

 <p>Special Needs Advisory Committee</p> <p>http://snac.lbpsb.qc.ca/</p> <p>Email: snac@lbpearson.qc.ca</p>	<p>SNAC Report to the Council of Commissioners, Central Parents' and Education Committees</p> <p>From SNAC Meeting October 22, 2014</p> <p>Page 1 of 2</p>
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New PASA Representative: The committee welcomed Diana Martire, as the new representative from PASA, representing school Administrators. Diana Martire is the current Vice Principal at Westpark Elementary and previous Resource Teacher and LBPSB Special Needs Consultant.

Special Presentation: Cindy Finn, Director of Student Services, presented “**Educating Students with Special Needs in Quebec**”, which discussed coding, funding and the organization of services for students with special needs at LBPSB. As of Sept 30, 2014, total enrollment at LBPSB was 20,863 students. Of these, 955 were identified with “handicaps” (coded with one of the 11 challenges accepted by MELS), and 2691 were identified “in difficulty” (with IEPs, but not specifically coded). Thus, the students with special needs currently constitute 17.5% of the total LBPSB population. As enrollment declines, the percentage of students with special needs is growing. It was also noted that the number of students “in difficulty” tends to increase over the school year, as additional students are identified, and is expected to reach 20-25% by year end, which is comparable to the rates being seen at other school boards.

MELS provides the school board with \$6,000 in funding for regular students. Funding for students with identified “handicaps” depends on their code. Funding ranges between \$9208 and \$14326 for K students; between \$11167 - \$17406 for Elementary students; and between \$10460 - \$16309 for High School students. MELS also provides funding based on a historical percentage of the student population, estimated between 10-12%, which is far less than the actual percentage of students with special needs. In addition, MELS provides funding in the form of grants to support specific special needs initiatives, such as adapted equipment/technology, support for professionals (occupational therapists, speech therapists, etc.), IEP release days (to replace classroom teachers with a substitute teacher so that they can have IEP meetings) and a general fund to “support inclusion” efforts within the school board. It was noted that LBPSB currently provides an integration rate of 88-90% of its students with special needs, which has decreased slightly from 95% a few years ago, due to the addition of new specialized programs at the high school level.

The complexity of cases is increasing, with more students exhibiting multiple codes. This is problematic, since MELS only provides funding for one “dominant” code, even for more complex cases that require additional support. It was also discussed that certain outside facilities, such as Summit school, are allocated more funding than LBPSB, supposedly due to the fact that they provide additional services such as physiotherapy.

To read more about MELS policy for coding and special needs, please visit:

http://www.mels.gouv.qc.ca/fileadmin/site_web/documents/dpse/adaptation_serv_comp/19-7065-A.pdf

To read more about LBPSB Policy for the Organization of Services for Students with Special Needs, please visit:

http://www.lbpsb.qc.ca/content/policies/Special_Needs_Policy_3_5_sept2013.pdf

To view Cindy Finn’s presentation on this subject from October 2012, please visit the SNAC website:

<http://snac.lbpsb.qc.ca/eng/webcasts/page.asp>

Finance Presentation: In light of the growing concern regarding MELS Budget Cuts, SNAC previously requested a presentation from the LBPSB Assistant Director General regarding the details of the budget cuts and their effect on the LBPSB budget, with particular emphasis on services to students with special needs. Unfortunately Ms. Heffernan is unavailable to attend SNAC’s November meeting, but will attend the January 21st 2015 meeting instead.

Parent Workshop: In line with the committee’s established priorities for this school year, SNAC is pleased to announce that it will host a **presentation for parents on January 15, 2014, to discuss the IEP Process at LBPSB**. More information on this presentation will be available soon. **Parents are encouraged to save the date!**

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SNAC Awareness Campaign: SNAC Chat Newsletter (Fall 2014): As part of an ongoing effort to increase the visibility of SNAC so that more parents of children with special needs are aware of the support services that we offer, especially the upcoming parent workshop, the Autumn 2014 edition of the SNAC Chat Newsletter was finalised, and is available on the SNAC website: <http://snac.lbpsb.qc.ca/eng/Newsletter/page.asp> It will be sent to Pearson News. In addition, the SNAC PASA representative has been asked to request that Administrators distribute SNAC Chat to parents at all schools.

SNAC Awareness Campaign: Letter to Parents via the IEP Envelopes: At the October SNAC meeting, the PASA representative was asked to discuss with Administrators whether SNAC may be permitted to include a letter with the IEP documents that are distributed to parents 3 times per year. The aim of the letters would be to advise parents of upcoming workshops, the availability of the IEP Resource Kits that can help parents prepare for IEP meetings, and more. It was noted that the IEP envelopes often include a letter from the school Resource Teacher and/or Administrator already, so the committee was hopeful that adding the letter from SNAC would not require too much additional work at the school level. Other ideas to communicate with parents of students with special needs were discussed, including providing SNAC with occasional access to the ERMS email communication system at the school board, which has been refused in the past. Another idea was to provide letters to Resource Teachers for distribution to parents during parent-teacher interviews, but as many parents meet only with the classroom teacher, it was felt that this might not be effective. This discussion has not yet taken place at PASA, but is hoped to be discussed before the end of October.

Letter from a Parent: SNAC received a letter from a parent who was concerned about the change in their child's Integration Aide that took place a few weeks into the school year. The parent felt that their child and the original aide had established a good bond during the first few weeks of the year, and were dismayed that the aide was changed. This prompted a discussion within the committee regarding the process of the allocation of Integration Aides, and how it may sometimes happen that there is a change in the specific Aide assigned to a student following the "priority pool" selection process that takes place in mid-September. The fact that the priority pool process for selecting Integration Aides occurs in September was explained by Administration as being a result of funding details being provided late by MELS – in recent years, funding details were only provided by MELS during the summer. The committee views this as problematic, and would prefer that the priority pool take place BEFORE the start of the school year, to ensure consistency of service to students with special needs. It would also benefit the aides to know their assignments for the following year in June. The committee has recommended in previous School Board Consultation Responses that the priority pool process for both classroom teachers and integration aides should occur before the end of the school year so that everyone is in place prior to the next school year, and planning meetings can take place as appropriate.

Next Meeting: The next SNAC meeting will take place on Wednesday, November 19, 2014 at 7pm at the school board. **All parents of children with special needs are invited to attend as guests, and may ask questions during the Q&A period.**

Respectfully submitted,

Brett Hillgartner, Chairperson, LBPSB Special Needs Advisory Committee 2014-2015
Sandra Buckingham, LBPSB Parent Commissioner for Special Needs 2014-2016