

## **For Immediate Release**

### **【East Asian Parent Conference: Multiple Pathways to Success】**

(Oct 19, 2010 – Toronto) The East Asian Parent Conference was held successfully once again by Across U-hub on Saturday October 16. The conference took place at Earl Haig Secondary School in North York. The organizers sincerely thank the three hundred parents, students, principals, educators, and professionals from different fields that came out to the conference on Saturday morning. This was Across U-hub's second year in hosting the East Asian Parent Conference and they are honored to have the Toronto District School Board (TDSB) co-sponsor this year's event as they serve together to address the unique needs (social and emotional well-being) of East Asian families in the GTA. The organizers expressed that through the conference, they want parents to discover some knowledge that they need to support their youth in finding their pathways to success. Organizers want to remind parents that when helping their youth choose their post secondary paths, it is important to keep in mind their youth's different talents and multiple intelligences. Not doing so might suppress the youth in their education and their future.

The theme for this year's conference is, "Multiple Pathways to Success" which precisely aims to discuss and examine together the many options that a child has after they finish their secondary education. There are many paths that youths can choose from - entering into university is just one of the many. Entering into colleges, joining an apprenticeship and going into the workplace are other viable options that youth can excel in where they can gain valuable experiences. Building upon experiences, youth can then choose to enter back into school to further develop their field of interest.

The conference was broken into three sessions—a panel discussion, and two breakout sessions. Panel speakers included Clinical and Forensic Psychologist, Dr. Thomas Li; Dr. Eric Fong, professor in the Department of Sociology at the University of Toronto; Ms. Devon Turcotte, Social Media Coordinator of Skills Canada—Ontario; Ms. Maria Yau, Research Co-ordinator of TDSB and Ms. Nicole Wong, Executive Director of Across U-hub. Topics covered during the panel discussion included *challenges that immigrant parents faces, life skills that are essential to university students, the different pathways after secondary education, unleashing youths' talent and multiple intelligence, and the importance of exploring one's life skill on the pathway to success and beyond.*

During the conference, Across U-hub's Chair, Board of Directors, Dr. Eric Fong, expressed his gratitude towards TDSB's support. Eric was pleased with the turn out of the conference and with how it addressed specifically the East Asian parents' care for their youth's future and education. There was an open platform for everyone to discuss about some of the challenges that East Asian families were facing as they decide on their youth's post secondary pathways. Eric said that not only was the conference beneficial to parents, it also is very beneficial to those within the East Asian circle.

Ms. Donna Quan, Deputy Director—Academic of TDSB opened the conference by introducing the theme of Multiple Pathways to Success and defined the meaning of “success” for the parents. “It is not about marks or report cards. It is about the growth and the well being of one’s body, mind and spirit. It is about engagement in life, searching for interests and being confident.” Emotional Quotient was another component to success. Youths should recognize and understand the emotional needs of themselves and of others. Through stress management, accountability, appreciation and conviction, youth learns to perceive the world through another perspective.

Clinical and Forensic Psychologist Dr. Thomas Li suggested that parents should learn to ask the right questions before helping their child make their post secondary decision. Oftentimes, parents tend to be fixated in their traditional ideals and yield no space for their child to develop who they are. Dr. Li reminds the parents that it is the children, not the parents, who are studying for their future, their happiness, their satisfaction, and their self-esteem.

Dr. Eric Fong, professor in the Department of Sociology at the University of Toronto, indicated that the learning habits of most East Asian students are often unhealthy. They tend to memorize everything from the textbook and remain quite reserved in class. “Yes, they do get good marks, but that is all I know about them. It is difficult to expand any further in regards to their personality or habits when writing reference letters for them.” Since post secondary education is generally the last step before these students enter into the workforce, he sincerely hopes that students would learn by understanding and integrating information, and expand their social network with colleagues and professors.

One of the co-chairs of the conference’s organizing committee, Ms. Maria Yau, pointed out that many immigrant parents are not too familiar with the concept of “multiple pathways”. In particular, this concept is not very well-understood by parents from the Chinese immigrant community. Research conducted in the TDSB indicates that virtually all East Asian parents expect their child to get high grades, pick the hottest subject, and attend university. There is a general belief that it is the only ticket to their child’s future success. While this is true for many, it is *not* the case for many others either. In fact in recent years, it has become increasingly common to hear stories about first-year students flunking out of university, undergraduate students suffering from deep depression or anxiety while struggling through their university years, university graduates being unable or unwilling to find a job in their field of study, or those who got employed but always felt uninterested, unfulfilled, or stuck in an occupation that they didn’t really enjoy or could excel in.

Parents should keep their mindsets open. They should support and encourage their youth to develop their personal interests. Executive Director of Across U-hub, Ms. Nicole Wong, sees the traditional relationship between certification and work opportunity being outdated. The types of jobs available are changing everyday with new technology and social priorities; thus, the focus of youth today should be shifted more towards their personal development and the discovery of their enjoyment through the course of life. Nicole stressed that the relationship

between parents and children “should be similar to that of a master and apprentice which walks beside each other, celebrating the successes and conquering the failures of life together.”

The organizers also arranged several youth representatives to speak from their personal experiences. Ms. Vivian Lo was one such representative. She entered university after graduating from high school, studying medical sciences. Unfortunately her graduation was met with a recession. Her chances of entering into the medical field were next to nil. Seeing her bleak future down the medical path, she and her family were burdened in her despair. Vivian described her situation as “a dead end.” With the lack of options, she found a job in the field of media and reporting—an entirely alien industry for Vivian. However, upon entering, she discovered her deep passion and interest in art, architecture and photography and thus continued to study different courses and diplomas in the areas of her interest. “There is nothing to lose in trying new things.” Vivian said. “I remember a quote from Frank Gehry saying ‘I have no plans. I just follow the flow.’ I deeply understand what this means now.” Today, she works with a department of the government that specifically assesses the architectural structure and facilities of medical buildings. On her spare time, she dives into her passion of arts and photography. Vivian expressed that she thoroughly enjoys the work that she is doing at the moment. She believes that her college training and workplace experiences have defined for her this unique path of success.

The second half of the Conference consisted of 8 different workshops in three different languages—English, Cantonese, and Mandarin. Besides Ms. Devon Turcotte, Ms. Maria Yau, and Dr. Thomas Li, the conference also invited several speakers including Mr. Larry Law, President of Law Development and Cranberry Resort; Mr. Peter Poon, Former VP of Strategic Planning and Business Development; Dr. Aaron Pun, Human Resources Manager at the City of Toronto; Mrs. Rebecca Tam, Former Principal from TDSB; Ms. Cindy Chan, recruitment representative from Centennial College; Mr. Antonio Santos, Principal from Lakeshore Cl.; and Mrs. Anne Kan, Instructor of Parent Child Resource Centre. The discussion from the workshop stemmed from the different professional, practical, and academic stand points. The content of the workshops included The college education – a Different Pathway to Success; Developing Social and Life Skills; Understanding Your Child’s Multiple Intelligences; University Admission and Course Selection; and more.

Parents agreed that the Conference has brought out onto the table the problem of the traditional mindset towards work and education. Most of them were hit hard by the fact that children may face many different physical and mental problems in their later stages of life if they were pressured into a path that they do not like and that does not settle well with their temperament. Many parents stayed behind to catch up with speakers to further their conversations in deeper details.

Ms. Nicole Wong also added that although having a university education may help in a child’s future development, building their life skills is crucial in the youth’s future success. From the beginning, Across U-hub has committed to foster youths’ holistic development. Through creative and interactive activities and with the support from mentors, peers and the youth

community at Across U-hub, youth learns to grow physically, socially, emotionally, intellectually and spiritually. Nicole stresses that in order to raise a generation of successful leaders, the whole community needs to be involve and support the youth. The organizers sincerely hope that the conference has triggered the East Asian community to become more aware of the needs of parents and students so that together, the community can know how to foster youths and build for a brighter future.

Following this parent conference, Across U-hub will be hosting their annual Celebration and Fundraising Gala on November 14, 2010 (Sunday), 6 p.m. at Le Parc Conference and Banquet Centre. Across U-hub cordially invites the community to attend and support this gala. For ticket sales and information, please visit <http://www.acrossuhub.com>.

#### Across U-hub Overview

*Together we help nurture our youth:*

- *to become a bridge across cultures by taking roots in Canada while developing a global perspective*
- *to become servant leaders for communities by helping them grow holistically*

#### Work:

*We adopt creative, interactive and multi-disciplinary approaches:*

- *to nurture our youths' holistic growth*
- *to cultivate their servant leadership skills*
- *to promote peer support and mentorship*
- *to foster their sense of community and to encourage active participation in cultural and civic activities*