



May 5, 2016

Mr. Tom Rhymes
Senior Director, Educational Services and Technology
Lester B. Pearson School Board
1925 Brookdale Avenue
Dorval, QC
H9P 2Y7

Subject: Consultation Response “LBPSB Five Year Strategic Plan 2015-2020”

Dear Mr. Rhymes,

On behalf of the Special Needs Advisory Committee (SNAC), please find below our comments and/or suggestions regarding the 2015-2020 LBPSB 5 Year Strategic Plan.

SNAC recognizes the importance of the 5-year Strategic Plan; specifically for the future planning and success of our students with special needs. It is our hope that careful consideration be given to our students with special needs when finalizing the 5-year Strategic Plan.

Thank-you for the opportunity to participate in this consultation.

Respectfully,

Brett Hillgartner
Chairperson, Special Needs Advisory Committee, 2015-2016

Angela Berryman
Vice- Chairperson, Special Needs Advisory Committee, 2015-2016

CC: Special Needs Advisory Committee, LBPSB
Central and Regional Parents' Committees, LBPSB



General Comments on LBPSB 5-Year Strategic Plan 2015-2020:

- SNAC likes the overall format of the plan. We consider both the way the document is presented, as well as how it is worded, to be straightforward and easy to understand. We believe that this is important because if the plan is too complex, it will be more difficult for schools to use it as a blueprint for putting together their plans.
- SNAC agrees that the 3 Directions set out in the plan: Improving Achievement, Ensuring Wellness, and Strengthening Engagement, are most important to student success and should be given highest priority. However, we do not agree that all the indicators and general strategies set out in the plan will adequately support and evidence the success of those targets.
- SNAC feels that the general strategies and indicators of success set out in the plan do not adequately set out the framework to support our schools in addressing all their needs. This plan does not track the success of ALL of the LBPSB students.

Specific Comments and Recommendations:

Direction 1: Improving Achievement

Objective A: To increase the number of students under the age of 20 who graduate or acquire a qualification to 90% by 2020.

- The strategic plan sets out a target to have 100% of students with special needs aged 18 - 21 exiting the youth sector with a “TEVA” plan. It also has a general strategy to “Ensure secondary students with special needs are registered in the appropriate pathway/program.” We agree that both of these are important for students with special needs.
- Considering boys are 5 times more likely to have autism, and are 2 to 3 times more likely to have ADHD, and considering there exists a 12.3% discrepancy between graduation and qualification rates between females and males: Youth Males 75% & Youth Females 87.3%, SNAC has the following recommendations:
 - Add the following general strategy to the plan: “Focus interventions in student populations with graduation rates below the board average, specifically males.”
 - Show separate gender Indicators, Baselines, and Targets, as opposed to combined LBPSB Secondary Graduation and Qualification Rates.

Objective B: To increase student success in elementary school Mathematics, English Language Arts, and French.

- We agree that the general strategies set out in the plan will aid in improving the success of students in the above-mentioned subjects. However, there is a concern that as an inclusive board, we need to find paths to success for all students – and providing a choice with less French may be the best way to support some of our students whether they are dealing with a learning difference or disability, language disorders, or anxiety issues. The question that needs to be answered is “What about the students who cannot master a bilingual and/or French immersion program?”
- We disagree that the indicators listed in the plan will adequately reflect the success of ALL students. Exam results will allow the success of those following a regular program to be monitored and evaluated. It does not include results for the students who are following modified programs to meet their individual education needs. Their success may look different, but is equally important.
- Indicators are missing a means to monitor the success of students following modified programs in Math, French and Language Arts. Even when a subject is modified, it is graded and evaluated based on the goal set. If we are to ensure that we are increasing student success (through the general strategies set out in the plan), then we also should be finding ways to effectively monitor improvements. Monitoring the success of ALL students, not simply the majority, will lead to greater accountability for the academic success of all our students; regardless of their individual needs and situation. We don't believe that there is any situation where a student would not be taught in any of the above-mentioned subjects. Their goals in each subject may look different, but we still expect that with the right support, they will achieve them. That progress needs to be monitored to ensure that we are truly improving the success of all students.
- SNAC recommends adding the following indicators:
 - 1) “Success rate of students following modified programs at the end of Cycle 3 in Math”,
 - 2) “Success rate of those following a modified program at the end of cycle 3 in English Language Arts” and
 - 3) “Success rate of those following a modified program at the end of cycle 3 in French”.

SNAC would recommend that the target for each one of the subjects start at 80%; representing that 80% of those following a modified program received a passing mark.

Objective C: To increase student success in secondary school Mathematics, Science, and Technology, History and Citizenship, English Language Arts and French.

- Same comments as listed in Objective B. The plan does not include any indicators that will reflect how well LBPSB is increasing the success of students not following the regular program in any of the above-mentioned subjects. There is also concern that the current Bilingual and French immersion Programs may not meet the needs of some of our students with special needs.

DIRECTION 2: Ensuring Wellness

Objective A: To strengthening healthy lifestyles and positive mental health.

- SNAC recommends modifying the general strategy “Encourage participation in school clubs and teams” to “Encourage participation of all students in school clubs and teams and commit to providing support for those students who may need it”. This change will stress the importance of ensuring that students with special needs are able to participate and are included in clubs and school teams. A sense of belonging is important for all students, and students with special needs may be at a higher risk of having negative school experiences. For example, they may have increased anxiety due to bullying, feelings of isolation, social skill deficits, academic struggles, etc. Clubs and teams are especially important for those students who may otherwise not feel like they “fit in”.
- SNAC believes that it is worth adding a general strategy that applies specifically to students with special needs to promote mental health. For example, an additional general strategy could be to “Promote the inclusion of all students in clubs and teams by providing appropriate support to students where needed”. The goal of the additional strategy would be to ensure that schools are fully including students in all aspects of school life, and not simply integrating them into their classrooms. This plan should emphasize the importance of ensuring that children with special needs are not left out and are all supported. Schools need to refer to this plan and remember that special attention needs to be paid to ensure that their students with exceptionalities are given equal opportunities to take part in clubs and schools activities.
- An important part of helping students to build positive mental health is to help both them and their communities be more accepting and appreciative of individuality. If communities at large believe, recognize and celebrate what each student has to offer, then student’s themselves will have a greater chance of believing in their own personal worth. This is especially true for students whom may have special needs, and who may struggle at school. Communities need to be encouraged to see all students as equal members of their communities. School communities, which include school staff, daycare staff, students as well as parents, should all be encouraged to value the diversity in their schools. That includes helping them to see students as more than their “deficiency” and ensure that all

students are seen and treated with equality and respect. SNAC recommends adding the following general strategy to aid students in building positive mental health: “Encourage sensitization in school communities regarding students with special needs.”

- If students are not able to complete the “Tell Them From me Survey” they are not included in the totals measuring the success of the objective. In the cases where it is not appropriate to have a student complete the “TTFM” survey, is there an alternative to help measure the success? There needs to be an indicator to supplement the TTFM survey, to ensure that LBPSB is measuring its success of strengthening the healthy lifestyles and positive mental health of all students. Some students, while they may be academically capable, may not have the ability to reflect on their own feelings and opinions. Their survey answers may not be an accurate reflection of their opinions.
- The TTFM survey may not be the best indicator of success. Even students, who may be engaged, may not necessarily take the survey seriously and/or may be concerned with confidentiality. If the survey is used, SNAC suggests that a standardized video tutorial (specific for grade level) be prepared by the board and provided to all students prior to administering the TTFM survey. This will help to alleviate the discrepancies on how the survey is presented at different schools and make the results more reliable. Additionally, it would be beneficial to have impartial and unbiased invigilators present to administer the survey, giving students a greater sense of anonymity. In addition, having parents complete the Parent Survey that is available should also be a consideration.

Objective B: To encourage learners to adopt a healthy and physically active lifestyle

- SNAC recommends modifying the indicator that is listed, "Average mark in Health and Physical Education Program", to include those students are not following a regular physical education program and therefore not included in class averages. There are no indicators that will measure their success.

Objective C: To foster safe and caring relationships within the school, the community, and the digital environments.

- If students are not able to complete the TTFM survey, then their level of feeling safe at school is not being measured. In the cases where it is not appropriate to have a student complete the “TTFM” survey, is there an alternative to help measure their opinion? There needs to be an indicator to supplement the TTFM survey available for those who cannot complete it.
- Students with special needs may be particularly at risk of being targeted for bullying. SNAC suggests making specific mention as a general strategy for schools to develop systems and programs to protect their most vulnerable students against bullying.

DIRECTION 3: STRENGTHENING ENGAGEMENT

Objective A: To have our students engage in their learning.

- An additional indicator is needed to measure whether or not LBPSB is successfully engaging all of their students in their learning.
- SNAC considers that the following general strategy listed in the plan to be very important to the success of students with special needs and is very pleased to see that it applies to every student. “Differentiate the educational experiences to effectively engage, appropriately challenge, and ensure mastery for every student.”
- Indicators for measuring the success of the objective need to include a measure that is appropriate for special needs students who are not able to complete the TTFM survey or not able to accurately respond.

Objective B: To have our students engaged in the world around them.

- SNAC recommends modifying the first point in the general strategies to be more inclusive of all students. : “Encourage initiatives and teaching practices that foster global citizenship, volunteerism, environmental awareness and bilingualism for ALL students.”