

## DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION ANNOUNCES 2020 RETIREMENT

Niagara Catholic Director of Education John Crocco has had many first days of school.

His first day of Kindergarten.

His first day of high school.

His first day of university.

His first day as an elementary teacher in New Liskeard in 1983, and his first day as a classroom teacher at Saint Paul Catholic High School in Niagara Falls in 1986.

His first day as Program Chair, Vice-Principal, Principal, Superintendent, and his first day as Director of Education.

And this year's first day of school; his last with Niagara Catholic.

Director Crocco informed the Board early this calendar year, as he had with the previous Board, that his plan has always been a commitment to seeing *Vision 2020*, and the accomplishments achieved as a system in realizing this vision, to its completion, and then to retire on August 31, 2020.

"It has always been my plan to see *Vision 2020* through to its completion, before beginning the next opportunity on my life journey in September 2020," Director Crocco said in his letter to staff. "I have always known that this would be the right time to move forward, as we move into a new decade and a new strategic plan to serve students, staff and the board through the 2020s.

"The start of this new school year traditionally has focused, as it should, on students and staff, and I wanted this year to be no different. My informing staff in advance provides the Board the time required to begin the search process for the next Director of Education, and for a transition period to ensure that Niagara Catholic's mission, vision and values continue to provide the direction for our system. I am deeply grateful for the unconditional support of my family throughout my career. I am profoundly proud of the genuine collaboration, visionary thinking, risk-taking, support and commitment of the Boards of Trustees, staff, student leaders, Bishops, religious, parents and community members. Together, we have created an innovative Catholic learning environment designed for all students to succeed, recognized locally, provincially, nationally and internationally as a leading educational community.

“My passion, excitement and dedication to the vocation of Catholic education shines even brighter today than it did when I began teaching in 1983. While education has evolved throughout my career, the core belief found in our call to be the hands and feet of Jesus remains at the foundation of Catholic education.

“The secondary students in the Class of 2020 were in Grade 1 when I began as Director of Education of Niagara Catholic in 2008. This year, I will proudly graduate from my role as Director of Education alongside these students and, like them, will look forward to the next chapter in my life and the adventures and opportunities it brings.”

Chair of the Board, Frank Fera, who has known Director Crocco for most of his career, commended Mr. Crocco for his years of service.

“As our Director of Education, John has undeniably given generously of his time to promote and enhance the educational well-being of Niagara Catholic,” said Chair Fera. “His endless energy, coupled with his enthusiasm to foster and support the social, academic and religious success of our students, speaks well of his commitment to Catholic Education. One of his top priorities has been to work closely with our Bishop to ensure that gospel values were embedded and maintained throughout our Catholic school system. On behalf of the Board, It is my privilege to wish John a retirement filled with peace, joy and good health for many years.”

Director Crocco’s advanced notice of his retirement provides the Board with the required time to select the next Director of Education, and for a suitable time of transition.

A backgrounder highlighting the Director of Education’s career is attached.

Contact: Jennifer Pellegrini, Communications Officer  
Issued by: Jennifer Pellegrini, Communications Officer  
Date: Friday, September 20, 2019



## BACKGROUND ON JOHN CROCCO

Director Crocco began his journey in Catholic education as an elementary teacher in New Liskeard in 1983. He joined Niagara Catholic's predecessor board, the Welland County Roman Catholic Separate School Board, as a secondary teacher at Saint Paul Catholic High School in Niagara Falls three years later.

Throughout his 37-year career, in addition to teaching, Director Crocco served as a Program Chair of Student Services and Religion, and was seconded to the Niagara Peninsula Industry Education Council/Business Education Council as a Supervisor of Career Information Centres. He was Vice-Principal of Notre Dame College School, Lakeshore Catholic High School and Saint Paul Catholic High School, and Principal of Saint Michael and Lakeshore Catholic High Schools. Immediately prior to commencing his current role as Director of Education in September 2008, Mr. Crocco served as Superintendent of Program, and a Family of Schools Superintendent.

During his tenure as Director of Education, together with the Board of Trustees, staff and partners, Niagara Catholic created and implemented the Board's first multi-year strategic plan – *Vision 2020* – and annual System Priorities, which supported new programs, supports and services to meet the objectives of the strategic plan. Key initiatives achieved under *Vision 2020* include: the introduction of elementary chaplains to Niagara Catholic's Faith Formation team, the installation of chapels at elementary schools, and the implementation of Niagara Catholic's Elementary Dress Code and French Immersion programming. The first Elementary Student Senate in Ontario, the *Niagara Catholic Athletic Association*, and the formation of a partnership between Team Canada '72 and Niagara Catholic were unique initiatives introduced during his directorship. Niagara Catholic oversaw a variety of new school constructions, expansions, and consolidations, and supported the creation of mental health and well-being supports for students and staff.

*Vision 2020* supported the creation of celebrations recognizing students, staff and alumni accomplishments and supported the creation of the Pope Francis, Saint Kateri and Niagara Launch Centres to enhance student achievement. Director Crocco also supported the expansion of Education Technology and International Education at Niagara Catholic including program delivery in China, and integration opportunities in Asia, South America and Europe. He played a key role in the creation and hosting of the inaugural Ontario Catholic Leadership Conference in 2011, as well as the most recent one in 2018. All of these initiatives supported Niagara Catholic being recognized with two Global Best Awards by the International Partnerships Network, in 2010 and 2011.

Director Crocco has held a number of positions on local and provincial organizations, including two years as Chair of the English Catholic Council of Directors of Education (ECCODE), Vice-Chair of the Council of Directors of Education (CODE) and a member of CODE's Executive. He is currently Co-Chair of the joint CODE/COMOH (Council of Medical Officers of Health) provincial committee, and serves as a mentor to new Catholic Directors and Superintendents of Education.

He continues to serve on a number of Ministry of Education committees, is a member of local, provincial and national educational and community organizations, and is Past Chair of the annual United Way campaign for the United Way of South Niagara.

In 2014, Mr. Crocco was nominated by his peers in the Ontario Catholic Supervisory Officers' Association (OCSOA), and received the organization's Ontario EXL Award. The following year, he received the Canadian National Award as Canadian Director or Superintendent of Education of the Year by the Canadian Association of School System Administrators (CASSA) at its annual national conference in Montreal, and was recognized as the Canadian recipient of the American Association of School Administrators at its annual conference in Phoenix in 2016.

"It has been an absolute honour and privilege to have humbly served the Niagara Catholic District School Board since 1986, most recently as Director of Education," said Mr. Crocco. "I am blessed by the unconditional support of my family, and to have been part of a remarkable team that serves our system with compassion, dedication and wisdom throughout my career. I have also been blessed to be a part of an extraordinary team of collaborative Catholic educators, who are dedicated to the vocational calling to lead and serve our students and families. I will miss being the cheerleader for students and staff in our Board, and being a part of the many achievements and celebrations throughout our system. Ultimately, I will miss the daily interactions with students and staff, and will cherish the many memories made over the past 37 years. I look forward to maintaining the friendships formed over my career long into my retirement."

Contact: Jennifer Pellegrini, Communications Officer  
Issued by: Jennifer Pellegrini, Communications Officer  
Date: Friday, September 20, 2019

