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Special Needs Advisory Committee

Lester B. Pearson School Board

MINUTES OF THE MEETING – April 15th, 2015.

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

In attendance: Sandra Buckingham, Camelia Burlec, Maria Colavita, Romina Costantini, Mary Ann Davis, Jennifer DiMarco, Cindy Finn (DG/SSD), Robert Gilmartin (I.A.S.S.), Brett Hillgartner, Maureen Hunt (P.E.P.), Carolynn Jones (P.T.U.), Kiley Philp, Barbara Schnider, and Donnalynn Rainey.

Regrets: Noel Burke, Christopher Fuzessy (Student Services), Franca Kesic (WIAIH), Caroline LeBrun, Diana Martire (P.A.S.A), and Christine McLean.

Observers: Voula Gritsas (from 7:19pm to 9:00pm) and Hennilynn Radin (from 7:22pm).

Recording Secretary: Laurie Kathleen Fox

Brett Hillgartner called the meeting to order at 7:06.

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

It was confirmed that Quorum had been established and Brett Hillgartner called the meeting to order at 7:06pm. **(SNAC1415-4.1)** Camelia Burlec was assigned voting rights for the evening. **MOTION CARRIED unanimously.**

2.0 Additions to Agenda

There was a request for the following additions to the Agenda under Section 7,

CORRESPONDENCE:

Under **Section 7.5:** Request for a Presentation by the LBPSB Teachers Union.

Under **Section 7.6:** McGill University Study focussing on Children with Autism & Vocabulary.

2.1 Approval of Agenda

(SNAC1415-4.2) A motion to approve the modified agenda with the above-mentioned addition was first received by Jennifer DiMarco, and seconded by Sandra Buckingham. The motion was carried unanimously, and approved.

3.0 Corrections to Minutes of March 18th, 2015

3.1 Approval of Minutes of March 18th, 2015

(SNAC1415-4.3) A motion to approve minutes from the March 18th, 2015 meeting was put forth by Robert Gilmartin, seconded by Carollyn Jones, and approved.

4.0 Business Arising

4.1 Ratify email vote for Budget Consultation

An email was sent to all members regarding the Budget Consultation. The majority of SNAC members (15 members) voted online in favour of the Budget Consultation Response.

(SNAC1415-4.4) A motion to approve the ratification of the email vote was put forth by Brett Hillgartner, and unanimously approved by all voting SNAC committee members.

Romina Costantini arrived at 7:14.

4.2 Sharing LBPSB SNAC information on EPCA website

A lengthy discussion regarding EPCA's request that the LBPSB share some of the content from the SNAC website, such as the videos of parent workshops for the soon to be created Special Needs section of the EPCA website transpired. Sandra Buckingham has been asked to assist EPCA in this effort. Sandra noted that it was recommended by Jim Hendry that if an individual is currently on the EPCA website and desires opening a SNAC link that this particular link be opened in a separate window. By doing so, SNAC is sharing its information with EPCA and the EPCA community, while allowing the LBPSB to continue to host all SNAC content. As a courtesy to those who are featured in SNAC webcasts (*i.e.* Dr. Cindy Finn, Ruth Schwartz, and Celina Bérubé), Dr. Finn will discuss this further with those individuals to ascertain if they are comfortable with the idea of sharing their respective webcasts in which they appeared. Approval of item was tabled until the next SNAC meeting scheduled for May 20th.

4.3 Update: QESEC (Inter Board Special Needs Parents) Meeting on April 19th, 2015

Sandra Buckingham informed the committee that following the last QESEC meeting on February 19, 2015, a letter to MELS was written and approved with recommendations regarding school board governance and increased participation of parents. The President of EPCA hand-delivered the QESEC letter with governance recommendations directly to Chantal Beaulieu, Assistant Deputy Minister for English Affairs at MELS. Mme. Beaulieu was delighted to hear that the English special needs parent community was working together as one to present a point of view that has been missing. The next QESEC meeting will take place on April 19, 2015. SNAC members were asked to send suggested topics for the Agenda to Brett.

4.4 Update: CPC and representation of parents of students with Special Needs

A rather lengthy discussion took place regarding the CPC and the representation of students with Special Needs. Brett reiterated that contrary to common misconception, SNAC is not a parents' committee *per se*, nor is SNAC a subcommittee of the CPC. Brett clarified the composition of all SNAC members. She mentioned that SNAC is a matrix group that represents various stakeholders' points of view, just as a Governing Board does not represent only the parents' views at the school. Since it is CPC's mandate and responsibility to represent all parents within the school board, one Special Needs parent and an alternate, as well as a Parent Commissioner for Special Needs, are mandated by the Education Act to be members of CPC and to represent the Special Needs parents' point of view. The CPC did not support

SNAC representatives to CPC when they suggested that the composition of Governing Boards should be changed to add an additional parent of a student with special needs. By doing so, parental input specific to the special needs community could be increased at the Governing Board of every school. SNAC members discussed the idea of bringing this notion of increasing special needs parent representation on Governing Boards directly to Council who could make these recommendations to the Governing Boards when they discuss Governing Board composition on May 23rd, 2015. A motion to vote for the drafting of a letter to the Executive Committee of Council requesting that the composition of Governing Boards should be changed to request an additional parent of a student with special needs was put forth by Jennifer DiMarco, and seconded by Kiley Philp. **(1415-4.5)**

MOTION CARRIED by majority vote, with six in favour, one opposition, and three abstentions.

4.5 Update: Printing of additional IEP Resource Kits

At the time of the meeting, Barbara Schnider has just received the most recent prices for the printing of additional IEP kits. At this point in the meeting, the discussion leaped to Section 6.11, Treasurer's Report. Sandra Buckingham confirmed that \$5 is to be added to the Net Balance, as an amount submitted for an Expense report was \$5 less than what was indicated in the Report, leaving a net balance **\$1298.00** to be spent by the end of the academic year. Should there be any outstanding monies, the School Board would reclaim these unspent funds, and not (as in years past) piggyback this unused money to the following academic year. In other words, it would be wise to spend all the money that was allocated to SNAC.

Dr. Finn reported that approximately 40-70 new, coded students should be entering Kindergarten within the schools of the Lester B. Pearson School Board for the upcoming 2015-2016 academic year.

Barbara elaborated that color copies of the kit are indeed more expensive than black and white kits. However, the members agreed that color copies would be more professional, and used to highlight important items in the kit. Specifically, Barbara reported the following particulars:

The cost for **500** color IEP kits= \$1505.00 plus taxes.

The cost for **1000** color IEP kits= ≈\$2200.00 plus taxes.

Irrespective of the number of kits in which the committee decides to order, the committee will have exceeded its allocated budget of \$1500.00 per academic year. Sandra Buckingham reiterated (and has done so in previous meetings) that the SNAC IEP Kit is well received and appreciated by the school board. At this point, a motion was put forth to request the Council of Commissioners to approve additional funding in order to pay for the costs of printing additional IEP kits. **(1415-4.6)** This motion was put forth by Jennifer DiMarco, seconded by Barbara Schnider, approved collectively. **MOTION CARRIED** unanimously.

4.6 Ideas for SNAC Workshops for the 2015-2016 school year

Brett Hillgartner asserted that it takes a lot of work and manpower to present two workshops within the year. Moreover, SNAC will be occupied and engaged in collaboration with the school board in dealing with the **Major School Change Consultation**. The March 26th, 2015 budget announcement suggested that school boards would be cut by \$350 million. If the government uses their historical method of per capita allocation cuts, LBPSB's share of that would be an additional \$8.75 million, totalling \$19.25 million in cuts for the 2015-2016 school years. Collective agreement obligations that govern salaries for teachers, professionals and support staff have not diminished. Obligation to provide services to students must continue.

Moreover, the school board will not be able to meet the salary increase of a mere 1% for teachers, as promised on March 31st, 2015 by the provincial government in the teachers' collective agreement. Input is strongly needed and urged. The Major School Consultation (*hereinafter*, the MSC) will be a major preoccupation across the school board, including SNAC, as the MSC process is a complex undertaking and one that is not launched without serious consideration of existing circumstances. It involves soliciting input from a range of stakeholders in the system. Parents, teachers, students, community leaders and groups, Governing Boards, unions and the community at large all have stakes in maintaining a healthy, vibrant and relevant public school system. For this reason, the 2 September and October 2015 SNAC meetings will be scheduled prior to the deadline for Briefs to be submitted regarding MSC. With the role of SNAC in the MSC clarified, Donnalynn Rainey suggested that a form of "Survey Monkey" be formulated, and eventually sent to all SNAC members for their respective ideas for upcoming workshops. It was also suggested that because of the MSC process, the first SNAC Workshop would not take place until mid to late November of 2015.

5.0 New Business

5.1 Three Year Plan 2015-2018 Consultation Response

http://www.lbpsb.qc.ca/content/consultations/ENGLISH_Consultation_Letter_3-year%20plan%202015%20to%202018_LAUNCH.pdf

http://www.lbpsb.qc.ca/content/consultations/2015-2018%20Three%20Year%20Plan_Feb%2024%202015.pdf

Brett Hillgartner announced that she drafted a letter (due April 16th, 2015) on behalf of SNAC in response to the Three Year Plan of Allocation and Destination of Immovables 2015-2018. This letter was included in the kit. The letter summarized that SNAC would like to encourage the Council of Commissioner that LBPSB houses important services and programs for children with Special Needs. The letter further explains that change is extremely challenging for students with Special Needs, and that should changes in location for these students transpire it could be detrimental for them. The only minor change in the letter that the Committee specified was the addition of the following sentence, to be added at the end of the letter: "In addition, we encourage that attention be given to universal accessibility to LBPSB buildings for all." (1415-4.7) The motion to approve the letter was put forth by Robert Gilmartin, seconded by Barbara Schnider, and approved. **MOTION CARRIED** unanimously.

5.2 Major School Change (MSC) Consultation

a) How do we ensure that services to Special Needs students continue through this process?

As SNAC will engage with the school board in dealing with the Major School Change Consultation, it is important that as a committee, we begin the process of drafting a brief before the committee breaks for the summer. Brett Hillgartner elaborated that it be best that the committee request further information from the school board, including: (1) a complete list of all Special Needs Services provided by the board and the associated costs, and (2) identification of Special Needs resources. As a committee, we would like to ensure that there is the least amount of disruption possible for children with special needs, as any change can be most challenging for these children. Brett requested that

members send ideas that will ensure that services to Special Needs students will be least effected after the MSC Consultation process.

b) Will the board continue its focus on “integration” of Special Needs students?

The committee elaborated that this would be an essential model to push for in the MSC consultation.

c) Can SNAC play a larger role in the budget allocation for Special Needs students?

SNAC should examine this important stance.

d) Can SNAC have an extra meeting in June to prepare the SNAC response for the MSC?

There was a general consensus that an additional meeting be held in June to compensate for the February meeting that was cancelled, as well as to tackle the process of drafting a brief for the MSC Consultation. It was agreed that no reports would be discussed in this meeting, but rather, that ideas be initiated and finalized for the future SNAC members.

(SNAC1415-4.7) Upon a motion first received by Jennifer DiMarco, seconded by Camelia Burlec, and carried unanimously, it was approved that a June 2nd meeting be added.

MOTION CARRIED by majority vote.

e) Date for SNAC AGM and September-October 2015 meetings

Pending availability of the Main Boardroom at the Lester B. Pearson School Board (1925 Brookdale Avenue, Dorval, Quebec, H8P 2Y7), the SNAC Annual General Meeting will take place on Wednesday September 16th, 2015 at 7:00pm. It was also confirmed that the first meeting of the year would subsequently be held 2 weeks later on Wednesday September 30th, 2015 at 7:00pm. The next meeting will be held on Wednesday October 21st, 2015 at 7:00pm, and meetings to follow throughout the academic year on every third Wednesday of the month. **(SNAC1415-4.8)** A motion to approve these dates was put forth by Jennifer Di Marco, seconded by Sandra Buckingham, and unanimously approved.

MOTION CARRIED by majority vote

5.3 Training of support staff (i.e. daycare and transportation staff) on Special Needs issues

Dr. Cindy Finn explained that bussing is contracted out to various bussing companies. Inasmuch, it is difficult for Dr. Finn to elaborate further if bus drivers are sensitized to children of Special Need through various workshops. Dr. Finn commented that there is a good relationship between the school board, and the bussing companies, as well as their drivers. As for daycare workers, Maureen Hunt explained that the FFSST recently provided a workshop for its various daycare workers.

6.0 Standing Reports

Standing Reports were not verbally discussed. SNAC members were urged to read any written reports provided in the kit.

6.1 SNAC Report to CPC, Education, and Council (FYI) Report in the kit.

6.2 Administration Report in the kit.

6.3 Council of Commissioners Report in the kit.

6.4 Parent Commissioner Report in the kit.

6.5 Central Parents' Committee Report in the kit.

6.6 Education Committee Report in the kit.

6.7 P.T.U. No report.

6.8 P.A.S.A. No report.

6.9 Professionals No report.

6.10 I.A.S.S. No report.

6.11 Treasurer's Report Report in the kit.

The Treasurer's Report was previously discussed under item 4.5 of the meeting.

6.12 Website Administrator's Report

Jennifer DiMarco reported that hits to the SNAC website were slightly down this month. Jennifer reported that since last month, there were 435 hits to the SNAC website, and 31 viewings of Dr. Cindy Finn's webcast.

6.13 Workshops Attended

Four detailed workshop reports from the March 22nd, 2015 conference, Montreal Autism and Motion Conference were provided in the kit. These workshops include:

- (1) Autism and Human Diversity, with Opening Speaker, Charles Lafortune.
- (2) Autism and Human Diversity, with keynote speaker, John Elder Robison
- (3) Autism and Human Diversity, with keynote speakers Antoine Ouellette and Katharine Cukier
- (4) Human Diversity: Why is Autism More Common in Males?

7.0 Correspondence

7.1 MCLD Parenting Conference on Sunday April 26th, 2015 from 8:00-4:30

<http://events.r20.constantcontact.com/register/event?oeidk=a07ea9sz4j083e81c19&llr=hlz9vblab>.

7.2 Stimulation Jeunesse pilot project for students with special needs

Called the Stimulation Jeunesse pilot project, LBPSB students are the first to use specialized rooms developed by Camp Bosco and inspired by the Snoezelen approach - a fusion of two Dutch words meaning explore and relax - to provide sessions of multisensory stimulation

followed by relaxation. Camelia Burlec added that the project seems to be having an extremely positive effect on her children who are participating in the project.

7.3 Special Needs professional seminar on Financial Resources on April 22nd, 2015 from 11-12:30

This seminar has been cancelled.

7.4 Autisme Montreal Invitation: Testimonies Evening on April 21st, 2015 from 6:30pm-9:30pm at l'Étincelle School located at 6080 Esplanade Avenue. A parent of a child with ASD will testify, among other things, her experiences, challenges, difficulties, successes and strategies. Support workers, parents and people with ASD are invited to attend this evening during which we will have the opportunity to welcome Mrs. Geneviève Lapalme, mother of a 7 year-old boy. The presentation is in French.

7.5. Request for a Presentation by the LBPSB Teachers Union.

The president of the Lester B. Pearson School Board Teachers Union, John Donnelly, approached Dr. Cindy Finn if he could provide a short presentation on the PTU and the union's position regarding the current teacher negotiations. **(1415-4.10)** Upon a motion first brought forth by Kiley Philp, seconded by Jennifer DiMarco, and unanimously approved, Mr. Donnelly will be allowed to speak for 15 to 20 minutes and respond to questions at the next SNAC meeting (May 20th, 2015).

7.6 McGill University Study focussing on Children with Autism and Vocabulary

Dr. Finn discussed a current study conducted by the graduate students of the Faculty of Communication Sciences at McGill University. Specifically, the students are looking for children with special needs ranging in age from 6 to 10 years-old.

8.0 Varia

Inquiring for a teacher-friend, Donnalynn Rainey asked the committee for recommendations regarding educational materials and sensory tools. Options are available on the FDMT website.

9.0 Questions from the Public

Nil.

10.0 Adjournment

(SNAC1415-4.11) Upon a motion by Jennifer DiMarco and seconded by Kiley Philp, the meeting was adjourned at 9:36pm. **MOTION CARRIED** by majority vote.

The next meeting will be held at 7pm on Wednesday May 20th, 2015 in room 219/221, 1925 Brookdale Avenue.