
Schools@theCentre: **Challenging the status quo**

February 16 & 17, 2007

Forum Proceedings

**A report from the
Community Social Planning Council of Toronto**

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Ontario Bar Association Meeting Centre

Introduction

Background

The cuts, and the threat of more cuts, have stifled discussion about how publicly-funded education must respond to our changing world, our changing communities and to the changing needs of our students. The cuts have stifled discussion about the importance to society and to individuals of a broad and inclusive education.

Now is not only time to reclaim what has been lost, it is time to take a fresh look at the education needs of our students and our communities.

It is time to improve publicly funded education.

This discussion is particularly timely for a number of reasons:

- Publicly funded education in Ontario is at a crossroads – and it’s an election year.
- Across Ontario, thousands of students are being marginalized in the education system, and in society.
- Across Ontario, hundreds of community schools face closure because of declining enrolment and under-funding. If these schools close, today’s students and communities lose right now – and tomorrow’s lose the opportunity to re-create our schools as vital centres of the community.

Context

The research agenda and strategic planning of the Community Social Planning Council of Toronto identified education as a priority for the Council’s ongoing research and community mobilization work. Though its research work with the “Inclusive Cities Canada” initiative, on ESL programming in Toronto, on community use of schools, and on the academic success of homeless children, the Community Social Planning Council of Toronto continues to work with a broad range of community organizations to improve the quality of life – and the quality of education – in the city of Toronto.

In this context, the CSPC-T sponsored a two day Forum, *Schools@theCentre - challenging the status quo*, to provide an opportunity for members of a wide range of sectors to join together in dreaming – and planning – what our education system *could – and should – be*.

Overview

The *Schools@theCentre* Forum, was held on Friday, February 16, 2007, from 5:00 PM to 9:00 PM and Saturday, February 17, from 9:30 AM to 4:00 PM at the Ontario Bar Association Conference Centre, 20 Toronto Street in Toronto and was open to all those who are concerned about the future of publicly funded education. The event provided an opportunity for discussion, for sharing of ideas, for networking, and for planning.

Forum Flyer

The Forum Flyer was available in seven languages, English, French, Somali, Urdu, Chinese, Tamil and Hindi and was widely distributed to community, parent and school organizations. A copy of the English language flyer appears in **Appendix A**.

Participants

The Forum brought together 197 participants, who are concerned about the future of publicly-funded education. The participants represented a wide range of individuals, organizations and institutions from numerous sectors. Included among these were:

- Settlement Organizations
- Elementary and Secondary Education
- Health
- Public and Catholic School Boards,
- Parent Organizations
- Post-Secondary Education
- Media
- Charitable Organizations and Foundations
- Student Organizations
- Professional Organizations
- Teachers' Federations
- Municipal and Provincial levels
- Ethnocultural Organizations and Networks
- Research
- Academia of government
- International Language Networks
- Labour Organizations
- Women's Organizations
- Legal Organizations
- Shelters
- Adult Education

A full list of participants appears in **Appendix B**.

Forum Activities

The Friday evening session of the Forum included:

- Registration,
- Buffet dinner,
- Welcome and introductory remarks on behalf of the host organization, the Community Social Planning Council of Toronto,
- Keynote address, *Creating Communities: New Possibilities for Schools*,
- Panel discussion responding to the Keynote Address involving panelists representing Community organizations, parents, education and student
- Question period, remarks and discussion from the floor.

The Saturday session included:

- Registration,
- Welcome and introductory remarks,
- Keynote address, *Paying for Education*,
- Five discussion groups: *The Needs of Differently Abled & Special-Needs Students, The Needs of Youth Marginalized by the School System, The Needs of Elementary & Secondary Students, The Needs of Adult Learners/ Older Adults & Seniors and the Needs of Our Communities*,
- Lunch
- Student documentary video, *Imagine a School... Making the Play*,
- Plenary Sessions, *What Needs to Change and What Can We Do: Next Steps*.

The complete Forum Agenda appears in **Appendix C**.

Forum Proceedings

The aim of this document is to share the ideas and insights gained through the presentations and discussions at the Forum with the event's participants and also with a wider audience. It includes an overview of the Forum's purpose and its structure, presents transcripts and summaries of the speeches and presentations, provides a summary of the small group discussions along with issues raised by participants and finally examines the next steps for action. Through the inclusion of this material and through the interaction evident within it, this document reflects the interest in the topic of this Forum and the common concerns expressed by participants from a wide range of sectors. The content of this document also reflects the participants' commitment to the education of the young people of this city.

Forum Opening

Opening Remarks

John Campey,
Executive Director, Community Social Planning Council of Toronto

John Campey welcomed participants and thanked them for attending the Forum, particularly since it is being held on the weekend. He expressed his personal and deep interest in this subject, as he was a classroom and an ESL teacher and also a school trustee. The following is a summary of his remarks.



Since decade of funding cuts to education in Ontario have reduced discussion to what can we cut, reduce or sell off, we must turn the conversation around and take back our schools and communities. We must talk about what we need our schools to do, to be and what we expect from government in providing to and for our communities. All levels of government must support schools in our communities.

The CSPC-T has been actively involved in many community initiatives related to education: The CSPC-T

- Has pushed for action, in the area of ESL needs, on the Ontario/Canada Immigration Agreement;
- Has implemented the Kid Builders Project, examining the academic success of children living in shelters;
- Was a partner in Inclusive Cities Canada, examining social inclusion and the concept that every resident feels like they have a stake in how their city is governed - one of the 6 key areas was education and how schools need to serve as community hubs and act as resources for the community.

This Forum is an opportunity to bring together a wide cross section of individuals to talk about what our schools could and should be.



Introduction of Keynote Speaker

John Campey introduced the keynote guest speaker, Penny Milton, the CEO of the Canadian Education Association. Penny has written widely on education, has been a school trustee and past chair of the Toronto Board of Education and has hosted a cable television show on education, *Education Matters*.

Biographical notes for Penny Milton appear in **Appendix D**.

Friday Keynote Address

Creating Community: *New Possibilities for Schools*

Penny Milton
Chief Executive Officer
Canadian Education Association

Good evening. It's an honour to be invited to open your conference with the splendid title of Schools@the centre.



It feels like coming home, or perhaps like coming back to the beginning. I came to Toronto by way of Montreal in 1976 – it is hard to believe that that was 30 years ago. Perhaps I remember it so clearly because the experience of becoming a parent at a Toronto neighbourhood school shaped my future in this city that I love. Toronto offered the opportunity for a new start at this business we call school. In Montreal my five year-old attended a large school in the French immersion program. It was a place where you dropped off your kid at the outside school door. I never met the principal and never visited the classroom until my first parent interview, a devastating experience for a young parent. The teacher advised me to agree to seek psychological assessment for my five-year old because “he was anti-social”. The evidence for her conclusion was that he spent the morning sitting in a rocking chair and looking at books all morning.

At supper time, I asked my son if this was true. “Oh yes, he said. She only talks in French and she knows I don’t understand what she says, so I just read books.” Fortunately I learned a lesson early, listen to the children.

In coming to Toronto, I was fortunate to be able to choose where to live, so one weekend I toured neighbourhoods until I found a small school, pressed my nose to classroom windows and sensed a place where my children and I could belong. And the school lived up to my expectations. Rooted firmly in the community it served, parents came and went as we chose, engaged in developing new programs and policies as well as fundraising and felt the school was ours. (One day I noticed my three-year-old was missing. My first instinct was phone the principal. “I’m so sorry,” he said, “We assumed you knew that Joe come to school today. He’s in the Grade 4/5 class. Why not let him stay until lunch time.”)

I became a school trustee in 1978. The eighties were a time of real possibility. A childcare centre for teen families to support a good start for babies and an education for their mothers; a policy to provide for a child care centre in every school whose community needed one; school community relations staff to facilitate community

participation in schools; policies that made the school available for community use; a new framework of student rights and responsibilities; heritage language programs and for a short time even a possibility of the renewal of high schools. When I meet people on the street there are still fond memories of the ‘good old days’. In hindsight we likely did some things better and some worse. But there is no going back.

Our task at this conference is to develop a sense of what going forward could mean and how we can make it happen.

Let me tell you what I want to do this evening. First I’ll say a bit about why schools should be at the centre, then use three examples from elsewhere to suggest possibilities and then finish with some approaches to making it happen.

One way of thinking of the challenge is the creation of schools that belong to their communities and communities that belong to their schools. There are many reasons for doing this but for me most important among them is to make possible the healthy development of all children and youth. We are used to the African saying, “It takes a village to raise a child” but how often do we act as if we believed it?

In her paper “Why Neighbourhoods Matter: Implications for Policy and Practice” prepared for the Strong Neighbourhoods Task Force, Christa Freiler (who is now CEA’s Director of Research) quoted American Clarence A. Perry speaking in Toronto in 1924 who proposed that the elementary school should be at the civic centre of the neighbourhood district because:

“Since the public school, more nearly than any other local institution, touches all families within its sphere of service, it is a common denominator of neighbourhood life and seems therefore the best available basis for determining the size of the local community.”

This is the common sense understanding of everyone who proposes that the response to any social or economic challenge rests with the school. (I remember when we had public health nurses and dental clinics in schools. And did you know that during WWII that Toronto schools provided universal childcare and meal programs because their mothers worked. What irony!) The school as the centre is only one of a number of different definitions of neighbourhood but it suits the purpose of this event. I can think of no more important societal goal than the healthy development of its young. It is not trite to say that our future depends on our children. It is a fact of life.

And so let’s start with the school itself – the school as community. Teachers and staff – are they a community working together to further the best interests of all students? Where do the students fit in this community? Is each one cared for, valued, known and respected as a full participant in the school experience? And what of the parents of the school? Do they not only feel welcome but genuinely valued for their knowledge and commitment to their child’s learning?

Debbie Pushor a researcher from Saskatchewan distinguishes parent involvement from parent engagement. She writes. “Parent involvement is a common vehicle for bringing teachers and parents together in schools. Parent involvement programs “tend to be directed by the school and attempt to involve parents in school activities and/or teach parents specific skills and strategies for teaching and reinforcing school tasks at home. Typically, parents are asked to serve in roles as “audience, spectators, fund raisers, aides and organizers.”

On the other hand parent engagement feels quite different. Pushor writes, “No longer are educators working alone to design and enact policies, procedures, programs, schedules and routines for the sole benefit of the children of the community. Instead, educators are entering a community to create with parents a shared world on the ground of school – a world in which “parent knowledge”¹ and teacher knowledge both inform decision-making, the determination of agendas, and the intended outcomes of their efforts for children, families, the community and the school...There is a sense of reciprocity in their mutual engagement, a sense of benefit for families and the school.

Who wouldn't aspire to engagement rather than involvement? But let's turn to the engagement of the school with its larger community. One of the popular metaphors is the school as a hub where the school is thought of as the ideal place for the location of services to children and families. I am going to describe three separate initiatives as examples of possibilities. One local, one regional and one provincial:

Vancouver: The Learning City¹

British Columbia adopted the goals of becoming the best educated jurisdiction in North America by 2010. The response of civic leaders in Vancouver was to form a working group, define a strategy and set about making it happen. They defined

“A learning city as a place where lifelong learning is valued and supported. That provides opportunities for lifelong learning to occur and harnesses the collective resources of all five sectors—civic, economic, education, public and voluntary - to make this happen.”

Because during the consultation phase people were having some difficulty in understanding what would be different if Vancouver were a learning city, the working group developed a vision of Vancouver by 2020:

“Learning will commence at birth. Every child will have a caring, nurturing, safe and stimulating environment in which to develop and grow. Parents will play a critical role in their child's development, building early literacy skills and cultivating a joy of learning

¹ Dr. Debbie Pushor is currently engaged in a three-year narrative inquiry into “parent knowledge,” funded by the Social Science and Humanities Research Council of Canada. Her research is asking the questions, What is parent knowledge? How is parent knowledge held and used?

and a sense of inquiry. Families will be supported by a continuum of community services, from healthy beginnings programs to quality childcare, which will build upon family and individual capacities and identify and address potential barriers to learning. At age six, every child will not only be ready for school - cognitively, emotionally, physically and socially - but will be equipped to progress. Children, whether at home, in the community or at school, will be exposed to new experiences and ideas and will be encouraged to pursue individual interests. They will develop strong analytical, social and technical skills and will be proficient in literacy and numeracy. Parents will play a pivotal role, providing assistance, encouragement and support. Children will be encouraged to explore their artistic and creative sides through community and school based activities, as well as contribute to community through volunteering.”

The vision goes on to talk about the vision for youth and adults.

Knowing where you want to go is the first step in getting there, so let’s look at some other examples.

SUN – Schools Uniting Neighbourhoodsⁱⁱ is a regional initiative in Portland/Multnomah County, Oregon. Their goal was two-fold: first, to support education and school success, and second, to improve the way resources for students and their families were delivered by developing a school-based delivery model. The initial planning group started with questions...

What if...

...there was a way to help kids succeed?

...there was a way to have all families involved in their child's education?

...there was a way for all members of the community to feel connected to their local school?

...there was a way that schools could be open from 7:00am to 9:00 pm, year-round?

The SUN Initiative opens doors to make it all possible.

SUN describes its work as creating schoolhouses where retired neighbours help 7-year-olds with homework after school. Where refugees new to the U.S. learn to read. Where parents feel their voice is heard. Where children take music, art, and sports classes in the afternoons. SUN envisions schools as community centers dedicated to student achievement and enrichment for the whole neighborhood, providing a safe, positive environment and offering valuable social services to meet the needs of the community.

There is now a SUN Service System an Integrated System of Academic Support and Social Services that promote healthy children and families.

Saskatchewanⁱⁱⁱ

School^{PLUS} is a term coined by a *Task Force and Public Dialogue on the Role of the School* (1999-2000) that describes a new concept of schools as centres of learning,

support and community for the children and families they serve. This model builds upon the successful practices of schools and community partners to date and strengthens their capacity for meeting the needs of all children and young people through the creation of a new social institution directly supported by other human services. It more actively involves family and community members, to help provide all children and young people with the supports they need for healthy development and learning success. These supports may include health, nutrition, recreation, culture, social and justice services for children and their families, as well as advanced learning opportunities for adults.

Saskatchewan is committed to School^{PLUS} happening in every school and community across the province. In many schools, the transition to School^{PLUS} is well underway. At the provincial level, there are eight departments of Government that are working together to create School^{PLUS}, including Community Resources, Corrections and Public Safety; Culture, Youth and Recreation; First Nations and Métis Relations; Health; Justice; Learning; and Northern Affairs. Their measure of success for School^{PLUS} is that Saskatchewan schools have the capacity to meet the learning and developmental needs of every child and young person.

So if some are putting schools at the centre, what about us?

I have a few suggestions:

- These examples are asset-based. They value community and work to achieve the best. This is the opposite of a lot of what we seem to do in Ontario – fixing problems or building on strengths are two quite distinct methodologies.
- Secondly, the job belongs to communities, not to governments. While some policies and funding might be helpful, these can never create the vision and energy needed to make things happen.
- Leadership matters, but it doesn't need to be positional, but inspirational.
- They all took advantage of opportunities. As Jane Jacobs once said, when asked where to begin because the change we need is so great (since everything is connected to everything else), just start somewhere.

Let me finish by referencing the ideas of Ric Young, the mastermind behind the Canadian initiative “True Sport,” a movement to reclaim the community values in sport and recreation, describes the imperative to create community.

“Most of the great policy questions of our day – economic, social, cultural and environmental – have now become urban questions. Given the fact that Canada is now one of the most urbanized nations on earth, it is understandable that place is fast coming into much sharper focus on the policy landscape. An urban agenda is starting to take shape.

But it's not just a job for policymakers, economists and technicians.

It's a job for citizens. We have to give voice to the communities we want. We have to call them into being by drawing on that storehouse of wisdom I referred to earlier. We have to inform and inspire the unfolding policy discussions with our authentic, legitimate human desire for community.

The desire for community in Canada is deep. And the moment to capture it is now. And it's the job of leaders to unleash that desire. To give it shape and meaning and narrative force."^{iv}

So why not connect the school-community agenda to the larger agendas taking shape around us – can we insert the school-community agenda more strongly into the mayor's Strong Neighbourhoods Strategy? What about the new Urban Education Centre at OISE? What about United Way's Action for Neighbourhood Change? How involved are educational leaders in the city's agenda? Can you begin the dialogue in your community, in your school, in your district?

Ric Young ended his speech to community leaders by saying:

“Indeed, in this era of globalization, a profound longing for community is beginning to reassert itself. I don't see it as a retreat from the modern world, but as a bold exploration in the right direction. A generation ago, we began to develop an ecological view of life – an understanding of the connectedness and fragility of the environment, and, given its sorry state at our hands, a reawakening to the sanctity of nature. I believe we are witnessing the beginning of something similar around the idea of community. There is a reawakening – you can feel it – to the importance, fragility and life-giving qualities of community. Maybe even to its sanctity.”

I wish you well in your deliberations. Thank you.

¹ Christa Freiler. 2004. Why Strong Neighbourhoods Matter: Implications for Policy and Practice. Paper prepared for the Strong Neighbourhoods Task Force. Toronto.

<http://www.toronto.ca/demographics/sntf/whystrongneighbourhoodsmatter.pdf>

¹ Vancouver Declared a Learning City. <http://www2.literacy.bc.ca/ebulletin/06summer/5.htm>

¹ Schools Uniting Neighborhoods. <http://www.sunschools.org/>

¹ School^{PLUS}. Saskatchewan Learning. <http://www.schoolplus.gov.sk.ca/>

¹ Eric Young. The Story of Somewhere: A New Narrative for Community. Presentation to the National Conference of Community Leadership Organizations. Calgary 2003.

<http://www.philia.ca/files/pdf/StoryofSomewhere.pdf>

Panel Presentation

The keynote address was followed by a panel discussion responding to the keynote address.



Panel Moderator

**Tam Goossen,
Vice-President Urban Alliance on Race
Relations**

Tam Goossen welcomed and introduced the panel members and briefly spoke about their shared history of being engaged in community:

- Ekua Asabea Blair, the Executive Director of the Rexdale Community Health Centre with involvement in the African Program at the Davenport/Perth Centre;
- Annie Kidder, Parent and Executive Director of People for Education, who helped to keep track of what was happening to the our schools;
- Eric Yam, a student with a history of engagement in community and an active youth member;
- Miriam DiGiuseppe, a long time school principal of inner city schools involved in many international projects;
- Faduma Mohamed, an active parent with Somali parent groups and Executive Director of the Community Labour Services.

Panelists

The panel presentations and discussion are summarized here from text recorded during the session. Biographical notes for members of the panel appear in Appendix D.

**Ekua Asabea Blair
Executive Director,
Rexdale Community Health Centre**



Ekua Asabea Blair recounted a number of personal stories about being a parent including the feeling of being “watched” by the school for the school to see in which activities parents are or are not participating. For a variety of reasons, many parents are not able to get involved in their schools.

It is the child that should be at the centre, such as in the clinical model, in which “clients are at the centre”. We should coordinate all the systems so that they work together. This will then keep the children and the parents in the focus. We all have a part to play (in each system), let's look at all things that the schools can be doing...a shift in the mindset, move away from a school system that is based on personalities. It needs to be a coordinated system that helps to build and sustain strong communities. Education is also a major determinant of health. We all need to work on a continuous process of engagement.

Annie Kidder
Executive Director,
People for Education

Annie Kidder emphasized the significance of having a conversation about the importance of education in today's society. The notion of putting the students/parents at the centre is incredibly important. Notion of “belonging” is how we give ourselves power, and we need to try and build this sense of belonging for all within the school. We must break down barriers of “class” within the classroom, and other barriers of exclusion and then reach out to those in the community that may not feel welcome, and help to give them that sense of belonging. The People for Education's parent inclusion project, with tip sheets in 12 different languages for parents, tries to demystify the school system.

We need to have a different kind of conversation about education, otherwise we can lose broad public support. What is the positive vision of education? What should there be in schools? We need to build a new idea and a new vision instead of focusing on the past.

- We should be extremely proud with what we have done with our education system in Canada and where we have come with it.
- How do we have a conversation about the system needs, while at the same time explain what we would like to see?
- We need to build a new idea and a new vision, talk about responsibility of including the community, let them feel like it's “their school, whether or not they have children.

Eric Yam
Student and Youth Advocate

Eric Yam expressed the belief that schools belong to the community, the students and the parents. Issues change over time, so the youth should have a say, as their issues will be different than those of adults. Leadership matters in such forms as student trustees, student council presidents



and student advocates. Students should have a role to play in development of education.

How to include schools:

- Forge links between schools and surrounding community (student body, and residents) with activities such as, hosting picnics, community fundraising efforts, inviting community to school concerts, etc.
- Turn school into community centre after school areas, for example lend gym out after school,
- Discuss issues facing community involving school principal, area trustee, parents and residents,
- Hold an annual area-wide carnival that brings schools, residents and businesses together,
- Develop links between different schools and community members

Let youth and student organizations happen. Organization and facilitation should be done by youth (in high school) and by parents (in elementary school). Youth and children are the leaders of tomorrow, have more responsibilities for youth especially in high school. SUN Schools and School plus should become a Canadian standard.

Miriam DiGiuseppe
Vice President, Board of Directors
Family Services Association of Toronto

Miriam DiGiuseppe related a personal story and experience when she was a newcomer to the Toronto school system at the age of 12. She spoke about being given a group IQ test when she could not speak English and, as a result, was almost “streamed” into a non-academic two-year program in high school. As a result, in her career as a teacher and a school principal, she believed that even making a small difference, one child at a time, would make the effort worthwhile. She expressed agreement with everything that all have said about making the school/child/ parents at the centre. If you position the school at the centre, then everything associated with the school is placed in the centre (students, parents, community). Schools should be a safe harbor, socially, emotionally and academically; places where students feel accepted and are able to succeed. She agrees with the concept of engagement instead of participation. When all stakeholders are engaged, we have a school and an education agenda that is all encompassing.

In some recent work on ESL, we have found that there is a great divide between education and community organizations that support newcomer families. Unless things are pulled together, and we speak with one voice, children and schools will not gain their place at the centre. We need to work together to explore and look at new ways and new strategies. Some of these have been discussed here this evening. We need to think creatively in using what we have and working together to get what we need. Change is always hard, especially for schools and the education system. However, change is

inevitable and to borrow from Giuseppe Tomasi Di Lampedusa, author of the novel, *The Leopard* “For things to remain the same, everything must change.”

Faduma Mohamed
Executive Director,
Community Labour Services

Faduma Mohamed also recounted a personal story of coming to Canada with three children, and wanting to put her youngest child in French Immersion. She was told that she couldn't put her child in French immersion because she didn't speak English. Faduma believes that if we teach children, children can learn. She learned English in Somalia and believes that her daughter can learn French in Canada. She found that many Somali children were being “streamed” in the school system. They came from war torn Somalia, in a number of different ways. Some came with family, some with neighbours. They came to survive and they trusted the school system. However, many found that the system put them all in “special” programs. Parents found that their children were not going anywhere and that they experienced many class issues within the classroom. It is sad that this is a determinant for children in school and it determines the future of other black children in the school system. The expectations of teachers and the school system determine where kids can go after school. We should have high/equal expectations of all children regardless of their household income. The food that they eat, and the way that they eat does not determine their capacity to learn in school.

If we want to fix the system, we need to divide our energy. One, we need to look at funding from government and second, look inward at the schools, principals and teachers. It is not acceptable to have counselors who tell children what/who they can become. Schools need to be accessible to the communities. In Etobicoke, there are cases where parents cannot come to the school as it is seen as trespassing because they “cause trouble”.



Thanking of Speakers

Tam Goossen thanked the Keynote speaker and panel participants for their insights and stories. It is important for us to help build a good education system so that the future is insured. This is where the leadership is. Keep the conversation going so that we cannot be shut out. Our voices need to be heard!

Open Mike Session

Following the panel presentation, participants were invited to comment or pose questions from the floor in an open discussion session with the keynote speaker, panelists and Forum participants.



The following is a summary of issues raised during this session. A more detailed summary of participants' comments/questions from text recorded during the session appears in **Appendix E**.

- The importance of adult education and the education of parents,
- Expectation of parents to assist students with school work and the challenge this poses to parents,
- Schools being a support within the community,
- Listening to and involving youth in discussion about the future of schools and education,
- The need to celebrate what we do well,
- Keeping schools open,
- Needing new ideas for what schools can be,
- Asset-based education, determining the needs of the community,
- Inclusive education,
- Building community capacity by building community hubs,
- Need for community stewardship of schools,
- Life long and life wide learning,
- Need for changing the language or dialogue if changes are to be made,
- Need for taking attack mode rather than a defensive one,
- Not recreating problems of the past in the solutions for the future,
- Training resources for teachers, including diversity training,
- Model schools as cluster centres for giving voice back to immigrant and poorer communities,
- Perception of schools as not being safe places by racialized communities,
- Need for alternative pathways for young people.

Closing of Friday Session

John Campey thanked all participants again for coming and contributing to the discussion. He also thanked the keynote speaker and members of the panel. He reminded participants to sign up for the various discussion group sessions for the next day of the Forum.

Opening of Saturday Session

Welcome and Introduction

John Campey

John Campey welcomed participants, including those who were not able to attend on Friday evening, and called the session to order. He briefly reviewed Friday's session including a very thought provoking discussion led by Penny Milton. Participants started to articulate some of the vision of what our schools could and should be. They raised a number of challenges that are created by some of the relationships or lack thereof and talked about relationships between and among schools, communities, boards and students. What are the challenges that are created by relationships and lack of relationships? There was a lack of conversation last night about teachers. They are an integral part of what makes schools successful. Nothing really happens in a school without having teachers fully involved.

This Forum is a unique opportunity for diverse groups of communities, organizations and schools to come together and have these discussions and explore some of the ways to make our visions a reality.

Introduction of Speakers

John introduced the two keynote speakers, Armine Yalnizyan, Director of Research, CSPC-T and Hugh Mackenzie, Economist and Research Associate, Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives.

Keynote Address: *Paying for Education*

Speakers

The remarks of the speakers are summarized here from text recorded during the session. Biographical notes for the speakers appear in Appendix D.

Armine Yalnizyan
Director of Research,
Community Social Planning Council of Toronto

At the CSPC-T we looked at four files from the point of view of a generation of change to try to examine why this generation seems to be having a tougher time raising kids than their parents' generation, although there is plenty more money. We found two things, not moving in predictable relation to one another:

- Growth in economy and increased capacity to pay for the things that we want,
- Growing sense of economic precariousness for families and children.



Between 1981 and 2005 the provincial economy grew 4 times, from \$131 billion to \$538 billion. Today, on a yearly basis, we are producing 400 billion more than only 25 years ago. In inflation adjusted terms, we went from about \$237 billion in 1981 to \$434 billion in 2005 – double the “*real*” economy in 25 years. Today we seem to have less to go around to meet basic needs than we did in 1981 in relation to schools, transit, health care, housing and services. Between 1981 and 2005 the economy doubled in size, but the population grew by less than half (43%) – productivity in action. We are hearing a lot about how the Ontario economy has taken a hit by the rising dollar, but still it is one of the strongest economies not only in Canada but also on the continent (when we look beyond Ontario). The Canadian economy has the best track record of the G7 over the past ten years, low inflation rates despite steady economic growth, low interest rates, low unemployment rates, etc. We have the best economic and fiscal performance in about 40 years with a generation of workers who are better educated and working more (weeks per year, hours per week) than any previous generation.

Under these conditions people should reasonably expect to be able to hang on to their share of the economic pie. How can this be measured? We can take a look at households (unattached individuals are a small minority, most people live in households with others). Of those, families raising children under 18 are the building blocks of society – about half of the population. What these children pick up in their household is what they think is normal. Compared to the last generation there is a huge disparity between distribution of income. When you see a growing gap between families raising kids, you know you have a problem (the single group that is most connected to the labour market, the tightest distribution of incomes within that group). 70% of families raising children are taking

home a smaller share of the economic pie they helped produce, comparing the first few years of the millennium to the late 1970s. Harder work, more work, better educated, yet economic advances highly concentrated at the top end of the distribution.

The key issue is wages. For 20 years (from mid 1970s to mid 1990s) families raising kids experienced changes in income distribution together, much as a pack. After 1998, the top of the pack breaks away. We accept it as “normal”. Most of those in the bottom half actually are worse off financially than a generation ago. Only the top half is moving ahead, and even so, it’s really only those in the top 10% that are seeing any real gains. Leaving 70% of the population behind in terms of significant economic gain. There is a myth of get education, work more, and you’ll get ahead. These families *are* better educated, *are* working more than their predecessors – and most of them are falling behind in comparison to their predecessors. They are working harder but not getting ahead, leaving less time to deal with everything families need to deal with their kids.

Not just the poorest, but also those in the bottom 30- 40%, pay more as a percentage of their income for housing. Their incomes are shrinking over time (after paying for housing) and families with children under 18 are being left behind. Teachers are dealing with increasingly desperate needs. But remember, we/these families are generating more than half a trillion dollars per year, double the size of the real economy (when including inflation) compared to the previous generation.

We’re being told that once we grow the economy fast enough, we can have the world we want, the society we want, the life we want. That’s the promise, but the reality is we *are* one of the fastest growing, strongest economies in the world. If we can’t provide what we need, let alone what we want, for everyone here and now, when and where can families expect to? It’s not about a hand up, or even a hand out. It’s about fairness – we all participate in the creation of the economy, but we’re not all sharing in the benefits. But we could. The economic and fiscal capacity is there. The issue isn’t making more money. The issue is demanding better use of that money. The issue is demanding that our economy works as hard as we do to help us all get ahead.

Hugh Mackenzie
Economist and Research Associate,
Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives



Two million of our children will go to school and meet one of the 150,000 teachers in the province, and the teachers will meet the next generation of those that will lead our province. How do you communicate the need to change the system and improve it?

What is the role that education plays in our society? We too often don't celebrate what we accomplish together. The public education system in Canada is the most successful public education system in the world. 94% of children attending school go through the public system, higher than any other country. Education is important to the development of culture in society.

The first exercise in democracy was in 1804 when governor Simcoe established a law of taxing neighbours to fund schools. This is how the education system began in Canada and it is now fundamental to the way that our society works.

We did a study and looked at people's perceptions of how inequality manifested itself for them. Two main issues emerged from this discussion:

- Growing inequality is not only about the poor at the bottom, but the middle being left behind and no economic security.
- People sense that the opportunities for their children were shrinking. They were losing faith that the next generation would be better off than they were. Their answer to this sense of inequality, insecurity, etc. was education.

Education is a massive undertaking - fundamental to how our society thinks about itself. We spend a lot of time talking about how Medicare is the feature of society that defines us as Canadians. However, education has a pretty strong claim that maybe Medicare is the second thing that defines Canada. Education, in fact, is the defining characteristic of Canada and our society.

How are we doing?

We are standing in the heart of the biggest city in Canada and discussing issues that affect education here in this city. We find ourselves looking back to the way it used to be. We talk about the 10 lost years. However, we must not talk about going back to the way it was funded before the new funding formula came into play. It is important to recognize that a number of school boards prior to 1995 lived through a number of years in which the amount of money they had was decreased year after year (before the new funding formula). However, boards were able to offset costs by raising taxes in the local community. But the tax base was becoming smaller and couldn't keep up. It is not viable to say "let's go back to how it was in 1995". At that time funds covered only 60% of what boards were spending and they had to cover the rest on their own, or cut back.

It is not politically viable to go back to the past. The biggest problem with the funding formula is that it is deliberately negligent of the present reality, which is the fact that needs are greater and costs are higher in big cities than in the rest of the province. Whether you like it or not, there is no solution to the gap between what we need and what we have...unless the provincial government is willing to admit that something needs to be done. Until the funding formula recognizes that people have different needs, and that urban areas have different needs, it will be perceived as unaffordable, and impossible. It will exploit rural bias for political gain, and “beats up” on urban centers. The Provincial government must acknowledge that things cost more in big cities and the funding formula must recognize these issues.

For example, allocation of the funding formula for school maintenance was based on the median costs to maintain square footage of the building: \$5.17/sq. foot. This rate has not kept up with inflation. Thus, is it not surprising that maintenance in schools has gone down? Another large shortfall is in adult education. It (credited education) is under funded by 30 million per year. An adult student is funded at half the rate of a secondary student in school, even though they may be taking the same course and receiving the same certificate. In short, when you are over 21 the funding is cut in half.

We have to come to terms with the need for the funding formula to recognize funding realities. Boards in northern Ontario and the big urban boards are the ones in the most financial trouble. When you go through the funding allocation formula, always expressed in what boards are getting, it boils down to not enough in the formula for teachers, adult education, school maintenance and other essential items. The reality is that the boards can't *not* pay teachers, maintenance, etc. So who pays? It is the students 'at risk' in the system who end up paying. Money is being used to make up for salaries and maintenance and other funding and it comes from the parts of the funding formula which is to provide support for the students at risk, such as special education, English as a Second Language, etc. Under funding of school boards is not a victimless crime and somehow we need to communicate that.

Thanking of Keynote Speakers

John Campey thanked the speakers for their participation and for sharing of their insights and expertise in this area. He acknowledged the presence of the broad range of organizations, which are participating in the Forum and noted the importance of such a wide spectrum of sectors working together for a common concern.

Discussion Groups

Discussion groups on the theme, *SCHOOLS SHOULD INCLUDE EVERYONE*, were held on Saturday morning from 10:00 AM to 12:15 PM. Each discussion group had an animator, a facilitator and a recorder.



The role of the animator was to stimulate and initiate the discussion by briefly addressing four discussion questions (listed below) for no longer than 3 minutes. The role of the facilitator was to ensure that all participants were heard and to encourage discussion with the purpose to share and collect ideas, which would be reported at the subsequent Plenary Session.

Participants had an opportunity to choose one of the following five groups:

Group 1: The Needs of Differently Abled & Special-Needs Students

Group 2: The Needs of Youth Marginalized by the School System

Group 3: The Needs of Elementary & Secondary Students

Group 4: The Needs of Adult Learners/Older Adults & Seniors

Group 5: The Needs of Our Communities

1. The Needs of Differently Abled & Special-Needs Students discussion group included but was not limited to topics such as: mental health, accessibility, education assistants and support staff, special education, transportation and integration.

Animator: Ayshia Musleh,

Facilitator: Cyndie Jacobs,

Recorder: Michaella Ciero

2. The Needs of Youth Marginalized by the School System discussion group included but was not limited to topics such as: safe schools, alternative programs, community-based programming and youth workers.

Animators: Alimamy Bangura, Michelle Cho

Facilitator: Ruth Baumann

Recorder: Arshia Raafat

3. The Needs of Elementary & Secondary Students discussion group included general topics but was not limited to topics such as: the arts, music, nutrition, curriculum, Black Cultural programs, Outdoor Education, International Languages, critical thinking, civic education, tutoring, homework clubs, ESL, and social & emotional support.

**Animators: Luz Bascunan, Arnie Amaral,
Ulla Knowles**

Facilitator: Richard DeGaetano

Recorder: André Lyne



4. The Needs of Adult Learners/Older Adults & Seniors discussion group included

but was not limited to topics such as: Adult Day School, Night School, General Interest Courses, ESL, literacy & numeracy, and seniors programs.

Animators: Jack Henshaw, Norm Beach

Facilitator: Chris Rahim

Recorder: Beth Wilson

5. The Needs of Our Communities discussion group included but was not limited to topics such as: Day and evening use of schools and services, child care, parenting programs, youth programs, health and mental health programs and “permit users”.

Animators: Animators: Ann Fitzpatrick, Fiona Nelson, Marlon Merraro

Facilitator: Rob Howarth

Recorder: Christine Davis

Discussion Questions

The focus of discussion in each group was centred on the following four questions:

1. What have you/your child/your community lost—that you want to bring back?
2. What have you/your child/your community have now—that you want to keep?
1. What do you/your child/your community need from publicly-funded education that you don't have now?
2. What will it take to get what you/your child/your community need from publicly-funded education?

The discussion in each of the groups was recorded on chart paper and a summary report made at the Plenary Session. The transcripts of the charts for each of the discussion groups appear in **Appendix E**.

Video Presentation

Canadian Education Association and Destination Arts

Penny Milton, Producer, Bleema Getz, Drama Teacher and students presenting “*Imagine a School... Making the Play*”, a documentary of the creation of a dramatic performance about life and learning by high school students from Halifax, Toronto and Vancouver.

Penny Milton introduced the video, which was designed to promote different way to think about schools. There are three contexts of student learning: classrooms, schools and communities and the student is the only person who has direct content with all three groups. However, the student is the last person we think about or speak with when talking about schools.

How do we give students the stage so that people, teachers, board etc, will listen to them? Generate a play from coast to coast. This is a 30-minute documentary of the process of creating a play that the students use in telling their stories relating to middle and secondary school.

Penny noted that the students involved were not “specialists” in film or sound, so the quality was not perfect. But this young company became determined to make a difference. Some of the key point in the experience:

- Community has to happen within the classroom as well, need to create respect, listening, negotiating;
- Need to create a situation where students are willing to take risks;
- Need to understand how to work together in a group, learn listening skills, and have the understanding before creating the play;
- Looked at a cross section of students that may not have had the best marks but had the interest in drama, variety of backgrounds (from lots of parental support to those with not enough financial resources);
- Need to look at all students as individuals, we are all different and have different needs, and these needs can have an impact on whether or not students are successful;
- Need to be reminded of how much we allow students to negotiate, share stories and validate them, (nobody was forced to share anything that they wanted to keep private);
- Other teachers noticed a change in the students after participating in the drama class, they were standing proud and were more confident;
- Watching students change, develop and mature, they will take this experience and will never forget it;
- Students will take this experience and do something with it.

Since it has been produced, the DVD has already been shown on a number of occasions and will be soon made generally available.

Plenary Session

The purpose of the Plenary Session was to report back from the discussion groups and to identify next steps.

Summary of Reports from Discussion Groups

The following summary of reports from the discussion groups is taken from text recorded at the plenary session.

Group 1- The Needs of Differently-Abled and Special Needs Students:

- Need to create partnerships with parents and educators and a need to have some sort of dialogue;
- Need for legal supports for parents trying to advocate /navigate system, policy changes, human rights complaints, how to navigate a system;
- Need for individual advocacy efforts to come together and create systemic advocacy efforts;
- Inclusivity in totality needs to be an umbrella over everything that we do, share a common vision, become engaged in advocacy work, mobilize locally within own communities and that will carry out across the province, make it political.

Group 2 - The Needs of Youth Marginalized by the School System

- Discussion focused on various issues as to what the community and students need, what we need in the future, and different actions required;
- Exclusion and inequality: the current system doesn't reflect cultural diversity found in Toronto;
- Hold school trustees accountable;
- Facilitate community engagement and awareness so that they can understand what we are doing;
- Stress the importance of student involvement in education and the roles that they play in determining what happens to them;
- Curriculum doesn't meet the needs of the students and therefore they lose interest in the programming. There is a need for alternative programs;
- Communities need to get immediate attention to geographic areas, as different areas have different issues;
- Need for inclusive curriculum (African/Asian issues);
- Need for taking preventative actions;
- Work with existing campaigns, work with group three and group five, as support is needed;
- Call for schools to provide continuous education, able to attend school to successfully participate;
- Respect children and youth at all levels;
- Support "don't ask, don't tell" campaign;

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- Push for and demand funding for staff and youth workers, and language specialists.
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Group 3 - Needs of Elementary and Secondary School Students

- There was a lengthy discussion about concerns for elementary and secondary school;
 - Bring back community workers;
 - More involvement of students, teachers and administrators;
 - Funding should reflect real cost of public education in communities;
 - Officials should work together on all levels of government;
 - More choices for the students;
 - Bring back program funding for the arts, phys ed, ESL, etc;
 - Elementary curriculum reform.
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-

Group 4 – The needs of Adult Learners/Older Adults & Seniors

What was lost:

- Schools at the centre of the hub of the community,
- Accessible and affordable spaces,
- Connections between city and community,
- Don't know about citizenship and changes that might come to programs without consultations,
- Continuity in the classroom, very little collaboration, such as curriculum.

What we want to keep:

- Learners commitment,
- Foster civil engagement, essential for democracy,
- Bring back respect across the system,
- Where does adult education have its place? Maybe bring in other partners to make it more accountable.

What do we want that we don't have:

- Mandate and budget,
- Full recognition of adult education and impact on community,
- Exponential learning, and paying more attention to it,
- Child care for ESL students, collaboration and coordination,
- Multi-funded if that is possible,
- Ending user fees,
- Boards need to look at education broadly,
- Program specific for women and training,
- Access (how to get to classes, where classes are).

Action needed:

- Advocate to MPs, MPP's, trustees,
- Inform media, get the information out there, write letters,
- Join campaigns for public education,
- Need to develop broad participation/consultation,

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- The “2 to 3 solution”, example of Manitoba, take 2% of every budget for education,
 - End the blame game and move forward on action issues,
 - Engage adult learners, advocacy, create seniors programs, intergenerational programs.
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Group 5 - The Needs of our Communities

- Focus on strategies and recommendations, not reinventing the wheel;
- Understand that there are a number of organizations that are doing work on the topics that we are doing today, and collaborate with those organizations, get one to push the agenda;
- A “new deal” for education: keep assets within the school system, free access for community schools, encourage community engagement and development, minimum standard for our schools, what we would like to see our schools do as a pivotal point in our community;
- Deal with issues around Safe Schools Act & Zero-tolerance policy;
- Deal with number of levels that should be held accountable for what they do/don’t do, how do we hold them accountable in regards to money, money allocation, schools as a community hub;
- How funds are allocated? Deals can be unfair;
- Mobilize and organize people that are already doing the work (organizations or coalitions); make it more inclusive; the timing is perfect with upcoming elections;
- Lets use this opportunity to push our agenda, create a political strategy for the next few years so that we can move forward on this issue;
- How do we get people involved in this process? Communications strategy: popular education to get this information to parents, students and other key stake holders to promote the message and to get the politicians to listen to what we have to say; word “respect” came up repeatedly;
- What we want to do when we leave here is to model what we want them to do;
- Look at how we can support ideas that are currently working and make changes where necessary; need to be open to hearing what the real concerns are; create and have a new deal that puts education in its rightful place.

Summary of Plenary Session Discussion

Following the reports from the five discussion groups, participants had an opportunity to engage in a general discussion and present ideas and suggestions. Among the issues raised and discussed were the following:

- Creating a website like Wikipedia,
- Community use of space (SPACE),
- Right to learn at all stages of life – all years,
- Developing “Learning Festivals”,
- Safe School Act – emphasizing prevention, not punishment,

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- Abolition of EQAO,
 - Formation of a cross sector coalition to push city and province to make schools hubs,
 - “Fair deal, not “New” deal – equity and respect,
 - Opening up schools to the community,
 - ”Great” or “Excellent” education,
 - Restorative justice,
 - Equitable distribution of funding,
 - The need for the city to have more affordable housing for everyone,
 - Support for after-school activities,
 - Engaging teens to become social change agents,
 - The need for teachers and staff to reflect student body/community,
 - Education for survival/participation in society,
 - Planning a major public event with theme, “City in Love with Learning”.

Resolutions

After much debate, the following resolutions were passed:

1. That the participants at this event affirm that the mandate of our publicly-funded schools must be broadened so that they can serve as hubs of learning and service in our communities.
2. That the participants at this event affirm that we will work together in every way possible to broaden the mandate of our schools as part of the process of renewing and improving publicly-funded education and this to include community programs for adults and seniors (i.e. adults over 20 years of age through to seniors).
3. That the participants at this event call for an end to school closings so that our schools can continue to serve our communities.
4. That the participants at this event call for increases in funding to allow our schools to truly meet the needs of our students and communities in which a profound commitment to equity serves as a foundation
5. That the four publicly funded school boards in Toronto provide adequate funding for school community advisors.
6. That the participants at this event call on school boards in Toronto and across Ontario to prevent the Canadian military from recruiting in our schools.
7. That the Safe Schools Act be repeated and all stakeholders be involved in creating a Safe School Act that is preventive and not punitive.

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8. That the EQAO be abolished and the funds saved be used for educating Ontario students.
 9. That the participants at this event call on the TDSB to fully implement and respect the principles of the “Don’t Ask Don’t Tell” policy, ensuring access without fear for all residents of Toronto regardless of immigration status.
 10. One of the best learning experience is through interaction. There should be more funding for organizations, which build bridges between youth and seniors. Seniors are wonderful resources and they can have an important role in teaching our children.
 11. That poverty and its impacts be recognized and accounted for in the development of policies, procedures and practices in the school system.
 12. Publicly funded means no P3a (Public Private Partnerships or alternative Financing models) which are more expensive due to costs of borrowing and profits build in; and no corporate partnerships or corporate curriculum.
 13. That we approach the “settlement workers” group and request a worker for all schools with ESL students to help communication with parents of elementary and secondary students in their own language on immigration and school matters.
 14. That we lobby the government for increased funding for all arts in the public school system.
 15. That more funding be put into the ESL programs not only for language learning, but also emotional support programs.

Closing Remarks

In his closing remarks at the conclusion of the Plenary Session, John Campey noted that this Forum brought together a broad range of interests and concerns to reflect on and identify some of the issues in this area and to provide participants with opportunities to network and to take back their experiences at the Forum to the different organizations which they represent.

The CSPC-T will prepare and send all participants and all levels of government the proceedings of this Forum. We will consider the proceedings in view of the strategies and suggestions on how we can move forwards together and explore ways in which the CSPC-T can help to support and continue these actions.

Participants' Evaluation/Feedback

The participants' evaluation/feedback was used to:

- Evaluate the Forum in terms of its usefulness to the participants and the broader community,
- Inform the planning and organization of future events,
- Identify community and participants' needs for future action of the CSPC-T.

At the Forum registration, participants received an information package, which included the following evaluation/feedback form:

Schools@theCentre Feedback Form
<p>We value your comments. We would appreciate it if you would take a moment to complete this feedback form.</p> <p><i>1. What did you find most useful about the Schools@theCentre forum?</i></p> <p><i>2. How could we have improved this event?</i></p> <p><i>3. What kinds of forums, workshops or events would you like the Community Social Planning Council of Toronto to host in the future?</i></p> <p><i>4. Do you have any other feedback for us?</i></p>

Summary of Participants Comments

Participants' comments on the evaluation/feedback form show that the Forum was timely and provided a valuable opportunity for discussion, sharing of ideas and experiences and for future planning. In general, participants noted that:

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- The Forum provided an opportunity for participants to meet, network, and discuss common concerns with individuals from a wide range of sectors and the opportunity to hear different perspectives and share ideas, thoughts and experiences;
 - The structure of the Forum provided opportunity for full participation through open mike sessions and small group discussions;
 - The Forum was well organized, relevant and informative both in content and resources;
 - More student input would have been useful, particularly from marginalized sectors;
 - There is a need for the CSPC-T to continue its active involvement in bringing people together from various sectors including parents, students, business, community groups and government to address social issues, such as race/class relations, education, including community use of schools, parental involvement in schools and advocacy for those who do not have a voice.
 - There is a need for the CSPC-T to continue its work in sponsoring public forums and provide opportunities for discussion and planning. Participants extended their appreciation to the CSPC-T for this work and encouraged future involvement of groups and organizations, which did not have representation at the Forum.

The following are some examples of participants' direct comments on each of the questions on the feedback form:

Question 1, "What did you find most useful about the Schools@theCentre forum?"

- "a) It happened. b) It was well resourced (food, etc.) c) It had powers – resolutions – outcomes"
- "The discussions on different issues – very informative"
- "An opportunity to reflect and hear from other people who are concerned about the publicly funded schools"
- "The networking was tremendous. I am a parent and would like to get other parents involved in the struggle. I got a lot of good information and a deeper understanding of the issues surrounding the state of education in Toronto".
- "The workshops"
- "I found lots of information here"
- "Group discussions. Resolutions"
- "What I found most useful about the forum/symposium was the opportunity to listen to the various groups, organizations, parents"
- "The way in which it was organized: Panel presentation, questions and comments, reading materials, group discussions, and feedback from all groups"
- "Diversity of voices and groups. Variety of organizations present but the fact that there is a shared goal and concern"
- "Broad discussion in small group setting"
- "The variety of viewpoints. Comfortable setting. Calmly mediated dialogue"

-
- “The event was wonderful as we were able to network with all stakeholders of the public education”

Question 2, “How could we have improved this event?”

- More student input particularly from marginalized sectors; however these youth may be difficult to reach and engage in such an event
- a) Were TTC tokens offered? b) Design a time table following the Resolutions, with report on that follow-up to members (within three months max)
- Very well organized. Great job!
- A list of participants and contacts would have been good to make networking easier
- End a little earlier on Saturday
- Keep the question and answer period focused on the topic at hand
- I would have liked the opportunity to participate in the other focus groups
- Better audio monitoring re microphone feedback
- If you provide transportation or car pool, easy access
- Procedures/governance rules should be adopted in advance of voting on resolutions. Chair should ask for yes and nays and abstentions
- I felt that this event was well organized, the microphones do act up at times, but that happens. We really enjoyed this event. It was quite informative I liked the “open” format
- The smaller groups still covered too broad of topics – it was challenging to focus and difficult as community agency not traditionally involved in education to contribute or feel as though they let in
- It was great! More participants could be better
- Invited the Minister of Education and politicians perhaps

Question 3, “What kinds of forums, workshops or events would you like the Community Social Planning Council of Toronto to host in the future?”

- “A workshop of new ideas/policies from alternative voices”
- “Cultural contributions to our communities”
- “From hall meetings – community parental input and educating the public to be active participants in getting improvements”
- “Race/class relations in Toronto”
- “Forum on impacts of cuts to social assistance on single and families”
- “How to get parents involved. How to approach your school councils, trustees, boards, etc. Do an open space format for students (high school). Do not ignore the needs of the middle years 6-12, they often get left out, unknowingly”
- “Learners forum with TASA and other partners”
- “To organize a symposium with Industry Trade and Commerce, a similar symposium as this one – to educate said organizations to broaden their educational requirements”
- “Opening schools to the community”

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- “I would like to see similar types of forums, perhaps with the discussion focusing on all students in the classroom, not only those with disabilities. We also heard a lot about non-dedicated teachers, however, no one talked about non-dedicated parents!”
 - “Training for public speaking and advocacy groups”
 - “Raising awareness on different issues. How to advocate on behalf of others who do not have a strong voice”
 - “Helping stakeholders to become more proactive in supporting public education”
 - “A joint partnership with all community organizations who could partner with school communities”

Question 4, “Do you have any other feedback for us?”

- “Keep on keep on! Consider fundamental change to the education system”.
- “More forums on education funding”.
- “Hopefully, those organizations that attended which do not have the capacity to reach larger numbers of people (as our campaign grows toward elections) will gravitate to organizations adept at searching larger numbers over the shorter term”.
- “Try to stay on time for the agenda”.
- “Great location and food. Thanks. It made working on Saturday easier”
- “I enjoyed this event. The discussions were good. There should be a way for us all to support the efforts of each organization”
- “Great jobs, different and painful issues. Thanks”
- “A wonderful opportunity to listen and share. Thank you for putting it together. Next time I will bring some of my students with me”
- “The event was well organized and valuable. Great food!”
- “Should get more people informed and involved or look for leaders in community to make others informed and involved”
- “Very good efforts and results! Keep it up!”
- “Would hope that groups who were not represented (i.e. French/“Board”/Aboriginal Community) were actually encouraged and formally invited to attend. Thank you! Wonderful event!”
- “Good food. Good venue. Good location”
- “It would be nice to share some good stories from different communities involved in school/community partnership programs”
- “Thank you for the opportunity to participate. I have gained a deeper respect for how many groups there are that work on single issues that are all a part of the greater net that supports our whole community”

Schools @ theCentre

It's been ten years of funding cuts – a decade of debating 'what to cut.' The cuts have stifled discussion about the importance of our public education system – what it needs to be, and what it could be. It's not only time to reclaim what has been lost, it is time to take a fresh look at what our students and our communities need!

Friday, February 16, 2007

5:00 PM to 9:00 PM

Saturday, February 17

9:30 AM to 4:00 PM

Ontario Bar Association Conference Centre

20 Toronto Street, 2nd Floor

Keynote Speaker: Penny Milton

(Penny Milton is Chief Executive Officer of the Canadian Education Association)

- The OBA Conference Centre is located two blocks east of Yonge, north of King Street East, (King Subway). This location is wheelchair accessible.
- Refreshments will be provided (light dinner on Friday, and a light lunch on Saturday) Childcare and interpretation available if requested by Monday, February 12, 2007.
- Conference registration is free.

This event will provide an opportunity for discussion, for networking, and for planning – to all those concerned about the future of publicly funded education.

REGISTER NOW – SPACE IS LIMITED

To register, contact Christopher Luke at 416 351-0095 x 256 or email
cluke@cspc.toronto.on.ca.

Sponsor: The Community Social Planning Council, in partnership with other community organizations.

Appendix B: Forum Participants

Name	Title	Organization
Israt Ahmed Suad Aimad Neemarie Alam	Community Planner	CSPC-T Somali Parents for Education Yorktown Family Child Services Beyond Learning
Alisha Ali Arnie Amaral Laura Antal Mauricio Arenas	Executive Assistant	TASA Canadian Union of Postal Workers (local 626) Ontario Coalition for Social Justice
John Argue		Ontario Coalition for Social Justice
Karen Arthurton Edna Aryee Irene Atkinson Dennis Bailey	Information Officer / Counsellor School Board Trustee	St. Stephen's Community House Woodgreen Community Services Toronto District School Board York Region Community Legal Clinic
Alimamy Bangura Anita Bartels Dennis Bartels Luz Bascunan Ruth Bauman	Secretary / Treasurer	GWNA GWNA
Norm Beach Rosemary Bell Cassie Bell Andrew Bell Nadia Bello Cindy Beman Dhurata Beqo	Adult ESL Teacher CDO Advocate School Board Trustee	Ontario Teachers' Federation /FEO TDSB City of Toronto TDSB TDSB
Katherine Blackett Ekua Asabea Blair	Manager, Children and Youth Programming Executive Director	Red Door Family Shelter People for Education Rexdale Community Health Centre Extend A Family CUPE 4400 TDSB
Selena Blake Janet Bojti Chris Bolton Garth Breit Jonathan Brown Bettina Brown Sarah Bukhari Hernando Burgos Earl Burt	School Board Trustee Parent	TDSB KPRDSB Urban Alliance on Race Relations
John Campey Sarah Carpenter Shelly Carroll John Cartwright	Executive Director Student Toronto City Councillor President	Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation CSPC - T OISE / U of T City of Toronto Toronto and York Region Labour Council
Sheila Cary-Meagher Asha Challenger	School Trustee Executive Assistant	TDSB National Anti-Racism Council of

Ken Chan	Parent	Canada
Emily Chan		Justice for Children
Christine Chang		
Shaun Chen	School Board Trustee	TDSB
Michelle Cho		Urban Alliance on Race Relations
Michaella Ciero	Program Support	CSPC-T
Tamar Clutterbuck		
Colleen Costa		CUPE 4400
Michael Coteau	School Board Trustee	TDSB
John Courtneidge		
Christine Craig		
Julie Dasoo	Parents' Council	Gateway Public School
Gloria David		Ontario Public Service
Janet Davis	City Councillor	City of Toronto
Christine Davis	Community Planner	CSPC-T
Maria Jose De Carlos	Parent	
Richard DeGaetano	Community Planner	CSPC-T
Fal Desai	Caseworker	Big Brothers and Big Sisters
Miriam DiGiuseppe	Vice President, Board of Directors	Family Services Association of Toronto
Courney Doldron		OECTA
Alexander Dow	School Coordinator (Rexdale)	Big Brothers and Big Sisters of Toronto
Gordon Dunbar		
Doris Duni	Teacher	ETT
Rob Fairley		
Jane Fardell	Teacher / Librarian	TDSB
Christy Fedirchuk	Teacher	Eastdale Collegiate
Philip Fernandez		Frontier College
Paul Ferriera	MPP, NDP	York South Weston
Ann Fitzpatrick		Children's Aid Society / SPACE Coalition
Paula Fletcher	City Councillor	City of Toronto
Raphael Francis	School Advocate	United Mothers Opposing Violence Everywhere
Ikram Freed	Parent	Etobicoke North Multicultural Association
Christa Freiler	Director of Research	Canadian Education Association
Sherrill Game		CSPC-T
Carolina Garcia		Spanish Speaking Education Network
Anna Germain	Parent	
Bleema Getz		TDSB
Andrea Gilpin	Health Promoter	Rexdale Community Health Centre
Chris Glover	Planning Committee Member	CPE
Tam Goossen	Board Member	UARR
Adalgisa Grande		TECT
Catherine Grechi		
Lynne Gregory		George Hull Centre
Tanya Gulliver	Facilitator	Toronto Neighbourhood Centres
Jenny Haggart		York University
Margaret Hau	Program Support	CSPC - T

Jack Henshaw	Parent	ETT
Jennifer Herman		
Elizabeth Hill	Former School Trustee	CUPE 4400
Graham Hollings		
Rob Howarth		
Sara Hsieh	Outreach Worker	Riverdale Immigrant Women's Centre
Doug Hum		Toronto Federation of Chinese Parents
Khadra Hussi		Horn of Africa Women's Group
Cyndie Jacobs	Director, Curriculum and Assessment	OTF FEO
Saizel Jaffer		
Toby Jason		ACORN
Ken Jeffers		OSSTF
Tyler Johnson		TDSB
Doug Jolliffe		OSSTF - 12
Samatha Juruc	Teacher	Northview Heights Secondary School
Dennis Keshinro		
Geoff Kettel		
Khurram Khan		
Yasmin Khan	Community Planner	CSPC-T
Annie Kidder		People for Education
Ulla Knowles		
Gerry Lang		Citizens for Lifelong Learning
Gilles Latour	Chief Operating Officer	Canadian Education Association
Cathie Leaid		Jessie Centre
Catherine Leblanc-Miller	School Trustee	TCDSB
Ray Li	student	
Andy Lomnicki		ETT
Jacob Louie		Don Mills Collegiate Institute
Christopher Luke	Program Support	CSPC-T
Andre Lyn	Research Analyst	CSPC-T
Bruce Lyne	Teacher	Eastdale Collegiate
Brian Macdonald	Assistant	ONT / NDP
Hugh Mackenzie		
Idris Madar		
Fowzia Mahamed	Health Promoter	Rexdale Community Health Centre
Rosario Marchese	Education Critic	Ont / NDP
Eileen Markwick		ETT
Archana Mathew		OPSEU
Jen Maurice	Youth Outreach Worker	Yorktown Child and Family Centre
Katie McGovern	Recording and Corresponding Secretary	CUPE 4400
Kim McKinnon		Community Legal Clinic of York Region
Glen McKinnon		
Kaydine Mclean	Student Intern	UARR
Sylvia Menezes	Chair	Neil McNeil CSAC
Marlon Merraro		St. Stephens House
Mary Micallef	Program Support	CSPC-T
Marilem Miguel		Autism Ontario

Delphine Milbrandt	Teacher	TDSB
Stephanie Mills	Youth and Outreach Worker	The George Hull Centre School Program
Penny Milton	Chief Executive Officer	CEA
Faduma Mohamed	Executive Director	Labour Community Services / Parent
Lidia Monaco	Director, Children and Youth Services	St. Christopher's House
Barbara Montgomery		York University
Patricia Moore		CIBC
John Mossey		Spanish Speaking Education Network
Michelle Munroe		TDSB
Bobby Nand		CUPE 4400
Thabsha Navamanikkam	Program Coordinator	Parent Action on Drugs
Karim Nehaz		City of Toronto
Fiona Nelson		
Stella Ng		SWC
Susan Nielsen		TASA
Christie Okonkwo-Mackenzie	Public Health Worker	Toronto Public Health
Abdul Hai Patel		Islamic Council of Immans - Canada
Ellen Peters		
Carol Podchashinsky	Student	TASA
Terri Preston		CUPE 4400
Jim Prince		TDSB Ward 10 Council
Arshia Raafat	Development Officer	CSPC -T
Chris Rahim	Community Planner	CSPC-T
Shriranga Raje		Highfield Junior School
Samy Ramachandran	Parent	Canada Tamil Parents Association
Geri Roberts	Director	Rexdale Community Health centre
Jennifer Robinson		Malvern Community Centre
Maria Rodrigues	School Trustee	TDSB
Maria Carmen Romero	President	Assoc. of Hispanic Canadian Teachers
Brian Rose	Parent	
Tim Rourke		Citizen's Income
Erin Rumsby	Placement Student	Community Social Planning Council of Toronto
Amber Rutherford	School Coordinator	Big Brothers and Big Sisters of Toronto
Susan Salek	Healthcare Consultant	Pharmacy Business
Stephen Seaborn		CPE
Ashely Sedeghat	Community Nurse	TDSB
Maria Serrano	Director of Operations	CSPC - T
Neethan Shan	School Trustee # 4	YRDSB
Sharon Shrieve		ACORN
Navjeet Sidhu	Student	CSPC-T
Bridget Sinclair		St. Stephen's House
Andre Singh		
Robert Spencer	Public Education Advocate	
Ivana Srsen	Student	York University
Jacqueline St.Kitts	Board member	Doorstep

Karen Sun Kevin Sutton Himy Syed	Executive Director,	CCNC City of Toronto Cdn Muslim Civil Liberties Assoc. Learning Curves CSPC
Wendy Terry Winston Tinglin	Director, Community Engagement	
Raj Tiwari		Etobicoke North Multicultural Association TDSB
Miron Uddin Helen Victoros Albert Viera Hema Vyas Phyllis Walker Geoff Webb Nadya Weber Chris Whitside Maria Williams Victoria Williams Beth Wilson Marjolein Winterink Don Wright Bianca Wylie Armine Yalnizyan Eric Yam Becky Yam Sonny Yeung Errol Young Minnie Zhou	Adult ESL Student Project Manager Retired School Teacher Student Ward 13 Parent Research Analyst Parent	Parkdale Community Info Centre ACTEW York University OISE / Univ. of Toronto Clarion Wave Ministry of Transportation CSPC-T Davenport Ward Council OSSTF Primed Toronto CSPC-T TFCP City of Toronto

Appendix C: Forum Agenda

Schools @theCentre

AGENDA

Friday Night, February 16

5:00 pm **Registration**

6:00 pm **Buffet Dinner**

6:45 pm **Welcome and Introduction**

- **John Campey, Executive Director
Community Social Planning Council of Toronto**

7:00 pm **Keynote Address: “CREATING COMMUNITIES:
NEW POSSIBILITIES FOR SCHOOLS”**

- **Penny Milton, CEO, Canadian Education Association**

7:30 pm **Panel Discussion Responding to Keynote Address**

- **Moderator: Tam Goossen, Urban Alliance on Race Relations**
- **Panel: Ekua Asabea Blair: Rexdale Community Centre
Annie Kidder: People for Education
Miriam DiGiuseppe: Educator, Family Services Association
Faduma Mohamed: Parent; Community Labour Services
Eric Yam: Student & Youth Advocate**

8:15 pm **Open Mike**

8:45 pm **Evening Wrap Up**

9:00 pm **Adjournment**

Saturday, February 17

8:30 am **Registration**

9:00 am **Coffee/Refreshments**

-
- 9:30 am** **Welcome and Introduction**
- **John Campey, Executive Director
Community Social Planning Council of Toronto**
- 9:40 am** **Keynote Address: “PAYING FOR EDUCATION”**
- **Hugh Mackenzie, Economist & Research Associate
Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives**
 - **Armine Yalnizyan, Director of Research
Community Social Planning Council of Toronto**
- 10:00 am** **Discussion Groups: “SCHOOLS SHOULD INCLUDE EVERYONE”**
- **I: The Needs of Differently Abled & Special-Needs Students**
 - **II: The Needs of Youth Marginalized by the School System**
 - **III: The Needs of Elementary & Secondary Students**
 - **IV: The Needs of Adult Learners/ Older Adults & Seniors**
 - **V: The Needs of Our Communities**
- 11:00 am** **Refreshment Break**
- 11:15 am** **Discussion Groups Continue**
- 12:15 pm** **Lunch**
- Canadian Education Association and Destination Arts**
- **Penny Milton, Producer; Bleema Getz, Drama Teacher; and students will present “Imagine a school... Making the Play”, a documentary of the creation of a dramatic performance about life and learning by high school students from Halifax, Toronto and Vancouver.**
- 1:30 pm** **Plenary: “WHAT NEEDS TO CHANGE”**
- **Report Back from Morning Discussion Groups**
 - **Plenary Discussion**
- 3:00 pm** **Refreshment Break**
- 3:15 pm** **Plenary: “WHAT CAN WE DO: NEXT STEPS”**
- 3:55 pm** **Wrap-Up**
- 4:00 pm** **Adjournment⁷⁶**

Appendix D: Bio Notes of Speakers and Panelists

Speakers

Hugh Mackenzie

Hugh Mackenzie is principal in an economic consulting business, Hugh Mackenzie and Associates, based in Toronto. He has worked for over 30 years in a variety of capacities related to public policy development in the trade union movement, the private sector, and at all three levels of government.

He is a Research Associate of the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives and of the Centre for Urban Studies at the University of Toronto. He is Co-Chair of the Ontario Alternative Budget and the author of an annual in-depth review of the funding of elementary and secondary education in Ontario. He has also written frequently on issues related to funding and tuition for postsecondary education.

He is a trustee and treasurer of the Atkinson Charitable Foundation and a member of the board of People for Education.

Penny Milton

Penny Milton is the Chief Executive Officer of the Canadian Education Association, a national, bilingual, charitable organization that promotes improvement in education. She has served as an elected school board trustee and chair of the Toronto Board of Education, a staff member of the former Federation of Women Teachers' Associations of Ontario and she was the first Executive Director of the Ontario Public School Boards' Association.

Ms Milton has served on numerous provincial and federal advisory committees concerning education and training. She served a term as Deputy Minister of the Premier's Council on Health, Well-being and Social Justice. She is a citizen director of the Toronto Community Housing Corporation.

Ms Milton has written and presented widely on many aspects of education as social policy including book chapters, magazine articles and conference papers. She holds a Masters in Management from McGill University (2002) and a B.Sc. (Hons.) in Botany from the University of Nottingham.

Armine Yalnizyan

Economist and media commentator, Armine Yalnizyan, has been writing for 20 years about trends in labour markets, and shifts in social and budgetary policy. She has advised governments at the federal, provincial and local levels, taught economics at York

University, and worked with international NGOs and community-based organizations and coalitions.

After 10 years as program director with the Social Planning Council of Metropolitan Toronto, she authored a ground-breaking report in 1998 on income inequality in Canada, entitled *The Growing Gap*. In 2002 she became the honoured first recipient of the Atkinson Foundation Award for Economic Justice and received the Morley Gunderson Prize from the University of Toronto in 2003.

In 2006, Armine returned to the Social Planning Council of Toronto as its Director of Research

Panel Moderator

Tam Goossen

Tam Goossen is Vice President of the Urban Alliance on Race Relations and the Community Social Planning Council of Toronto, as well as being a board member of the Ontario Press Council.

Tam has been a community activist for over 2 decades and has worked with many community organizations including the Chinese Canadian National Council and St. Stephens Community House.

From 1988 to 1997 Tam served as an elected public school trustee on the former Toronto Board of Education where she played a key role in the Board's initiatives around equity, language and challenging racism.

Panelists

Ekua Asabea Blair

Ekua has been the Executive Director of the Rexdale Community Health Centre for the past 7 years. Prior to joining the team at Rexdale CHC she was the Program Director at the Davenport-Perth Neighbourhood Centre for 5 years and Youth and Children's Program Coordinator for 2 years.

A graduate of Ryerson Polytechnical Institute (now known as Ryerson University) earning a Bachelors of Applied Arts Degree in Hospitality and Tourism Management. In her final year, she was awarded the Laventhol and Horwarth award for best published research paper.

While at Davenport-Perth Ekua was instrumental in establishing the Nighana African-centred Program at the Toronto Board of Education. The Program was offered at Davenport-Perth Neighbourhood Centre for two year prior to moving back into the school system.

Ekua is also the 1999 award recipient of the Constant E. Hamilton Award from the City of Toronto Access and Equity Department for her work with low-income women in the Rexdale Community.

Miriam DiGiuseppe

Miriam came to Canada at the age of 12 and has experienced being a newcomer in the Toronto school system.

In her extensive career as an educator, she has worked at the elementary, secondary and adult levels as a teacher, curriculum consultant, coordinator of English as a Second Language, supervising principal of International Languages, and principal of 3 inner-city, multicultural and multiracial schools with on-site Daycare Centres. She has worked closely with board officials, teachers, parents and community organizations on programs, which address educational, social and equity issues and focus on positive change.

Miriam has provided leadership for the development of programs and documents for the Toronto Board of Education, the Ontario Ministry of Education, the International Children's Institute, the World Health Organization and the Community Social Planning Council of Toronto. She has extensive experience in teacher training including being Principal of the ESL and ESL Specialist Courses at York University.

Miriam has worked internationally in providing leadership and coordination for programs for children who have experienced the trauma of war in Sarajevo and other parts of Bosnia.

Miriam is the Vice President of the Board of Directors of the Family Services Association of Toronto and chair of the organization's Access and Equity Committee.

Annie Kidder

Annie Kidder is the mother of two children and one of the founders of People for Education, a non-partisan, charitable, parents' organization dedicated to the ideal of a publicly funded education system that guarantees every child access to the education that meets his or her needs. The group has been working since 1996 to improve public education in Ontario's English, French and Catholic schools.

Faduma Mohamed

Faduma is the Executive Director of Labour Community Services of Toronto and York Region Labour Council. Faduma's passion is social justice, equity and access. Faduma's prior positions were: Executive Director of the Somali Youth Association of Toronto, Settlement Coordinator with the Rexdale Women's Centre, New Comer Youth Settlement Worker with CultureLink and a Youth Outreach Worker with the African Youth Settlement and Development Project.

Faduma has served in many community organizations in Etobicoke, the Strong Neighbourhood Task Force of the United Way of Greater Toronto and the City Summit Alliance; the Mayor's Roundtable for Children, Youth and Education and is currently serving in the boards of Youth Challenge Fund, Family Services Association of Toronto, Toronto Environmental Alliance, Human Service Planning Coalition of York Region and the United Way of York Region's LEAD advisory Committee.

In 2004, Faduma was a recipient of the Person's Day Award from the City of Toronto which honours women who have made significant contributions to society, and have advanced the standing of women in Toronto.

Faduma has a Master's Degree in Agricultural Science from Justus Liebig University in Germany. Faduma came to Canada in 1995 with her three children and husband as refugees from Somalia.

Eric Yam

Eric Yam is a Grade 9 Toronto District School Board student who volunteers in his community and involves himself in social justice issues such as the Redress campaign for Chinese Canadian Head Tax payers. His advocacy for equitable school funding began with the 'Save Our School Community Advisers' campaign and recently he has been active as a youth member of the Campaign for Public Education.

Appendix E: Notes of Open Mike Session

The following is a summary of participants' comments/questions from text recorded during the Friday evening Open Mike Session.

- Key indicator of student success is education of parents. Can we not make adult education equal and parallel to children's education?
- Mindset about adult education is that it will take away from the children. As we change and think about what we want while moving forward, we need to think about adult education and need to think about it together. Think about the WHOLE community, and how interconnected it is.
- Realizing how much work parents have to do, are expectations of schools for partnerships with parents in teaching the children realistic? How are the children going to succeed without supports other than just the school? How are kids from newcomer families going to succeed without adult education programs? There should not be a competition for resources.
- Many adults (newcomers) do not have time to go to school as they have three /four different jobs and also have children to look after because they cannot afford daycare. We should not assume that everyone can go to school, what can the school do to help the child who cannot receive help at home?
- Often it is hard to get minds around a school being a support within the community, (support for children and support for adults), a centre of community (meaning the whole community), we must continuously remind each other of that.
- Students are not only the leaders of tomorrow but are the leaders of today. Allow students to participate in organizing events to teach them about teamwork and social skills. Where are the students right now? Students want to get involved and want to share their voice, need to let them share their voice.
- Invite children, or grandchildren; invite the youth to come and lead a discussion about the future of schools. Repeat the conference so that students can have a say. Expand education to adults and newcomer children, as they can feel isolated, and are profoundly affected Provide support groups, or a buddy system for newcomer students.
- The challenge is to listen to what the kids are saying and to include them and encourage them to get involved.
- We need to start celebrate what we do well and to put it together, because we are so fragmented. We should be proud to be called adult learners, intergenerational

knowledge. We need to value these things. Are we talking about education? We need to challenge this and talk about learning, lifelong and life wide, learning.

- School closed due to land sold to private enterprise. Jargon and parameters were such that it was easier to sell it. If you really want to keep school at the centre you need to keep them open. Now it's closure and sale! How can we get involved, how can we get other sectors involved.
- School closure is going to be hard, and it will happen more and more. It won't be enough to just to say it's wrong to close schools. If there's not a new idea for what a school can look like, schools will close on the basis of what they look like now. In some cases there are not enough students to keep them in buildings that are only open from 9-4. Municipalities should own schools, as then the decision for closure lies within the community. Practically, work out what schools at the centre means, otherwise the battle will stay the same. Declining enrollment is a reality, but if we can reimagine what the buildings are for, then we would be able to effectively fight school closures.
- Asset based education: Running a pilot program taking into consideration about 40 developmental assets. Students will do a survey and more than focusing on academics, they will get a sense of what the community is all about. Determine in an anonymous way about what the needs of the community are.
- If you want to change anything you need to change the language or the dialogue: "Inclusion of education as a social determinant of health". When we speak about persons with disabilities, we should talk about people first, not the identifier (e.g. "fat Susie or the down syndrome kid"). We need to change attitudes about language. Stakeholders, why aren't they ever parents? There is no inclusion in any way unless you can have inclusive education. We need to change the way we teach and stop holding children back.
- All that was progressive has been wiped out in '97. We have been trying to rebuild programs ever since. Seven model schools are being selected by this board as cluster centers for revoicing parents and putting money back into inner city children. This is the first big step in giving voice back to the immigrant communities, giving voice to the poorer communities
- Facilitate neighbourhood action. Build community capacity by building neighbourhood hubs, particularly in disadvantaged communities where services are not equitably distributed. Created hubs across the city, where there are no barriers. This is not about competition. Build infrastructure where infrastructure is weak. Talk about how to have service integration. Why aren't the schools at the table with 3 levels of government? You've got to be student friendly before you can be student centered.

-
- If you stay on the defensive you will get worn down, you need to go on the attack. When are people finally going to go on the attack? When will we finally get fed up and do something about it? Everybody seems to agree on what they want, but nobody wants to talk about how to get it.
 - Solution to these issues is to recognize that the education system is now a “training system” and is profoundly gendered and class based. Community needs stewardship of the schools. Teachers need to live in the community.
 - Please consider yourself the parent of a child within the community rather than of your own child. Need to make sure not to recreate problems of the past in the solutions for the future.
 - What ongoing training resources are available for teachers to keep current with changing demographics and issues within the school? In the West Indies, teachers go to training college during the summer months before going back to school in the fall.
 - Maybe teachers need to be trained culturally so they have a better understanding of their students. This may help to eliminate different forms of discrimination.
 - A lot of racialized communities don’t see schools as a safe place to be. They feel criminalized in the school, and are monitored. It is not about more funding, it is about what is currently funded. Think about the priorities and whose voices get heard.
 - Recognize that not all young people go to school. There needs to be discussion and thought around this issue. Think of alternative pathways for those that don’t fit the mould in order to be inclusive.

Appendix F: Notes of Discussion Groups

Group 1: The Needs of Differently Abled & Special-Needs Students

Additional Comments

- Do not label students,
- Focus on the needs of students with disabilities and treat students with dignity,
- Do not separate the needs of children with disabilities but look at the needs of all students,
- Need to hear the needs of students with disabilities in a broader group,
- Languages and labels can be interpreted differently by different groups of people,
- Poverty amongst children may be seen as high needs students.

Question 1:

What have you/your children/your community lost – that you want to bring back?

- No support staff for students in the classroom,
- Dignity has been compromised by the funding formula,
- No speech pathologists in schools,
- Not so much what is lost but what is missing in terms of students who lack appropriate supports in the classroom,
- Parents need to compromise their earning potential to support their child who is in the school system.

Curriculum Issues

- Technical programs i.e. hairdressing, shop class,
- Students may have low-expectations academically placed upon them the school system,
- Too much focus on the illness and not on the potential of the students,
- Potential graduates/students become insecure and drop out,
- Students need to be fully integrated but their learning should not be compromised,
- We have lost almost all support i.e. nurses, custodian care,
- Government accountability,
- Funding needs to be given to strength students support system not to teachers training,
- Teachers need to be trained in teacher training institutions to teach students with disabilities, not after they have already started teaching,
- Money is not always the issue, the funding formula allows money to be transferred from special needs students to other areas,
- Inclusive education needs to be the focus,
- Community relations advisors,
- Labels are stigmatizing but schools that have students with disabilities tend to receive more money from the government from the funding formula,

-
- Community involvement in **all** sectors, i.e. community agencies, schools, churches.

Question 2:

What have you/your child/your community have now – that you want to keep?

- Innovative and creative programs,
- Teachers and principals that care about their students and also support staff are important,
- Teachers and principals who have a clear understanding of human rights and guidelines and who respect the families so that families are not segregated from the system but become part of it,
- Respect for inclusivity and integration,
- Parents and teachers that advocate for their children,
- People/ teachers/principals/parents who have an awareness and support **all** the social factors involved with students with disabilities,
- Partnerships right across the board,
- Training opportunities for teachers,
- Committed teachers and principals who are good leaders,
- More educational assistants not fewer in the classroom.

Question 3:

What do you/your child/your community need from publicly funded education that you don't have now?

- Accountability,
- “Common language” – different school boards use different terms. All boards should come together and use common terms,
- Collaboration within the communities and government ministries,
- There needs to be a leader preferably the provincial government,
- Economic supports for families who have students with disabilities,
- Parent advocacy, lobby, learn policies keep on top of the issues and speak out at school board meetings,
- People need to become activists to pressure government for policy change,
- Advocacy requires recognition and understanding that people have to make sacrifices for their children,
- Boards could support parent advocacy,
- Push for multi-disciplinary team,
- How can we make the current system work for us in a better way,
- Legislation and policies for safe and accessible schools need to replace the current policies,
- Inclusion first; not suspension,
- Quality of opportunity for all students,
- Parental supports,
- Mechanism that understands different learning needs,
- Work with parent engagement officers,

-
- A newspaper that puts forward this agenda,
 - Concrete proposals like the \$10.00 minimum wage needs to become part of the media/regular dialogue.

Question 4:

What will it take to get what you/your child/your community need from publicly funded education?

- Better communication among parents and advocates so that each group can network and benefit from each other,
- A central network of parents and advocates,
- Special office that network with the TDSB and the provincial government,
- Parents to be seen as formal stakeholders and respect for parents as stakeholders,
- Incorporate self-advocacy and provide accommodation,
- Formal parents advocacy,
- Formal training for E.A.s,
- Pressure politicians (MPPs),
- Visit to MPPs (a personal visit),
- Work closely with MPPs and put things in writing,
- Simplify complex government policies,
- Organize/engage residents to pressure MPP,
- Use provincial election to pressure MPPs,
- Provincial campaign,
- Raise awareness across the province,
- Educate parents about the school councils,
- Find balance with councils and parents,
- Need solidarity among parents and not allow themselves to be pitted against each other,
- Make use of existing organizations,
- Need strong leaders and policies to move the issues forward,
- A legal connection can be made,
- Find the missing link to bring these issues together,
- Media.

Key Points/Resolutions

- Partnerships with parents and educators via a symposium that creates a dialogue that develop a network,
- Provide legal supports to parents that have children with disabilities and need to navigate the system,
- Utilize upcoming provincial elections,
- Inclusivity – need for policy and legislative changes via advocacy from parents, educators and people with disabilities themselves,
- Advocacy – policy change and legislation,
- Exposure of issues before provincial election to pressure MPPs,
- Common vision: educating the people so that we are all on the same page.

Group 2: The Needs of Youth Marginalized by the School System

Question 1:

What have you/your children/your community lost – that you want to bring back?

Issues

- Transportation:
 - differential treatment (some students receive money, some do not),
 - children with special needs,
- Alienation by school system
 - fueled by media,
- Support system diminishing (individualism)
 - losing a sense of community
 - build values – public education,
- Translation
 - parents not aware of the right to ask for it,
- “Breaking the cycle”
 - getting to marginalized groups (gangs),
- Alternative education,
- Children being denied programs for financial reasons,
- Loss of after school programs.

Action

- Have lost ability to find individual/community solutions,
- Self-reliance (may end negatively)
 - inclusion or not by community
 - at risk youth,
- Influence media - what is the definition of community?
 - How do we engage it?
 - How do we change governance for social justice?
- Momentum for rapid change (taken away)
 - we are dealing with results
 - ex. Debates re: curriculum,
- Purchasing power,
- Educators,
- Cooperation with community,
- Extra curricular activities
 - over-night field trips (have lost).

Question 2:

What have you/your child/your community have now – that you want to keep?

- Engagement in community – build awareness of what youth are already doing in community,
- Level of control.

Keep

-
- Keep schools as places to access opportunities
 - interact and see role models,
 - Link to non-traditional groups offering services/assets to community
 - recognize them,
 - Legal protection in special education
 - implementation may be in fault (non-status) but the rights are there,
 - All extra programs.

Question 3:

What do you/your child/your community need from publicly funded education that you don't have now?

Need

- Awareness of poverty issues,
- Guidance in terms of post secondary
 - applications
 - needs,
- Daycare in high schools,
- More after school programs (help)
 - add more staff
 - tutors (e.g. ESL),
- Awareness of services available especially in newcomer communities
 - translation services,
- Language
 - barriers for parents as well
 - funding for ESL (for students & parents)
 - translation services,
- Integration/recognition of practical applications of school topics
 - practicality, e.g. budgeting,
- Ample resource to fund alternative programs
 - community based programs,
- Streaming
 - leads to stress (parents/children),
- Development of an inclusive curriculum
 - world history
 - social justice
 - where are we going to,
- First Nations' focus program,
- Don't Ask Don't Tell Campaign,

Question 4:

What will it take to get what you/your child/your community need from publicly funded education?

- Look at various structures/roots
 - identify problems and tackle them, e.g. make immigrant parents aware of the system (details)

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- prevents issues that happen later on,
 - Board vs community centres
 - develop structures to tie the two together, e.g. choose principal through committee of parents,
 - Hold the system responsible for its policies
 - identify issues (suspension)
 - take action (create program)
 - present to system
 - be part of system and proactively come up with solutions/implement them,
 - There's a lack of diversity among decision makers
 - challenge that (equity audit?) the institution has failed many communities (racist institution?)
 - campaigns have already started, e.g. Safer Schools (there will be amendments),
 - Actively involve media in how issues are represented,
 - Address the power politics issue
 - find resources for running of programs
 - work with all other groups at this conference,
 - What is the goal of education? Clarify that,
 - Political liability
 - put forward a vision that will work for all,
 - (22) trustees are influenced by superintendent (98)
 - work on dealing with that,
 - TDSB 's report
 - students at risk are minorities (even English speaking ones)
 - racism
 - Hold trustees responsible as they are elected by communities.

Key Points/Resolutions

Overall issues/suggestions

- Networks are very much downtown – how do we expand or connect to other areas?
- Educate (through collaboration)
 - services/classes available
 - parents on rights and services,
- Mentoring for newcomer parents,
- Understand what parts of system need reform,
- Strengthen (encourage) links of teachers to communities (by TDSB),
- Look at alternative ways of learning
 - what is available/support them.

Summary

Exclusion/inequality/racism:

- Challenge the system and media,
- Hold the system responsible for its policies,

-
- Board vs community centres – have structures in place,
 - Hold Trustees responsible,
 - Community Engagement /Awareness.

Education:

- Parents face barriers and have needs
 - rights
 - services
 - languages
 - mentoring,
- Children/youth alternative programs,
- Schools and people in schools need to know communities on a more intimate level
 - inclusive curriculum
 - preventative actions
 - work with existing campaigns,

Key Points/Resolutions

- We call for schools to provide continuous education for all students temporarily unable to attend their schools so that they can successfully participate on their return to school,
- Respect every child and youth at all levels,
- Support the “Don’t Ask Don’t Tell” campaign.

Group 3: The Needs of Elementary & Secondary Students

Question 1:

What have you/your children/your community lost – that you want to bring back?

- Funding formula,
- Curriculum changes, e.g. Drama and Arts are lost
 - Integral to social skills,
- Pressure of new curriculum and testing
 - less time to focus on arts,
- School community advisors, relations department needed back, e.g. TV ads,
- Creative and innovative approach rather than a knowledge economy
 - going to be like a developing country,
- Ontario school system was set up to be unequal,
- Need the arts for social development,
- School system needs to make room for the arts,
- Expand our idea of what success means,
- It’s all about money,
- Qualified gym, arts, music teachers needed,
- Schools are becoming testing factories,
- Lost public health nurses, community members in the schools,
- Alternative schools work,

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- Need to be involved politically re: funding
 - PAC,
 - Other language courses need to be back in the schools,
 - Arts program happen outside the curriculum; need them to be in the curriculum,
 - Alternative schools looked as special needs schools,
 - Move beyond “white” and “black” to include other ethnic groups,
 - Loss of democracy due to loss of money.

Question 2:

What have you/your child/your community have now – that you want to keep?

- PCSS
 - model Piloted @ Neil (all boys school)
 - literacy
 - success for all to access
 - money,
 - Asset based assessment,
- Need engagement of marginalized parents,
- Need to improve our equity department,
- Be able to contact Trustees
 - \$ for Trustees,
- Discipline re-incorporated into the school system,
- Education assistants need to stay in the schools,
- PD for staff.

Question 3:

What do you/your child/your community need from publicly funded education that you don't have now?

- Pathway to Education benefits marginalized students,
- Asset based education,
- More local control,
- Elementary level
 - specialized teachers for program, maths, science, arts,
- Secondary level
 - special program,
- Principal and vice-principal to be engaged with parents,
- More heritage language open to more students,
- Core French – better results,
- Guarantee right to education,
- Education is a right – need resources,
- Shift from primitive to nurturing,
- Question: Safer School Act,
- School to become a community,
- Democratic participation,
- Parenting skills to be taught,

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- Need to decide where the money goes,
 - Accountability
 - parents
 - teachers
 - trustees,
 - Cut standardized testing,
 - Improve school conditions,
 - 1 month to be a parent,
 - Community control school facilities/real estate,
 - Return to civic engagement
 - how to affect changes,
 - Civic course go to grade 11,
 - More money for ESL teachers,
 - Settlement worker for all schools that offer ESL,
 - Simplify how community/volunteers/parents can get involved,
 - Monitor community service time,
 - Welcome non-profits/non-traditional organizations (e.g. Big Brothers/Sisters)
 - need space,
 - Benefit of free school resource,
 - Parent engagement,
 - Parent council engagement.

Question 4:

What will it take to get what you/your child/your community need from publicly funded education?

- PAC – Politically involved parents and teachers,
- Class Action Suit,
- Community advisors,
- Recognition of the real cost of education,
- Professional development for educators/service providers re understanding cultures' sexual orientation,
- Expand to bring in non-traditional stakeholders,
- Demand that Mayor/political leaders invite School Board to be part of their discussions,
- Trustees stand against militarization,
- Review the Safe School Policy,
- Hiring push for school staff that reflect student profile,

Key Points/Resolutions

- Bring back community workers,
- Involve students, teachers, admin. etc.,
- Funding should reflect the real cost and needs of publicly funded education in communities,
- Demand that elected officials work together,

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- Secondary school money
 - Revised curriculum – more choice and courses,
 - Overhaul Safe School Act,
 - Bring back the Arts (e.g. music, drama, visual arts) and more money for ESL and physical education programs,
 - Parameters to review the funding formula.

Group 4: The Needs of Adult Learners/Older Adults & Seniors

Question 1:

What have you/your children/your community lost – that you want to bring back?

- Schools as community hubs lost,
- Accessible, affordable space and programs lost,
- Valuing of adult education, education for older adults and seniors lost,
- Language like “culture of learning” lost,
- Continuing education classes lost,
- Immigrants’ sense of being valued by Canadian society lost,
- Essential supports like childcare for adult learners lost,
- \$ for space and program lost,
- Lost continuity – i.e. different teachers, no consistency,
- Lost availability of teachers after class,
- Not for credit ESL co-op programs lost,
- ESL move from Ministry of Education to Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration threatens inclusivity of program,
- ESL programs siloed/lost coordination.

Question 2:

What have you/your child/your community have now – that you want to keep?

- Adult learner commitment and excitement in schools,
- Keep adult education to foster civic engagement, essential for democracy,
- Keep respect for adult learners,
- Keep subsidies for adult education and seniors,
- Keep non-credit ESL under continue education – don’t move to contracted services,
- Keep and improve ESL because parents learn and learning extends to children,
- Keep free parking,
- Debate over whether adult education should be kept under School Board and Ministry of Education or use alternative system such as has been used in Manitoba.

Question 3:

What do you/your child/your community need from publicly funded education that you don’t have now?

- Mandate and budget for adult education,

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- Full recognition of adult education and its impact on communities, families and individuals,
 - End of silos/barriers between ESL program,
 - Childcare for ESL participants,
 - Access to ESL for all,
 - \$ in budget for space, and use of multiple payments for publicly funded facilities (i.e. taxes and user fees),
 - End all user fees,
 - Programs specifically for women – education, training,
 - Boards need to listen to unions,
 - Boards need to look at issues of education broadly to include transportation issues, access, hours of programs.

Question 4:

What will it take to get what you/your child/your community need from publicly funded education?

- Advocate to MPPs,
- Write letters to media,
- Join campaign for public education,
- Action in development of West Donlands to ensure schools will be community hubs,
- For demonstration projects, need separate funding envelope,
- Need to develop broad participation – in upcoming election, to inform residents and build stronger voice for change,
- 2-3% solution where ministries commit % budget o education/learning,
- Need to get ESL/adult education curriculum to include health literacy/civic engagement information,
- Celebrate achievements – festival of learning,
- Breakfast program for adult learners,
- End blame between teachers, parents – build solidarity,
- Confront attack on public education, public services and community sector,
- Develop collaborative approach to education,
- Engage adult learners in advocacy,
- Advocacy for re-opening of seniors camp program.

Suggested Motion Additions:

#1. Add: and to that end we call on the City of Toronto to block – grant the TDSB, TCDSB etc. for such community use, stewardship, care and well-being.

#2. Add: using the ICA Statement (attached) co-operative values and principles as a starting code of ethics and audit.

#3. Add: and that the Ontario Provincial Government sustainably provide funds for this purpose.

#4. Add: as, for example, specifically described in Amended Motions 1 & 3 above.
Add after “2nd communities” ... in which a profound commitment to equity serves as a foundation.

Suggested Motion #5 (to the CSPC-T Executive Committee)

That the CSPC-T convene a debate for its members to consider:

- Sustainable funding of public services on a “green credit” interest-free basis;
- That the concept of a guaranteed living “Citizen’s Income” for all be explored!

Key Points/Resolutions

- Website like Wikipedia,
- Community use of space (SPACE),
- Schools and community agriculture,
- Amend #2 - ensure attacks on education don’t reoccur – Toronto as a province,
- Reaffirm learning at all stages of life – all years (seniors),
- Develop “learning festivals” as in Quebec,
- Safe School Act changed to emphasize prevention, not punishment,
- Abolished EQAO and replace it with arts education,
- Ban military from school recruiting,
- CSPC, CUPE, UARR, etc. get together to push City (Mayor) to meet with Province etc. to make schools hubs,
- “Fair” deal, not “New” deal equity and respect,
- Open schools up to the community,
- Moved: First four motions,
- Publicly funded means no P3s or Alternative funding models which are more expensive, no corporate partnerships or corporate curriculum,
- Resolution 3 – City has more affordable housing for everyone,
- “Great” or “excellent” education,
- #5 and other 4 motions,
- Repeal Safe Schools Act,
www.saferschools.info,
- Restorative justice,
- #4: include:
 - funding be equitably distributed
 - \$ for support and after school activities, not punishment or criminalizing,
- Engage teens to become social change agents,
- #2 attention to special education,
- More funding for ESL programs for language and emotional support,
- Adults are students too,
- Teachers and staff reflect student body/community,

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- Calls on MCI accommodate funding and childcare \$ for non-credit ESL programs,
 - Education for survival/participant in society ... not serve including Trade of Commerce – need dialogue.

Resolution

Plan to organize a major public event with the theme “A City in love with learning” involving all organizations involved in learning from ECE to school boards, trade training centres, community colleges, universities and education unions; in which thousands of students could participate, to heighten the public awareness of the crucial role that lifelong learning plays in our society.

Group 5: The Needs of Our Communities

Question 1:

What have you/your children/your community lost – that you want to bring back?

- School basis to support everything,
- Former York – space for parenting centre, ESL etc. and other things,
- Senior services, heritage programs, recreation programs,
- Control over education
 - Finances (lost)
 - Control to define what is education,
- Access to meeting place,
- Consultation process
 - stakeholders (community) to have a say in decision making (including support staff),
- Organizers and volunteers (women) now working - historic contribution of women,
- Visible partnership with City,
- Capacity of community to have a voice – translators, community liaison staff to help with process of communicating with school board,
- Right to manage education system and make that non-revocable,
- Commitment to an equity agenda,
- Equity component in the curriculum,
- More direct contact with members of the Board,
- Manufactured consent,
- Contact with half population of Toronto who don't speak English,
- Different vocabulary,
- Education/space.

Lost and want to keep

- Before and after school care,
- Daycare,
- Seniors program,
- Local adult education – day school and credit,

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- Adult ESL in local schools,
 - International language and African heritage,
 - 6 schools scheduled to close,
 - Out door education – sold,
 - Local night school,
 - Use of empty space to be used for services for free,
 - Fee space to incubate emerging community organizations.

Question 2:

What have you/your child/your community have now – that you want to keep?

- School assets
 - now being used to raise revenue
 - selling off of assets,
- Commitment to parental involvement
 - from Ministry and School Board,
- Visions,
- Opportunity,
- Resources
 - self education
 - CITI
 - Cooperative alternative,
- Creating,
- Resolutions,
- Corporations out of public schools
 - keep profit out of schools,
- Community agencies to work with parents and students and Board to value that,
- Mandate for youth to volunteer and bolster service learning,
- Strong advocates in Ministry of Health to bring back physical education in schools,
- Contracts to go to non-profit rather than corporations.

Question 3:

What do you/your child/your community need from publicly funded education that you don't have now?

- Consistent approach to delivering education to children that's not dependent on parents ability to raise funds or write proposals,
- Respect
 - taking community want/need seriously,
- Accountability,
- Affordable housing for families,
- Centres of learning institutions that serve from the base up – away from silos,
- Integrating immigrants in the school system,
- Safe school resolution,
- Reordered priorities.

Question 4: What will it take to get what you/your child/your community need from publicly funded education?

Strategies to get what you need

- Community pressure,
- Part of sales tax directly for education,
- Use email and other networks to share info and tell stories to Trustees
 - email Trustees and Board staff directly,
- Local school board to have power to tax constituents,
- Provincial power for the City because of size of constituents,
- Improvement without investment,
- Involve trustees,
- Bring people (retirees, parents) back to school system,
- Strategy to get local organizing schools – to get community, parents, etc. involved,
- Abolish EQAO and use resources for students,
- Schools & model (Sask. 6 to 7 ministries involved),
- Have vision of funding for overall government,
- Not just education,
- More discussions in organizing ratepayers and neighbourhood associations,
- Community agencies to integrate immigrants and move forward,
- Revisit safe schools. Discretionary powers of principals - reforming this,
- TDSB and other Board staff to sit on community coalitions,
- Different levels of school board where can enter and strategize,
- Abolish all user fees for community space,
- Tax on commercial/industrial and retail space,
- We need to promote working class education of school systems,
- Staff live within walking distance of community they work in,
- Movement that changes the political culture pressure at provincial level for government to deliver on community development model, funding to support process,
- Use what exists now CPE or have broader more enriched model,
- Drastically reorder priorities – lower taxes not serving us well,
- Expose “cowardness” in politics,
- Campaign for politicians who will be truthful about tax situation,
- Programs that include agencies that service families from birth
 - first duty
 - involve all ministry,
- Community take back control of process from schools – such as closing schools,
- Bring different coalitions together to create political agenda,
- Agree on one agenda,
- CSPC-T to lead,
- Use Wikipedia – creating education Wiki,
- Articulate common agenda or Bill of Rights
 - pop ed language use to articulate e.g. editorial boards,

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- Communication strategy to send message,
 - New deal for education needed,
 - Want our taxes to pay for our schools.
