

for immediate release

## **Groups come together to develop new vision for big city and suburban schools**

### *Strong schools/strong communities the focus for meeting*

Toronto (February 7, 2008) –“It is time for Ontario to dream big dreams about what we expect from our public school system – to begin to talk about the kind of environment we value to ensure that all kids can graduate, confident and ready to face the future.” So says Deborah Konecny of Families Are Important Resources, a part of the Family Service Association of Toronto.

Ms. Konecny’s voice was one among many at a meeting that brought together representatives from settlement organizations, early childhood education, OISE, U of T, TDSB inner city school committees, provincial Parenting and Family Literacy Centres, Social Planning Councils, Pathways to Education, the Urban Alliance on Race Relations, Toronto City Council, the Toronto District School Board and many more.

### **The meeting is just the start of a move to create a new vision for schools in Ontario’s large centres.**

Jeff Kugler, Executive Director of the Centre for Urban Schooling at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto, said of the first meeting, “It was enlightening to have so many people from various organizations together in the same room working to develop and support an urban education agenda.”

“While it’s important that we have a strong overarching provincial vision for education, it’s also important that we recognize what’s unique about different areas of the province,” says Annie Kidder, Executive Director of People for Education. “Just as rural schools have particular challenges and requirements, so do the schools in our cities and suburbs. We have to ensure we have cohesive, forward-thinking policy that allows the students and families in those population centres to thrive.”

**The series of dialogues will continue over the coming months – creating links among a wide range of community organizations/schools/education professionals/parents and policy-makers. In March, People for Education will release the first in a series of reports on urban/suburban schools, including new data from the Ontario School Survey, and input and examples from the participants.**

**The goal of the initiative: a renewed vision for education that integrates programs, supports and education for families, children and youth in Ontario’s urban/suburban schools.**

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