

ICAC Meeting Minutes
Thursday April 19th, 2012
6:30 – 9:30 PM
5050 Yonge Street

In attendance-

Janice Gillespie, Aim Mujib, Sharlene Bourjot, Chris Penrose, Peter Dorfman, Sharon Moynes, Sheila Cary-Meagher, Chris Glover, Sejal Patel, Laurie Green, Lesley Johnston

Regrets –

Donna Quan, Alejandra Bravo, Heather Johnson, David Clandfield, Chris Tonks, Nathan Gilbert, Michael Griesz, Lisa Watson, Cheryl Skovronek, Vicky Branco, Jann Houston

Staff – Marjolein Winterink, Manon Gardner, Gail Fraser, Cassie Bell

Guests –

Honey Ali, Sam Sotiropoulos (Trustee), Graham Hollings, Lina Iordanoua, Renata Karapanceva, Alicia Donaldson, Rachel Mathis, Samantha Peterson, J J Honasan, Ricardo Francis

1. **Welcome and Introductions –** ICAC Co-chairs
2. **Agenda Approval –** moved that #6 and #7 be reversed on agenda – by C. Glover, seconded by S.Cary-Meagher, approved unanimously.
3. **Previous Meeting Minutes Approval (March 22nd, 2012) –** moved by C. Glover, seconded by L. Johnston, approved unanimously
4. **ICAC Co-ordinator’s Report**

Announcements and Handouts

- *Pushing Forward* Conference tomorrow at York U – supported through York U faculty
- Child Food Insecurity Report – forwarded by Principal Aldona Volunge
- “Thank you” letter from Smart Saver to MSIC for partnering
- People for Education – *Beyond School Councils – Engaging parents to help their children succeed at school*
- *Education Weekly (US)* – Article on MSIC (hard copy only)
- Invitation to attend Futures Conference on Saturday May 5th as ICAC representative – anyone wishing to do so asked to contact ICAC Co-ordinator

Action Items and Motions

- P. 1 (of previous meeting minutes) – invitation to TFSS (Toronto Foundation for Student Success) and CAO (Chief Academic Officer) for Focussed Interventions and Student Supports – *in progress*
- P. 2 – “thank you” letter to Toronto City Council from ICAC – **complete** (see agenda package)
- P. 2 -US Education Weekly article handout on MSIC - **complete**

- P. 2 TDSB Comptroller to send details of financial reporting required for school councils – *in progress*
- P. 3 – Comptroller to send list of five categories for gathering and reporting non-public funds – *in progress*
- P. 3 – Comptroller to request principals to indicate if their school has a charitable foundation or not in October report – *in progress*
- P. 4 – Post and /or circulate MSIC Research update (2012) – *in progress*
- P. 6 – Circulate TPH (Toronto Public Health) presentation – **complete**
- P. 7 Connect TPH program to CPACs (Cluster Parent Academy Committees) and through staff for PD – *in progress*
- Request for tonight’s ICAC from Trustee Glover – York U students report on their research findings on corporate partnerships in schools around the world for their fourth year seminar course, *Ideology, Social Policy and the State* – **complete**

5. MSIC Resource Team Update – Staff

- Will be about 600 MSIC parents and 200 children at Futures Equity conference on Saturday May 5th
- Currently 1000 people from around the world registered for this conference – huge!
- MSIC is presenting two workshops on Saturday and will be supporting a Faith Walk on Wednesday May 2nd – two buses full already
- Conference being held at Allstream Centre – greenest building in Toronto apparently!
- Childminding and translation/interpretation services will be provided so parents can fully participate
- MSIC Org. chart – currently 126 schools (+ 7 secondary) included in MSIC program; next year moving to embrace 150 schools (i.e., adding 33 new schools)
- Staff have not yet been able to meet with principals of new schools to welcome them and introduce them to program – as soon as that has been done organizational charts can be posted/circulated

Q & A

Q: Is there a twitter hashtag for Futures?

A: We will check and find out (*complete*)

Q: Has MSIC funding been allocated for next year?

A: Yes.

Q: Is there any increase to accommodate and support additional schools?

A: No. We are doing this program on the same ‘nickel’ we began with - \$8.5 million (Trustee Sheila Cary-Meagher)

Q: What are the details for the Faith Walk?

A: Faith Walks are walks through various communities (and their places of worship) to experience the lived lives and faiths of those in that community; Staff will undertake to send these details to ICAC Community Co-chair (*complete*)

Q: Is the \$8.5 million MSIC funding extended to the secondary schools also?

A: Mandate was to serve first 150 elementary schools highest on the LOI first; MSIC does support the secondary schools but they also receive some funding through the Ministry of Education as well

7. York University Students Presentation – Global Perspective on Corporate Partnerships and Sponsorship with Schools

- Students – Lina Iordanoua, Renata Karapanceva, Alicia Donaldson, Rachel Mathis, JJ Honasan, and Samantha Peterson
- Third presentation by students so far – at Toronto Social Planning Council and Peel District School Board
- Some of the jurisdictions looked at by students: Ontario (Peel, Toronto, York school boards), PEI, Nova Scotia, US, England, Europe, Americas etc.)
- General conclusion? Corporate partnerships in schools can be both detrimental and beneficial
- Ugly side? Channel 1 ‘info-mercial’ being shown to students as ‘captive audience’
- Advertising to students is legislated in Quebec and educators have autonomy to form partnerships in B.C.
- Corporate partnerships are clearly linked to declining education funding
- Federal levels of corporate taxation rates have fallen 28% since 1960s
- Word “partnership” implies equality but in reality, given funding crunches facing public education, there is a power imbalance
- Corresponding decrease in students’ critical thinking and an increase in passivity is dangerous combination
- Goal of corporate partnerships? Creating niche markets and loyal consumers – antiethical to goals of public education
- In Quebec, public/private school competition is intense
- Ban on advertising towards children under age 13, but large corporations are able to find loopholes- for example, Pepsi-sponsored health and nutrition program!
- Also, \$15 million Rio Tinto donation towards decreasing number of high school dropouts across province
- England – education is being completely transformed – moving from public to private
- Transforming public schools into “academies” – schools in charge of their own destinies; first academy opened in 2002 and under-performing schools were specifically targeted ¹
- Academies can hire their own staff and corporate sponsor is responsible for hiring principal of school as well
- Academies can set calendar (length and timing of school days, holidays etc.), curricular focus (IT, Arts) and location (school could be located in a business building or factory – not always in a traditional “school”)
- NUT (National Union of Teachers) strongly opposes academies
- Originally focussed on inner city schools, now any school (including struggling rural schools) can become an academy providing they can secure corporate sponsor (other sponsorship also possible)

¹ See article in UK’s Guardian newspaper regarding Academy schools
<http://www.guardian.co.uk/education/2007/nov/13/newschools.schools>

- No strong evidence of student improvement (yet) and there are accusations of exclusion and unfair admissions processes- inequitable
- Academy staff have varying wages and qualifications and often lack benefits and employment protection (as opposed to unionized staff)
- Academies are not 'islands', but rather in competition with one another
- Academies reflects marketplace mentality in UK with students as commodities
- Once a school has opted to become an academy it cannot return to public system under free trade legislation – this may not be widely recognized yet

Some key challenges of neoliberal policies in education –

- Difficult to think critically and question under hegemony of neo-liberalism, for example, under-funding of Arts
- Lack of transparency in processes, i.e., definition of “donation” vs. “partnership” vs. “sponsorship” etc.
- Need lots of voices at tables where these are being discussed, i.e., parents, students, communities etc.
- Impact on autonomy of educators – limitations / barriers posed by corporate involvement
- Important to respect community values and goals of public education in this evolving global environment
- Key question to consider: Is it possible to have common goals when corporations' goal is the 'bottom line'?
- Trend – corporations leaning towards wealthier communities leading to further inequalities as poor schools are still left behind

Discussion

- In the 1950s corporate taxes were relatively high yet corporations made profits; taxation is now much lower and the gap between the very rich and very poor is widening and we are experiencing a disappearing middle class
- Argument that if you really want to do “something” for public education as a corporation, donate to schools with no strings attached, don't try and run them!
- However, question also needs to be asked – why can't school 'director' (i.e., principal) be from Home Depot, for example?
- Is there any correlation between an increase in private donations and lowering of corporate tax rates?
- No, principals now head of corporation and everything is turn towards the corporation; development of corporate towns etc.
- Problematic for teachers – they will not oppose their employer (i.e., corporation) and have no protection to do so
- When did this start in England?
- In about 2000 with Tony Blair
- Find it exciting when students such as yourselves are engaged in research that you find relevant! Think key here is current public education funding gap; if there weren't a funding gap, then playing ground would be more equal and schools could dictate how corporations partner with them – right now they don't have the leverage

- Middle ground of not-for-profit groups, they have corporate funding in order to provide necessary service themselves, for example, Pathways Canada – is this a gray area?
- We do touch on a cycle of dependency which tends to develop within these frameworks; for example, in Australia there are organizations which deliberately seek corporate partnerships for schools
- Question should be – what is our goal in public education: workers or critical thinkers?
- Congratulations to students on their presentation; problem-solving piece is a balance and all stakeholder groups need to be engaged in an ethical discussion about this, but how? Corporate sponsorships/advertising can produce much needed funding stream, but not at expense of having control over curricula content; balance between negating concept totally and embracing education as a benefit for *all* students; diversity and equity need to be integrated in this discussion
- Next step might include looking at not-for-profits and seeing where *their* funding comes from; be careful with this shell game!
- Major concern of TPH (Toronto Public Health) right now is kids' obesity rates, poor nutritional habits, lack of physical exercise etc., if you imagine extra layering certain types of advertising or sponsorship in schools might present it would be very difficult to counteract
- Question of imbalance of knowledge/power – i.e., children may not have business 'savvy' – if it looks good it must be good!
- If advertising is presented as *fait accompli* in schools may engender blanket acceptance, lack of questioning and/or critical thinking by students, parents, staff etc. as to value of product – i.e., seen as sanctioned by educators
- Caution – remember slippery slope of cigarette advertising – hard work to eventually get it banished; psychological impact of advertising should also be considered

ICAC thanked York University students for their excellent presentation and welcomed them back to continue the discussion as this issue develops (i.e., Ministry of Education's pending policy guidelines review for corporate sponsorships)

8. ICAC Sub-committee Updates

- *Update for ICAC's Ad Hoc Special Education Work Group* (Laurie Green)
- Meeting was held April 2nd at 5050 and had attendees from SEAC, PIAC, Caring and Safe Schools AC, Trustee's Constituency Assistant, and Somali Parents CLC
- Notes from meeting have been circulated to group and are attached here
- Toronto Family Network (members of Caring and Safe Schools Advisory Committee) also announced they are meeting with TDSB Chair Chris Bolton to discuss special education issues on May 8th at 7 pm and that *all* are welcome

- Group will report out on the meeting at their respective upcoming advisory committee meetings and indicated they would like to meet again after both the May 7th SEAC and the May 8th meeting with the Chair

ACTION ITEM

ICAC Co-ordinator will facilitate next ad hoc ICAC special education meeting and send around details to all (including ICAC members)

- Discussion focussed around the Brown/Parekh demographic report (2010) and issues concerning parental roles in advocacy and supporting their child(ren) with special needs
- Possible next steps include the joint development of a document on the rights/roles and responsibilities of parents as experts in their child's needs
- Thank you extended to all who attended and to Dr. Green and Dr. Clandfield for organizing this meeting
- *Fees and Fundraising Sub-committee Report (Lesley Johnston)*
- Pleased to announce that Andrew Deakin, a York University student, will be interning with Social Planning Toronto on issue of corporate partnerships within public school context
- Speaking to recent PIAC letter regarding recent survey circulated by the TDSB Advertising Policy Review committee; suggest ICAC endorse letter
- Survey on advertising in schools neglects to highlight fiscal pressures on school boards, including the TDSB, which leaves little choice in the matter as schools are so strapped for money
- Is a survey an appropriate tool to research this complex issue? Would focus groups possibly be better?
- Bias in survey is inherent – i.e., advertising by degrees rather than should there by advertising *at all*
- Is representative sample big enough to provide statistically sound and relevant conclusions?
- How many people were able to access survey? How many accessed translated copies? Etc.
- PIAC is requesting specific details of parental responses which is helpful

ACTION ITEM

ICAC Co-ordinator to summarize ICAC feedback and endorsement of PIAC letter at next Advertising Policy Review Committee meeting.

6. Trustee Budget Update (Trustee Chris Glover) – PowerPoint presentation

ACTION ITEM

Trustee Glover to forward copy / link of presentation to ICAC Co-ordinator for ICAC.

- Minister of Education Laurel Broten is claiming funding is up and enrolment is down
- Why do we then have a deficit of \$110 million?

- Currently, Ontario has one of the lowest levels of per pupil funding in any jurisdiction; if we were American we would rank 46th in terms of funding!
- We continue to cut services and programs to balance budget as legally required by the Ministry of Education – total of 7% or \$170 million of our global budget cut so far
- After cuts this year, we still will need to cut \$30 million next year and the year after that
- Just two weeks ago the Board cut \$50 million in staffing and must look at another \$60 million before budget is balanced
- Why is this happening now?
- Political timing translates as doing ‘hard’ (i.e., controversial or unpleasant) things early on in mandate so that voters will forget by the time next election rolls around
- There is a drive to privatize with this neo-liberal agenda
- Solutions?
- Close and sell schools – why not? Under-valued and unrecognized use of space by Ministry of Education (Moe) which translates as money if it is sold
- Unfortunately demographics reflect that population wave has hit bottom and is now on the increase; we will soon need 50,000 more spaces to accommodate full day kindergarten in the near future
- Provincial funding is not forward thinking and does not allow for future planning
- Recommendations?
- Immediate external review of education funding formula in Ontario (this is long overdue)
- Province needs to layout its funding plan for full day kindergarten
- TDSB must be allowed to collect an education development charge (to provide funding for new build schools in areas where development is booming); province could change legislation and allow this now

Discussion

Q: Is it possible to get a count of “real” spaces in schools?

A: Staff is working on this; complicated as individual principals have to survey their schools and indicate how space is used versus FTE (full time enrolment) as reflected on Moe documents; in other words – what is perceived capacity of schools vs. how is space in school really used?

Q: Continuing Education has this information for adult programming; no one has ever done an accounting of how much space is dedicated to adults, adult ed. Etc.

Q: Moe always talks about ‘equity’ and diversity, but it is not happening! As you cut funding to school boards you eliminate any equity that exists and fundraising becomes key to providing resources for kids (*if* parents can fundraise)

Q: Board becomes complicit in rolling out two phases of cuts when staffing then programs are hit; PIAC is looking at producing four sets of documents to inform parents about these cuts and their impact – (i) staffing (ii) school budgets (iii) special education (iv) secondary course reductions (primarily due to loss of 200 secondary teachers)

Recommend that parents ask their principals for this data – what is the impact of recent staffing decisions on our school? What will we lose? Provide parents with information and contact information for their MPPs too!

ACTION ITEM:

PIAC will liaise with ICAC and other advisory committees and monitor / depute at upcoming committee meetings; ICAC Co-ordinator to keep ICAC updated re: upcoming committee agendas and dates and circulate information as per PIAC etc., including trustee and MPP contacts.

Meeting Adjourned

**Next ICAC Meeting –
Thursday May 10th, 2012
6:30 pm – 9:30 pm
5050 Yonge Street, Boardroom**