

**Inner City Advisory Committee Minutes
Thursday, February 06, 2014
6:00pm to 8:30pm
Secord Elementary School, Gymnasium**

In Attendance	Trustee Howard Kaplan, Trustee Sheila Cary-Meagher, Aim Mujib, David Jennifer Arp, Clandfield, Laurie Green, Graham Hollings, Lesley Johnston, Ingrid Palmer.
Regrets	Alejandra Bravo, Jann Houston, Bonnie MacDonald, Debra Payne, Cheryl Skovronek, Kwabena Yafeu.
Staff	Vicky Branco, Helen Fisher, Vidya Shaw, Thelma Akyea, Craig Snider, Lisa Moser, Patrick Boland, Fonda Zettler, Hilary Wollis, Paul Blackwood, Zulekha Noormohamed, Ian MacPherson, Colleen Huggins, Daniele Cammisa, Dvane Spencer.
Guests	Nahbub Alam, Laurie Bowman, John Bowman, Angela Brackett, Camminci, Fuad Chowdhery, David Darling, Karin Eaton, Christina Frity, Andrew Hudson, Melissa James, Serwa Kong, Belinda MacLeod, Imogen Mercer, Sonya O'Connor, Ying Ong, Kuga Palau, Peter Saros, Jennifer Singh, Lucretia Stepic, Heather Tormey.

**Welcome, Introductions, Information Sharing and Announcements
ICAC Co-Chairs**

- Community Co-Chair Aim Mujib welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked Secord Elementary for hosting the group this evening. Mujib noted that the catering was provided by Danforth Technical Institute, and thanked them for the wonderful meal.
- Trustee Co-Chair Sheila Cary-Meagher welcomed everyone to the meeting, noting that after more than two years' of service, this is Aim Mujib's final meeting as the co-chair. Cary-Meagher thanked Mujib for his dedication to the [ICAC](#), and noted that there will be an election for a new community co-chair at the March meeting.
- Cary-Meagher introduced TDSB Comptroller, Craig Snider, and invited him to join the co-chairs at the front of the room.
- Introductions were made around the room.
- Mujib read the regrets from members who could not attend.
- Hilary Wollis reminded the group the [Parent Involvement Advisory Committee](#) (PIAC) Annual School Council Appreciation Evening is fast approaching on Thursday, February 20th at the Montecassino Inn. School Councils should have received an invitation. If not, they should contact the school Principal.

**1. Approval of Agenda
ICAC Co-Chairs**

- Moved, David Clandfield. Seconded, Lesley Johnston. Approved

2. Presentations: Clusters A1, A2, B3 Parent Academy Committees

Cluster B3:

Crescent Town Elementary Parents:

- Ontario Government has recognized International Mother Language Day for February 21st. This is a day to respect and listen to all languages of the world. Not one MPP was opposed to this MPP motion. I am hoping this will become a significant day at TDSB.
- At midnight on February 20th, the Crescent Town community will gather to celebrate. Everyone is welcome to come.
- I am Bangladeshi. The British colonization of the Indian sub-continent, and the conflict created between India and Britain resulted in many divisions along language lines. Language is strongly connected to identity.

George Webster Elementary Parents:

- I am a mother of 3, with my eldest finishing college, and Grade 2 and kindergarten students at George Webster. I am also legally blind.
- If I asked you what you think I need in my life, you could probably fill a page from what you know and have experienced. But part of it would be wrong, because it is an imagining of my needs. I live with my vision, and my needs suit my blindness.
- There are three people in my life who have taken time to engage and find out what I need. Most people try to tell me that they know what I need and what's required.
- This is room filled with great intentions and passions. But without the involvement of the people who are living these experiences, there will be gaps because you cannot accurately imagine what they need.
- I have concerns regarding the parent engagement allocation in the school budget. There are Principals and others who have strong ideas about what school communities need. However, sometimes decisions don't consider the lives and needs of the parents and children involved, in spite of good intentions.
- I believe that more transparency is required regarding the parent engagement money given to [Model Schools](#).
- Principals and Teachers can't just ask at the beginning or end of year, "Are your needs being met?" Instead, they have to keep asking throughout the year, because it is a conversation.
- I am so happy that there is a budget consultation here tonight. We need to include parents and students. This is an ongoing process. With regard to money, there is no accountability without transparency.

Cluster A2:

Norman Cook JPS Parents:

- I am a parent of 2 boys at Norman Cook. I am Chair of the School Council, a coach, and a student.
- I am going to address [Special Education](#) tonight. My youngest is autistic attending a fully integrated Senior Kindergarten. He received his diagnosis about 2.5 yrs ago. It was a lot of work to prepare him for school.
- I am representing parents with kids on the Autism spectrum who are angry, frustrated, and tired.

I will identify four key barriers we have encountered:

1) **How school is prepared for my child:** Twice I've handed my child to a Teacher with very little training in working with kids with autism. Teachers have been unprepared to use that information to support him.

2) **Paper versus practice:** If you look at my son's file, you can see all the key terms listed, things like autism team, referrals, etcetera. But day to day, that practice is not being used by the Teacher. The tools are there but the Teacher is not sure how to use them.

3) **Reactive approach to challenges:** Because my child is on the Autism spectrum, some of his challenges are more problematic than others. In Junior Kindergarten, he was frustrated and started to hit. I asked the school to bring in the Autism Team multiple times. I grew tired of the struggle, and I eventually pulled him from school. That is when the Autism Team came in to help the Teacher learn to support my son.

4) **Lack of follow - through on that specialized support:** The Autism Team comes in, makes suggestions, but there is not follow-up to ensure that the suggestions are followed. There is no ongoing support for the classroom Teacher in the implementation of the suggestions. So the result is that my son isn't getting supports consistently.

My Suggestions:

- 1) **Teachers receive training in dealing with children on the Autism Spectrum:** I mean training in real, daily ways to support these children in school, not theoretical lectures. What does it look like, how does it act, what do you do?
- 2) **Establish a larger Autism Team:** Currently the team can only see a child twice per school year. These children require ongoing visits and consistent support. That's all we need.
- 3) **Provide more Education Assistants and Special Needs Assistants:** I've seen what a typical classroom looks like, and I've seen what Special Education at its best can look like. My son's current classroom is crowded, with 28 students. It is noisy, he is easily distracted, and he can only have access to a Special Needs Assistant for a half day. Who is teaching these kids how to do the right thing – each time – because that's what they need. Who is writing it all down?
- 4) **Accountability:** Who is making sure that the Independent Education Plan (IEP) points are being implemented and tracked, so that children are meeting goals when they are supposed to meet them?
 - Research shows that high-functioning Autistic kids will close the learning gap if they receive frequent and consistent support for learning during their two years of Kindergarten. It doesn't feel like that is happening, that it is a priority.
 - A parent of an ASD child sees Kindergarten as an hourglass, the last chance for a child to have their best chance for the future. The time in kindergarten cannot be "done over".
 - My heart breaks for the other kids, because I have lots of skills and a huge support network. The other kids don't have parents who know how to ask and advocate, because they are newcomers, or they are working 2 jobs, and they can't make time to meet with teachers and come to meetings.
 - My experiences aren't just the bad luck of a weak teacher. I have yet to meet one parent of an autism spectrum child who can say something positive about their school, the Board, and how their child on the spectrum is learning.
 - It's not all bad, because my kid comes home happy, and he likes his school. He doesn't see all of the work I do, writing communication logs and going to meetings and following up. But he doesn't cry every night.
 - High functioning ASD students do not need baby-sitting. They need critical support, throughout the day.

Cluster A1:

Military Trail PS Parents:

- Our EQAO results are very low in our community. We are doing what we can to get our students help. Communications need to improve.
- I am thankful to have Patrick Boland, our Community Support Worker. 60% of our community are newcomers. Sometimes they just don't understand what is coming home from school. A shooting had a significant impact on families. Children were not coming to school because of their parents' safety fears. We started the [Mornelle Court Coalition](#), and Patrick helped. We started our WalkSafe program, a walking school bus. The children started coming to school again.
- We started a homework program. It is run by me, a parent, and high school students, who want to help. We are paying for snacks, and other things kids need out of our pocket.
- When we went to the Superintendent for support, there was none. When parents are making the choice to not send kids to school, when there is a program like a homework club for parents and students who need support, where is the TDSB?
- I have been a volunteer since 2008. I've gone to the City of Toronto, to U of T Scarborough, to Toronto Community Housing Corporation (TCHC), to Toronto Police, to get support for the community.
- The one group that should be there to support us is not there – the school Board. It is the Community Support Worker who is doing the work to get potential partners outside TDSB.
- TCHC has just given us a space to hold our programs, and we are starting a Mornelle Hub. We want to bring English as a Second Language (ESL) for parents. The classes at the school are twice weekly, which is not enough time. Parents don't understand their ESL teacher because he is a newcomer too. These are adults that want to learn.
- The system is so broken. We should support our children and youth. If we don't what are they going to become?

- A parent of a kindergarten student came to me. Her son has been referred to speech therapy because he doesn't speak clearly. The mother is confused, because she can understand him. Her child is being taken out of class for behavior issues, but she never hears that he has behavior problems outside of school. She doesn't feel there are reasons given so she can understand.

3. Presentations: Model Schools Secondary Students

Cedarbrae CI students:

We are a Model Schools high school. We are going to talk about some budget issues. We are concerned with how the TDSB budget is allocated, and how it is spent on sports equipment, technology, and international languages.

- Sports Equipment: Participation in school sports is low partly because the equipment is old. Sports are a great outlet for students for many reasons. We know that equipment is expensive, but we think it should be replaced on a 5 or 6 year cycle, so that it is in good shape. That will encourage students to be involved in school sports. We also think participation in sports, and funding for equipment can be a priority under the Model Schools [Essential Component](#) of "providing support services to meet social, emotional and physical well-being of students."
- Another Essential Component of Model Schools is to demonstrate "innovation in teaching and learning practice and in school structure." Our school currently has 2 or 3 computer carts, which allow teachers to bring technology into their classroom. We believe that investing in classroom technology further engages students and helps them learn. Can TDSB channel more budget funds to in-class technology?
- Our school currently offers an evening International (Heritage) Languages program. But students don't know about the night classes, and they don't meet needs of community, in the selection of languages, and the fact that many students have other responsibilities after school. We think that the incorporation of diverse languages into our school could be housed under the Model Schools Essential Component of "providing support services to meet social, emotional and physical well-being of students."

George S Henry Academy Students:

Thank you to the ICAC for inviting us here today.

OSSLT: [Ontario Secondary School Literacy Test](#) (grade 10):

- I understand that it is there to make sure that students have the general literacy skills to succeed beyond high school. But what many don't realize is that there is a lack of consistency between the classroom experience and the test experience.
- Following the test, a group of friends were all talking. I say to my friend "what did you write for the guy barbequing?" and he says "No, the picture was of a guy performing a science experiment." How could we have two such different impressions? My friend failed the test by five marks. He has an 85 average in school. In fact, he failed the test twice. Why? He thinks that the issue is that when he is in class, he can work with the teacher, edit his work, and ask questions. In the test, he is on his own, and it is a new experience.
- Everyone needs to understand that this isn't just a test. It is the opportunity to graduate from high school. It is the opportunity to go to college or university. It is the opportunity to find a different future.
- This test doesn't test a student's ability to read and write, and it shouldn't keep someone from graduating.
- Finally, students should be better supported when they fail, so that they don't drop out of high school because of a test.

EQAO:

- [EQAO](#) tests do not consider newcomers who have to take the test.
- Newcomer students have pressure to graduate, to do well, to take ESL, and to write this test. I was a newcomer, and I didn't know a lot of English, and I felt huge pressure.

- I luckily passed, but many of my ESL peers did not pass. It tests certain areas of English, but doesn't test others. I was given twice the time to complete it, but I struggled with the test.
- When a newcomer arrives in Canada, they are confronted with a new way of living, culture, and language. They are used to seeing very different things (for example, the treatment of gay people, or gender roles). Newcomers bring these experiences and norms to school. The programs that TDSB has aren't doing much to eradicate these long held mindsets, because they don't consider that for these students, they are cultural norms.
- **Special Education:**
- I have an [Independent Education Plan](#) (IEP) with a learning disability, and I attend regular classes. I don't have the supports I need for my learning disability in math or science classes. I am supposed to receive extra help when I need it. But most of my Special Education teachers have an arts background. They can't help me with high school math and science. These are just not their areas.
- If you are a Special Education student taking academic level classes, people think you don't need support because you can compensate for your learning disability. It means that supports aren't in place for us until we fail a course. The help swoops in when I fail, but not when I am getting 75, 65, and seen as "not in danger of failing." But I want to go to University, and I'm not going to be accepted with a 65 average. I need to be doing my best. I need support.
- Many Special Education students deal with anxiety. Will their teachers understand their needs? Will they be bullied because they are different? This is a mental health issue, and there is not enough support for this issue. I am lucky, because my mom is a teacher, and English is my first language. But this isn't true of my peers. Their parents don't understand the school system, and they aren't able to email teachers and meet with the Principal to ensure that their needs will be met.
- These students have the potential to achieve, and to go to university. But they aren't getting support, and their parents can't advocate for them. They don't have the opportunity to achieve their best.

In conclusion, I want to comment that adults love making decisions, and sometimes they don't seek input from the people they are making decisions for – like students. Thank you for having us here, and showing us that our voices do matter.

Marc Garneau CI Students:

- We are both Special Education students, both taking academic level classes. We connect with our Special Education teachers very quickly, and the quality of our work is better because we have more time and support.
- However, the subject teachers and Classroom Assistants don't have the special education knowledge to support our learning needs effectively.
- We also need more Special Education teachers who are subject specific, who have more training because the classroom assistants don't always have enough knowledge to help with the work.
- The image of Special Education needs to be improved. Our classmates don't understand why we get support, why we get extra time for our work.
- We believe that Independent Education Plans (IEP) should be shared after school, on our own time. We should not have to miss class time from academic classes for these meetings.
- As secondary students, we should have more input into the development of our IEP. Sometimes the plans are not revised to reflect how we are changing, how we are learning. We understand what our needs are at school.
- We would like more support with our future plans. Guidance staff speaks to us, but in our school Special Education students need more support with considering the future. We suggest that maybe Special Education and guidance could work together to counsel us, to combine our learning needs with our plans for our future success.
- When I was in elementary school, I was placed in a class of mixed ages and abilities. I feel that I didn't get the support I needed to achieve, because I wasn't the highest need student in the room. I missed out.
- This is the first time anyone has asked me about my experiences in Special Education, and asked what I think. I think that Special Education students should be surveyed on what works for them and what doesn't, and what we think could change, so that TDSB can support us to be successful.

4. TDSB Budget Community Consultation

- I am Craig Snider, and I am Comptroller of Budget for the TDSB. I work with the Senior Team and Trustees to create the budget, and to maintain the financial statements.
- There are three handouts: [The financial Facts; Balancing the budget, and the Preliminary Options to Balance the budget.](#)
- I'll take questions as we go, and try to manage it.
- There will be a presentation of the budget in June. However, this year we will approve an operating budget for 2014-2015 on [March 5th](#). The Capital budget will be passed in June. This budget addresses growth and refurbishment of schools.
- By approving the budget in March, it will be balanced, and everyone will know where we are going, and staff will be able to plan for next year. This will also show fiscal responsibility of the Board to the Ministry of Education, in advance of any Provincial budget variances.
- Why is budget cut less this year? It stands at \$12.4 million.
- The Board made tough decisions in the last 2 years. Many decisions were long term savings, and those have given us a manageable deficit. With increasing enrollment, this amount will be less and less. It should be \$8million, and in 3 or 4 years, the Board should show a small surplus.
- What comes next: we are going to do [public consultations](#) sessions throughout February.
- In May, there will be community consultations for a multi-year operational plan, and a multi-year capital plan.

Questions:

1. **Permits were not previously required for non-profits operating a program within a Model School. This is no longer the case. At Secord, we have the [Boys and Girls Club](#) and a music program that are at risk. How will that be addressed within the budget?**

A: There are two funding options for programs: There are grants for priority schools. It confirmed that Secord is not included in this grant. Second, there is a grant for the community use of schools which is in high demand. You can talk with permit department further.

2. **How has last year's teacher job action and the associated legislation affected the budget?**

A: This is our first full year under the regulated changes (sick days, etc). We can't track the financial impact at this time.

3. **Being on a [student advisory council](#) (SAC), I am interested to know how funds for student councils are allocated. Why do some SACs have \$300 and some have \$3000? Some SACs don't have the money they need to accomplish goals.**

A: I wasn't prepared for this question. I don't believe there is a student council line item in the school budget. I think that it is discretionary decision by the Principal, made in consultation with the school community and the staff.

4. **Dundas school has a nutrition program that the community relies upon. The old stove is in need of replacement. It is a \$9,000 expense to replace it through a board approved vendor. The Principal says the school budget cannot afford the stove. The community have found a vendor to subsidize the purchase of same equipment. What happens when school can't absorb a cost and the school community can't fundraise?**

A: There are guidelines on purchasing. We need to be fair, competitive purchasers. I've heard this question many times at schools. We do bid competitively; we assess the vendor (fair trade, quality, ability to provide the goods over time, and price). We have an obligation to honour our contracts, because we establish a contract for large baskets of goods. There are savings within the large contracts that realize savings over time and quantity. However, your situation seems unique. Here is my card, let's talk about what we can do with the purchasing department in your case.

Comment: There is a coordinator at the Board, Menna Paternostro, who deals with furniture and equipment. She can assist your Principal in finding the best price.

5. What is the other revenue shown?

A: This includes permit fees, international students, continuing education, curriculum materials sales, bank interest, property leases, special ministry grants (EPOs – things like tutoring)

6. What are the debt costs?

A: They are approximately \$40 million, and they are all funded. They are funded through a debenture – which is like a mortgage. We are given the money to pay for it each year from the Ministry of Education.

7. Coming back to the student question about discretionary items around which a Principal should consult with parents and community: I don't believe that is happening, I don't believe Principals are consulting, so how is it monitored? How does anyone know if the Principal is consulting appropriately?

A: My department handles the appropriate spending of the money. Superintendents oversee Principals.

Comment: A Principal is bringing plans forward for review and suggestions, but the Principal has the final say regarding the school budget. We are hoping there is an open and honest conversation around the budget, and that the Principal is coming back to the community with how they incorporated that consultation. The Board is working towards uploading school budgets for public view.

8. When you said "student success" does that include community support, like community organizations running programs in school?

A: No, that is outside of this budget. This funding comes from other grant sources.

So what does "student success" in the budget mean?

A: That is part of the Learning Opportunities Grant. That is Ministry of Education funding to support grades 7 to 12 academic achievement.

Comment: It is funded by head count, and there are stipulations around the funding for how it can be used. The Principal has to decide how that money will support grade 7 and 8 students in elementary, and then again in high school. Often, it is used to support the transition into high school. An example would be a career / family night for grade 7 and 8 students. There is significant accountability around the approval of spending for this funding.

9. My concern is that schools need activities to enrich and support children. When community volunteers ask for some money for supplies, snacks, etc, there is no money to support these valuable experiences. If volunteers are out of pocket, or unsupported, then the programs will end. How can programs be supported?

A: When it comes to money around activities and programs, the key is relationship building, creating strong ties between the Principal and the community, so that community building becomes a priority of the school. As well, always keep in mind that you need to make a request for funding before October 1st of the school year.

10. The school budget is approved and is available on the website. Are Principals held accountable for that plan?

A: Yes. Superintendents approve budgets and track them over the course of the year.

How do you measure that the money for student success achieved its intended goals? So that we can see that it was well spent?

A: If you ask a Principal to see how the student success funding was allocated, then a Principal should be able to share that information and have a conversation.

11. What do you as a Superintendent do to inform and engage parents in communities like this, where parents are not able to access the school, where they work two jobs, or face language barriers?

A: The Model Schools for Inner Cities program is all about engaging the community and providing a larger experience for communities.

5. Adjournment

Lesley Johnston, moved. David Clandfield, seconded. Adjourned.

NEXT MEETING:
Wednesday, March 5, 2014
9:30am to 12:30pm
5050 Yonge Street, Committee Room A