



# **Special Needs Advisory Committee**

**of the  
Lester B. Pearson School Board**

## **Annual Report**

### **2015-2016**

## A Message from the SNAC Chairperson

The Special Needs Advisory Committee (SNAC) had another very busy year. We hosted a successful Annual General Meeting (AGM) which resulted in an unprecedented number of parents putting themselves forward to be nominated for positions as members of the committee. Due to the obvious surge in interest of parents to be more involved in Special Needs issues, SNAC increased their parent membership by one additional voting member (from 7 to 8) and one additional alternate member (from 4 to 5). The SNAC Constitution was updated to reflect these changes.

SNAC members worked diligently to promote and respond to issues related to special needs across the board. Several SNAC members presented the SNAC Major School Change (MSC) brief at the Public Hearing of November 17<sup>th</sup>, 2015. One of the primary recommendations of SNAC was that the school board commit to preparing a written plan of action, with input from parents and students concerned, to help with transitions for those students with special needs that are affected by the MSC process. The SNAC MSC brief was applauded by the Council of Commissioners and they requested that SNAC draft the transition planning document which was well-received by the LBPSB Administration.

SNAC hosted a free parent seminar on Individual Educations Plans (IEP) entitled “An IEP Journey: A Parent to Parent Perspective” on February 2, 2016 that had over 70 participants from a variety of schools throughout the board. The organizing committee received a great deal of positive feedback from the parents who attended the workshop. As follow-up, an “IEP Questions & Answers” document was developed and posted on the SNAC website to share all of the information that was explored in the different sessions.

In an effort to increase the representation of parents of students with special needs throughout the school board, SNAC continued to promote the recommendation to reserve a parent position on each school’s Governing Board (GB) for a parent with a student who has an IEP. Working with the Central Parents Committee (CPC), this recommendation was made via the AGA kits which are provided to each school prior to governing board elections. So far, SNAC is aware of 9 Elementary and 3 High School representatives that were elected to their GBs for the 2015-2016 schoolyear. SNAC parent members are very pleased with this excellent start to the initiative. A Q&A document to clarify the role of this position was approved by SNAC for the purposes of responding to questions that have been raised by various GBs. The document was shared with CPC with the hope that SNAC can work together with CPC to further the adoption of this proposed position at even more schools in the future.

SNAC has continued its efforts to communicate more and more with our community, and inform them of SNAC’s role within the school board. This year SNAC collaborated with CPC to provide special needs-relevant content to the Parent-2-Parent Newsletter that was initiated by the CPC’s communication team and distributed via email to all LBPSB parents. SNAC applauds the hard work of CPC members to develop the new parent newsletter, and we are looking forward to working with CPC to further this project in the 2016-2017 schoolyear.

In addition to participating in various LBPSB consultations, SNAC parent members participated in consultations—both at the levels of the school board and the provincial government—on the proposed Bill 86 legislation that was eventually abandoned by the Quebec government. Through this effort, however, it is clear that parents of students with special needs want strong representation at all levels throughout the school board.

The SNAC IEP Resource Kits continue to be a source of pride for SNAC. Last year, with the financial support of LBPSB Administration, 500 additional kits were printed for distribution to new students with IEPs who attended LBPSB schools in the 2015-2016 schoolyear. In addition, the special needs committees of other school boards have approached us to duplicate the content of our IEP Resource Kits to help create their own. To quote Oscar Wilde: “imitation is the sincerest form of flattery”.

SNAC’s website has grown throughout the past few years, and we have made much progress in providing pertinent information of interest to our community. We are very pleased with the site’s increasing popularity as there are more visits to the site each month and many viewings of the webcasts featuring some of the workshops that SNAC has hosted in the past.

I would like to thank all members of SNAC for their dedication, participation and hard work this year. Your time is valuable and giving up so much of it for our students and parents shows your commitment to our community.

In closing, I would like to encourage all parents of students with special needs to attend the SNAC Annual General Meeting on September 14, 2016. Whether you would like to nominate yourself to join as a parent member, or vote for a representative, I encourage you to exercise that right. On behalf of the Special Needs Advisory Committee, I would like to wish everyone a successful school year.

Sincerely,

Brett Hillgartner  
Chairperson, Special Needs Advisory Committee, 2015-2016  
Lester B. Pearson School Board  
Email: [snac@lbpearson.ca](mailto:snac@lbpearson.ca)  
Website: <http://snac.lbpsb.qc.ca>

**(I) SPECIAL NEEDS ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEMBERS 2015-2016:**

**Parent Members**

Sandra Buckingham  
Jennifer DiMarco  
Donnalynn Rainey  
Brett Hillgartner  
Kiley Philp  
Christine Mclean  
Angela Berryman  
Samantha Marco

**Administrative Liaison**

Cindy Finn (Director of Student Services)

**PASA (School Administrators)**

Diana Martire

**PTU (Pearson Teacher's Union)**

Arlene Tennant

**IASS (Independent Assoc. Support Staff)**

Robert Gilmartin

**Alternate Parent Members**

Barbara Schnider  
Maria Colavita  
Cheryl Vienneau  
Kathy Robinson  
Laurie Kathleen Fox

**Student Services**

Erik Olsthoorn  
Marie-Eve Claude

**Student Services Professionals**

Maureen Hunt

**Commissioners**

Daniel Olivenstein  
Mary Anne Davis

**Community Representative (WIAIH)**

Franca Kesic

**Executive:**

|                   |                                   |
|-------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Brett Hillgartner | Chairperson                       |
| Angela Berryman   | Vice-Chair                        |
| Sandra Buckingham | Special Needs Parent Commissioner |
| Christine Mclean  | Secretary                         |
| Donnalynn Rainey  | Treasurer                         |

**External Committee Representatives:**

Central Parents' Committee: Jennifer DiMarco, Donnalynn Rainey (alternate)  
Education Committee: Barbara Schnider  
Council: Sandra Buckingham  
QESEC: Sandra Buckingham, Angela Berryman

**SNAC Website and Emails:** Jennifer DiMarco, Maria Colavita (assistant)

**Recording Secretary:** Laurie Kathleen Fox

## **Meeting Dates 2015-2016:**

September 16, 2015  
September 30, 2015  
October 21, 2015  
November 18, 2015  
January 20, 2016  
February 17, 2016  
March 16, 2016  
April 20, 2016  
May 18, 2016

## ***(II) ITEMS ADDRESSED DURING OUR MONTHLY MEETINGS:***

### **Increase in SNAC Membership**

Due to the tremendous number of parents who showed interest in joining the committee at the Annual General Meeting this year, SNAC members voted to increase parent membership by one additional voting member (from 7 to 8) and one additional alternate member (from 4 to 5). The SNAC Constitution was updated to reflect these changes. SNAC members are pleased with the increased interest and would like to encourage parent participation. All parent members, both voting and alternate non-voting members, are encouraged to share their opinions at the meetings. In addition, a second “questions from the public” section was added to the Agendas of the SNAC meeting so that visiting parents would have an opportunity to ask questions or make comments at the beginning and/or end of each meeting.

### **SNAC Recording Secretary**

For the past two school years SNAC has been incredibly fortunate to have SNAC member, Laurie Kathleen Fox, agree to step in to the role of volunteer recording secretary. Minutes are listed on the SNAC website under the “*Minutes of Meetings*” tab. A special thank-you goes out to Laurie who has dedicated so much time to performing this important duty.

### **SNAC Priority Projects**

As ever SNAC’s first meeting started with a brainstorming session to identify priority projects for the year. Some our priorities this year included;

- Increasing SNACs awareness and visibility.
- Reviewing SNAC’s MSC brief and next steps to promote it.
- Following up on the success of the IEP kits and hosting an IEP workshop.
- Tracking the implementation of having an IEP parent on GBs and work in collaboration with CPC to further encourage the development this position across the board.
- Increasing the representation for parents of special needs students throughout the school board.

## **SNAC Awareness**

Over the past several years, SNAC has made efforts to increase its visibility throughout the school board and provide access to information to all parents of students with IEPs. Considering the high turnout of parents of students with special needs at the SNAC AGM, it looks as though these efforts are paying off. From the high number of hits on the SNAC website, to the impressive number of participants at the parent-to-parent workshop on IEPs, as well as regular attendance of parent visitor to SNAC meetings, and a marked increase in the number of parents contacting both the SNAC committee and the Special Needs Parent Commissioner, SNAC continues to assist parents to access important information that can help them and their child(ren). Additionally, the Parent-to-Parent Newsletter established by CPC also helped to spread the word about SNAC to an even wider audience, as well as the promotion of the position of IEP parent on GBs.

SNAC would like to continue to be a resource for parents of students with special needs. Here are some additional ideas that have been discussed at SNAC to continue to increase SNACs visibility within the parent community;

- Draft a letter introducing SNAC to be sent out with student's IEPs.
- Letters sent to all resource teachers with SNAC pamphlets for hand-outs to parents.
- Continue to encourage the establishment of a position for an IEP parent representative on each school's GB.

## **Increasing Representation for Parents of Special Needs Students within LBPSB**

In an effort to increase the representation of parents of students with special needs throughout the school board, SNAC recommended that a position be established on every Governing Board (GB) for a parent of a student who is supported by an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) in May of 2015. The goals of this recommended position are:

- 1) to ensure parental input specific to the special needs community at the GB of every school and center;
- 2) to provide parents of students on IEPs with a specific contact person, whom is also a parent, that they can share their questions, concerns or suggestions with; and
- 3) to improve communication between the special needs communities at every school and SNAC.

Throughout the 2015-2016 schoolyear SNAC continued to promote this recommendation. A Q&A document to clarify the role of this position was approved by SNAC for the purposes of responding to questions that have been raised by various GBs. The document was shared with CPC with the hope that SNAC can work together with CPC to further the adoption of this proposed position at even more schools in the future. Click here to read the Q&A:

<http://snac.lbpsb.qc.ca/eng/extra/img/183SNParentonGB-FAQ-April2016.pdf>

Additionally, SNAC established contact with the 9 Elementary and 3 High School representatives that were elected to their GBs for the 2015-2016 schoolyear. They were invited to meetings and provided with documentation to share with their schools. SNAC also hosted a "Meet & Greet" networking event at the end of the year to thank them for their commitment and collaboration.

## **SNAC AGM Posters and Promotion**

The flyer to promote the SNAC Annual General Meeting on September 14, 2016 was updated, and new posters were printed and distributed to all schools. Promotion of the event will be further emphasized

via the LBPSB and SNAC websites, and it will be requested that school administrators distribute the flyer via school emails and/or school websites in order to encourage parent participation.

### **Contract Negotiations**

The PTU, IASS and PEP representatives to SNAC provided the committee with updates on the latest contract negotiations and the teachers' "work-to-rule" situation throughout the school year.

### **Presentations to SNAC**

This year SNAC was fortunate enough to have several presentations made to them during their meetings. Those included;

- Cindy Finn: Educating students with special needs in Quebec
- Carol Heffernan and France Daoust: School board financing
- Peter Gilson: "Work Oriented Training Pathways"
- Mylaine Cardin and Heather Young: "Cooking for Autonomy"

### ***(III) SPECIAL EVENTS & MEETINGS:***

#### **MSC Public Hearings**

On November 17<sup>th</sup>, 2015, SNAC members Brett Hillgartner, Angela Berryman and Jennifer DiMarco presented the SNAC MSC brief at the MSC Public Hearing in Verdun. The SNAC brief was well received by the Council of Commissioners. The focus of SNAC's presentation was to highlight the following priorities for SNAC:

- That the school board commit to preparing a written plan of action, with input from parents and students concerned, to help with transitions for those students with special needs that are affected by the MSC process.
- That the school board continues to commit to use "inclusion" into regular classes as the primary model for the integration of students with special needs.
- That the support services that make the "inclusion" model effective, continues to be a funding priority for the school board.
- SNAC encourages the retention of bilingual community schools across the board, along with the immersion programs, since many students with special needs choose schools that offer more English than French instruction.
- That the school board commit that the alternative models of education available for students with special needs (i.e. REACH, LIFE, WOTP) will remain untouched by the MSC process.

The complete SNAC MSC brief is available at the following link:  
<http://snac.lbpsb.qc.ca/eng/extra/img/SNAC-MSC-2015-Brief.pdf>

The committee was asked to follow-up its presentation by providing some recommendations for a written plan of action that would be implemented to help transition students with special needs as the result of a MSC decision. The attached document was developed by SNAC and shared with LBPSB

Administration to assist in transition planning:

<http://snac.lbpsb.qc.ca/eng/extra/img/173SNACtransitionplanrecommendations2016.pdf>

### **IEP Workshop “An IEP Journey: A Parent to Parent Perspective”**

Thanks to a dedicated planning committee, SNAC once again hosted a very successful workshop for parents on February 2, 2016. The free parent seminar on Individual Education Plans (IEP) was entitled “An IEP Journey: A Parent to Parent Perspective” and had over 70 participants from a variety of schools throughout the board. The organizing committee received a great deal of positive feedback from the parents who attended the workshop. As follow-up, an “IEP Questions & Answers” document was developed and posted on the SNAC website to share all of the information that was explored in the different sessions. Please visit the following link to view the document:

<http://snac.lbpsb.qc.ca/eng/extra/img/177SNACParenttoParentIEPInformationExchangeQA.pdf>

### ***(IV) CONSULTATIONS:***

Consultation Responses are listed on the SNAC website, under the “*External Reports*” tab. This year SNAC provided a consultation response for each of the following:

- Enrolment Criteria 2016-2017
- Budget Consultation 2016-2017
- 3-Year Plan of Allocation and Destination of Immovables 2016-2019
- 5-Year Strategic Plan 2015-2020

#### **Enrollment Criteria 2016-2017:**

The committee ratified a response suggesting that an additional clause be added to the Question & Answer document of the Policy to address the potential concern that special consideration be given to a student with Special Needs if a school with a Bilingual program has reached capacity, since that program may be more conducive to the student’s success versus an Immersion program.

<http://snac.lbpsb.qc.ca/eng/extra/img/164SNACResponseEnrolmentCriteriaConsultationNovember272015.pdf>

#### **Budget Consultation 2016-2017:**

Pending receipt of more detailed financial information from the school board about the specific breakdown of the allocation of funds for the support of students with Special Needs within LBPSB, the SNAC is limited in the detail that the committee can provide for this consultation. It was decided that SNAC’s brief last year was still relevant and appropriate, thus it was resubmitted with no significant changes.

<http://snac.lbpsb.qc.ca/eng/extra/img/179SNACBudgetConsultationResponse2016-2017.pdf>

#### **3-Year Plan of Allocation and Destination of Immovables 2016-2019:**

Considering that there are many important services and programs for students with special needs that are housed at the different LBPSB schools and centers, and considering that change can be difficult for some students with special needs, SNAC encouraged that special consideration be made to maintain all of the current services and programs in the current locations, with the least amount of disruption or



change for these students as possible. In addition, SNAC commended the board for their efforts to provide universal accessibility to LBPSB buildings.

<http://snac.lbpsb.qc.ca/eng/extra/img/190SNACConsultationResponse3YearPlan2016-2019.pdf>

### **5-Year Strategic Plan 2015-2020:**

SNAC recognized the importance of the 5-year Strategic Plan, specifically for the future planning and success of our students with Special Needs. SNAC provided a detailed response to the LBPSB's 5-year Strategic Plan Consultation. In particular, the committee felt that the indicators used by the school board to determine success should be inclusive to represent the success of ALL students, and some indicators could be altered or modified to meet this goal. It was discouraging to see that none of the committee's recommendations appeared to be taken into consideration in the final draft of the 5-year Strategic Plan. To read SNAC's full and detailed response to this consultation, click on the following link:

<http://snac.lbpsb.qc.ca/eng/extra/img/191SNACConsultationResponse5yearStrategicPlan.pdf>

## **(V) *RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE 2016-2017 COMMITTEE:***

1. Strive to be a strong voice at the school board to represent the concerns of the special needs community, by ensuring that SNAC parent representation is maintained or added, on the various board-level committees and key meetings.
2. Follow-up with CPC on how the recommendation for the addition of a parent of a student with an IEP representative on governing boards was received and look for ways to improve awareness of this new option for participation.
3. Work with CPC to ensure continued representation of Parents with Special Needs in the newly proposed Parent Structure. Specifically, providing all SNAC parent members with speaking rights at all Parent Committee meetings, and subcommittee meetings, while maintaining the right to vote for one SNAC parent rep to CPC. Additionally, ensuring that the Special Needs Parent Commissioner has full membership and voting rights on the Parents' Committee.
4. Draft a parent survey to discover how SNAC can better meet the needs of the special needs parent population.
5. Continue to explore ideas on how to communicate more effectively with parents of students with special needs.
6. Revisit the idea of sending out information about SNAC with IEPs in the fall.
7. Host one or two workshops of interest for parents of students with special needs. Ideas for future presentations were put forward after the IEP workshop with the most popular being a workshop to help with the transition of a special needs student from elementary to high school. Pads of notepaper with the SNAC emblem and website were purchased at the end of the school year (with funds from 2015-2016 committee) so that these can be given out at a future SNAC workshop to further awareness of SNAC.

8. Collaborate with external parent groups (EPCA) and other school board SNAC/SEAC groups via QESEC to work together on projects with common goals, such as lobbying the Quebec Government to increase school board funding for Special Needs.
9. Request detailed information from Administration regarding the allocation and distribution of special needs resources. Increase SNAC involvement in advising on the LBPSB Special Needs Budgeting process, allocation of priorities, and other responsibilities outlined by the Education Act.
10. Collaborate with WIAIH to provide parents of students with special needs information on parent support groups and resources that are available in our communities. The need for a support group was brought up several times in feedback from the IEP Workshop.

We would like to thank all members of the Special Needs Advisory Committee for their dedication, participation and hard work this year. Your time is valuable and giving up so much of it for our students and parents shows your commitment to our community.

Respectfully submitted by,

Brett Hillgartner, Chairperson  
Angela Berryman, Vice-Chairperson

LBPSB Special Needs Advisory Committee, 2015-2016