

**ICAC Meeting Minutes**  
**Thursday November 10, 2011**

**In attendance –**

Chris Glover, Howard Kaplan, George Martell, Jeff Kugler, Michael Shapcott, Alejandra Bravo, Lesley Johnston, Nathan Gilbert, Aim Mujib, Sheila Cary-Meagher, Laurie Green, Darcy MacCallum, Chris Penrose, Monika Etzler, Bob Spencer, David Clandfield, Sharlene Bourjot, Vincenza Pietropaulo

**Regrets –**

Jann Houston, Donna Quan, Manon Gardner, Cheryl Skovronek, Varun Desai, Graham Hollings, Heather Johnston.

**Guests-**

Dudley Paul, Kemp Rickett, Shirley Kim, Adanna Anucha, Natasha Burford, Sharma Queiser, Andrew Pearson, Anna Furfaro Monjezi.

**Staff –**

Marjolein Winterink, Vicky Branco, Cassie Bell, Jim Spyropoulos

**1. Welcome and introductions –**

- Congratulations to Chris Penrose and his wife on the birth of their son, Joshua – welcome to the world, Joshua!
- Futures Conference – Equity in Education From Policy to Practice (May 3-5, 2012)

2. **Agenda approval** – moved by N. Gilbert, seconded by Trustee Cary-Meagher, approved unanimously.

3. **Previous Meeting Minutes Approval (October 20, 2011)**– moved by N. Gilbert, seconded by A. Bravo, approved unanimously

**4. ICAC Co-ordinator's Report (see attached also)**

- *Handouts*
- *Event reminders*
- *Board update* – student agenda issue at AFA (Administration, Finance and Accountability Committee), appointment vs. by-election for vacant trustee seats (Wong and Coteau) at P and P (Planning and Priorities Committee), Opportunity Gap Report and Africentric High School feasibility study PSSC (Programs and School Services Committee)

***Discussion*** –

- Board seems divided re: appointment or election of new trustees
- Cost (approximately \$500K) seems prohibitive; Trustee Goodman has a motion requiring full consultation/input by parents, school councils etc. while other trustees feel it should only be a democratic election
- Issue will be decided at November 16<sup>th</sup> Board
- Will province pay for any of by-election cost? No.
- Trustee Glover has put forward motion in support of a by-election process

- Feel as both teacher and a parent that student agendas are vital tools
- Cost (\$1.3 million revenue to board through contract) could be more affordable – agendas are over-glossy, filled with many unnecessary items
- Size is also an issue – they are huge at elementary level and too heavy for little backpacks (and little bodies) to carry
- Concern that many students are not taught how to use them properly – can only be a useful tool if kids learn how to use them!
- Key question – are student agendas a necessary learning tool? If so, they should be provided for kids at no cost according to Education Act
- Consider age appropriateness of agendas as well – they seem to a useful time management tool for the younger kids, but as kids move into Grades 7 and up, they tend to use electronic devices (phones, iPods etc.) to manage their schedules
- Issue of equity re: technology as well
- Board should be looking at this in a holistic way – what is useful and relevant now, next year, and five years from now?
- Board should also look at agendas from teaching process perspective, i.e., time management skills, planning and organization skills etc. “teachable moments”

#### ***Action Items and Motions***

- **Page 3** – Motion – waiting staff response
- **Page 6** – Action item – in progress
- **Page 6** – Action item – complete
- **Page 7** – Action item – waiting staff response
- **Page 7** - Action item – waiting staff response

#### **5. MSIC Resource Team Report – MSIC Resource Team**

- Update on Canada Learning Bond event (CLB) through partnership with Omega Foundation
- 60,000 low income parents received RESP voucher in mail however faced many barriers in processing voucher, i.e., no social insurance number (SIN) for child, and often no bank account
- Parents receive \$500 initially for child’s RESP (Registered Education Savings Plan), plus \$100 every year thereafter; if kids don’t attend a post-secondary institution (and therefore don’t need RESP), monies are automatically rolled over into a RRSP (Registered Retirement Savings Plan)
- MSIC response was to set up nights where “SIN” applications could be processed and bank accounts set up – one stop for parents
- Clinics were set up with access for all 126 schools and included supports such as child minding and interpreters for parents
- Public awareness level of this program has now increased dramatically
- Federal government now more aware of barriers faced by some of our families and need for translations and interpreters – influencing governments in how to work more effectively in our inner city communities
- CCP Branco passed out information on the CLB program to IC-AC members and encouraged them to circulate information to their organizations/contacts

**Q:** Some people have raised issue of debt load some families have – how secure is RESP fund if debt is chased?

**A:** Money is ‘attached’ to child so monies cannot be retrieved through parent

**Q:** Concern that uptake might be directed more a middle-class families?

**A:** Omega Foundation partnership means this is reaching “our” (i.e., MSIC) families and through SIN clinics we are helping to remove barriers to program

- Update on Tele-psychiatry program
- This is another innovative MSIC and TDSB “first”
- Program began in northern boards to provide mental health support to students in isolated areas
- Pilot of project will launch four sites (1 per quadrant) in MSIC program as well as an east and west central site
- Karen Gravitis is staff lead (Focussed Interventions) on project

**Q:** Would psychiatrist ever prescribe medications?

**A:** No, purpose is not to treat, but to fast-track assessments and deal more holistically with complex situations requiring rapid and expert support; allows TDSB access to professional expertise we wouldn’t have otherwise

**Q:** Who pays for psychiatrist’s time and why isn’t OHIP covering it?

**A:** There are new policies in place now which we are aware of and reviewing.

**Q:** This is wonderful news – would add one caution: connection with family physician in this process is pivotal; can consent be gained to share process with GP?

**A:** At this point it is just a pilot and there will be ‘bumps’ along the way, but portals will be amazing for helping kids.

## **6. Discussion of Special Education Report, “Special Education: Structural Overview and Student Demographics”**

- Dr. Rob Brown of TDSB’s Research Department and author of this report, introduced by Dr. L. Green
- Documents provided for ICAC discussion include executive summary of report, copies of Toronto Star article which followed report, and Board report recommending a pilot of a Special Education Facilitator position
- Overview of executive summary of report given by Dr. Brown
- December 2010 report includes census and SES data – 2010 report is a follow up of earlier report
- First looked at these types of statistics 20 years ago and issues involving gender and students in behavioural classes haven’t changed
- Current Special Education system is result of amendments to Education Act in the 1980s
- Paradigm shift from beginning of the 1970s – number of students who dropped out decreased and graduation rates increased
- Students who have an exceptionality are required to have an IEP (Individual Education Plan), preceding the formal IPRC (Identification, Placement and Review Committee) process; group of students placed on IEPs without formal IPRC represented the largest increase statistically in this report – (approximately 20%)
- At post secondary level, large number of students IEPs now graduate, but do not go on to post secondary education

- There is a ‘cultural’ link to largest number of behavioural students in non-academic programs
- Male students had a disproportionately high representation within both Gifted and non-Gifted Exceptionality categories, particularly within the Behavioural and Autism identification groups
- Majority of new exceptionalities take place in grades 3 – 6 (i.e., we identify earlier)
- Comparatively few students placed on IEPs or given formal identification of exceptionalities in Kindergarten or within the secondary panel
- No public reporting process for special education except through EQAO; reporting process at MoE (Ministry of Education) through “section J”

### Question and Answer:

- Most of the students in non-gifted special education programs are still going into non-academic streams in high schools – which post secondary institutions do they attend?
- Most go to community colleges and not university
- Is there a class link?
- Some, but not as clear as you’d think
- But aren’t many kids who are in congregated classes from lower SES and children designated gifted more likely from higher SES?
- Yes
- Mobility is often a factor in inner city communities. What happens to a kid who is on a list for assessment and s/he moves to another school – does s/he drop to the bottom of the assessment list at the new school? Can we look at age of designation of student by income?
- Wait times issues for assessment – designation for gifted program might look different in the inner city
- Are congregated classes the best place for students or not?
- This is currently under discussion at Board level now
- Continuity of data for these students is a problem; approximately only ¼ of the kids who finish with TDSB begin with us – leads to gaps; transition between grade 8 and 9 also problematic, as well as large number of newcomers without data trail
- We need to do a better job helping our staff to support our kids with IEPs; new special education program called “Target 10 Focus 5” is good start
- Real question is, is it our kids or is our teachers? More support needed
- Interesting point re: earlier diagnosis – for example, points to reliance on EDI (Early Development Instrument- <http://www.offordcentre.com/readiness/project.html>), but we ask teachers to perform the EDI with varying degrees of training and background knowledge – how accurate are the results? Look at correlations
- The issue that stands out the most in this report is the link to *race* – the number of black children (14% total of school-aged population) compared with the percentage placed in non-gifted special education classes (36%) is an outrageous disproportion – we need to name what we are seeing in our system – racism
- Re-look at special education: what is it? What should it be? Who is in it? Can you exit it if placed in it? Lots of children do need special education, but we need to

- make sure those who need supports are getting them and those who don't get what they need to succeed within the system outside of putting them in special education classes
- Attended a day spent re-visioning special education and *no* discussion of who is in special education and who is not – need to open up door to a different conversation
  - This is not about ‘blaming’ or ‘shaming’ as special education is a part of a huge system, so need to look at whole system in order to figure out where special education services fit and who they serve
  - Sad to note that 2/3 (almost 80%) of kids with exceptionalities of any sort are male and that the longer you are in the system the greater the likelihood you will be diagnosed with one or more exceptionalities!
  - No one in special education intends to ‘silo’ kids; currently special education is under-funded by \$15 *million* which is a huge part of the problem
  - Have York or OISE done any work with TDSB’s Special Education Department on culturally responsive and relevant pedagogy (CRRP)?
  - Not by Centre of Urban Schooling (OISE U/T)—question for Special Education staff?
  - Appendix B, # 7 – student achievement – could this part be expanded upon? Strategies that work really well, for example, anxiety in children playing a big part in how well they’re responding and achieving
  - A system that is unable to define inclusion for all children is in trouble – must begin there, i.e., define inclusion and look at all issues that fall outside of that definition; poor and racialized kids are excluded to begin with
  - Clarification on language – children *with* autism (as opposed to children who *have* autism) –i.e., I *have* a driver’s license
  - Special Education is the front line of how racism is felt in this system – we need a new paradigm to support kids to understand their exceptionalities and continue with research for best practices

#### **ACTION ITEM –**

*The following group will work over email to formulate key questions coming out of this report and the discussion at ICAC for the upcoming meeting with Special Education staff on December 14<sup>th</sup>. (Responsibility: ICAC Co-ordinator to facilitate)*

*Volunteers include: Bob Spencer, Jeff Kugler, Dudley Paul, George Martell, Howard Kaplan, David Clandfield, Laurie Green, Chris Glover, Nathan Gilbert, Andrew Pearson, Natasha Burford, Sharlene Bourjot, and Kemp Rickett*

- ICAC would like to sincerely thank Dr. Rob Brown of the TDSB Research Department for attending today to discuss his report, and to the Special Education Department for requesting the report to begin with – this is how courageous conversations begin!

#### **7. City of Toronto Core Service Review - Update (see attached document) - Trustee Chris Glover**

- As a school board we need to take a strong stand against broad cuts which will impact our students and their families

- Plan to connect with other three boards in city and make a joint statement against cuts
- Goal is to aim for December 7<sup>th</sup> (TDSB) Board meeting in time for December 8<sup>th</sup> City meeting
- Consulting firm (KPMG) was hired to look at efficiencies not social costs – damage could be very serious

### **Discussion**

- Student nutrition will likely require a campaign to keep it – Mayor’s office does not support it; relatively cost of program is fairly small, but impact of cutting it will be huge
- Board should make a statement, but should MSIC take this on? These are our kids – can we use the ‘infrastructure’ to get the word out to families?
- (Staff) – We could get information out through CPACs (Cluster Parent Academies Committees) – could send dates of meeting to ICAC Co-ordinator and ask Chairs of committees to add information item to agenda for discussion- include facts only, not a political fora; could include results of nutrition program survey currently underway at same time?

### **Motion:**

*Whereas the proposed cuts to core city services are most likely to affect MSIC students and their families disproportionately hard, and,*

*Whereas given the diversity of our MSIC communities, including languages spoken within their homes and access to mainstream media, they may not be aware of the potential impacts of these cuts,*

*Therefore, be it resolved that:*

**As soon as possible, Trustee Chris Glover will send a joint statement by all boards of education in Toronto regarding the proposed budget cuts and their potential impacts on children and their families across the city to the ICAC Co-ordinator to forward to the Chairs of all seven CPACs.**

**(Responsibility: Trustee Chris Glover and ICAC Co-ordinator)**

**Moved by B. Spencer, seconded by A. Bravo, approved unanimously.**

### **8. Opportunity Gap Report – Discussion**

- Welcome to Co-ordinating Superintendent, Inclusive Schools, Student, Parent and Community, Jim Spyropoulos by Nathan Gilbert of ICAC’s ‘Achievement Gap Work Group’ (AGWG)
- Opportunity Gap (OG) Report (as it is now called), was presented at Programs committee on November 2<sup>nd</sup> and approved unanimously
- Superintendent Spyropoulos appreciates insights so far on report – OG Report is one of most important pieces of work of Board so far
- Keys into five strategic directions of Board:  
([http://www.tdsb.on.ca/about\\_us/media\\_room/room.asp?show=allNews&view=detailed&self=30230](http://www.tdsb.on.ca/about_us/media_room/room.asp?show=allNews&view=detailed&self=30230) “Board Announces Five Strategic Directions to Guide TDSB through 2015”)

- Support for all students, especially those who need the most support
- Before this gap report was even thought of seven legacy boards committed to equity for all – these were not just words for many staff
- OG report is TDSB’s “call to action” – did not want to create another report to sit and gather dust – but rather propose and execute concrete actions
- Two years ago Executive Officer Lloyd McKell began work on report, and this past summer staff met with 600 students to discuss issues important to them
- Students will continue to have input and document will continue to evolve – work in progress!
- Important to have concrete action items which are measurable – provides accountability
- At last PSSC (Programs and School Services Committee) meeting, committee recommended to full board that plan be approved and turned over to staff to provide – a) cost of all items b) an expanded communications plan for whole system
- Some items have already been enacted (i.e., Aboriginal self-identity policy as per provincial legislation) or have been started – urgency to act for benefit of identified student groups (i.e., Roma, Aboriginal, Portuguese, Black youth etc.)
- Gap is not only determined by achievement – wanted a broader definition and have recently introduced “ethno-cultural portraits” in Research Department
- Also wanted to draw correlation between cultural/ethnicity and census data – biggest factor? Poverty, leading to poorer health outcomes
- Clear that poverty and race are tightly interwoven
- Ministry of Education (MoE) gave TDSB \$3 million for Aboriginal Education project to assess how subset of kids did when adequately resourced; result? *Decolonizing Our Schools Report* – conclusion was we do not serve our Aboriginal students well!
- Actionable items out of this report became foundation for Aboriginal plan in Opportunity Gap Report; Aboriginal Advisory Committee (AAC) has applauded work done so far

### **Discussion -**

- According to previous OECD reports, this board was a leader in dealing with issues in our inner cities and poverty and dealing with the “achievement gap”; report came up with idea of “equity of outcomes” which was taken up by Finland, a mainly privatized system then and now very equitable
- At that point, Finland committed to a system of excellence for all and began to build what is now arguably best education system in the world
- The TDSB OG Report is the ‘start of another start’; need to link what we’re learning from the Model Schools to what works – this will be how we answer the question of *inclusion*
- Definition of ‘achievement’ in OG Report remains no more than test scores – if kids can’t see for themselves in their classrooms how they can change their world, then there will be no change!
- This is similar to the discussion we just had on special education – these are *all* our kids
- Key to report is to answer the question: what do we mean by achievement? Define!

- Dr. Brown’s report talks about student well-being for example
- If we apply an equity lens to EQAO test stories for example, gap between stories and children’s realities are very telling (i.e., story about Grandpa’s backyard); suggest looking at old Toronto Board of Education benchmarks
- Strongly urge board to look at where alignments are in place, for example, building on successes in place in system? Is this something to consider?
- Adopt alternative indicators of learning and success at this board
- Accountability will come from schools and communities getting to know each other better – for example, the *reality* of schools as hubs of their communities
- In Saskatchewan, the “Project Understanding” seeks to extend understanding of aboriginal culture and identity across the whole system rather than focused only on aboriginal populations
- What is this section about: “Student Performance incentive – Marketing Plan”?!?
- Key question appears to be – if we’re doing a gap analysis, why are we testing the victim?
- Begin by defining inclusion - look at system supports, adequate funding, staffing, curricula etc. Who is included? Who is excluded? Why?
- Year II goals – working with community agencies - so many are so keen to work with schools but barriers are huge; there seems to be no recognition at all that these agencies have any relevance at all
- Look at EQAO or report card data in isolation doesn’t tell us (staff) anything; need census data to fill out picture (i.e., demographic data); this is brave of the school board to do because it tells us how kids feel – are they respected? Are they safe? All this data together tells a fuller story
- We are asking for help – not just with the plan, but for people to resource the plan
- One thing OG Report doesn’t appear to address is the student/teacher interface – what is happening right at the classroom level?
- Thank you to Superintendent Spyropoulos for attending today and the ongoing discussion

***ACTION PLAN:***

*If ICAC members have any further questions or comments on Opportunity Gap Report, please forward to ICAC Co-ordinator who will forward directly to Superintendent Spyropoulos. Report goes to full board next week.*

**Meeting Adjourned**

**Next Meeting –  
Wednesday December 14<sup>th</sup>  
9:30 am – 12:30 pm  
5050 Yonge Street, Committee Room “A”**