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Special Needs Advisory Committee

Lester B. Pearson School Board

MINUTES OF THE MEETING – May 20th, 2015.

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

In attendance: Sandra Buckingham, Camelia Burlec, Marie-Eve Claude (SSD), Maria Colavita, Jennifer DiMarco (from 7:41pm), Cindy Finn (DG/SSD), Christopher Fuzessy (SSD), Robert Gilmartin (I.A.S.S.), Brett Hillgartner, Maureen Hunt (P.E.P.), Carollynn Jones (P.T.U.), Christine McLean, Kiley Philp, Donnalynn Rainey, Barbara Schnider.

Regrets: Noel Burke, Romina Costantini, Mary-Ann Davis, Franca Kesic (WIAIH), Caroline LeBrun, Diana Martire (P.A.S.A).

Observers: Mike Nalecz, Hennilynn Radin (from 7:19pm).

Recording Secretary: Laurie Kathleen Fox Kadri

Brett Hillgartner called the meeting to order at 7:09.

1.0 Special Presentation by John Donnelly from Pearson Teachers' Union

In light of the current MELS budget compressions, coupled with the current negotiations for the Teachers Collective Agreement, Mr. John Donnelly shared with SNAC the perspective and concerns of the teachers with respect to potential changes to services provided to students with special needs. Mr. Donnelly responded to questions at the end of his presentation, and he concluded his presentation by emphasizing that both public and parental support is gravely needed.

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

Until Jennifer DiMarco's arrival, voting rights were given to Camelia Burlec.

3.0 Additions to Agenda

There were no additions to the Agenda.

3.1 Approval of Agenda

(SNAC1415-5.1) A motion to approve the presented agenda was put forth by Sandra Buckingham, seconded by Robert Gilmartin. The motion was carried unanimously and approved.

MOTION CARRIED by majority vote.

4.0 Corrections to Minutes of April 22nd, 2015

4.1 Approval of Minutes of April 22nd, 2015

(SNAC1415-5.2) A motion to approve the Minutes of April 22nd 2015 was put forth by Barbara Schnider, seconded by Robert Gilmartin. The motion was carried unanimously and approved.

MOTION CARRIED by majority vote.

5.0 Business Arising

5.1 Sharing LBPSB SNAC information on EPCA website (vote)

SNAC is investigating the feasibility of sharing SNAC website content with EPCA for the new Special Needs section of their website. Since Cindy Finn was unable to discuss this issue with Jim Hendry, this item was tabled until further notice.

5.2 a) SNAC input to MSC

Sandra Buckingham, Special Needs Parent Commissioner attended and provided an update on the MSC meeting that was hosted by Greendale on May 14, 2015, In attendance were four neighboring schools, including St. Anthony, St. Charles, Thorndale and Wilder Penfield. Sandra asserted that the meeting was well-attended. Various issues were discussed, from the consideration to opening a Special Needs school, to class sizes, to the capacity of schools. The opening of a Special Needs School will not happen due to lack of funding to support this endeavor. In regards to class sizes, Sandra explained that class sizes are controlled by teachers' collective agreements and these are under current negotiations. Sandra also elaborated that there was discussion on the establishment of "*Transition Committees*" to assist in the ease of transitions for Special Needs children in the event of a school merger.

Brett Hillgartner then confirmed that both she and Barbara Schnider would be drafting a brief for the Major School Consultation on behalf of SNAC to be discussed at the upcoming June 2nd meeting. Any input that SNAC members could provide would be most appreciated.

Jennifer DiMarco arrived at 7:41 during these discussions.

5.2 b) LBPSB Special Needs Financials

Further to the April 19, 2015 QESEC meeting, QESEC will be drafting a letter to MELS to protest insufficient funding provided to school boards to support the Integration of Students with Special Needs into regular classrooms. It is acknowledged that all school boards are severely underfunded in this area. This letter will be provided to SNAC members for input, as well as to other school board representatives, and then be finalized and sent out by QESEC. Additionally, QESEC will be preparing an additional letter to MELS with a list of recommended changes to the Education Act pertaining to the Election procedures of parent members of the Special Needs Advisory Committees and the Special Needs Parent Commissioners.

5.3 a) Update: Printing of additional IEP Resource Kits

Barbara Schnider reported that 500 additional IEP kits have been ordered, and that these kits should arrive by next week. Dr. Finn confirmed that the LIFE Program will be available to assemble the kits, and assembly should be completed within 1 week. It is expected that the Kits will be ready before the end of this school year, and ready for distribution to school Resource teams at the start of the next school year.

Discussion then concentrated on the Treasurer's Report. Sandra Buckingham confirmed that

there have been no budgetary changes since the last meeting. A breakdown of SNAC's budget is as follows:

Available Budget: \$1299.58
Expenses to print 500 additional IEP Kits: \$-\$1730.37
Subtotal: Expenses Incurred to Date: -\$ 430.79
Expenses to print 120 AGM Posters: -\$137.97
NET BALANCE: -\$ 568.76

SNAC's request to the Council of Commissioners to approve additional funding in order to pay for the costs of printing additional IEP kits and AGM posters was approved, and the \$568.76 deficit will be absorbed.

5.3 b) Printing of AGM Posters

Dr. Finn substantiated that Maureen McAfee reserved the Main Board Room for the SNAC Annual General Meeting for Wednesday September 16th, 2015. Inasmuch, Barbara confirmed that SNAC could proceed in printing 120 AGM Posters (at a final cost of \$137.97) now that the AGM Meeting has been confirmed. Two posters will be sent to every school. Cindy Finn will contact the Directors of Schools so that they can request that all in-school administrators distribute the PDF version of the AGM Flyer to the parents of students with special needs at every school.

(SNAC1415-5.3) A motion to approve the printing of the AGM posters was put forth by Jennifer DiMarco, seconded by Kiley Philp. The motion was approved.

MOTION CARRIED by majority vote.

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

Following concerns over the past several months regarding the representation of parents with Special Needs at CPC, 5 SNAC parent members attended the last CPC meeting on May 7, 2015. For 2 members, it was their first time attending a CPC meeting. These members informed SNAC about their negative perceptions of the meeting. In addition, they informed the committee that the Parent Commissioner At Large had requested that the CPC Internal Rules be discussed early in the Agenda, in order to finalize discussions that have been ongoing for months, and to clarify the role of the Special Needs Parent Commissioner at CPC. However, this request was denied. Only a brief discussion of the Internal Rules took place very late in the meeting (approximately 10:30 pm), when it was determined that the Internal Rules would be reviewed and updated by a Subcommittee consisting of the CPC Chair, the Parent Commissioner at Large, the Parent Commissioner for Special Needs and the Chair of the Region 2 Parents Committee. The regular CPC meeting ended at approximately 11pm, and was followed by a private members-only in-camera session.

SNAC examined the Education Act with regard to the Election Process for SNAC Parent Members and the Special Needs Parent Commissioner (SNPC). It was discussed that LBPSB's long standing practice of electing SNAC Parent Members at the Annual AGM should continue so as the special needs parent population is able to select their own representatives, with CPC *approval* of these elected members as presented. For similar reasons, SNAC also discussed that the SNPC should be elected by the SNAC parent members. Ultimately, SNAC members felt that the CPC should establish the SNPC as a full-voting member of the CPC in order to increase the representation of parents of students with special needs. Inasmuch, SNAC is preparing a letter to the CPC in this regard, to request that CPC formally makes these changes to their Internal Rules. In an attempt to

improve relations with CPC, the SNAC Chair will communicate this request with the CPC Executive only, rather than all committee members.

5.5 Update: QESEC

Brett Hillgartner drafted a letter to Pierre Chouinard, President of EPCA in support for the Quebec English Special Education Committee (QESEC). Specifically, this is a letter of endorsement of the QESEC, comprising a group of Special Needs Parent Commissioners and the Executives of the Special Needs Advisory Committees of the Quebec English School Boards. **(SNAC1415-5.4)** A vote was taken to approve this letter of support for QESEC. It was moved by Jennifer DiMarco to approve the letter as presented. The motion was seconded by Donnalynn Rainey and unanimously approved.

MOTION CARRIED by majority vote.

5.6 Update: Letter to Council

Further to ongoing discussions at SNAC and at CPC for the past several months, SNAC prepared a letter and accompanying Resolution to Council and Administration to recommend that a position be established on every Governing Board for a parent of a student with an IEP. The goal is to increase parental input specific to the special needs community at the Governing Board of every school and center. It will also allow for improved communication between the special needs communities at every school and SNAC. Following discussions with the Chairman of the Board, it was agreed that the recommendation should be presented to Council rather than the Executive Committee. The letter and Resolution were approved by email vote, in order to meet the deadline for adding documents to the Council meeting kit. The Special Needs Parent Commissioner informed the committee that she has sent the letter to the Chairman of the Board, and is expecting feedback shortly.

<http://snac.lbpsb.qc.ca/eng/extra/img/133SNACLettertoCouncil-SNRepsonGBMay2015-3.pdf>

(SNAC1415-5.5) The email vote was ratified at the SNAC meeting. The result of the email vote was 10 in favour, 1 opposed, and 1 absent.

MOTION CARRIED by majority vote.

5.7 SNAC input to LBPSB procedure for tutoring

Further to numerous discussions throughout the year, SNAC has provided a list of suggestions and ideas to Cindy Finn, the committee's Administrative Liaison, pertaining to the practice of Tutoring of Students on school premises during Daycare hours. Dr. Finn agreed to present these ideas to administration on SNAC's behalf.

Kiley Philp left at 9:09 during discussions.

6.0 New Business

6.1 Inter School Board Meeting for all boards on the Island of Montreal and Laval

A group of Parents' Committees has been formed between the English and French School Boards of Montreal and Laval. Members include the Chairs of the Central Parents' Committees, the Chairs of the Special Needs Advisory Committees, and the Special Needs Parent Commissioners of the English and French School Boards, as well as other Executive members of these committees. The main goal of this group is to protest against MELS Budget Cuts. LBPSB currently has "observer" status on this committee. Two current initiatives that LBPSB is participating in include a Petition to

be posted with the Assemblée Nationale, and sample letters that Governing Boards can send to their local MNAs.

6.2 Drafting Annual Report

Brett Hillgartner asked for assistance in drafting the yearly SNAC Annual Report. Donnalynn Rainey has offered to assist in the composition of this important document.

6.3 Communications with Parents

Brett Hillgartner reinforced that this is one of the most difficult challenges faced by SNAC. Several ideas on how to communicate more effectively with parents were brought forth to the committee. In particular, the idea of doing a “parent survey” was examined. It was decided that this idea would be tabled until the following school year, due to the extensive current time/project commitments at SNAC. However, due to the importance of this issue, it will be added to the “Recommendations to next year’s committee” section of the Annual Report.

6.4 TEVA (Kiley Philp to elaborate)

Due to Kiley's departure from the meeting, TEVA was not discussed.

7.0 Standing Reports

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

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

7.2 Administration

Dr. Finn provided a detailed report in the kit. Dr. Finn informed the committee about a new Ministry program for students aged 6-15 with moderate to severe intellectual disabilities. This program will be known as **CASP** - a Competency-based Approach to Social Participation. The integral focus of this program is on assisting students in learning crucial and practical skills in order to significantly participate in school, home and community life. CASP will be piloted in the 2015-2016 academic year, with full implementation expected in 2016-2017 academic year. For more detailed information, please refer to the following link:

http://www.mels.gouv.qc.ca/references/publications/resultats-dela-recherche/detail/article/casp-education-program-a-competency-based-approach-to-socialparticipation/?tx_ttnews%5Blang%5D=1

7.3 Council of Commissioners No report.

7.4 Parent Commissioner Report in the kit.

7.5 Central Parents' Committee Report in the kit.

7.6 Education Committee Report in the kit.

7.7 P.T.U. No report.

7.8 P.A.S.A. No report.

7.9 Professionals No report.

7.10 I.A.S.S. No report.

7.11 Treasurer's Report

The Treasurer's Report was previously discussed under item **5.3 a)** of the meeting.

7.12 Website Administrator's Report

Jennifer reported that since last month, there were **531** hits to the SNAC website, and **49** viewings of Dr. Cindy Finn's webcast.

7.13 Workshops Attended

None attended.

8.0 Correspondence

8.1 The latest publication (Issue 34) of the Centre of Excellence Newsletter was provided to members of the committee.

9.0 Varia

Brett Hillgartner and her husband have created their own respective letter for their respective Governing Board at Clearpoint Elementary for the MSC. If anyone is interested in the letter, Brett would be happy to share it with them.

10.0 Questions from the Public

A parent visitor expressed concern that her school website did not have a link to the SNAC website, and that parents at her school did not receive information from SNAC. As SNAC's Administrative Liaison, Cindy Finn will make this request via the Regional Directors of Schools.

11.0 Adjournment

(SNAC1415-5.5) Upon a motion by Jennifer DiMarco and seconded by Robert Gilmartin, the meeting was adjourned at 10:01pm.

MOTION CARRIED by majority vote.

*The next meeting will be held at 7pm on Tuesday June 2nd, 2015
in room 219/221, 1925 Brookdale Avenue.*