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# CUS

CENTRE FOR URBAN SCHOOLING

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First Annual Report of Activities  
2007-2008

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**OISE**

ONTARIO INSTITUTE FOR STUDIES IN EDUCATION  
UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

# ABOUT THE CENTRE FOR URBAN SCHOOLING

The Centre for Urban Schooling (CUS) is dedicated to improving the quality of the teaching and learning experiences available to children and youth living in underserved urban communities. Established in 2005, at the Ontario Institute of Studies in Education at the University of Toronto, CUS carries out academic and contracted research, offers educational programs and professional development opportunities, and supports students, teachers, schools, parents and district boards in the development of school reform initiatives that have a clear focus on equity for all students. With over twenty associated professors and researchers from OISE's prestigious departments, CUS is quickly gaining recognition as Canada's leading research centre in issues of urban education.

## MISION STATEMENT

The Centre for Urban Schooling is an education, research, policy and advocacy centre established in 2005 to connect OISE to schools and communities in inner cities. We are committed to social justice and equity for all students. The educators, researchers and activists affiliated with the Centre work collaboratively on education projects that challenge power relations based on class, race, gender, language, sexuality, religion, ethnicity and ability as they are manifested in all aspects of education, both formal and informal.

The Centre's work includes: developing teacher and graduate education programs; initiating and participating in critical collaborative research; analyzing and advocating for policies that affect urban schools and communities; participating in school district educational change initiatives; and building the knowledge base of urban education in Canada through the sponsorship of conferences and publications.

The Centre also addresses issues of culture and the arts; religious, ethnic, linguistic and sexual diversity; politics; immigration; and teaching and learning both within the education system and Canadian society as a whole.

The Centre is committed to a dynamic, situated practice and therefore revisits its goals and purposes regularly.

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# Welcome to the Centre for Urban Schooling: First Annual Report 2007-2008

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It is with great pleasure that we present to you the first annual report of the Centre for Urban Schooling. The report you are about to read is a reflection of the collaborative work of many different people. What makes us the most proud is how this report reflects the collaborative efforts of OISE faculty, staff and students; teachers, administrators, parents and community activists all working together to make a difference for inner city youth, schools and communities.

The different sections of this report reflect the varied areas of work of the Centre for Urban Schooling. It demonstrates our work on urban education research, urban focused educational programming, support to schools and advocacy around urban/inner city educational issues. We are very proud of the work of the Centre in working to unite the developing theoretical understandings of urban education in Canada to the practical day-to-day work of practitioners in schools and communities working for change.

We hope that this report serves not only to share our work with others, but also, as a catalyst to help to develop the movement for equity in education in all of its forms for young people living in the inner city communities of our city, province and country. While a great deal has been accomplished we all know how much more work there is to do. Please do not hesitate to contact us to discuss the work highlighted in this report. We are anxious to find new and exciting ways to collaborate and work to make a difference in our schools and communities.

We look forward to working together,

Jeff Kugler  
Executive Director  
Centre for Urban Schooling, OISE



Dr. Tara Goldstein  
Academic Director (Acting)  
Centre for Urban Schooling, OISE



# CUS Administrative Team, Associate Members, Donors and Sponsors 2007-2008

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## ADMINISTRATIVE TEAM 2007-2008

Dr. Kathleen Gallagher, Academic Director (On leave, December 07-July 08)  
Dr. Tara Goldstein, Acting Academic Director (December 07- July 08)  
Jeff Kugler, Executive Director

Dr. Lance McCreedy, Director, *Building Capacity for Urban Schools' Success Program*  
Dr. Dominique Riviere, Research Officer  
Luisa Sotomayor, Research Officer  
Nina Lewis, Administrative Assistant

## ASSOCIATE MEMBERS 2007-2008

Dr. Maria-Jose Botelho  
Beverly Caswell  
Dr. Jim Cummins  
Dr. Kari Delhi  
Dr. Diane Farmer  
Dr. Joseph Flessa  
Dr. Caroline Fusco  
Dr. Ruben A. Gaztambide-Fernandez  
Dr. Eunice Jang  
Belinda Longe  
Dr. Douglas McDougall  
Dr. David Montemurro  
Dr. Sarfaroz Niyozov  
Dr. Leslie Stewart-Rose

## CUS' GENEROUS DONORS AND SPONSORS IN 2007-2008:

Mr. William and Mrs. Phyllis Waters  
The Ruth and Alexander Dworkin Tolerance Fund (Jewish Community Foundation of Montreal)  
The Academic Initiatives Fund (University of Toronto)

# 2007 – 2008 Report of Activities

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## A. RESEARCH

Since its inception, the Centre for Urban Schooling has been involved in a number of research projects at the school, community, and government levels. This section describes the research projects that have been completed this year, as well as some work in progress.

### *Using Applied Theatre to Change School Culture: An Impact Evaluation of ETFO's Poverty and Education Project*

Kathleen Gallagher (Principal Investigator) Luisa Sotomayor (Project Coordinator), Burcu Ntelioglou, Ken Huynh, Esther Leung (Graduate assistants) and Ivan Service (Research assistant).

This research project seeks to understand the processes of change that have taken place in some of the participating schools in The Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario's (ETFO's) Poverty and Education Project 07-08. ETFO's project is based on applied theatre methods via the play "Danny King of the Basement" written by David Craig. ETFO's project objectives are: 1) To allow teachers to explore their assumptions about poverty and its impact on students, and deepen their understanding of the complexities of poverty; 2) to explore how ETFO's members can work together in a school, and with their neighbours, to mitigate the effects of poverty on student achievement; and 3) to encourage discussion regarding assumptions of the role of family/home life on student achievement. The study *Using Applied Theatre to Change School Culture* selected a sample of eight diverse schools across the province and followed ETFO's program development for each school since its initial stages. Data gathering methods included focus groups with teachers, interviews with principals, site visits and an online survey for teachers. A final research report will be completed in the fall of 2008.

### *The Urban Arts High Schools Project*

Rubén Gaztambide-Fernández (Principal Investigator), Leah Burns, Kate Cairns, Yuko Kawashima, Lydia Menna, and Elena VanderDussen (Graduate assistants).

The *Urban Arts High Schools Project* seeks to document the structure of specialized arts programs in Toronto high schools, their approaches to curriculum and pedagogy, their histories, and the experiences of their students and teachers. This purpose of this exploratory research project is to generate themes and questions that will inform future research on public arts high schools in cities across Canada and the United States that illuminate what actually happens in these settings. In addition, this research may inform policy discussions by documenting different approaches to arts-focused programs and how these are implemented in different school contexts. This documentation will act as a rich foundation for considering how to develop arts programs with different goals in other urban schools.

### ***The Lived Experience of Learning to Teach in Inner City Schools: Negotiating Identity and Agency in the Figured Worlds of Teacher Candidates***

Leslie Stewart-Rose – Doctoral thesis, 2008

What is the experience of teacher candidates learning to teach in inner city schools? To explore this question, Dr. Stewart-Rose used a qualitative methodology strategy. The participants in this inquiry were elementary teacher candidates in an inner city education cohort within a larger one year B.Ed. program. Data revealed the teacher candidates' experiences of negotiation through their journey of learning to teach in inner city schools, including negotiation of learning in a cohort, of their understanding of equity, diversity and social justice, of personal identity, of positionality within an oppressive education system, of conflict and of living for the future. Misleading assumptions, barriers and supportive contexts for agency are drawn forward to guide future research and initial teacher education program development in a new figured world-making.

## **POLICY ANALYSIS REPORTS**

### **Evaluating and Assessing Parental Engagement: A Critical Analysis**

Joseph Flessa (Principal Investigator) with Kari Dehli, Diane Farmer, Jeffrey Kugler, Lance McCready, and Dominique Riviere (collaborators).

The purpose of *Evaluating and Assessing Parental Engagement: Critical Analysis* is: 1) to identify a variety of models (including examples of performance measures and indicators) that are used to assess parent engagement in different jurisdictions; 2) to provide a critical analysis of the theoretical and conceptual frameworks beyond different evaluation schemes; and 3) to offer the Provincial Parent Board different options, with a clear list of weaknesses and strengths for each option. The goal was not simply to provide descriptions of how to monitor parental involvement policies but also to suggest that some approaches may be better than others in building and reflecting a commitment to parental engagement. This report was informed by conversations about parental engagement with more than forty stakeholders from thirty different organizations. These individuals included researchers, parent activists, policymakers, and school district officials from a variety of jurisdictions across Canada and the United States.

## **OTHER REPORTS**

### ***Towards a Multidimensional Framework of Student Engagement (Forthcoming)***

Dominique Riviere, Luisa Sotomayor, Jeff Kugler and Lance McCready

*"Towards a Multidimensional Framework of Student Engagement"* is the product of the collaborative work that has followed CUS's symposium "Redefining Student Engagement". This event took place on November 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> of 2007 at Hart House, University of Toronto. The symposium worked under a scheme that involved "Symposium Eye reports" and Graduate Assistants' notes. The Eye reports formed a record of what each panelist said regarding what "counted" as student engagement; what was at stake if student engagement didn't matter; and why student engagement needed to be redefined. The Graduate Assistants' notes reflected how the panel presentations and subsequent discussions addressed the economic, academic, social/civic, and educational implications

of student (dis)engagement. In addition, the proceedings of the two-day symposium have been transcribed, thus providing another source of information.

An initial step in the information-gathering process for “*Towards a Multidimensional Framework*” was to look for emergent themes within the notes from each panel session. These themes have been reconceptualized into six domains, each of which has several principles for fostering student engagement. These domains serve as the organizing framework for the report: a) Community and Neighbourhood Dynamics, b) Parent and Family Connections, c) Relationships with Peers d) Education Policies and Assessment, e) School Culture and Environment, f) Curriculum, Pedagogy and Classroom Culture.

Our next step is to further contribute to the process of “redefining student engagement” by creating a dynamic model that accounts for all of the intersecting, context-based processes that influence students’ level of engagement in their learning. The goal is to develop a comprehensive and expansive approach to student engagement that connects conversations across multiple sectors and contexts (e.g. education, policy, community, youth, etc.). In this way, we will consciously re-frame the discussion on student engagement, and re-think the various factors that are essential in understanding and acting towards building engaging school communities.

## RELATED PROJECTS

### *Zero Tolerance*

Tara Goldstein

*Zero Tolerance* is a dramatic script written by affiliated CUS faculty member Tara Goldstein. It is based on the issues raised by *The Road to Health*, a report on school safety commissioned by the Toronto District School Board in early June 2007. The goal of the report was to analyze the events leading up to the tragic death of student Jordan Manners at C.W. Jefferys CI in May 2007, and to provide a set of recommendations for creating safer schools. The script includes both excerpts from, and responses to, *The Road to Health*, which can be viewed and downloaded from the Toronto District School Board’s website: [www.tdsb.on.ca](http://www.tdsb.on.ca). *Zero Tolerance* will be performed at OISE’s Safe School Conference on Saturday September 27, 2008.

## RESEARCH PROJECTS STARTING IN 2008

### *Putting Inner City Students First: A School-University-Community Partnership*

Kathleen Gallagher (Principal Investigator); Dominique Rivière (Project coordinator); Jim Cummins, Joseph Flessa, Caroline Fusco, Eunice Jang, Sarfaroz Niyozov (Co-Investigators).

Global events and immigration patterns in the last decade have dramatically changed the cultural and political landscape of Canada, and of the world at large. The *P.I.C.S.F* project aims to consider the impact of these changes on public schools, especially those located in urban areas. The study is directly connected to the Toronto District School Board’s *Model Schools for Inner Cities* program, and will produce a series of case studies that document the processes of change in both the designated Model Schools, and their cluster schools. The case studies are grouped thematically, under the following categories: schooling, student engagement, and academic achievement; schooling and social equity; and schooling and community connections.



### ***Urban School Performances in Canada, the United States, India, and Taiwan: The Interplay, through Live and Digital Drama, of Local-Global Knowledge about Urban Education***

Kathleen Gallagher (Principal Investigator). The international collaborators are: Dr. Christina Marín (New York University, New York), Dr. Urvashi Sahni (The Study Hall Educational Foundation, India), and Dr. Su Chien-ling (Ming-chuan University, Taiwan).

This is an international research project that examines how the relationships among culture, identity, multiculturalism and immigration policies play out differently in the lives of youth in schools and communities traditionally labeled “disadvantaged” in the cities of Taipei (Taiwan), Lucknow (India), Toronto, (Canada) and New York City, (USA). In each context, *USP* engages youth, teachers and researchers in a creative inquiry using digital-drama research tools in order to explore how schools and young people “perform”: socially, academically, and artistically. The research studies both the cultural and everyday performances (of student/school life), and the artistic performances created by children/youth in the particular context of drama lessons. Dr. Kathleen Gallagher has recently been awarded a 2008 SSHRC grant for this project.

## **B. SERVICES TO BOARDS AND SCHOOLS**

During 2007-2008 the Centre for Urban Schooling offered professional services to the Toronto District School Board, as well as direct services to schools. Through consultancy, professional development workshops to school staff, and collaborative work with principals, CUS had the opportunity to have an impact on the work of educators in meaningful ways. This was also the first year of our new program, *Building Capacity for Urban School Success*, which is briefly described below.

### **SERVICES TO BOARDS**

#### **Coordination of Phase III Model Schools’ Work Group, TDSB**

Jeff Kugler was contracted through CUS to co-coordinate the TDSB Phase III Model Schools "Beyond Elementary" Work Group on all the aspects of program planning and design. Under this contract, Jeff coordinated and co-wrote the proposal for this initiative. Phase III Model Schools aims to reach four Secondary Schools and four Middle Schools (one per TDSB quadrant), all of which rank high in the Learning Opportunities Index. The Model Schools Initiative aims to provide underserved schools with the resources to improve in key areas, while striving towards equity for its students. The Phase III Work Group held many consultative meetings through the winter of 2007, discussing what a Model School would look like after elementary school. It also, developed a set of Guiding Principles and Key Components for these schools. It is hoped that the Final Report of the Work Group will go to the Board for approval and implementation in the fall of 2008.

#### **CUS-Model Schools Principal Group**

During the last three years, CUS and the TDSB Model Schools have partnered in several initiatives. The *CUS-Model Schools Principal Group* is an example of this partnership. On a monthly basis Jeff Kugler, the Executive Director of CUS, and CUS Associate Member Joseph Flessa met with Model School Principals. Being a Model School principal is an enormous job with many additional

responsibilities beyond the regular principalship. The meetings provided a professional support to the Principals: they were able to discuss common issues, successes and concerns, and solve problems together. The meetings also included discussion on research-based articles connected to inner city *principaling*, and the processes of school change. It is hoped that next year, this professional development piece will continue as a part of the regular Model School Principal meetings.

## SERVICES TO SCHOOLS

### Building Capacity for Urban School Success (First Year) Program Director: Dr. Lance McCreedy

The Centre for Urban Schooling's *Building Capacity for Urban Schools' Success (BCUSS)* initiative is a school support and professional development program aimed at providing assistance to urban schools in key areas. Through a process of collaborative inquiry and strategic planning over the course of the academic year, staff from the Centre for Urban Schooling support schools in meeting high educational standards, and fostering equity. What is unique about the BCUSS program is the



cooperative nature of the program. School and CUS staff work together to develop the program according to the context of each school. Thus, the program's development in each school is the result of a collaborative inquiry of which teachers' knowledge about their students, classroom instructional techniques, engagement and school culture are a fundamental component.

Dr. Lance McCreedy facilitating a professional development session on Culturally Responsive Teaching at Kingsview P.S., March 2008

During 07-08, the following schools participated in the BCUSS program:

- ❖ **Bala Avenue P.S.:** Focus on student behaviour and parental engagement  
CUS Staff involved: Jeff Kugler, Lance McCreedy and Luisa Sotomayor.  
Graduate assistant: Clint Eckstein.
- ❖ **Nelson Mandela Park P.S.:** Focus on student behaviour  
CUS Staff involved: Jeff Kugler, Lance McCreedy and Luisa Sotomayor.
- ❖ **Kingsview P.S.:** Focus on balancing multiple diversities  
CUS Staff involved: Jeff Kugler, Lance McCreedy and Dominique Riviere.

## OTHER SERVICES TO SCHOOLS:

**Willow Park Junior P.S.:** CUS initiated focus group discussions about classroom management and culturally responsive discipline.

CUS staff involved: Lance McCready, Dominique Riviere and Matt Gillbert (intern).

**Duke of Connaught P.S.:** CUS provided consultancy services to Duke of Connaught P.S. in developing an outreach strategy that would engage parents and community in school activities; particularly, in bringing parents of Chinese background to the school. CUS also provided a professional development workshop to all staff.

CUS staff involved: Jeff Kugler, Joseph Flessa and Luisa Sotomayor.

## C. EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS

### M.Ed. Cohort in Urban Education (First Year)

During 2007-2008 the M.Ed. cohort in Urban Education provided a unique opportunity to twenty-five inner city educators (teachers, new administrators, social workers, librarians, youth workers, and others) working in urban schools. Some students in this cohort were educators in the TDSB Model Schools for Inner Cities. Through a combination of required and elective courses, and drawing from the expertise of three OISE/UT departments, (Curriculum Teaching & Learning, Sociology & Equity Studies and Theory & Policy Studies), participants focused on questions and issues related to urban/inner city education across different settings and levels: in the classroom, in the lives of individual students and teachers, in the life of the school and community, and in the broader urban context. Courses were problem-centred and interdisciplinary, and invited participants to develop analytical skills to understand the conditions and dynamics, as well as the relations of power and possibility that shape urban education as they encounter it in their practice. This M.Ed. drew on approaches from curriculum, policy, sociology, philosophy and history of education, while also allowing participants to focus on specific areas of interests through their “home” programs, such as assessment, language and literacy, the arts, media education, anti-racist education, immigration, teacher leadership, and so on. In addition, it brought together theory and practice in order to integrate different perspectives and levels of analysis.

It is hoped that this M.Ed. Cohort will be opening admissions again in 09-10.

### B.Ed. Programs

#### B.Ed. Cohort - Inner City Option (Second year)

**Program Coordinators: Belinda Longe and Bev Caswell**

During the second year of this cohort, sixty-five teacher candidates from diverse backgrounds, and with a commitment to making a difference in inner city schools, participated in the Inner City Option (ICO). CUS played an instrumental role in supporting many of these teacher candidates to find placements within TDSB Model Schools. The ICO offers a program that is strongly linked to communities and schools in the Toronto District School Board and the Toronto Catholic District School Board. This option focuses on social justice through an anti-oppression agenda, which addresses the systemic power imbalances both in the educational system and society as a whole.

The ICO works to prepare Teacher Candidates who are ready to engage with the current reality of inner city schools and arrive at an understanding of the many ways in which teachers can help to change this reality. This is an important feature of the social justice focus of this option.

### **B.Ed. Cohort - SPI: Inner City Education (First Year)** **Program coordinator: David Montemurro**

2007-2008 was the first year of the SPI: Inner City Education (SPICE) cohort, which is designed to provide Teacher Candidates with the opportunity to explore and develop teaching strategies unique to inner-city secondary schools. In its inaugural year SPICE was in such popular demand so as to generate two cohorts. A total of fifty-six teacher candidates were enrolled in the program.

Some unique features of SPICE are, first, that it is site based: it runs out of an inner city secondary school. Second, it provides an innovative integrated instructional team; and third, it requires a community-based learning project and provides teacher candidates with the tools to better understand and connect with the communities with which their students interact outside of school.

This year, both cohorts operated out of Bloor Collegiate (TDSB), and involved staff, students and school administrators in program instruction and activities. For teacher candidates, this was a very enriching part of the program, given that they had the opportunity to gain individual feedback from five principals from inner-city schools on their job application materials.

The program was also designed to provide an integrated instructional team, where Foundation courses (*School & Society* and *Psychological Foundations*) were taught all year, as opposed to the traditional semestered courses. Furthermore, teacher candidates were involved in community-based learning "praxis" projects with a wide-range of organizations including: Pathways to Education, Centre for Addiction & Mental Health, Working Women's Community Centre, Portuguese Canadian Educators Network, Parkdale Community Health Centre, in addition to a number of school-based projects.

Some of the highlights of this cohort's activities include: school-neighbourhood tours, community mapping assignments, and school-community documentary projects. The program also had guests from Lawrence Heights Community Health Centre, Pathways to Education, Sir Sandford Fleming School, TDSB Student Equity Program Advisors, Settlement Workers, TDSB Triangle Program, and FoodShare.

SPICE had a very successful practicum cohort - placing over 80% of all teacher candidates in eight main partner schools for their practica.

### **2008/2009 - SPICE The Upcoming Year**

Building on the success and insights from the first year at Bloor Collegiate, SPICE is starting a new site-based cohort, which will operate out of Winston Churchill Collegiate in Scarborough (Dorset Park). In both schools, there will continue to be strong community-school partnerships. Teacher candidates will have extensive exposure to a range of school programs and staff over the first two months of the program. Also, for next year, the program will target a smaller number of community partners to focus and deepen the experience in the community "praxis" projects.

### *OISE Inner City Advisory Committee*

To support the development of OISE's teacher education programs, CUS coordinates the *OISE Inner City Advisory Committee*, which brings together OISE Faculty and staff, teacher candidates from ICO and SPICE, and associate teachers. During 2007-2008 students' voices played an important role in these meetings, on which they participated in program planning and development.

### **CUS Study Group**

**Coordinator: Dr. Lance McCready**

The CUS study group met once a month during 2007-2008, and brought together students from the M.Ed. Cohort in Urban Education as well as teachers, professors, graduate students, community members, administrators, and others affiliated with OISE and Toronto schools. This year, there were selected readings and a guest speaker every month who facilitated a collaborative inquiry into issues, dilemmas, and success stories related to teaching and learning in Canadian diverse urban schools. Attendance for the CUS study group during 2007-2008 was between fifteen and thirty-five participants per meeting.



CUS Study group with guest speaker Julian Falconer, January 2008

### **Special Education Additional Qualifications (AQ) Course:**

*Inclusive Practices for Inner City Schools, Students and Communities*

November 6, 2007 to February 12, 2008

**CUS Course Coordinator: Jeff Kugler**

**TDSB Model School Course Coordinators: Diana Kordic and Allison Rutherford**

CUS associate members involved in instruction: Joseph Flessa, Maria-Jose Botelho, Lance McCready, Jim Cummins, Tara Goldstein, Bev Caswell, David Montemurro, Sarfaro Niyozov, Leslie Stewart-Rose, Belinda Longe, Diane Farmer. Vice-Principal Wilma Verhagen (TDSB) and David Ast (Equity Instructional Leader at TDSB).

“The sessions made me reflect a lot on my own practices and made me more aware of many of the biases I bring into the classroom. After each session, I returned to my classroom with a new perspective and appreciation of the needs, strengths and backgrounds of my students. I began shaping my teaching practice in a way that allowed me to not only teach my students, but learn from them as well.”

John Clarke, Teacher  
Corvette Junior P.S.

“Out of the many activities I became involved in this year this course has been one of the most enjoyable and meaningful. Beyond the fantastic resources, guest speakers and best practices, I was able to connect with a group of educators who share my vision and passion about education. Each week I looked forward to meeting my colleagues to hear their thoughts opinions on our readings; to learn from their experiences; and most importantly, to reaffirm that the work we are doing around equity is important and must continue. I would be genuinely enthusiastic to get future opportunities to work with these wonderful, devoted educators.”

Melissa Rabess  
St. Margaret's P.S.

This AQ course focused on both the theory and practice of developing inner city schools, which work to meet the needs of all students in an inclusive and equitable way. On it, twenty-five teachers from the Willow Park Model School Cluster participated, including staff from Willow Park Jr. P.S., Cedar Drive P.S., Corvette Jr. P.S., Cornell P.S., St. Margaret's P.S., Galloway Road P.S., White Haven P.S., Victoria Village P.S., George B. Little P.S., and Golf Road P.S. All of these schools are located within some of the most underserved communities in Toronto's east end. This course was jointly led by staff from the Willow Park Model School and the Centre for Urban Schooling. The course was collaborative and interactive in nature, based on constructivist learning principles in that each teacher participant brought their knowledge and experience to the course.

### **Internship Program, April - May 2008 (First Year)** **Internship Supervisor: Jeff Kugler**

Interns: Nicholas Carkner, Suchi Garg (ICO); Daniel Lowinsky, Tiffany Shelton, Suzana Neves and Carolyn Boot (SPICE).

This year CUS started for the first time an internship program, on which six students from the Inner City Option and SPICE cohorts worked on the following projects during April and May:

- ❖ An analysis of effective teaching practices based on equity for students in Chicago and Toronto's urban secondary schools.
- ❖ The production of a video that would gather some of the learnings from the field research;
- ❖ A report on the 2007-2008 students' experience in the Inner City Option (included data gathering through focus groups, data analysis, elaboration of recommendations and a formal presentation)
- ❖ Support to The Building Capacity for Urban School Success Program in Kingsview P.S. and Nelson Mandela Park
- ❖ A literature review and a concept paper on existing offerings of tutoring programs for low-income high-school students in urban schools.

## D. SYMPOSIA, FORUMS AND EVENTS

### CUS Symposium: *Redefining Student Engagement*

Coordinator: Luisa Sotomayor

November 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup>, 2007, Hart House, University of Toronto

This event was made possible through a generous donation by William and Phyllis Waters.



Dr. John Portelli (left) and Dr. David Gillborn (right) at RSE.

*Redefining Student Engagement* was a two-day symposium that brought together 180 local and international academics, educators, practitioners, policy makers - as well as youth, themselves - to discuss critical questions concerning student engagement. The symposium gathered key stakeholders who attended the event by invitation only, and at no-cost.

The keynote speakers were Dr. Lois Weis, State University of New York Distinguished Professor of Sociology of Education at the University at Buffalo, State University of New York; and Dr. Urvashi Sahni, the Co-Founder of the *Digital Studyhall* project, which involves the use of technology to reach underserved students -mostly girls- from rural communities in India. Other international speakers invited included Dr. David Gillborn from the University of London; Wendy Luttrell from Harvard University; Linda Nathan, headmaster of Boston's Arts Academy and Jean-Paul Willaime, from Sorbonne University. The symposium also included two youth panels, and presented a dramatic piece by students in the Theatre in Education Coop program from Central Technical Institute (TDSB).



Keynote speaker Dr. Urvashi Sahni at RSE



Youth panelists Genesis Ampuero-Lucas and Genele Joseph at RSE.

The major goal of the symposium was to gain a better understanding of the conditions experienced by students who face the greatest challenges in completing their schooling. This involved, in the first place, hearing from young people about the conditions that actively helped them in their learning. Secondly, it entailed examining the ways in which families, communities and schools could generate feasible ways of reconfiguring and reinterpreting themselves in order to understand the issues young people encounter and, therefore, to better support them. *Redefining Student Engagement* was the first symposium completely run, coordinated and organized by CUS's administrative staff. In addition, CUS associate members had an active role as "symposium eyes", reporting the most important ideas that emerged during each of the panels, and acting as moderators for the panel discussions.

**Fostering Community-School Relationships in TDSB Model Schools**  
**Centre for Urban and Community Studies (CUCS) – CUS**  
**Collaborative Seminar Series**  
April 1<sup>st</sup>, 2008, OISE/UT

Luisa Sotomayor (coordinator), Elizabeth Schaeffer, Nelson Mandela Park Public School in Regent Park; Harpreet Ghuman, Firgrove P.S in the Jane and Finch community; Kenneth Slater, Dixon Hall youth worker; Yvonne Davis, Facilitator for the Ministry-funded On-Track Pre-Employment Program in the Jane and Finch community; and Jeff Kugler, Executive Director of the Centre for Urban Schooling at OISE/UT (Speakers).



Speaker Kenneth Slater, April 2008

School-community relationships can have a profound impact on the social and economic development of a community. As a major neighbourhood facility – in some areas, the only one – and a core component of the community fabric, public schools determine, to some degree, the quality of life of a neighbourhood. When schools are regarded as community hubs, students and their families gain in educational outcomes, and all residents benefit from improved neighbourhood safety, a higher level of social and cultural capital, and more active civic engagement. Yet, in most under-serviced neighbourhoods in Toronto, the inherent capital in community-school relationships is unrealized. This forum discussed three designated “Model Schools for Inner

Cities” in Regent Park and the Jane and Finch communities, which are tapping into this potential. The Toronto District School Board has provided these schools with special resources to address the pressing challenges of urban poverty, racism, and marginalization in their communities.

**Convergences in Urban Education (First Year)**  
**Coordinator: Dominique Riviere**

Starting in April 2008, The Centre for Urban Schooling opened up a new forum for graduate students to share on-going research in urban education. *Convergences in Urban Education* features four outstanding research projects every year. Selected presentations will include students' individual projects, as well as work that is connected to their supervisors' projects. The first *Convergences* forum featured the work of the research assistants in Ruben Gaztambide-Fernandez's *The Urban Arts High-schools Project*.



Dr. Gaztambide-Fernandez and his research team answer questions from the audience during the first *Convergences* session, April 2008.



## D. OUTREACH, ADVOCACY & COMMUNITY COLLABORATIONS

During 2007-2008 staff from the Centre for Urban Schooling continued to collaborate with community groups, parents and non-profit organizations to advocate for enhanced social justice and equity for underserved students in urban schools. Some examples of our advocacy and community collaboration efforts included:

- ❖ TDSB Model Schools Summer Institute (August 28<sup>th</sup> 2007): CUS participated in the Planning Committee. Dr. Lance McCready and Jeff Kugler were invited as the keynote speakers.



Dr. Lance McCready, keynote speaker at the Model Schools Summer Institute, August 2007.

- ❖ Deputations to the panelists of the School Community Safety Advisory Board.
- ❖ Leading a petition to support the implementation of key recommendations made by School Community Safety Advisory Panel (SCSAP). “The Road to Health: A final Report on School Safety”. CUS gathered over 300 signatures, and the petition was forwarded to the TDSB’s Director of Education, Chair, and Chair of the SCSAP Trustee working group.
- ❖ Deputations by Jeff Kugler and David Montemurro to TDSB trustees to support the continued funding of the Model Schools for Inner City program, on behalf of twenty-two OISE staff and faculty.
- ❖ Collaboration with *People for Education’s* update of its *Urban Suburban Schools Report* on public education across the Province.
- ❖ Coordination of a series of CUS speakers on various panels at the one-day symposium “Breaking the Log Jam”. This provided a forum to discuss school safety and equity in Toronto’s public schools, and make recommendations so that the document would lead to actual changes.
- ❖ Establishment of “Issues that Matter”, an editorial space on the CUS website to provide opinions and stimulate discussion on controversial and current topics in education (see : [cus.oise.utoronto.ca/Issues\\_That\\_Matter%21.html](http://cus.oise.utoronto.ca/Issues_That_Matter%21.html)).
- ❖ SCAARP: School Community Action Alliance Regent Park. CUS participates in monthly discussions with other stakeholders of the Regent Park community about children and youth’s wellbeing.

- ❖ CUS is a regular and engaged member of the Inner City Advisory Committee (TDSB), helping to foster critical dialogue among community, government and school board representatives.
- ❖ Toronto Inner City Schools Parent Action Committee: CUS coordinated monthly meetings to involve parents in meaningful discussions about the implementation of the action plan that emerged from the 2007 Inner City Conference.
- ❖ Toronto Chapter Inner City Education: CUS coordinates a meeting every six weeks to discuss the action plan that came out of the Inner city Conference.
- ❖ Miyumi Sasaki Scholarship Fund: CUS coordinated -with York University Faculty of Education- the establishment of two new scholarships to support teacher candidates in Inner City Options and cohorts at both universities. CUS coordinates the allocation of the OISE scholarship.

In addition, during 2007/08, CUS participated in several professional development workshops for new teachers about equity in low-income communities, as well as collaborated with NGOs and multiple stakeholders in many advocacy efforts that reflected the commitments declared in the CUS mission statement.



Dramatic Play performed at *Redefining Student Engagement* by The Full-Day Co-Op Theatre in Education Company of the TDSB, directed by Naomi Savage, teacher at Central Technical Institute.

## Conclusion

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As expressed in this report, 2007-2008 was a year of much growth and innovation at the Centre for Urban Schooling. This is reflected on each of our working areas: Research, Services to Boards and Schools, Educational Programs, and Outreach, Advocacy & Community Collaboration.

In terms of research, this year CUS carried out several research projects as well as developed new research initiatives that are ready to start on 08/09. One interesting project to come is “Putting Inner City Students First”, which will bring together several CUS affiliated members under the same collaborative research effort. Also, this year we hosted for the first time an event of the magnitude of the symposium *Redefining Student Engagement*. Through this event, we were able to bring a handful of highly acclaimed international academics, and initiate a relevant and much needed discussion on student engagement at the provincial and local levels.

In 2007-2008, we strengthened our ties with Model Schools and other urban schools, and were able to formalize much of the work that we do in schools into a comprehensive and integrated program for school support. In the first year of *Building Capacity for Urban School Success*, we were able to work with three schools through an action research approach, stimulating the notion of teachers as researchers, and providing ongoing professional development support for teachers and administrators. It was our intention to help staff from underserved schools to foster change in their everyday practice.

This year, CUS supported the development of Secondary B.Ed. Cohort on urban education “SPICE”, which was highly successful for its students in educational gains and relevant practica. New spaces were also created to support graduate students’ work, for example, by opening up the student forum “Converges in Urban Education”. Moreover, a new internship program was set in place, and a very successful AQ course in partnership with TDSB Model Schools was offered for the first time.

Finally, this year the Centre continued with its outreach, advocacy and community collaboration initiatives, and was heard loudly on issues of school safety and equity, on its committed support for the Model Schools Initiative, and a variety of controversial issues that referred to social justice. We are very proud of the work completed this year and look forward to continued growth in urban education research and meaningful collaborative praxis in 2008-2009.



Nelson Mandela Park students and staff celebrate being chosen as a Model School for Inner City.



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CENTRE FOR URBAN SCHOOLING  
ONTARIO INSTITUTE FOR STUDIES IN EDUCATION  
UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO  
252 BLOOR STREET WEST, 10<sup>TH</sup> FLOOR  
TORONTO, ON  
M5S 1V6  
PH: 416-978-0146  
2008

**OISE**  
ONTARIO INSTITUTE FOR STUDIES IN EDUCATION  
UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO