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Special Needs Advisory Committee

Lester B. Pearson School Board

MINUTES OF THE MEETING – OCTOBER 22ND, 2014

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

In attendance: Sandra Buckingham, Marie-Eve Claude (Student Services), Maria Colavita, Romina Costantini, Jennifer DiMarco, Cindy Finn (DG/SSD), Christopher Fuzessy (Student Services), Robert Gilmartin (I.A.S.S.), Brett Hillgartner, Maureen Hunt (P.E.P.), Carollynn Jones (P.T.U.), Caroline LeBrun, Diana Martire (P.A.S.A), Donnalynn Rainey.

Regrets: Camelia Burlec, Franca Kesic (WIAIH), Christine McLean, Kiley Philip, Barbara Schnider.

Observers: Hennilynn Radin and Bonnie Mendel

Recording Secretary: Donnalynn Rainey

The meeting was called to order by Brett Hillgartner at 7:10pm.

1.0 Appointment of Recording Secretary

The Special Needs Advisory Committee's regular Recording Secretary, Laurie Fox, was unable to attend the meeting due to a car accident. Donnalynn Rainey agreed to take the minutes in her absence. The members of SNAC expressed concern for Laurie and her family, and were relieved that no one was seriously hurt considering the severity of the accident.

2.0 Introduction of the new P.A.S.A. Representative

The committee welcomed Diana Martire as the new P.A.S.A Representative. Diana Martire, current Vice Principal at Westpark Elementary and previous Resource Teacher and LBPSB Special Needs Consultant, replaces Colleen Galley.

3.0 Presentation given by Cindy Finn: *Educating Students with Special Needs in Quebec*

Dr. Cindy Finn, Director of Student Services, gave SNAC members an extremely informative presentation discussing the coding, funding, and the organization of services for students with special needs within the Lester B. Pearson School Board.

Dr. Finn specified that as of September 30th, 2014, total enrollment at LBPSB was 20,863 students. Of these students, 955 were identified as those with **handicap** (and thus, coded with one of the 11 challenges accepted by MELS), and 2691 students were identified as those in **difficulty** (these are students with IEPs, but not specifically coded). Consequently, students with special needs currently constitute 17.5% of the total LBPSB population. Dr. Finn reiterated that as student enrollment declines, the percentage of students with special needs increases. It was also specified that the number of students **in difficulty** tends to increase over the school year, as additional students are identified, and it is expected to reach 20-25% by the end of the academic school year. This rate, it was emphasized, is comparable to the rates being seen at other school boards.

The Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport (MELS) provides the school board with \$6,000 in funding for regular students. Funding for students with identified as **handicaps** depends on their respective code. Funding ranges between \$9208 and \$14326 for Kindergarten students; between \$11167 - \$17406 for Elementary Students, and between \$10460 - \$16309 for High School Students. The Ministry provides additional funding based on a historical percentage of the student population, estimated between 10-12%. This is a far less than 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 also noted that the 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.

Dr. Finn explained that the number of complex cases with students exhibiting multiple codes is on the rise. This is problematic since the Quebec Ministry only provides funding for one dominant code. It was also discussed that certain outside facilities such as the Summit School are allocated more funding than LBPSB, due to the fact that they provide additional services such as physiotherapy.

Dr. Finn's webcast from Oct 2012 on the same subject can be found on the SNAC website: <http://www.lbpsb.qc.ca/content/webcasting/snac.html>

4.0 Confirmation of Quorum: Establish voting rights to Alternate members as required

(SNAC1415-10.1) As many members were absent this evening, voting rights were given to Caroline LeBrun, Maria Colavita and Romina Costantini.

5.0 Additions to Agenda

5.1 Approval of Agenda

(SNAC1415-10.2) The agenda was changed to accommodate the length of the Special Presentation by Dr. Cindy Finn. As a direct result, the Reports Section was pushed to later on in the meeting (*i.e.*, item 6.0 became item number 5.0; item number 7.0 became item number 6.0, and item number 5.0 became item number 7.0). A motion to approve the agenda was moved by Sandra Buckingham, seconded by Romina Costantini, and was unanimously approved.

6.0 Corrections to the Minutes of October 1st, 2014

6.1 Approval of the Minutes of October 1st, 2014

(SNAC1415-10.3) It was noted by Jennifer Di Marco that she was incorrectly listed as absent when she had in fact sent in her regrets. This was subsequently changed. A motion to approve minutes was put forth by Donnalynn Rainey, seconded by Robert Gilmartin, and unanimously approved.

7.0 Business Arising

7.1 SNAC Awareness Campaign: SNAC letter with IEP Distribution

A lengthy discussion about the logistics of raising awareness about SNAC and SNAC activities took place. At the first October SNAC meeting, Colleen Galley was asked to discuss with Administrators as to whether or not SNAC may be permitted to include a letter with IEP documents that are distributed to parents 3 times per year. The aim of these 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 this form of SNAC letter 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 that was discussed was to provide letters to resource teachers for distribution to parents during parent-teacher interviews. However, many parents only meet only with the classroom teacher, and therefore, it was felt that this might not be very effective. It was also suggested that SNAC utilize the resources of the QFHSA and the local Home & School Associations to get the word out about SNAC events and activities.

Diana Martire, the new P.A.S.A representative to SNAC replacing Colleen Galley, agreed to bring the issue of SNAC communication to P.A.S.A. to the forefront and report back to the committee.

7.2 SNAC Awareness Campaign: SNAC Chat Newsletter

Minor text adjustments were made to the autumn 2014 edition of the SNAC Chat newsletter. **(SNAC1415-10.4)** A motion to approve the newsletter was put forward by Sandra Buckingham, seconded by Romina Costantini and was unanimously approved. The finalized version is available on the SNAC website and was sent to Pearson News. In addition, Diane Martire has been asked to request that Administrators distribute the SNAC Chat Newsletter to parents at all schools.

7.3 SNAC Awareness Campaign: SNAC pamphlet distribution to resource teams

Cindy Finn reported that pamphlets were being distributed to many resource teams, and that this process was ongoing.

7.4 SNAC Workshop for Parents with Children on IEPs

SNAC will be holding an IEP Information Workshop on January 15th 2015 from 7:00 to 9:00 pm. **(SNAC1415-10.5)** It was moved by Jennifer DiMarco to approve the date. The motion was approved by Caroline LeBrun and unanimously resolved. Cindy Finn notified the committee that the workshop will be presented by Celina Bérubé and Ruth Schwartz. Cindy will ask the presenters to get a brief description of the workshop for our marketing purposes and a poster will be designed. In addition, Cindy will look into recording the event for our website. Brett Hillgartner will develop a spreadsheet for the following SNAC meeting so that more specific details of member responsibilities at the workshop can be ironed out.

7.5 Presentation to SNAC: LBPSB Budget Process and Budget Cut Summary

A planned presentation on the school board budget process has been moved from the SNAC November 19th meeting to the January 21st meeting due to the unavailability of the speaker, Carol Heffernan. Some concerns were brought forth about having this meeting in late January was that it was too late in the year to address the budget issues, considering all the budget cuts by MELS. The possibility of having this meeting sooner was discussed. However, some SNAC members explained that there were more meetings scheduled after November which would provide more insight and information on the budget issues. It was decided by the committee that it would be best to keep the January 21st date for this presentation.

7.6 School Board Elections

Barbara Schnider was unable to attend this evening's SNAC meeting, however, she was able to attend several "meet the candidates" and "debate" events. Along with Sandra Buckingham, they provided the Committee with some general notions as to some of the Special Needs issues that were discussed by the candidates. Mention was also made to the debates that were posted on the LBPSB website homepage. Sandra Buckingham also asked the committee to spread the word about the upcoming November 2nd election, and encouraged individuals to vote.

8.0 New Business

8.1 School Board Consultation: Enrollment Criteria

The document for Enrollment Criteria had not been modified from the previous year. However with a new set of Commissioners in place, it was discussed that it may be worth sending in suggestions since they would be examined from a new perspective. Any ideas and/or suggestions are to be sent to Brett Hillgartner, who will draft a response for the next meeting.

9.0 Correspondence

9.1 The Committee received a letter from a concerned parent regarding a 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 an excellent bond during the first few weeks of the school year, and were disappointed that the aide was subsequently 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. With the case of this particular family, they have had to adjust to the new aide despite their plea for change.

9.2 It was mentioned that there is a day-long workshop on November 6th entitled, **Joyful Learning** to be held at UQAM. SNAC members were asked if anybody desired attending the event at the expense of SNAC. A motion to approve payment was brought forward by Jennifer DiMarco, seconded by Maria Colavita, carried forward, and thus approved. Unfortunately, none of the committee members were able to attend. Registration for the **Current Trends in Autism** Conference starts on November 11th.

10.0 Standing Reports

10.1 Administration

Cindy Finn reported that two (2) Ped Days (i.e., September 19th and October 3rd) were set aside for the development of the IEPs. In addition, the LBPSB Centre for Excellence will be hosting a seminar on November 18th on "**Autism: Healthy Sexuality and Sex Education**".

10.2 Council of Commissioners

The Council of Commissioners has been dissolved due to the upcoming November 2nd elections. As a direct repercussion, no report was submitted. The next meeting of the Council of Commissioners will take place at the end of November.

10.3 Central Parents' Committee

The Committee did not submit a report as it has been concentrating mainly on the upcoming November 2nd School Board elections.

10.4 Education Committee

Once again, due to the upcoming school board election, no meeting was held, and thus, no report was submitted.

10.5 P.T.U.

A written report was included in the kit. The Annual Delegates' Weekend was held on October 17th through October 19th. Various workshops were given and presented. An induction dinner for new teachers will on December 2nd.

10.6 P.A.S.A.

As P.A.S.A. has yet to meet, no report was submitted. The next meeting for P.A.S.A will be on November 18th.

10.7 Professionals

No written report was submitted. Nonetheless, it was verbally reported by Maureen Hunt that many individuals attended workshops to enhance skills and resources.

10.8 I.A.S.S.

Robert Gilmartin provided a written report in the kit. It was noted that the AGM will be held on November 28th, offering a Health and Well-being Theme to the day.

10.9 Treasurer's Report

Sandra Buckingham reported that no financials have changed since the last report.

10.10 Website Administrator's Report

Jennifer DiMarco emphasized that the SNAC website counters were not reset. As a direct result, the page views are slightly ambiguous. Nevertheless, the SNAC website is receiving numerous hits.

10.11 Workshops Attended

None

13.0 Adjournment

Robert Gilmartin made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 9:40. This motion was seconded by Jennifer Di Marco and unanimously approved. The next meeting will take place at 7pm on Wednesday, November 19th, 2014 in room 219/221, 1925 Brookdale, Dorval.