

Special Needs Advisory Committee *Lester B. Pearson School Board*

MINUTES OF THE MEETING – NOVEMBER 18TH, 2015

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

In Attendance: Angela Berryman, Marie-Eve Claude (S.S.D.), Maria Colavita, Jennifer DiMarco, Cindy Finn (DG/SSD), Laurie Kathleen Fox, Robert Gilmartin (I.A.S.S.), Brett Hillgartner, Maureen Hunt (P.E.P.), Dianna Martire (P.A.S.A.), Kiley Philp, Donnalynn Rainey, Kathy Robinson, Barbara Schnider, Arlene Tennant (P.T.U.), and Cheryl Vienneau.

Regrets: Sandra Buckingham, Mary Ann Davis (Commissioner), Franca Kesic (W.I.A.I.H.), Samantha Marco, Christine McLean, and Danny Olivenstein (Commissioner).

Recording Secretary: Laurie Kathleen Fox

Observers: Carrie-Ann Houthuys

Brett Hillgartner called the meeting to order at 7:03.

1.0 Special Presentation: Dr. Cindy Finn: “Educating Students with Special Needs in Quebec”

Once again this year, 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, 2015 total enrollment at LBPSB was 20,613 students. Of these students, 973 were identified as those with handicaps. Students with handicaps represent 38% of students with Special Needs. Coded students are identified as those with autism, psychopathological disorders (depression, anxiety); moderate intellectual impairments, language impairments, mild motor/organic disorders; sensory impairments, and severe motor disability (and thus, coded with one of the 11 challenges accepted by the MEESR. A total of 1,587 students were identified as those in difficulty - students with an IEP, but not specifically coded. Students in Difficulty represent 62% of those students with Special Needs. Consequently, students with special needs currently constitute 12.4% of the total LBPSB population or 2,560 students. 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.

When we scrutinize the split between elementary and secondary schools, Dr. Finn reported the following: 31% of students with special needs are at the elementary level, versus 69% of these students at the secondary level. Additionally, when we break down the statistics for the distribution of those in difficulty, 79% have learning disabilities, 14% have mild cognitive impairments, and 7% have behavioral problems.

Dr. Finn explained that funding from the MEESR is *a priori*, based on the percentage of student population having special needs. Per capita funding from the MEESR is based on the number of students who have been identified, and diagnosed with validation by the MEESR as having a particular special need. The student is then assigned a specific numerical code. A medical diagnosis by a professional, including substantial proof that the child has specific 2 limitations that affect learning and/or socializing is required. MEESR provides the school board with a basic allocation of \$6,000 per student. However, this allocation is higher for students who have been identified as special needs; the amount of the funding depends on their respective code. Funding ranges between \$9,438 and \$14,701 for kindergarten students; between \$11,446 to \$17,863 for elementary students, and between \$10,728 to \$16,744 for secondary students.

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.

Discussion followed with a description of the various complementary educational services within the LBPSB. Some of these services include classroom teachers, support from paraprofessionals, itinerant teachers services, *etc.* The purpose of Resource Teams was then emphasized. IEPs, points of transition, and transition programs were then discussed. The Student Services Department at the school board was also discussed at length.

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>

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

With Sandra Buckingham's absence, voting rights were accorded to Cheryl Vienneau. Kathy Robinson was given voting rights with Christine McLean absence. Finally, Maria Colavita was accorded voting rights in Samantha Marco's absence. (SNAC1516-11.1) It was confirmed that quorum had been established.

3.0 Additions to Agenda

- 1) Addition: there was a request to add point 9.2 under **Correspondence** to discuss an email that was received by the SNAC website
- 2) Correction: the date indicated on the Agenda is to be modified to Wednesday, November 18th, and not November 19th as indicated (typo).

- 3) Correction: there was a motion to change the date of the next meeting. The agenda indicates the next meeting taking place on December 20th, which should read instead, January 20th. There are no SNAC meetings scheduled in December.

3.1 Approval of Agenda

(SNAC1516-11.2) A motion to approve the agenda with the aforementioned changes was put forth by Jennifer DiMarco, seconded by Maria Colavita, and unanimously approved.

MOTION CARRIED by unanimous vote.

4.0 Corrections to the Minutes of September 30th, 2015

4.1 Approval of the Minutes of September 30th, 2015

The only change to the minutes of September 30th is on Page 1 in the spelling of Jennifer DiMarco's name. (SNAC1516-11.3) Jennifer DiMarco approved the minutes, seconded by Kiley Philp, and consequently, unanimously approved.

MOTION CARRIED by unanimous vote.

5.0 Questions from the Public

An observer at the meeting addressed a rumor suggesting that coding for children with High-Functioning Autism will eventually be dropped. She was inquiring as to whether or not there was any truth to this rumor. As Arlene Tennant explained further, this point is currently on the negotiation table in the current teacher collective agreement negotiations. Whether or not to code students with high Functioning Autism isn't definitive thus far.

6.0 Business Arising

6.1 MSC: SNAC Brief Presentation at Public Hearing on November 17th

On Tuesday, November 18th, Brett Hillgartner, Jennifer DiMarco, and Angela Berryman presented the SNAC Brief at the MSC Town Hall Meeting at Verdun Elementary School. Their presentation can be viewed at <http://www.lbpsb.qc.ca/content/webcasting/MSC20151117.html>, specifically from the 1:04:15 mark to 1:27:25 of the webcast. Moreover, a copy of the SNAC Brief can be found at <http://snac.lbpsb.qc.ca/eng/extra/img/SNAC-MSC-2015-Brief.pdf>.

During the MSC brief presentation, SNAC representatives were asked two questions that they brought back to the committee for discussion. The first pertained to the amount or percentage of students with special needs that had language challenges. Dr. Cindy Finn gave a general statement as to her opinion on how to best answer this question. She also advised that she would send an email to the SNAC chair to aid in responding to the Council of Commissioners. The second question was if SNAC could provide the Council of Commissioners with a specific list of examples on how to aid students with transitions that may result from the MSC outcome. Specifically, the Council would appreciate any ideas on a Transition Plan for students with special needs. This plan of action, it was discussed, would be quite similar to the plan of action used in the transition from elementary school to high school. Some ideas will be drawn up by Angela Berryman and will be forwarded to all members via email for input and/or suggestions.

6.2 SNAC Email: Updating SNAC pamphlets

Barbara Schnider reported that for the 1350 pamphlets that are available, 2 block-out stickers (for the front and back of the pamphlet) are required to indicate the changes in the website. The

cost for 2700 stickers is \$42.00. Barbara was given the go-ahead to order these labels as this allocation of funds was previously approved at the last meeting (**SNAC1516-10.5**). As for the IEP Kits, Rob Gilmartin has dropped them off with the LIFE Program, and will be following up on the status of the labeling.

6.3 Identification of Special Needs GB Reps & new FAQ document

At the last meeting, SNAC discussed contacting CPC to follow-up on the optional Special Needs Parent Representative position that was introduced last June in order to determine how many of these positions were established at the GB AGMs in the fall. Brett Hillgartner reported that she has been in communication with Darren Kotania, Chairperson for the CPC. There is no official information as of yet. Brett then handed out a draft copy of a document Sandra Buckingham drafted. Specifically, Sandra drafted an FAQ regarding Special Needs Parents on school Governing Boards. Brett asked all members to email her with feedback and/or suggestions regarding this document. Eventually, once all comments are reached and compiled, the draft will be sent out for an email vote in order to send this document to the CPC.

6.4 SNAC IEP Workshop

Jennifer DiMarco reported that communications are on-going with the other members of the sub-committee. It was confirmed that Tuesday, February 2nd, 2016 would be the date of the workshop, barring any school board labor dispute issues.

6.5 Enrollment Criteria Consultation

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. At the October meeting, SNAC members were asked to review the School Board Consultation: Enrolment Criteria Policy and SNAC responses to the Consultation from previous years. Brett reported that there wasn't any new feedback. What was suggested was the drafting of a letter to indicate that SNAC's position; in that it remains unchanged. A response with portions from past consultations will comprise the brief. Once drafted, the brief will be emailed to all members for a vote and, once approved, submitted by November 27th, 2015.

7.0 Standing Reports

7.1 SNAC Report to CPC, Education, and Council

At the last meeting, it was discussed that every month Brett Hillgartner submits a SNAC Report to Council, CPC and the Education Committee. There was some discussion as to who should write and submit the report. As a response, Sandra Buckingham met with Suanne Stein Day to clarify the proper procedure for Council. After a discussion with Suanne Stein Day, it was decided that the SNAC chair's report be submitted, and then Sandra, Danny and Mary Ann will alternate as to whom shall be presenting the report at Council.

7.2 Administration

The Administration Report was provided in the kit. Of notable interest, Dr. Cindy Finn reported the following:

- On October 21st, the LBPSB hosted a Google Leadership Summit.
- On October 23rd, Student Services held a professional development session with Dr. Reggie Melrose on mindfulness. Over 100 professionals, teachers, and administrators

- attended this workshop.
- Student Services professionals are in the process of preparing documentation required for validation of special needs coding with the Ministry. Every year, between 175-200 student files must be prepared by the school board for validation purposes. This is a very labor intensive process that requires gathering diagnostic psychological and medical reports, documenting the limitations these disabilities have on student functioning, and reporting on the services being provided to students.
 - School Administration recruitment will soon begin for the 2016-2017 academic school year.
 - The 53 briefs on Major School Change have been posted on the LBPSB website. All MSC public hearings will be held the week of November 14th.

7.3 Council of Commissioners

A report was provided in the kit. Notably, Commissioner Olivenstein emphasized the following in his report:

- Two new student commissioners have been voted into Council. These students include Cierra Leitman from LPHS and Tyler Nacke from JRHS.
- The Executive Committee approved the LBPSB participation in the CGTSIM Group Purchasing Plan for 2016-2017 academic year for the following products: Computer supplies, paper, office supplies, envelopes & various printing services and art supplies. Also included were maintenance products such as ballasts, fluorescent tubes & incandescent lamps, garbage bags, hand towels & toilet paper, chemical products & cleaning supplies as well as heating oil.
- Again this year, no material misstatements or errors were reported by the external auditors. They were also very satisfied with the transparency and receipt of information throughout the process to perform their work. Mrs. Heffernan provided additional information regarding the financial results and responded to comments highlighted in the audit report.
- Mitigation measures will be implemented this fall in four LBPSB buildings where radon levels slightly exceed the values recommended by Health Canada. The work will be completed within the two-year timeframe recommended by Health Canada.
- Regarding the Central Parents Committee, John Donnelly, President of the PTU provided a presentation of the Teachers Job Action. Additionally, Regional Parent Representation on the Central Parents' Committee has been increased to six (6) members per region.
- Suanne Stein Day has been elected as Vice-President of the QESBA (Quebec English School Boards Association)
- The First Annual LBPSB Family Day with the Montreal Alouettes raised \$2000 on Sunday, October 18th.

7.4 Special Needs Parent Commissioner Report

Sandra Buckingham provided a detailed report in the kit. Sandra basically reiterated what was included in Commissioner Olivenstein's report, discussed under point 7.3.

7.5 Central Parents' Committee

A report was provided in the kit. Donnalynn Rainey reported that of interest, the CPC is working on their priorities for this academic year.

- The priority issue is communication, both internally and externally. To this end, a Communications Committee was established in order to keep the main discussion away from the table and taking up time at CPC meetings. The committee will meet once a month and will determine which tools are at the disposal of the CPC and how best to utilize them. Any and all communication with the press will go through the entirety of the CPC before being approved for use.
- The CPC will be overhauling its entire website to make it more user-friendly and to offer a portal for parents to reach reports and minutes that are relevant.
- Discussion regarding providing Governing Board training for all Governing Boards within in LBPSB via an e-learning program. It was concluded that the final sum for this training including support could run to around \$250,000. It could possibly be provincial wide and bilingual. Discussions included ideas on how to fund this training; however no decision was reached, and thus, has been tabled for further discussion.

7.6 Education Committee

Barbara Schnider reported that high school presentations are now taking place within the school board. Moreover, WTOP was discussed at length.

7.7 QESEC

Angela Berryman provided a detailed report via email. Angela reported that the Sir Wilfrid Laurier School Board has recently completed and distributed an IEP Resource Kit, based on the LBPSB model. Moreover, the LBPSB and WQSB are planning workshops for parents. The EMSB has received 23 million dollars in funding from MEESR to construct a new Mackay School in 2018.

7.8 P.T.U.

Arlene Tennant provided a verbal report of the P.T.U. Arlene reported that the proposed three strike dates in December (*i.e.*, December 1, 2, and 3) will not take place. Instead, teachers within the Lester B. Pearson School Board voted today in favor of three more strike dates. The strike dates will be determined later. Arlene reiterated that the union is protesting against lagging contract talks with the provincial government, where points of contention include increasing class sizes and lowering support services for students with special needs.

7.9 P.A.S.A

Diana Martire verbally reported that P.A.S.A is very busy in the month of November, with IEPS, report cards and Parent-Teacher Interviews.

7.10 Professionals

Maureen Hunt verbally reported that the on-going labor negotiations are difficult. A vote will take place on Monday to decide on 3 more strike dates.

7.11 I.A.S.S

Robert Gilmartin gave a verbal report about the last meeting at the I.A.S.S. Robert reported that the I.A.S.S. has 1 more strike date in the works. Their annual AGM will be held next week, with Margaret Trudeau present as a keynote speaker.

7.12 Treasurer's Report

Donnalynn Rainey reported that no financials have changed since the last report.

7.13 Website Administrator's Report

Jennifer DiMarco advised the committee there were 515 hits to the SNAC Website in the last month. Additionally, there were also 45 views of the archived webcasts of previous parent workshops offered by SNAC.

7.14 Workshops Attended

None.

8.0 New Business

8.1 New LBPSB Parent Newsletter for CPC & SNAC

Brett Hillgartner spoke with Darren Kotania, Chairperson of the CPC after he had a discussion with Steve Balliene, Assistant Director General of the school board. It was agreed that a LBPSB parent newsletter will be created, collaborating both the CPC and SNAC. This newsletter will be distributed to every parent through the school board ERMS system. Our own Donnalynn Rainey is on the Communications Committee that is responsible for this newsletter. She will attempt to add a few blurbs regarding the upcoming IEP Workshop, as well as the SNAC modified website and email address.

8.2 Schedule LBPSB Budget Presentation for SNAC

Cindy Finn has a meeting with the Director General's office on January 20th, 2016. At that point, she will ask Carol Heffernan as to her availability to present her annual discussion to SNAC on School Board Financing and the LBPSB budgeting process, with particular emphasis on funding for students with special needs.

9.0 Correspondence

9.1 WIAIH: PEERS Parent Info Night on Nov 26th

A pamphlet from WIAIH was included in the kit. The pamphlet discusses a parent information presentation to be held on November 26th, at 7 pm. PEERS[®], a program for the Education and Enrichment of Relational Skills, is a 14-week evidence-based social skills training for motivated teens aged 11-17 who are interested in learning ways to help make and keep friends. During each group session, teens are taught important skills and are given the opportunity to practice these skills in session during socialization activities. Parents attend separate sessions at the same time and are taught how to coach their teens in making and keeping friends by helping to expand their teen's social network and providing feedback through coaching during weekly socialization homework assignments. Registration is required. For additional information, visit the WIAIH website; email Peersmontreal@gmail.com, or telephone (514) 694-7090 (extension #214). All sessions will be held at WIAIH, located at 111 Donegani Avenue, Pointe Claire.

9.2 Email received by SNAC

Brett Hillgartner brought up an email received to SNAC from a concerned parent. The crux of the email involves a parent privacy issue that occurred at a child's school while in daycare. Brett responded to the email. Cindy Finn responded that both the daycare coordinator and the principal are meeting with the parents and staff to ensure that the issue is dealt with correctly. Moreover, Cindy Finn reiterated that there will also be a follow-up at the school board level.

10.0 Varia

Nil.

11.0 Questions from the Public

Nil.

12.0 Adjournment

(SNAC1516-11.4) Upon a motion set by Jennifer DiMarco, then seconded by Robert Gilmartin, the meeting was adjourned at 9:56 pm.

The next meeting will be held at 7 pm on Wednesday, January 20th, 2016 in room 219/221, 1925 Brookdale, Dorval.

On behalf of everyone at SNAC, Happy Holidays!

