



Special Needs Advisory
Committee (SNAC)

Special Needs Advisory Committee
Lester B. Pearson School Board

MINUTES OF THE MEETING – APRIL 23, 2014

Held at the Lester B. Pearson School Board, 1925 Brookdale, Dorval Room 219/221

In Attendance: Sandra Buckingham, Marie-Eve Claude, Jennifer DiMarco, Cindy Finn, Stephanie Herault (PASA), Brett Hillgartner, Carollynn Jones (PTU), Franca Kesic (WIAIH), Daniel Olivenstein, Kiley Philp, Robert Gilmartin (IASS), Donnalynn Rainey, Barbara Schnider, Ruth Schwarcz (Professionals)

Regrets: Christopher Fuzessy (Student Services), Linton Garner (Commissioner), Robin Keough, Christine McLean, Douglas Stewart (PASA), David Szabo

Observers: Shannon Bird Robertson, Carrie-Ann Houthuys

Recording Secretary: Brett Hillgartner

1.0 Confirmation of Quorum: establish voting rights to Alternate members as required

It was confirmed that quorum had been established and the meeting was called to order by Sandra Buckingham at 7:05pm.

1.1 Appointment of Recording Secretary

The regular recording secretary, Andrew Graham, was unable to attend the meeting. Brett Hillgartner agreed to take the minutes in his absence. In addition, Robert Gilmartin was introduced as Allison Provost's replacement for IASS.

2.0 Additions to Agenda

2.1 Approval of Agenda

Motion: It was moved by Jennifer DiMarco to approve the agenda with the addition of items *8.3 SNAC Annual Report*, *8.4 SNAC Chat Newsletter*, and *8.5 Spencer West*. The motion was seconded by Kiley Philp and unanimously resolved.

3.0 Approval of Minutes of March 19th, 2014

The minutes were included in the kit. **Motion:** It was moved by Barbara Schnider to approve the minutes. The motion was seconded by Allison Provost. Jennifer DiMarco and Kiley Philp abstained from the vote since they had not been present at the previous meeting.

4.0 Business Arising

4.1 Update: SNAC Funding Request to Council of Commissioners

SNAC received a formal response from Suanne Stein Day regarding the request to increase the SNAC budget (letter sent February 3rd, 2014). The request was denied, however it was noted that SNAC had made a similar recommendation in the recent “budget” consultation, which will be taken under consideration by Council, and if approved, would apply to next year (2014-2015). Ms. Stein Day acknowledged the importance of SNAC and stated that the committee would have the school board’s support for the funding of special projects.

4.2 Update: Dealing with flight risk concerns for students with Special Needs

There has been no response to the letter sent February 3rd, 2014, however SNAC did receive a copy of the proposed updated policy, which is in the Consultation phase. (see item 6.5 for further information)

4.3 “Budget” Consultation

SNAC has had confirmation that the SNAC response to this consultation has been received.

4.4 “Art and Culture in Education” Consultation

SNAC has had confirmation that the SNAC response to this consultation has been received.

4.5 “Student Transportation Policy” Consultation

DRAFT #3 of this policy was included in the kit. The current transportation policy made no mention of Special Needs so many suggestions were made in the SNAC response to the consultation. It was agreed by the committee that the Policy needs to reference students with special needs and that some high level guidelines be available through the Policy. Stephanie Herault explained that a lot of accommodations are already being made even though they are not included in the Policy. Daniel Olivenstein explained that there can be hesitation to include specific items in a Policy document because they then become “law” and this may cause budgetary issues. Nevertheless, it was decided by the committee that there was no harm in making detailed suggestions.

DRAFT # 3 was reviewed in depth and it was decided to add a comment after the introduction section to include several examples of what some special provisions might be (for instance, extending the age for the Purple Equals Parent Program for special needs children). In addition, the date was updated to April 23rd, 2014. **Motion:** It was moved by Jennifer DiMarco to approve the “Student Transportation Policy” consultation response with the changes. The motion was seconded by Kiley Philp and unanimously resolved. The Consultation Response will be made available on the SNAC website.

5.0 Reports

5.1 Administration

The administration report from Cindy Finn was included in the kit. This is a very busy time of year for administration. Most notably, a new high school IEP template is in development to provide more options and drop down menus in the

IEP, similar to those available at the elementary school level template. In addition, 95% of the special needs dossiers submitted to MELS for validation were accepted. The MELS validation process itself is very arduous and provides little gain to the school board.

5.2 Council of Commissioners

A report from Danny Olivenstein was included in the kit. The highlight of the report was the calendar modification to the 2013-2014 to reinstate June 23rd, 2014 as the last day of school. Danny Olivenstein explained that this was not an easy or unanimous decision for the Council of Commissioners. The circumstances behind the decision were unique in that the election was not forecasted yet they needed to meet the 180 school day requirement and they did not want to take any ped days away from the schools. Sandra Buckingham expressed that the CPC had received a lot of negative feedback from parents regarding the return of the June 23rd date.

5.3 Central Parents' Committee

A report from the CPC was included in the kit. There were several notable CPC items that were highlighted by Sandra Buckingham. School board elections will be held in November 2014, where the number of commissioners will be reduced by half. There will be an increase in parent commissioners (currently there is 1 elementary and 1 high school parent commissioner, but this will be doubled to also include 1 ad hoc parent commissioner and 1 SNAC representative parent commissioner). The term for commissioners will also increase from 1 year to 2 years.

CPC is also working on a project to offer suggested improvements to Administration regarding the template that is used to document every school's Annual Success Plan Update. A subcommittee has been struck to work on this, and is requesting input from all parent groups, since the Success Plan is a document that is geared towards informing parents.

The English Parents Committee Association (EPCA) represents 7 of the English school boards in Quebec. EPCA has singled out the LBPSB SNAC website as a great example with content that is very helpful to the Special Needs Community, and they have requested permission to link to the LBPSB SNAC website so that other English school board SNACs could emulate our website.

Motion: It was moved by Jennifer DiMarco to approve the request that EPCA link to the LBPSB SNAC website. The motion was seconded by Franca Kesic and unanimously resolved.

5.4 Education Committee

A report from Barbara Schnider was included in the kit. A synopsis of the Guidance and Transitions Presentations was provided highlighting the important role that Guidance Counsellors play at the high school level and outlining the successes of the Transitions program. Updates on the status of the both the Draft of the Arts and Culture in Education Policy, and the Home Schooling Policy were provided.

5.5 P.T.U.

A report was included in the kit. It was noted that all executive PTU positions were elected by acclamation and on April 30th, 2014 there will be a vote to elect members at large. Additionally, the oversize class grievance is still in progress. A verbal report was provided following today's PTU meeting, wherein a Focus Group has been struck for the exams/correction center to follow-up on concerns that there are too many exams at the same time. In addition, in preparation for the next round of negotiations, QPAT has sent a questionnaire/consultation to all teachers and resource teachers.

5.6 P.A.S.A.

No report was provided, as Stephanie Herauld was unable to attend the last PASA meeting.

5.7 Professionals

A report was included in the kit. Ruth Schwarcz explained that they were in the process of conducting observation visits to daycares and preschools of special needs kids who have registered with the LBPSB for the fall of 2014.

5.8 I.A.S.S.

The IASS held a new delegates dinner on April 7th, 2014 and they are also going into negotiations soon.

5.9 Treasurer's Report

There is approximately \$215.00 remaining in the budget. It is estimated that \$150.00 will be spent on poster advertising SNAC's Sept AGM and the remaining funds will be put towards the SNAC end of term party. Several members offered to donate wine for the party.

5.10 Website Administrator's Report

Jennifer DiMarco provided a verbal report about the number of main page hits for last month (343), webcast views (34) and emails (22). One particular email was discussed wherein a parent was requesting information about tutoring programs for grade two. It was agreed that the parent would benefit by speaking directly to the school's resource teacher to see what recommendations could be made specifically for that child's needs. In addition, administration informed us that there will not be any literacy camp this summer.

5.11 Workshops Attended [See report]

Barbara Schnider, Donnalynn Rainey and Robin Keough attended the *Advancing with Autism* conference on March 30th, 2014 and Barbara provided a detailed report for the kit. The overall theme was that children with autism have many unique gifts and talents and that we need to foster their strengths and not give up hope on them.

6.0 New Business

6.1 SNAC AGM and first meeting dates for 2014-2015

Dates for the SNAC AGM and meetings for the upcoming school year were discussed. It was suggested that the AGM be held on September 17th, 2014 and that the first two SNAC meetings be held on October 1st and October 22nd. After October the meeting schedule would be the 3rd Wednesday of every month with

the exception of December and ending after the May 2015 meeting. There was some discussion as whether SNAC should only have one meeting in October and reinstate a meeting for December, however it was decided that by having two meetings in October SNAC can get off to a more productive start to the school year. Also, due to the holidays in December, there would be fewer members available and that establishing quorum might be an issue. In order to reduce the load for October it was decided that the October 1st meeting would be primarily a brainstorming session and no reports will be discussed. **Motion:** It was moved by Jennifer DiMarco to approve the September 17th, 2014 AGM date and the October 1st and October 22nd, 2014 first two meetings dates. The motion was seconded by Brett Hillgartner and unanimously resolved.

6.2 SNAC Communications Project: AGM Posters

Last year SNAC advertised their AGM by putting up a couple of posters in each of the schools. A discussion of the effectiveness of the posters ensued and it was decided that considering there are few alternatives, this is the best way for SNAC to make itself known to new parents. The SNAC representatives to PASA will remind school level Administrators to kindly post the AGM posters in the month of June, and email a PDF version to their parent populations next September. SNAC will also prepare a final edition of the SNAC Chat Newsletter to highlight the AGM. Cindy Finn will distribute SNAC Chat to all school Resource Teachers. **Motion:** A motion to approve the printing of the posters at a cost of \$150.00 was put forth by Barara Schneider. The motion was seconded by Brett Hillgartner and unanimously resolved.

6.3 Allocation of Funds for the SNAC End of Year Party

The SNAC end of year party will be held on May 21st. **Motion:** It was moved by Donnalynn Rainey to approve that the remaining budget (funds left over after the posters are ordered – *see item 6.2*) be used towards the May 21st SNAC party. The motion was seconded by Jennifer DiMarco and unanimously resolved.

6.4 LBPSB “Home Schooling Policy” Consultation

There was some discussion as to whether SNAC should prepare a response to the “Home Schooling Policy” Consultation because CPC had decided that they would not be involved in this consultation (home school parents are not represented in CPC). It was agreed that some parents home school their children specifically because their children have special needs and therefore the committee will work on providing feedback.. It was decided that Jennifer DiMarco and Kiley Philp would prepare a draft response and provide it to the other SNAC members for review by May 16th, 2014.

(Donnalynn Rainey left the meeting at 9:35)

6.5 LBPSB “Emergency Preparedness Policy” Consultation

There has been no response to the letter sent February 3rd, 2014 which SNAC prepared in response to the flight risk issue (see item 4.2) wherein SNAC recommended that all alarmed fire doors be tested during routine fire drills. SNAC members are concerned that since the item may be included in the Procedures document and not the Policy itself we might never learn if the SNAC

recommendations were included or not. Danny Olivenstein agreed to look into it on behalf of SNAC.

7.0 Correspondence

7.1 Parent Evening: A Positive Approach to Challenging Children

This event will be held on May 8th, 2014. It was decided that no one from SNAC would attend this event, however much of Dr. Ross Greene's information is available on the web.

8.0 Varia

8.1 Article: Ontario Teachers Seek Smaller Class Sizes

8.2 Article: Ontario Eliminating Wait Lists for Developmental Services

Two items were discussed under varia regarding class sizes in Ontario (specifically for special needs kids) and efforts to eliminate wait lists for services in Ontario.

8.3 Annual Report

Sandra Buckingham would like to include suggestions for next year SNAC activities in the Annual Report. Please email suggestions and recommendations to Sandra as soon as possible.

8.4 SNAC Chat Newsletter

Sandra Buckingham will prepare a new SNAC Chat Newsletter to announce the dates for the September 17th AGM.

8.5 Spencer West

Sandra Buckingham reported that St. Anthony's hosted an event called "We Create Change" which was put on by Free the Children. Spencer West, who has had both of his legs amputated, was the keynote speaker at the event and he was very inspirational.

9.0 Questions from the Public

A parent expressed that in certain cases, it would be beneficial to more clearly indicate on a student's report card that although they may have received good grades, if they are following an IEP with an adapted program, those results cannot be directly compared to the class average of his/her peers. In this particular case, the parent was unaware that the student was performing at a level significantly lower than other students, because he had been receiving good grades. (even considering the class average was on the report cards). This can be confusing for parents and it was suggested by the committee member that the school board somehow explain this difference better to parents so there is more clarity. Administration responded by saying that each situation is unique to each child and that it would have to be done on a case by case basis.

10.0 Adjournment

Motion to adjourn at 9:45pm: Jennifer DiMarco, seconded by Kiley Philp, and unanimously resolved.. The next meeting will be held at 7pm on Wednesday May 21st, 2014 in room 219/221 at the School Board (1925 Brookdale, Dorval).