



<http://snac.lbpsb.qc.ca/>
Email: snac@lbpearson.qc.ca

Special Needs Advisory Committee

Lester B. Pearson School Board

MINUTES OF THE MEETING – June 2nd, 2015.

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

In attendance: Sandra Buckingham, Camelia Burlec, Marie-Eve Claude, Maria Colavita, 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.), Christine McLean (from 7:21), Kiley Philp, and Barbara Schnider.

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

Observers: Debra Hume, and Kathy Robinson

Recording Secretary: Laurie Kathleen Fox Kadri

Brett Hillgartner called the meeting to order at 7:08.

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

With Donnalynn Rainey's absence, voting rights were given to Maria Colavita. Camelia Burlec also had voting rights until Christine McLean's arrival at 7:21.

2.0 Additions to Agenda There were no additions to the Agenda.

2.1 Approval of Agenda

(SNAC1415-6.1) A motion to approve the presented agenda was put forth by Kiley Philp, seconded by Jennifer DiMarco, and approved.

MOTION CARRIED by majority vote.

3.0 Corrections to Minutes of May 20th, 2015

3.1 Approval of Minutes of May 20th, 2015

(SNAC1415-6.2) A motion to approve the minutes of May 20, 2015 was put forth by Sandra Buckingham, seconded by Barbara Schnider, and approved.

MOTION CARRIED by majority vote.

4.0 Business Arising

4.1 MSC and Next Steps

This special June 2nd meeting was called in order to discuss the SNAC brief for the MSC consultation. In preparation, Sandra Buckingham sent some questions to a couple of

committee members. Sandra asked Robert Gilmartin, as representative of the Independent Association of Support Staff (I.A.S.S.), if an integration aide could follow a student to a new school in the event of school closures or mergers. Robert confirmed that this is not in line with the support staff collective agreement. Students are attached to the school they attend, whereas aides are assigned to a class within a school. Therefore, an aide would not follow an individual student, but may be transferred to the new school along with other staff members. Sandra explained that her main concern is to minimize the impact of change on the student. Sandra then asked Carolynn Jones about her experience working at a dual-track School. It should be noted that there are currently no dual-track schools within LBPSB since the closing of Purcell Academy. Dual-track schools have the unique advantage of offering two delivery models of French language instruction, early immersion and bilingual, which allows a school to meet the different needs of their population. Carolynn explained that in her experience the dual-track system had worked well, but that there were more students with special needs in the bilingual program than in the immersion one. She also mentioned that she prefers a system where there is only one teacher because it can be more challenging for students with special needs to move from one class to another. Some parent members of SNAC questioned why there were no more English-only schools in the LBPSB system. Administration explained that these schools were so heavily populated with students with special needs that they were often considered “special needs” schools by the general population. This goes against the principles of inclusive education that LBPSB champions, where students receive additional supports within a regular classroom.

There was further discussion of the draft MSC document that Brett Hillgartner prepared with the help of Barbara Schnider, Sandra Buckingham and Donnalynn Rainey. It was recommended that the document be reorganized to put the more important ideas pertaining to MSC transitions at the beginning. Additionally, it was recommended that the section which discusses issues of importance to SNAC was turned into bullet points to make it more concise. Brett Hillgartner will make these changes and provide a final draft of the brief via email to SNAC for further commentary and edits. Once this process is completed then a final version will be put to an email vote for SNAC members. Ideally, SNAC can complete and present the MSC brief prior to the end of the school year. If the new SNAC committee for the 2015-2016 school year would like to submit another brief on their behalf, they can do so next fall.

4.2 Budget Cuts

Sandra Buckingham confirmed that since the last meeting, there have been many questions regarding the budget cuts brought on by the Quebec government's announcement that it was cutting the board's budget by \$3.8 million for the 2015-2016 school-year on top of the previous \$11 million in cuts. The school board had originally presented a deficit budget with the intention of balancing by 2016, but were subsequently informed by the MEESR that budgets had to be balanced by 2015. Other topics discussed include:

- Budget cuts have forced the School Board to lay off employees immediately (the announcement was made on May 28th to cut 18 part-time elementary school librarians) as their respective collective agreement stipulated that all staffing decisions had to be made by June 1st.

- The Council of Commissioners will be meeting at the end of the month to review proposed budget cuts.
- The proposal to eliminate school board elections.
- The idea that the government may not fund the maintenance of schools that are less than 50% occupied and within 20 kilometers of another school.

4.3 Update: QESEC letter to Protest Special Needs Funding

Sandra Buckingham updated the committee about the letter that QESEC wrote and sent to the MEESR (dated May 26th, 2015) to protest the insufficient funding provided to school boards to support the inclusion of students with special needs. Earlier in the month, SNAC had been given the opportunity to comment on a draft of this letter prior to its approval by QESEC. Several SNAC members felt that it would be a good idea for SNAC to send a similar letter on the behalf of SNAC.

4.4 Vote: SNAC letter to Protest Special Needs Funding

In follow-up to the discussions prompted by the QESEC letter to MEESR to protest insufficient funding in education, SNAC prepared a similar letter to send to MEESR. This letter, written from SNAC's perspective, expressed concerns about the direct and negative impact the recently announced school board budget cuts will have on the success of students with special needs. The chair opened the floor to members to make any changes to the letter and some minor modifications were made to the draft. **(SNAC1415-6.3)** . Kiley Philp motioned to approve this letter with the aforementioned modifications, seconded by Robert Gilmartin, carried unanimously and approved.

MOTION CARRIED by majority vote.

4.5 Update: Printing of additional IEP Resource Kits and Printing of AGM Posters

Barbara Schnider reported that 500 additional IEP kits were printed. Students of the LIFE Program will assemble the kits. Barbara proceeded to thank the School Board for their contribution of additional funding to print the IEP kits and SNAC AGM posters (*i.e.*, \$568.76). Barbara explained that she dropped off 120 AGM Posters with Dr. Cindy Finn for distribution to the schools, and she also forwarded Cindy a PDF version for email distribution to parents of students with special needs at every school.

4.6 Update: CPC and SNAC election process

Further to ongoing discussions with CPC regarding the SNAC election process, Brett Hillgartner sent an email to the CPC Chair, the four parent commissioners, and the CPC member responsible for finalizing the CPC Internal Rules. It was expressed in the email that SNAC would like to continue the long-standing practice of electing SNAC parent members, that the special needs parent commissioner be elected by SNAC parents, and that the special needs parent commissioner be given voting rights at CPC. It is our hope that these recommendations be accepted by CPC and formalized in their Internal Rules.

4.7 Update: Letter to Council

At our last meeting, SNAC approved a letter to Council and Administration to recommend that a position be established on every Governing Board for a parent of a student with an IEP. This will 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.

According to Sandra Buckingham, the letter was presented to Council, but was tabled for resolution until their next meeting scheduled for June 29th, 2015. Sandra will explain the merits of this proposal at the next Council meeting.

5.0 Varia

Sandra Buckingham announced to the committee that the Council of Commissioners would be holding a Special Meeting of Council on Monday June 8th, 2015. In this special meeting, there will be the appointment of the new Director General of LBPSB, replacing Robert T. Mills after having served 42 years in public education. This meeting shall be webcast.

6.0 Questions from the Public

6.1) A member of the public wanted to know a little more about SNAC, and who exactly represents SNAC. Cindy Finn explained to her that According to the Education Act, every school board should establish an advisory committee on services for handicapped students and students with social maladjustments or learning disabilities. Dr. Finn also specified that the committee be composed of: Parents of students concerned, a representative of teachers, a representative of support staff, a representative of non-teaching professional staff, a representative of community organizations who provide services to these students, a school principal, the LBPSB Director General or his/her representative. It was also reiterated that the role of this committee is to advise the school board on a policy for the organization of educational services for students with special needs and advise on the allocation of financial resources for the provision of services intended for these students.

6.2) A parent visitor expressed her sincere thanks for the IEP Resource Kit that has been developed by SNAC. She indicated that she has successfully used the kit this year as a reference point, and to help prepare for her IEP meetings.

6.3) Two parent visitors expressed concern about the Budget Cuts announcements and Teacher's Contract Negotiations in the news. They were specifically concerned about how what this would mean for services to students with special needs. They also expressed concern about insufficient help for students who are "at risk" versus those who are "coded".

7.0 Adjournment

(SNAC1415-6.4) Upon a motion by Jennifer DiMarco and seconded by Kiley Philp, and unanimously approved, the meeting was adjourned at 9:02pm.

MOTION CARRIED by majority vote.

Brett Hillgartner expressed her gratitude to all parents for volunteering their time for all the children with Special Needs. The committee then gave Brett a round of applause for her hard work as her first year as SNAC Chairwoman. The meeting was immediately followed by an end-of-year celebration where SNAC members had refreshments and snacks.

***The next meeting will be the SNAC AGM.
The AGM will be held at 7pm on September 16th, 2015,
in the main boardroom at 1925 Brookdale Avenue in Dorval.***