

Special Needs Advisory Committee

Lester B. Pearson School Board

MINUTES OF THE MEETING – NOVEMBER 19TH, 2014

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

In attendance: Sandra Buckingham, Noel Burke (Council of Commissioners), Camelia Burlec, Marie-Eve Claude (Student Services), Maria Colavita, Jennifer DiMarco, Cindy Finn (DG/SSD), Robert Gilmartin (I.A.S.S.), Brett Hillgartner, Maureen Hunt (P.E.P.), Carollynn Jones (P.T.U.), Diana Martire (P.A.S.A), Christine McLean, Kiley Philip, Barbara Schnider.

Regrets: Romina Costantini, Mary Anne Davis (Council of Commissioners), Christopher Fuzessy (Student Services), Caroline LeBrun, Franca Kesic (WIAIH), Donnalynn Rainey.

Observers: Shannon Bird-Robertson

Recording Secretary: Laurie Kathleen Fox

The meeting was called to order by Brett Hillgartner at 7:05pm.

1.0 Pearson Education Foundation

Barbara Vuk Freeston, President of the Pearson Education Foundation (hereinafter, the PEF) of the Lester B. Pearson School Board gave a short presentation to SNAC. She explained that through a commitment to public education and the promotion of learning for all, the PEF believes in enhancing the opportunity for all students to become life-long learners, self-assured, respectful and responsible to their community. Recognizing that government funding of public education is finite, the PEF supports students and furthers this goal by supplying seed money to a broad array of projects generated by the teachers and administrators of the LBP community.

She explained that the PEF will be running 2 fundraisers before the holiday season. These fundraisers are pure fundraisers, whereby all monies go directly to the PEF. Secondly, **A Christmas Carol**, starring a cast of characters from the School Board, will be held on November 29 at Lakeside Academy in Lachine. Our own Cindy Finn will be participating in this Christmas classic. All money raised at the event will fund the PEF's Snowsuit and Boots Program – founded in memory of former commissioner Rona Cupak - which supplies winter wear to students in need across the board from Verdun to the Ontario border.

2.0 Introduction of New Commissioners to SNAC

Sandra Buckingham, Parent Commissioner of the Lester B. Pearson School Board for students with special needs, introduced the new Commissioners that would be sitting on the Committee. Mary Ann Davis, representing Ward 1, and Noel Burke, representing Ward 4, are

the newest SNAC Commissioners.

Noel Burke gave a short introduction and biography of himself. Mary Ann Davis was unable to attend the meeting on such short notice. The rest of the SNAC members followed with an introduction of themselves to welcome Commissioner Burke.

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

(SNAC1415-11.1) With Donnalynn Rainey's absence, voting rights were given to Camelia Burlec. It was moved by Kiley Philip to approve the Confirmation of Quorum. The motion was seconded by Sandra Buckingham and unanimously resolved.

4.0 Additions to Agenda

4.1 Approval of Agenda

(SNAC1415-11.2) A motion to approve the agenda by Jennifer DiMarco, seconded by Kiley Philip, and unanimously approved.

5.0 Corrections to Minutes of October 22nd, 2014

5.1 Approval of Minutes of October 22nd, 2014

(SNAC1415-11.3) A motion to approve minutes was put forth by Sandra Buckingham, seconded by Robert Gilmartin, and unanimously approved.

6.0 Business Arising

6.1 SNAC Awareness Campaign: Update from PASA

Diana Martire reported that there was nothing new to report to SNAC with respect to the last PASA meeting. Further to the committee's 2 previous requests that the PASA rep discuss with Administrators the possibility of SNAC including a letter with the IEP documents that were distributed 3 times per year, Diana Martire clarified that would not be possible. Instead, she indicated that the 3 Regional Directors of Schools have included a reference to SNAC in their newsletter to in-school Administrators, and have encouraged the distribution of the SNAC Chat Newsletter to the parents within their schools. The method by which the Principals choose to distribute the information and may be via the school website, Facebook page or email, and is at their discretion,.

6.2 SNAC Workshop for Parents on IEPs

The January 15 SNAC Workshop for Parents on the IEPs was discussed at length. This workshop will review the key features of an IEP, the resources available in the schools, as well as the process of referral for services. Through this workshop, parents will gain a better understanding of the types of educational supports that can be provided for students and how these supports are indicated on an IEP. The speakers (Celina Bérubé and Ruth Schwartz) will explain how teachers link students' objectives to their term plans and the Quebec Education Program (QEP). In the end, parents will leave the workshop with an understanding of their collaborative role in ensuring their child's success.

Brett Hillgartner agreed to develop a flyer to help advertise the event and would get back to the committee via email for approval of the flyer. Additionally, the "action item" list which had previously been distributed by Brett Hillgartner, was reviewed by the committee.

6.3 School Board Consultation: Enrollment Criteria Policy:

http://www.lbpsb.qc.ca/content/consultations/POLICY_Enrollment_Criteria_2015_16_EN.pdf

SNAC's consultation response from last year:

http://snac.lbpsb.qc.ca/eng/extra/img/84SNACConsultationResponse_EnrollmentCriteria2014-2015.pdf

The Education Act requires that the School Board develops criteria to be used when the number of applications for enrollment in a school exceeds the capacity of the school. The document for Enrollment Criteria 2015-2016 had not been modified from the previous year, however, with a new set of Commissioners in place, it was felt that the committee should issue a response since it would be examined from a new perspective. Sandra Buckingham encouraged further discussion within the committee by pointing out all of the aspects of the Enrollment Criteria that were related to Special Needs. SNAC put forth a new response, drafted by Barbara Schnider, which was similar to that of the previous year. **(SNAC1415-11.4)** After a couple of minor adjustments to the text, Sandra Buckingham made a motion to approve the Enrollment Criteria 2015-2016 Consultation Response. This motion was seconded by Brett Hillgartner, and unanimously approved.

7.0 New Business

7.1 Teacher Training on Special Needs issues at LBPSB

In response to a question from a parent, Cindy Finn informed SNAC members on the diverse training offered to teachers within the LBPSB system. She explained the difference between “pre-service” training that takes place during university and “in-service” training that occurs once the staff member is an LBPSB employee. Pre-service training with respect to Special Needs depends entirely on the university where the future teachers get trained, but generally there is only one university course that is devoted to Special Needs. SNAC discussed that it might be in our best interest to write a letter to MELS requesting that additional training on Special Needs issue occur at the university level since the current training is insufficient.

As for new teachers entering the school board, Cindy Finn explained that the school board has a New Teacher Committee, offering workshops for teachers with less than 3 years' experience. These courses concentrate on parent-teacher interviews, the reality of the classroom, classroom management and so forth. Cindy Finn also described other various types of training offered for teachers. Diana Martire stressed that the in-service support and training offered by the school board is fantastic and that many courses are offered to further learning for teachers. It is important to note that despite the fact that many in-service training opportunities are available on Special Needs issues, none of these trainings are mandatory for teachers/staff. Essentially, if a teacher does not participate of their own volition, they will not further their skills/abilities in teaching students with Special Needs . Ostensibly, with the emergent number of children with Special Needs, continuous, contemporary courses on this subject is paramount.

7.2 Preparation for budget presentation on Jan 21st (develop questions for Ms. Heffernan)

Brett Hillgartner recommended that SNAC provide a list of questions for Carol Heffernan in advance of her budget presentation scheduled for January 21st, 2015. It was requested that any questions be sent to Brett by the start of the Holiday Break so that they could be sent to Ms. Heffernan in early January.

7.3 IEP meeting dates

Brett Hillgartner brought up the issue as to when IEP Meetings are held. It was noted that in some schools, there is a significant time delay between the receipt of the IEP at the beginning of the term, and the meeting between the parents and the in-school resource team to discuss/adjust the IEP. In some cases, IEP meetings only took place during the first week of November this year, which was very close to the end of the term. It was questioned whether the School Board has a policy to govern the date of IEP meetings. Cindy Finn explained that there are designated pedagogical days for the drafting of IEPs. However, it was up to each individual school to set up the IEP meetings with the parents. It was also discussed that in High School the IEPs don't have to be accepted and signed by the parents for them to be put into effect. Cindy Finn commented that a parents' signature was not a requirement of the IEP, but rather a courtesy to the parents.

7.4 LBPSB policy for tutoring

It was brought to the committee's attention by the Central Parents' Committee that in particular schools, students who are having academic difficulty have had tutors work with them during daycare hours after school and on school premises. The Lester B. Pearson School Board has expressed some concern about this process. A lively discussion transpired about the benefits of tutoring for students in need, versus potential conflicts of interests, security issues and insurance concerns. Ostensibly, student safety is of a paramount concern. Yet, for working parents with children of special needs, after-school time is basically the only available time allotted for tutoring (as many have therapies on weekends). It appeared as though the committee was divided on whether or not it is proper for a students' classroom teacher and/or Integration Aide to provide tutoring services after school or whether that represents a conflict of interest. In addition, it was discussed whether the "Judicial Form" that is currently required for Home and School Volunteers could be a good method for providing a background check on Private tutors.

7.5 Proposal for Special Needs Conference

Barbara Schnider asked if SNAC would be willing to participate and collaborate with other special needs committees for an upcoming Special Needs Conference that was discussed by the Education Committee of the QFHSA. All SNAC members seemed willing to join forces and felt that it was a brilliant idea.

8.0 Standing Reports

8.1 Administration

A report was included in the kit. Cindy Finn reported that the Annual Report to MELS was on the fore-front. Other than that, there was nothing new to report.

8.2 Council of Commissioners

Noel Burke reported that at the Council of Commissioners first meeting since the November 2nd elections, all new Commissioners and Parent Commissioners were sworn in, and delegates to new and standing committees were named. The first council meeting will take place on November 24th.

8.3 Central Parents' Committee

A report was included in the kit. The issue of tutoring that was discussed at length under point 7.4 was accentuated.

8.4 Education Committee

Barbara Schnider reiterated that there was nothing new to report.

8.5 P.T.U.

Carolynn Jones expressed that there was a P.T.U. meeting today, and that a demonstration was being held today regarding the government's austerity measures. She clarified that teaching staff were not expecting to receive any additional funding to support the integration of students with special with needs this year, due to the recent funding cuts.

8.6 P.A.S.A.

This was previously discussed by Diana Martire under Section 6.1.

8.7 Professionals

Maureen Hunt reported that they were busy with MELS special needs coding validations. Remembrance Day celebrations were quite poignant this year, given the tragic events that transpired both in St-Jean-sur-Richelieu and in Ottawa.

8.9 I.A.S.S.

Robert Gilmartin expressed that there was nothing additional to report. The IASS AGM will be held on Friday November 28th, 2014.

8.9 Treasurer's Report

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

8.10 Website Administrator's Report

Jennifer DiMarco expressed that since last month, there have been 603 hits on the SNAC website. Moreover, Cindy Finn's Webcast has been viewed 73 times.

An email of note was discussed from a concerned parent who just moved here from BC. She expressed concern on how an IEP is written here in Quebec, through the School Board. Some guidance was provided to the parent by Jennifer DiMarco.

Sandra Buckingham provided her new coordinates as LBPSB Parent Commissioner for Special Needs, requesting that this information be added to the home page on SNAC's website. Her new coordinates are the following:

Email: sbuckingham02@lbpsb.qc.ca

Telephone number: (514) 422-3000, extension #30163

8.11 Workshops Attended

Jennifer DiMarco attended the *Autism & Sexuality Workshop* hosted by the ASD Centre for Excellence. Jennifer expressed that the workshop was quite informative and that attendance was quite strong.

9.0 Correspondence

Cindy Finn handed out some buttons and pamphlets entitled "Positive Ways to Manage your Days", written by a group of McGill nursing students.

10.0 Varia Nil.

11.0 Questions from the Public

1) A question from a concerned parent was brought forth by Sandra Buckingham: it was asked if the LBPSB has an entente with Giant Steps. The short answer is no. Cindy Finn explained the process whereby students at LBPSB may be referred to external specialised schools in the event that LBPSB feels that they are unable to provide services to meet the needs of a specific student. LBPSB currently has an "Entente in Principle" with Summit, Peter Hall and MOSD; however ententes are not in place with Vanguard or Giant Steps. If a parent chooses to send their child to any external school, transportation services must be discussed with that school, and is not the responsibility of LBPSB.

2) A member of the public asked whether the SNAC Chat was available for those who are not tech-savvy. She was disappointed that the only way she could get SNAC Chat was to go to the SNAC website since it was not available for distribution elsewhere. It was mentioned to her that principals can choose to print some copies out for interested parents, but that it is at the principal's discretion.

3) Sandra Buckingham proposed an idea coming from a parent at the Central Parents Committee. The interested parent was wondering if there was a way to showcase achievements of those children with Special Needs? It was discussed that the committee may consider adding an extra tab on the SNAC website entitled "Achievements", to highlight and feature student successes.

12.0 Adjournment

(SNAC1415-11.5) Jennifer DiMarco made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 9:38. This motion was seconded by Kiley Philip, and unanimously approved. The next meeting will take place at 7pm on Wednesday, January 21st, 2015 in room 219/221, 1925 Brookdale, Dorval.

