciate this positive vantage point but there is a really high level of Special Education, especially in racialized populations right now; Special Education is seen as a stigma and as ‘managing’ student until he graduates in some areas of the city; furthermore, designations of Special Education and giftedness are falling along lines of privilege and access; Special Education is not equitable and Dr. Brown’s latest data should reflect this; Is it possible for Research Department to respond to questions posed by ICAC Special Education Work Group?

A: It’s possible (Dr. Brown), but I am currently busy analyzing cohort data for Special Education report ...

Q: Is the funding adequate for Special Education?

A: No.

****Q:** *Previous question from Natasha Burford was an important one – are distinctions made between social, emotional and cultural responses in the classroom and those which are labeled ‘behavioural’ which risk the student being identified as Special Needs?*

****A:** *Staff will consider this and get back to the Committee*

- Furthermore, Staff returned and further reviewed translated materials and discovered SST documents are not translated – now being done! Staff did not realize so checks and balances of processes are being reviewed
- Also reviewing “discrepancy” reports and following up on placements which don’t match

Dr. Clandfield and Dr. Green thanked Staff sincerely for their attendance and participation in this important discussion.

Dr. Clandfield also moved: (ACTION ITEM)

*“That a working table of representatives from SEAC, PIAC, ICAC, and EPAC be formed to discuss the issue of parent involvement in the identification of students with special needs and the development of programs designed for them within the framework of Special Education, with a view to bringing forward recommendations on this subject to the appropriate board standing committee for consideration.”
Seconded by L. Johnston, approved unanimously.”*

Meeting Adjourned

**Next ICAC Meeting Date –
Thursday March 22, 2012
9:30 am – 12:30 pm
5050 Yonge Street, Committee Room A**