



Special Needs Advisory Committee
Lester B. Pearson School Board

MINUTES OF THE MEETING – January 30th, 2013

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

In Attendance: Shauna Beauchamps, Sandra Buckingham, Marie-Eve Claude, Hirut Eyob, Cindy Finn, Christopher Fuzessy, Linton Garner, Franca Kesic, Daniel Oliverstein, Kerry Payette, Kiley Philip, Allison Provost, Donnalynn Rainey, Pamela Rainone, Barbara Schnider

Regrets: Camela Di Lorio, Jennifer DiMarco, Laurie Fox, Jonathan Zimmerman

Visitors: Commissioner Joseph Zemanovich, Robin Keough (parent), Tanya Hamelin (parent)

Recording Secretary: A. Berryman

Sandra Buckingham called the meeting to order at 7:05.

1.0 LBPSB Budget Process Presentation: Assistant Director General C. Heffernan

A presentation was given by the Assistant Director General, C. Heffernan, "*A guide to School Budgets; Based on 2011-2012 School Year.*"

The following was noted:

MELS website has a document, **Les Règles Budgétaires**, that explains how schools are funded. However, not all grants are listed in this document.

The total revenue for the 2011 – 2012 year was **\$264 120 576**.

MELS Operating Grants	\$164 823 247
School Taxes	\$ 58 823 840
(allocated towards maintenance on buildings, upkeep of properties, commissioner salaries)	
Other Operating Revenue	\$ 36 078 852
(includes revenues from field trips, daycare)	
Transportation	\$ 4 394 637
TOTAL	\$264 120 576

LBPSB has approximately 5,500 full and part-time employees.

Per Capita Youth Grant

September 30th is the deadline for student registration in the youth sector, and MELS

provides funding based on the number of students enrolled at the School Board. The adult education enrolment deadline is later because students more often move around. Enrolment data for this year will be available in March. Usually MELS provides School Boards with detailed budget parameters (rules) in April, but in recent years, it has been delayed, which in turn causes difficulties for the School Board to plan its budget and allocations. Final budget rules were released from MELS last year in June. This year the rules are expected in May or June 2013.

Other Supplementary Grants: examples include daycare, homework assistance (only for elementary), Wellness grant (grade 5-6); Library grant

Revenues for Resources for students at risk and with special needs

- There is an "A Priori" funding amount, which is funded as a percentage of enrolment, to support children that are "at Risk" but do not have a specific special needs code. Fortunately, that funding is still based on the 2006 School Board Enrollment numbers, which was higher than it is today. However, the School Board's number of students with special needs is increasing, so we hope that we will continue to be funded this way.
- In addition, funding is provided for each student with a "code", which must be validated annually by MELS.
- NOTE that ***the funds received from MELS for the coded students is not directly for that child; children without codes are also being supported, so best efforts are made to divide the funds equitably. These decisions are made by "Parity Committees" at the School Board Level and again at each school.***
- In addition, MELS provides funding for 12.5 elementary teachers, 12.6 secondary and 1161K for professionals or support targeted at students with behavioural problems or special needs. Resource teachers 303K, Integration grant 1 million + 760K (for direct support for students, does not include the indirect costs such as teacher training), IEP teacher release 255K, 494K for professional in youth and adult.

Recurring Negative adjustments....

Since 1996, MELS has imposed significant funding reductions on the School Board, which recur annually, and have been accumulating every year to a current total of \$8.5 million in reduction or 4.3% of the LBPSB budget:

Transportation

Dollars are non-transferable; it has to go to transportation and cannot be used for any other purpose.

Capital Grants

Non transferable to capital budget

Base amount for buildings, equipment, and computers

Specific amount for text books: computers and large projects

Depreciation expense and costs of borrowing

*NOTE: new schools are being built with elevators; more cost efficient than coming in at later date to renovate building. 1 out of every 4 schools in a geographic region must be "Accessible" by law.

Question and answers from previous years' Budget Consultations are posted on the LBPSB website.

Question period following Budget Presentation:

Funding: MELS provides money based on what are the "measures". Any board on the island cannot borrow money; they receive a credit line. When MELS sends the money depends on what the grant is. Special needs funding numbers will not come in until May; where MELS informs the board on how many of our codes have been validated. September 10th of the following school year is when we get confirmation from MELS on how much we be receiving for our special needs students. If they have done adjustments, we may have to repay some of the funding.

Priority Pools: Can Integration Aides/Techs be assigned before September 15th for special needs students? The aide can change because of the "priority pool" enforced by the Independent Association of Support Staff (IASS); which is why students may not receive their aide immediately at the beginning of the school year, or why their aide may change.

Oversize class compensation: Negative adjustments are the main concern. The other issue is that schools are not funded for students with behavioural problems. Schools such as PETES, are overcrowded. They do not have the space for another class, therefore classes can be oversized. Teachers are compensated for students having students with special needs, regardless if the class has an aide. More information is available at www.pearsonteachersunion.com.

Question: Does the board anticipate that services for special needs students will be affected with the cuts from MELS?

Response: The board will try not to let the students be affected. However, it is very difficult to not affect the service of education when money is being cut to this extent.

Other comments included:

- Schools are juggling the resources that they have, but the funding from MELS coming late is a problem.
- The collective agreements are not in synch with the dates for when funding is received from MELS.
- While LBPSB successfully validates approximately 92 percent of our special needs codes, our professionals are spending too much time on completing the necessary MELS paperwork in this validation process.

The question was raised regarding whether SNAC can work with Administration, and perhaps other SNAC groups and CPC groups, to lobby MELS to reduce bureaucracy to streamline budget allocation processes. .We could consider approaching the government with the suggestion of releasing funding earlier, and then auditing by Sept 30th instead.

2.0 Confirmation of quorum; establish voting rights to Alternate members as required

Three of the regular members are not present; therefore alternates will be eligible to vote.

3.0 SNAC Recording Secretary: Introduction and Approval of Replacement

Unfortunately, SNAC's recording secretary A. Graham will not be available for service for the remainder of the school year.

Motion by Kiley Philip to appoint Angela Berryman, a parent volunteer, as recording secretary for the remainder of the 2012-2013 school year, at no cost to the committee.

Motion seconded by Shauna Beauchamps. Motion carried unanimously.

4.0 Approval of Agenda

Request for the following additions:

Under section 8.3 : Letter of Support for WIAIH; changing " Discussion of Pilot Project at PETES " to section 8.4

Under section 9.4 and 9.5: Correspondence from Family Resource Centre, and WIAIH

Motion to approve the agenda by Allison Provost, with the above mentioned additions, and seconded by Barbara Schnider. Motion carried unanimously.

5.0 Corrections to Minutes of November 28th, 2012

Motion to approve the November minutes by Alison Provost, and seconded by Pamela Rainone. Motion carried unanimously.

6.0 Business Arising

6.1 Appointment/Approval of replacement for Treasurer Position

A position of Treasurer has been vacated and a replacement is needed. Until someone steps forward to assume the position, Sandra has volunteered to take on this role.

Motion by Kiley Philip to approve Sandra Buckingham as treasurer. Motion seconded by Pamela Rainone. Motion carried unanimously.

6.2 Video/PPT from Special Presentation on Oct 24: on SNAC website

October 24th video is up on the SNAC website; as well as the PowerPoint presentation "Educating Students with Special Needs in Quebec".

6.3 I.E.P Folder Project: update

There is no further update for the moment; the changes will be done shortly.

6.4 CPC Parent Conference; update; volunteers for SNAC table

April 6th, 2013, is the Annual Parents Conference hosted by the CPC. All the information from various committees has been collected. The survey by SNAC, CPC, and Region Parents revealed the top choices to be:

1. Helping your Child Develop Social Skills, and Helping with Anxiety
2. Finding Ways to Help Your Child Open Up and
3. Bullying with Boys

There are already approximately 20 presenters lined up. Some of the presentations include:

- Brain Gym,
- Presentations by parents such as: Mothering Without Smothering, Digital Citizenship
- School Anxiety, Stress and Counselling.
- Ipad and Social Stories, and
- Kids that Wiggle and Giggle

The question was raised to see if it is possible to have a presentation on helping parents to deal with the stress of raising special needs students. It was suggested that the Family Resource Center could be contacted, to see if they could offer something pertaining to coping strategies. It was also mentioned that WIAIH does offer some sessions for parents of newly diagnosed children with ASD.

List of volunteers is needed for the SNAC kiosk and the set up the night before. Kiley and Barbara have volunteered. Linton will be available for set up the night before.

7.0 Reports

7.1 Administration:

Report was submitted by Cindy Finn. Question was raised as to whether or not any Mental Health support sessions for parents could be offered. It was noted that for the moment the focus will be on the schools; reaching out to both staff and students.

7.2 Council of Commissioners

Daniel Olivenstein and Linton Garner submitted reports for both December 2012 and January 2013. Safe and Caring Policy general consultation will be out in March and the approval from Council is scheduled for June. Only the bullying section of the policy has been changed.

It was also noted that the Pearson Education Foundation was able to allocate almost \$42000 for 22 projects this year!

It was also noted that SNAC's representative to council may attend council meetings as a member of the general public; they do not have any role per se on the council.

7.3 Central Parents' Committee

CPC has prepared a letter that has been sent to MELS regarding the problems with last year's exam results.

Linton Garner reported that the council is also working on preparing a document addressing bill 14 to send to MELS.

7.4 Education Committee

Report submitted by Barbara Schnider. Schools have begun posting their anti-bullying policies on their web sites.

7.4.1 Ed Subcommittee: Special Needs Policy Review

The LBPSB S.N Policy Review Subcommittee has created a second draft based on feedback from the Management Committee, and will be submitting the new Draft Policy to the Education Committee on Monday, Feb 4, 2013. SNAC was informed that school Principals make up the majority of the members on the Management committee, in addition to LBPSB Directors. SNAC had previously requested that a copy of the Draft(s) be forwarded to SNAC for the committee's feedback and comments, prior to the general consultation, which was denied.

7.5 P.T.U.

Report submitted by Shauna Beauchamps. Local agreement is becoming closer to being negotiated. New website is up as of January 17th, 2013. www.peasonteachersunion.com

7.6 P.A.S.A.

Report submitted. Discussion took place concerning student portfolios. It was questioned whether or not schools must hold "portfolio" nights, however it is done on a school to school basis; and is decided by the school staff. Often, "portfolio night" is where students take ownership of their work and progress by personally presenting their portfolio to their

parent.

7.7 Professionals

Report submitted by Kerry Payette. The ABCs of mental Health handout was circulated. There is a website www.hincksdellcrest.org/, which teachers and parents can reference concerning children's mental health issues. It also provides strategies for supporting children with ADHD in the classroom, and at home.

An ASD grid was also included in the report. The ASD team is looking at the needs of the students transitioning into kindergarten as well as into high school. They have partnered with the Abe Gold Learning Centre for the TEACH training.

A question was raised as to the role of the Autism Consultant. LBPSB has approximately 400 to 450 students on the Autism Spectrum. The consultant acts as a support or a coach to school staff when there is a need.

7.8 I.A.S.S.

No report submitted.

7.9 Website Administrator's Report

The SNAC website received 158 hits last month. Only 4 parent emails were received in December and 5 in January. This reduction is expected, due to the holiday period. A comment was received complimenting the quality of the SNAC website.

7.10 Workshops Attended/Webinars Viewed

None.

8.0 New Business

8.1 LBPSB "Relatives" Consultation [due Feb 28; discuss; finalise by next meeting]

This year's version of the consultation is more flexible than last year's. There was a discussion on Transfer 2.3: the "grandfathering clause". It was expressed that some feel that all situations should be rectified. It was also expressed that moving and rectified situations could be causing more challenges. It was also noted that the commissioners are not included in this policy, since they are elected to their positions. A suggested response will be written by a SNAC member and brought back to the next meeting for discussion.

8.2 LBPSB "Budget" Consultation [due March 27; discuss at next meeting]

To be discussed at the next meeting.

8.3 Letter of Support to WIAIH

There is an initiative from WIAIH to try to expand the current Pat Roberts centre in an effort to provide more support to local families. The special needs population is growing and they are running out of space. They are looking for funding from the government. They are applying for the Economical Development Federal Grant.

A letter has been drafted for SNAC to support WIAIH in this grant. Cindy Finn will verify with LBPSB Administration if SNAC is permitted as a committee to endorse such a project. If the answer is yes, the final letter will be circulated for approval.

A motion to Barbara Schnider and seconded by Kiley Philip to have a letter drafted up to support the project, provided SNAC is permitted to do so. Motion carried unanimously.

8.4 Discussion of Pilot Project at PETES

The Region 1 Parents' Committee raised an issue to the Central Parents' Committee (CPC), whereby a pilot project was introduced this year at PETES, in which a class consisting entirely of children with behavioural problems were grouped together. This particular class is a made up of grade 4 and 5 students.

Cindy Finn advised SNAC that it is each school's responsibility to provide the services for their students, and make decisions regarding how those services will be provided. It was noted that parents of children in this class were informed of the plan through individual meetings with each family, although not necessarily consulted for their input. In this particular case, the Regional Director of Schools was aware of the project

It was also noted that at the end of the year, no data per se is being gathered to evaluate the success of this program, and it is not clear whether the program will be continued next year. There are other schools in the board (and three classes) currently using a similar approach for grouping students. PETES is also experimenting with a TLC (The Learning Centre) room.

It was mentioned that because of new classroom weighing rules for students with special needs, groupings of students can be one method of both reducing classroom sizes, as well as at the same time providing more individual attention to at-risk students. It was noted that working with smaller groups can sometimes be a successful approach for helping these children achieve their potential. At the same time, it was recognized that grouping students with similar challenges can sometimes lead to an increase in the mimicking of negative behaviours.

A concern was raised as to whether or not the children are integrated with the other kids at any point during the day, perhaps in other activities such as recess, lunch, or in specialty classes (music, etc). It was also questioned as to whether groupings of this nature is a direction that the school board will be taking...

A discussion ensued as to whether or not SNAC could be consulted, or at least advised, when these types of projects are taking place. The question could perhaps be brought to council to see whether SNAC could be consulted when there are changes to services that

differ from the current integration policy. SNAC could potentially be the means of communication to parents, in order to allay their fears as well as to share “Best Practices” throughout the School Board, but in order for that to happen the committee will need to be informed of these types of classes.

The discussion may be addressed further when SNAC is invited to participate in the new Special Needs Policy general Consultation.

9.0 Correspondence

9.1 LCEEQ Conference Feb 11th, featuring a presentation by Barbara Coloroso

Information is in the kit

9.3 ASD Newsletter

Handout was distributed.

9.4 Pamphlet from the Family Resource Centre

Handout was distributed

9.5 WIAIH

WIAIH is organizing a free information fair on Thursday, February 7th, 2013. A flyer was distributed.

WIAIH also has a parent support group that is held every second Tuesday of every month at 7:00 p.m.

11.0 Questions from the Public

Question: Concerns from a parent visitor with regards to her child’s participation in the PETES pilot class were expressed. What should a parent do if they feel that their child is experiencing difficulty, and not progressing well in a “grouped class”?

Discussion by committee: It was suggested that the parents should contact their Resource Team and/or School Principal to express concerns, and to foster communication in a collaborative fashion.

Question: Is it possible to modify, or use another goal in IEP’s that is not included in the “drop down list” of recommended goals?

Answer: It was confirmed that the Electronic IEP Form drop-down form lists a set of goals that follow the Quebec Education Plan, however it is possible for resource team members to enter a customized goal for a child via a “blank” field in the IEP form.

Question: A Visiting Parent expressed concern that her child’s daily communication

journal is not being used by his high school teachers, even on days when her child exhibits a lot of anxiety. The parent is wondering what she can do?

Discussion by committee: It was suggested to speak with the resource teacher. It was also suggested that the parent consider contacting the consultant for special needs that is assigned to that school as well as the school's administrator.

Question: How can the parent community get involved in helping to express opinions and concerns regarding the grouping of students with special needs?

Answer: It is up to every school's governing board to gather the relevant details pertaining to the delivery of services to students with special needs. In speaking with governing board members, as well as the school's Parent Representative who is also a Governing Board member, parents may express their opinions. Although the governing board is not the place to discuss personal issues, they may discuss general policies.

There was also a brief discussion on the protocol for handling challenging situations. Parents are encouraged to go to their teacher, Resource Teacher, and/or Principal to discuss their concerns. The Commissioner member on SNAC advised that if parents feel that their concern has not been resolved, they can then contact the Regional Director of Schools.

10:37 meeting adjourned.

Next Meeting: Wednesday, February 27, 2013 at 7pm