TDSB Task Force on the success of Students of Somali Descent
Meeting Minutes
Monday April 29, 2013

Time: 6:00PM
Location: 5050 Yonge Street – Cafeteria


Guests: Trustee Chris Glover- Ward 2, Etobicoke Centre, Spin.


Minute Taker: Zahra Hassan

AGENDA ITEMS

1. Dinner

2. Welcome
   - Haweiyah Egeh chairing the meeting.
   - Meeting called to order at 6:20PM

3. Consultation Debrief
   - Ali: Congratulated and thanked everyone for all the hard work put into the community consultations

   Consultation Debrief
   - Few surprises –collected rich data to work with
   - Consultations went well and we still have a lot of work to do
   - Concerns around having enough time to go through the data and sort things out
   - Students: good to see people who care about us and who are trying to help us but we are young and there are other stuff that are getting us to go off track. When we realize the importance of this time it might be too late but the young people who listen can benefit from this work
   - Parents voiced concerns with the system that is not receptive
   - Process was inclusive and people were able to voice objectively what they wanted
   - It is amazing that we had the first ever TDSB consultation for the Somali community –happy that we had the process
   - The community was receptive to the data and they did not think it was available
   - It was good to have data and feedback from parents and students
   - Some of the stories were depressing – parents who were forced into applied 20 years ago are now experiencing the same thing done to their children
   - Hope to retain as much of the data as possible instead of synthesizing it into neat data
   - In similar meetings people come out and poured their hearts out but nothing gets done – hope there is follow-up this time
   - Jobs for young people was an important theme and concern
   - The consultations re-affirmed things we already knew
   - It is important the community does not feel consultation fatigue and to not exploited the stories they told us
   - Did not understand the importance of the Taskforce for the community but now after holding the consultations, we see the responsibility we have
   - Going over the notes brought back so much of what the community told us
   - The Somali parents are crying out for help
   - Our community is over studied – hope we can do something meaningful with the stories we
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received
- The problem is how the community is perceived and that is what needs to change
- Having the East consultation at Abu Huraira Centre was a strategic decision and it allowed us to capture a good size of the community. It was good to see parents and youth in the same space
- Concern with turnaround time in regards to the data- we should not rush and we need to take our time with the data
- Trustee need to be prepared in terms of the makeup of the community so that the message being communicated can make sense – some sensitivity training for them would have been helpful
- The hurt, struggle and pain of the community was real
- Parents expressed how they are being perceived as immigrants and refugees
- Somali parents have a lot of knowledge of the school system but they are having difficulties navigating it
- Somali youth conference had a huge turnout. The data was presented to them in the morning and they were shocked with the numbers. In the afternoon they had the opportunity to interact with professionals. They were impressed with the professions and the post-secondary students and they got to see different options in terms of areas of study and different professions and career paths
- Interesting to see the dynamics of different communities around the city – the needs and the dynamics were the same
- The elderly men at the East consultation were looking at what they needed to do for the community – the mothers are doing their part but the fathers acknowledged need to step up
- We had 7 trustees, at some point or another, come to the consultations. It is important to note that the trustees are decision makers and the ultimate accountability to staff
- Every consultation had packed rooms – huge turnout
- People came with passion – we have seen and heard their tears
- There is a lot of commitment to what comes next which takes courage
- It is interesting to see the number of parents who send their kids to private schools
- The sense of responsibility is huge – people are expecting something from us and we hope we are worthy
- Since the Taskforce was formed, three Somali community support workers were hired – this will give the community better access to the system

Trustee Chris Glover – Ward 2 – Etobicoke Centre
- Started a boys group in the West to come together and talk about issues
- We need to look at the systematic barriers and where we put the onus - 2 way relationship
- Teachers/institutions need to relearn how to work with our children
- Need to identify systematic issues – reason why the TDSB Board of Trustees launched the Taskforce is seen as a need to do things differently

4. Next Steps
- TDSB committed to bring 2-3 interns to filter out the notes and present us the final document with guidance from the 2 co-chairs. This work will be done on our behalf - decisions will be made as a group
- Interns will have one week to go through the data and bring it to the group
- Suggestion: research committee will act as a liaison to the intern – all in favor

Timeline:

- Week of May 6th: Interns work on the data and send data to the Taskforce over the weekend
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- Week of May 13th Taskforce meets twice: May 13 and May 16 - all in favor
- May 28th: Admin Council meeting - need to have everything ready – to be on the safe side have everything done by May 21st
- June 5th: Program and Services committee meeting - need to present final recommendations

5. Other Business
   • n/a

Next Meeting: Monday May 13th
5:30PM Dinner
6:00PM-8:00PM Meeting

ADJOURNED: 8:06PM