

Wednesday, March 21, 2018

Me. Geneviève Dugré
Secretary General
Lester B. Pearson School Board
1925 Brookdale Avenue
Dorval, QC H9P 2Y7

Subject: Extra Curricular and Field Trip Activities Consultation

Dear Me. Dugré,

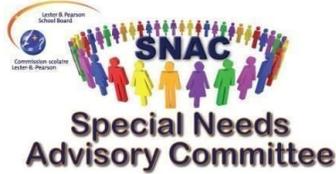
The Special Needs Advisory Committee (SNAC) is pleased to have the opportunity to provide input on the Extra Curricular and Field Trip Activities Policy Consultation.

Currently, there is no provision for children with special needs in this policy.

Parents on SNAC have seen the following with field trip permission forms:

- The integration aide is included in the number of adults attending and is included in the ratio. This does not give a true ratio since one of the adults is responsible for only 1 or 2 children.
- The integration aide is not included, and it is not mentioned anywhere on the form that an integration aide will be attending. This puts the responsibility on the parents to ensure their child is properly supervised.
- Not being able to sign the “Authorization for School Activity” form without taking additional steps if they want to ensure their child is adequately supervised. If signed “as is” the small print states: *“The undersigned acknowledges full awareness of the risks involved in this activity, and **accepts the arrangements for supervision as noted above:**”*
- Allow every child to participate in whichever capacity they are able

How do parents on SNAC deal with permission forms? Parents often must send an email to teachers and resource requesting and ensuring arrangements are made for their child. They must take the extra step of attaching the email to the permission slip with the corrections.



SNAC would like to propose the following:

If a student is to have a different ratio than what is listed in the permission slip given to the class, then a separate permission slip is given to that student with the correct ratio. This would save time of emails being sent by the parents and staff having to respond to each individual need.

In addition to the above mentioned comments, please find two additional documents:

- Extra-Curricular Activities & Field Trip Policy Draft, Specific Comments & Recommendations

and

- Additional Thoughts, Specific Parent Experiences

Thank you for the opportunity to participate in this consultation.

Respectfully,

Jennifer DiMarco - Chair
Special Needs Advisory Committee, 2017-2018
snac.lbpsb.qc.ca

Extra-Curricular Activities & Field Trip Policy Draft: Specific Comments & Recommendations

INTRODUCTION (PAGE 3, item 1):

Comment: Encourage schools/centres to organize activities that meet the specific needs of students with special needs. For example, organizing adapted sports activities and/or additional supervision (where applicable) that would allow all students to participate.

Recommendation: Modify the last paragraph to read:

*“Extra-curricular activities and field trips should enhance the provision of aesthetic, cultural, intellectual, spiritual, athletic and social experiences **of our diverse population of students.** Schools are encouraged to organize activities that promote diversity and inclusion.”*

GENERAL RULES (PAGE 4, item 4)

Comment: Promote inclusion by specifically making mention that students should not be excluded because they have special needs.

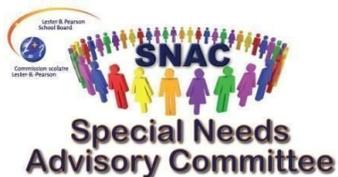
Recommendation: Modify section 4.4 to read:

*“... make every reasonable effort to ensure that no student is excluded for financial reasons **or due to their special needs.**”*

Comment: Participating in extra-curricular activities and field trips enhance a student’s school experience, and therefore students should be given every opportunity to participate; regardless of their challenges.

Recommendation: add point 4.7

*“Prohibiting students to participate in activities that happen during the regular class schedule, as means of a **“punishment”** for behavioural issues, should only be used in extreme circumstances.”*



ORGANIZATION OF THE ACTIVITY (PAGES 4-5, item 5)

Comment: Emphasize that approval of activities is a **2-step process** and that both steps must **always** be exercised. Step 1 is the approval from the administrator and step 2 the approval from the Governing Board. There have been instances where field trips have taken place without Governing Board approval.

Recommendation: Modify item 5.2 to read:

*“The school’s administrator shall see that a request for approval be an item on the Governing Board’s Agenda **prior to the activity taking place**. The approval must be in the minutes of the Governing Board meeting. **Activities cannot take place without the prior approval of the Governing Board.**”*

Comment: To make an informed decision, Governing Boards may require additional information regarding supervision for students with special needs and alternative activities for students who are not participating. This information is not always shared with the Governing Board. In addition to providing Governing Boards with supervision ratios, include the number of integration aides/support staff, where applicable. Also include the number of children requiring additional or special support, (without disclosing a student’s confidential information), that may directly impact the ratio of supervision. For example, if 20 students are attending, and 5 adults, the ratio would not be 1:4 if one of those adults is providing one-on-one support for 1 student.

Recommendation: modify item 5.3 to read:

*“...As a minimum, the following information shall be provided to the school’s Governing Board when approval is requested: educational objective, date and time, destination, grade level or class, cost to parents, supervision ratio, **number of students requiring additional support**, method of transportation, additional rules of conduct and safety and security considerations, as applicable. **If the activity takes place during regular class time, the Governing Board shall also be informed on what appropriate in-school activity will be provided for those students who are not participating. When requesting the approval of a field trip, Governing Boards will be presented with a copy of Addendum C and D.**”*



COMMUNICATING INFORMATION TO PARENTS (PAGES 5-6, item 6)

Comment: Some students may require special supervision or support during activities and field trips. Students requiring these extra supports or supervision should receive a form that makes specific mention of the support they will receive so that it is not left up to the parent to call and make sure arrangements have been made. Parents of students with special needs should have the information that they need to make informed decisions on whether or not to allow their child to participate.

Recommendation: add the following point to item 6.1

“If applicable, any special supervision or accommodations that will be put in place to allow the student to participate in the activity is to be outlined in Addendum D. This may include a modified supervision ratio.”

Comment: For activities that require carpooling, Addendum E must also be included in the forms sent home. The form must be sent home so that all interested drivers know what the rules are for carpooling; the form stipulates that drivers must have read Addendum H.

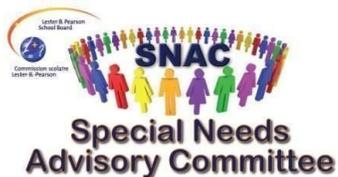
Recommendation: add the following point to item 6.1

“If applicable, include information for parents who would like to volunteer for carpooling (Addendum E and Addendum H).”

Comment: Section 6.2 makes specific mention that “the school/centre will determine the eligibility criteria for participation and the final decision rests with the administrator.” This phrase should be followed up with a statement that ineligibility will not be based on a student’s disability or special needs.

Recommendation: add the following to item 6.2

“A student’s disability or special needs should not be the basis for their being ineligible to participate in school activities and field trips.”



MEDICAL INFORMATION (PAGE 6, item 7)

Comment: There is no mention of the Fusion Portal as it relates to the Emergency Medical Treatment Form. Will the paper forms still have to accompany the field trip/activity supervisor?

Question: If there is a substitute teacher, is there a way to flag any students with “special” medical information so that the substitute can easily identify those children?

SAFETY AND SECURITY (PAGE 6 & 7, item 8)

Comment: With the diverse needs of students, it is important that the foreseeable risks to students with special needs be considered by Governing Boards when activities are proposed. Governing Boards should be encouraged to consider the risks not only to “typical” students, but also, to those who may have special needs.

Recommendation: Elaborate on “foreseeable risk to participants” (item 8.2), to include specific mention of students with special needs. Add the following at the end of the sentence in item 8.2:

“foreseeable risk to participants; including those who may be at a higher risk due to their special needs.”

Comment: Students are sometimes excluded from participating in activities because the activity is deemed “inappropriate” for them. This is not how inclusion should be practiced. All students deserve adequate supervision/support and the opportunity to benefit from participating in school activities.

Recommendation: Elaborate on “appropriate supervision” (item 8.3.2), to include specific mention of students with special needs. Modify the first sentence in item 8.3.2 to read:

“...ensure the well being and safety of students participating; including students with special needs.”



Comment: When accessing the capacity of each student, it is important that students not be excluded because of their disability. (item 8.3.3)

Recommendation: *add the following to the end of the sentence in item 8.3.3*

“...capacity of each student; **ensuring students are not being excluded due to their disability.**”

Comment: Included in the rules for safety should be a measure to help ensure that students with special needs who require additional support are properly identified.

Recommendation: *add the following point as item 8.3.4*

“Students requiring additional supports and/or supervision are identified and their student to adult ratio is accurately reported on Addendum D.”

Comment: Help ensure the safety of students being transported by carpooling by having parents indicate on Addendum D that their child requires a car seat.

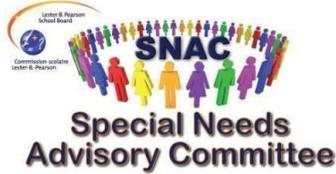
Recommendation: *add the following point as item 8.6*

“When carpooling is used, parents must indicate on Addendum D if their child requires a car seat.”

ACCIDENT REPORTS (PAGE 7, item 10)

Comment: The policy does not outline specifically what the procedures are for a parent who gets into an accident while carpooling.

Recommendation: **Include, somewhere in the policy, or as an addendum, the specific procedures for a parent volunteer who is carpooling and gets into an accident.**



TRANSPORTATION (PAGE 8, item 12)

Comment: It is not specifically stated in the policy that when teachers and staff are providing transportation to or from an activity, it is considered carpooling.

Recommendation: Clarify if teachers/staff providing carpooling are required to complete Addendum H.

Comment & Question: It is not clear if an Addendum H must be completed each time carpooling is used for activities that are “blanket approved” by Governing Boards. Does a form only need to be completed once, or every time the activity takes place (ie. Sporting events).

Comment: It would be beneficial if a “communication chain” were established for all activities taking place off school premises. When carpooling is used, it is important that all drivers have the contact information for the school. If the driver gets lost, gets a flat tire, or is in an accident the school should be notified.

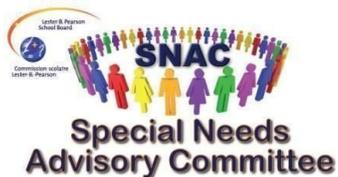
Recommendation: Add the following point to item 12:

“When carpooling is used, all drivers must have the school’s contact information. If the activity takes place out of regular school hours, the drivers must have the contact information for the organizer of the event.”

ADDENDUM A: DEFINITIONS (PAGE 9)

Comment: Field trips that take place after school hours, especially on weekends, may not be considered as needing approval from Governing Boards. Governing Boards may need clarification on what constitutes a field trip or extra curricular activity?

Recommendation: Clarify if field trips include activities that take place after school hours and on weekends. Is any activity, organized by the school, or staff, considered a field trip or an extra- curricular activity that requires approval from the administration and governing board; regardless of the mode of transportation or when the event takes place? For example, an activity that is taking place on the weekend, where students are responsible for their own



transportation, is it considered a field trip and requires approval if it is organized by the school (by any staff member) or in the name of the school?

ADDENDUM C: EXTRA-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES AND FIELD TRIP COVER PAGE

Comment: The form does not provide space to include possible provisions for students with special needs. To further support the inclusion of students with special needs, additional information that is relevant should be included on this form. For example, there may be situations where a resource teacher, or integration aide accompanies a class on a trip to provide additional support for one student, or a group of students. This information should be on this page, however, both the student(s) and the additional staff, should not be included in the ratio provided. There should be an additional section outlining ratios for additional support persons.

Recommendation: Modify the form to include an additional field for special provisions. Please refer to “modified Addendum C” attached.

ADDENDUM D: AUTHORIZATION FOR SCHOOL ACTIVITY

Comment: This form needs to be modified to include “special ratios” and additional considerations for students with special needs. The information on the form should be sent to the parent(s) with accurate information so that it is not up to the parent to contact the school to get the correct information.

Recommendation: Include a specific field for additional considerations: ie. Child requires 1:1 supervision.

Question: The form lists “special requirements/skills”; what outing would require special skills? Why is this necessary?

Comment: The number, or group of students participating in an activity, may impact the supports a student requires in order to participate.

Recommendation: Include on the form the approximate number of students participating in the activity.



Comment: When granting permission for their child to participate in a field trip, it may be useful for a parent to know not only the name of the place in which the activity is taking place, but also some information about the location.

Recommendation: If applicable, include in the “location field” on the form a link (web address) of the location of the activity.

Comment: Parents may want to provide the school with additional information that is pertinent to the type of activity/field trip taking place. For example, a child may be more prone to wandering in certain environments. A child’s diagnosis will not always give a clear picture of how they will react in different environments. For example, there could be a specific smell or sound that may impact a child’s ability to cope in an environment. There may be information that a parent would like to make formally known, if it is relevant to the type of activity taking place.

Recommendation: Included in Addendum D should be a place where parents can indicate additional information they consider relevant and would like to share to help ensure their child’s safety and participation in the activity or field trip.

ADDENDUM E: CARPOOL AUTHORIZATION FORM

Comment: Parents volunteering to carpool may not be familiar with Addendum H or know where to access it. The last point on the form stipulates that the driver has read Addendum H and is in compliance with it. Therefore, Addendum H should also be printed on the back of Addendum E to ensure drivers read it.

Recommendation: To help ensure that parents volunteering are familiar with Addendum H, have it printed on the back of Addendum E and send it home to parents before their service is needed.



Additional Thoughts:

We wanted to provide you with specific examples that have come to the Special Needs Advisory Committee over the years to better understand our suggestions above.

Excluded from participating in end of the year Grad Trip to Ottawa

All students should be permitted to participate in activities, even students with disabilities. When overnight trips are planned, and integration aides are not included in the trip, parents may be faced with the difficult choice of allowing their child to participate without adequate supervision, or not granting permission and having their child miss out on the experience that their neurotypical peers get to share. In this particular case, a group photo was taken on the grad trip and distributed as part of the graduation ceremonies. Therefore, not only did the child with special needs get excluded from his grad trip, but he was also not featured in the photo which was provided as a memento at the graduation ceremony. The child was devastated to miss the trip but to add insult to injury, was further upset to be excluded from the photo. This could have been prevented if the needs of all of the students were taken into consideration when the event was approved. While this was a great opportunity for his neurotypical peers, he was not given equal opportunity to participate because the appropriate accommodations were not put in place.

Excluded from participating on ped day field trip

The daycare service had a field trip planned during a ped day. They were going wall climbing. At the beginning of the registration process, we signed up our son, who is 6 and diagnosed with Autism. The week of the field trip, I had a chat with the daycare director about the hours. The day of the field trip arrived, and we received a call from the daycare director at 7:50 am as we were going out the door and 30 minutes before the buses were scheduled to leave for this trip. She had concerns about our son going on this field trip, saying he would *probably* not want to climb the walls (I am not sure why she thought that), that it would be loud in the gym (he can be sensitive to noise in some situations), and if he cried, she told me that I would have to go pick him up. I felt pressured to keep him at home when she asked if that was a possibility. So that is what we did, even though I had to rearrange my schedule. There was a lack of planning for special needs children in this case and it felt like my son was excluded because of his diagnosis of autism. During school hours he has a full time integration aide.



Appropriate supervision is not a “given”: Being left behind and no one noticed

Children on the autism spectrum may not progress emotionally at the same level as their neurotypical peers. A grade 6 student with special needs was left behind at a field trip. The activity took place within walking distance of the school. At one point during the trip, the child was told to stay somewhere, and so he did. Even when his classmates all left, and there was no one else there, he did not think to ask for help, or even notice anything was wrong. The teachers in charge, assumed the child was mature enough to realize they were leaving, did not take any additional measures to ensure the child was with them when they walked back to school. No one at all from the school noticed the child was missing: clearly no headcount was taken prior to leaving the event nor arriving at the school. Another parent, who knew the child and knew his diagnosis, happened to drive by and saw him. They drove him home. The child's parent drove immediately to the school to advise the administration of what had happened. Although apologetic, there was no accountability for what happened. This child was not new to the school, nor was this the first time that this parent had mentioned that their child required additional supervision. Although teachers may know their students well in the class setting, they may not have the experience with the child in different environments. To ensure accountability, field trip permission slips must allow parents to provide teachers with additional information.

Appropriate Supervision not given while walking to a field trip destination (Substitute Teacher)

Parent received a call from another parent, who was a trip volunteer, to inform her that her child was running up and down the street, beside the group walking, in a panic looking for his integration aide and asking who is he supposed to be with. There was a substitute teacher and the resource teacher was absent. The class was leaving right after lunch and decided to leave a little early, because all the children were ready. The integration aide also worked as a lunch supervisor and was not yet back to the class. There was another teacher walking, but it was not his teacher for the day and the substitute was not aware of this student's special needs.

Ratio: Continuously needs to be corrected

Initiative from the parents is required to ensure their child will be adequately supervised on every trip. Parents need to email the resource team, teachers and administration requesting what the ratio will be for their child. If the accurate ratio was provided on the permission form, as it is with non-disabled and neurotypical students, parents would not have to take on this additional responsibility. In addition, not all parents realize that they can ask for additional support, so they may simply not allow their child to participate.

As an example, a parent received a letter from their principal, after refusing to sign the field trip form for an upcoming sugaring off event. The ratio was going to be 1:15 and they knew that this was not sufficient for their son's needs. This is the first time this has happened to them, since



up until now, all field trips had been with their son's class only and the ratio had always been small. This trip included the entire school. They signed the letter from the principal, but also doctored up the Field Trip Permission form to refer to the letter from the principal, as opposed to leaving the form 'as is' and signing below where it still said the ratio was 1:15.

Parents of students in wheelchairs: no accommodations for field trips

On more than one occasion, the parent of a student in a wheelchair, had been contacted by the school, to drive her son to field trips as they did not provide adapted transit and he couldn't go on a regular bus. If the parent is not available, then the child cannot participate. The parent pointed out that if the school has accepted him, and he is entitled to go on the field trips, then they should be budgeting for adapted transit. Other parents have reported that they also had to drive their child in order for them to be able to participate. This puts the burden on parents to take time off work to ensure that their child is fully included in school activities.

These are but a few examples, not an exhaustive list by far.

Should you want to be provided with more examples, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Special Needs Advisory Committee 2017-2018
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