



MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL EDUCATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 8, 2020

Minutes of the Meeting of the Special Education Advisory Committee, held on Wednesday, **January 8, 2020**, at 6:30 pm in the Father Burns csc Boardroom at the Catholic Education Centre, 427 Rice Road, Welland.

Vice Chair, Karen Murphy, called the meeting to order at 6:30 pm.

A. ROUTINE MATTERS

1. Opening Prayer

- Opening Prayers were led by Vice Chair, Karen Murphy

2. Roll Call

Members	Affiliations	Yes	Excused
Harvey, Dorothy	Niagara Children's Centre		✓
Helmeczi, Bill	Pathstone Mental Health		✓
Howcroft, Andrew	Community Living Welland Pelham	✓	
Murphy, Karen	Autism Ontario Niagara Region	✓	
Nangle, Ted	Learning Disabilities Association – Niagara	✓	
Palombo, Pina	Down Syndrome Caring Parents (Niagara)		✓
Racine, Anna	Community Member		✓
Smith, Lorraine	Mainstream		✓
Smith, Rita	Community Living Port Colborne/Wainfleet		✓
Burkholder, Rhianon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Board Trustee – Thorold/Merritton 	✓	
Burtnik, Kathy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Board Trustee – St. Catharines 	✓	
Willett, Adeline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student Senate Representative 	✓	
Filice, Adele	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vice Principal, Secondary 	✓	
Kerho, Chris	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Principal Elementary 		✓

The following staff members were in attendance:

Pat Rocca, Superintendent of Education, **Danny Giancola**, Coordinator – Special Education, **Vincent Mancuso** – Behaviour Resource Teacher and **Jennifer Lanese**, Recording Secretary/Administrative Assistant to Pat Rocca.

The group welcomed Adeline Willett, our Student Senate from Lakeshore Catholic High School to her first SEAC meeting.

Due to last minute regrets from our members, we had no quorum that evening. Approval of January's Agenda and December's Minutes will be deferred until next month.

3. Approval of the Agenda

- No Quorum

4. Disclosure of Interest

- No Quorum

5. Approval of Minutes of the Special Education Advisory Committee of December 4, 2019

- No Quorum

B. PRESENTATIONS

1. Letter from Growth and Retention AD Hoc Committee

- A copy of the letter that Anna Racine received on **December 13, 2019** from Paul Turner, Board Trustee and John Crocco, Direction of Education inviting SEAC members to be representatives on the recently created Growth and Retention AD Hoc Committee. All interested members were required to inform Anna Pisano, Administrative Assistant to Board and Corporate Services at anna.pisano@ncdsb.com or 905.735.0240 x 219 by **Friday, January 10, 2020**.

2. 2020-2021 School Year Calendar

- A copy of the draft proposal of the Niagara Catholic Elementary and Secondary School Year Calendars for School Year 2020-2021 were distributed to the group, along with a feedback sheet. In order to ensure that all SEAC Member received a copy, the draft proposals were also electronically sent to all SEAC Members on **Thursday, January 16, 2020**.
- SEAC Members were encouraged to discuss and comment on the calendar dates as well as possible alternatives and complete the feedback sheet. Completed feedback sheets were due by **Friday, January 31, 2020** to jennifer.pellegrini@ncdsb.com.

C. AGENDA ITEMS

1. Policy Review

- The following Policies and Administrative Guidelines are currently being reviewed as part of the cyclical Policy and Administrative Guidelines Review process.
- To be considered, all submissions must identify the specific policy and include the individual's name, their phone number, their home address and affiliation with Niagara Catholic.
- *Anonymous or pseudonymous submissions will not be considered.*

- [Code of Conduct Policy \(302.6.2\)](#)
 - [Establishment and Cyclical Review of Policies Policy \(100.5\)](#)
 - [Purchasing Supply Chain Management Policy \(600.1\)](#)
 - [Trustee Electronic Meetings \(Board and Committees\) Policy \(100.8\)](#)
 - [Volunteering in Catholic Schools Policy \(800.9\)](#)
- Please submit your feedback to jennifer.pellegrini@ncdsb.com by **January 15, 2020**.
- [Concussion Policy \(303.1\)](#)
 - [Employee Workplace Harassment Policy \(201.7\)](#)
 - [Employee Workplace Violence Policy \(201.11\)](#)
 - [Occupational Health and Safety Policy \(201.6\)](#)
 - [Naming of a Board Facility, Designated Area or Chapel Policy \(100.15\)](#)
 - [Sexual Misconduct Policy \(201.13\)](#)
 - [Student Use of Guide Dogs and Service Animals Policy \(NEW\)](#)
- Please submit your feedback to jennifer.pellegrini@ncdsb.com by February 6, 2020.

D. SEAC Report

- NIL Report

E. AGENCY REPORTS

1. Learning Disabilities Association – Niagara – Ted Nangle

- Come out and cheer for the Niagara Ice Dogs – Puck Toss on **February 20, 2020** from 7:00 pm to 9:00 pm.
- LDA is hosting a Trivia Night Fundraiser on **February 22, 2020** from 6:00 pm to 9:00 pm.
- S.L.A.M. Applications will be opened on **February 24, 2020** from 6:00 am to 11:30 pm.

2. Niagara Children’s Centre – Dorothy Harvey

- NIL Report

3. Autism Ontario Niagara Region – Karen Murphy

- NIL Report

4. Down Syndrome Caring Parents (Niagara)

- NIL Report

5. Community Living Welland Pelham – Andrew Howcroft

- Thinking Differently: Meet Jamea and her family Jamea has a delightfully curious personality and an incredible gift for cutting through small talk. She is 15, in high school, is an animal advocate, a horseback rider and music lover. She also has autism.



Jamea, her sister Tashy and Tashy's boyfriend, Aaron

- For any parent with a child who has a disability, safety is key. So, in an effort to protect Jamea, it was decided that specialized programming was the best option to keep her safe. Community Living Ontario's Family Engagement Leadership Series helped Jamea and her family think differently. It provided them with strategies to address some of the hurdles they faced. The series is a retreat-style workshop that engages the family in exploring what's possible for their loved ones who have an intellectual disability. It provides a unique opportunity to share and learn with other families that have similar lived experiences, where the focus is on developing tactics to overcome societal barriers. "The work done through the family engagement series is actually very radical. It challenges what our society understands to be a meaningful, happy life," Jamea's dad Mark Davidson said. "The other families at the retreat had similar challenges and the weekends made us look long and hard at our thoughts and frankly, how limiting our beliefs were," Jamea's step-mom Naila Lalani added. Jamea who also attended the series with her father, stepmother and sister Tashy, developed a new appreciation for people's uniqueness and what natural inclusion means. Her family understood that providing opportunities to develop reciprocal relationships that are based on common interests was best for Jamea, and she agreed. "The autism has moved from being a front-and-centre 'disability' to being an awareness of her unique needs and how those are part of a much bigger picture of who this beautiful girl is and how she will continue to evolve in ways that will make the world a better place." - Mark Davidson, Jamea's dad When it came time for Jamea to transition to high school, a daunting task for any teenager, she confidently advocated that she was ready for a more integrated and inclusive environment, where she would have more independence and autonomy. "I found that I didn't really need to be in an autism classroom anymore." Jamea's mom Melissa Melnitzer and stepdad, Ari Kaplan, are proud of Jamea and her recent accomplishments at school. Working with her principal and teachers, she started an animal advocacy group, which quickly grew in popularity. "She showed me how independent, determined, and courageous she had become, which instilled in me strong feelings of hope, joy, and inspiration." Jamea and her dad, Mark Davidson Armed with this new way of thinking, Jamea and her extended family have a better understanding of the importance of authentic inclusion. While having Jamea's best interest at heart, they now see that the specialized educational program limited the rest of the world from getting to know her. "I don't think we really understood inclusion until we experienced how important it was to help Jamea

thrive,” said Melissa. Families are often met with barriers and resistance when it comes to naturally including their loved one who has an intellectual disability in everyday life. Frequently, the focus is on the person’s limitations. Through hard work and support from Community Living Ontario’s family engagement initiatives, Jamea and her family now think beyond the disability and focus on the possibilities.

6. Mainstream – Lorraine Smith

- NIL Report

7. Community Living Port Colborne / Wainfleet – Rita Smith

- Community Living Ontario would like to invite elementary school aged children from across Ontario to participate in a contest that promotes and raises awareness about inclusive education. **The Together, We’re Better** contest is an annual contest inviting individual students to submit a story/poem or a class to submit a video expressing why class is better because students who have an intellectual/developmental disability are included and everyone is learning together. The intent is to have students and classes to begin thinking about inclusion and start a conversation about how a diverse class offers a better educational experience for all students. Winning prizes include resources for the classroom, pizza party, a tablet (for individual entries) and much more! The contest deadline is Tuesday, **January 28, 2020**. Winners will be announced on Friday, **February 7, 2020** and showcased on the Community Living Ontario’s website.

8. Pathstone Mental Health – Bill Helmeczi

- NIL Report

F. STAFF REPORTS

1. Secondary Principals – Adele Filice

- Nothing new to report; however, she will be seeking out information from our Catholic Secondary Schools on any special events that our unique students participate in. Board events will not be included in her upcoming submissions, as the SEAC members were looking for what our NCDSB unique students are doing.
- Our SEAC members are looking forward to hearing the upcoming updates from Adele!

2. Elementary Principals – Chris Kerho

- NIL Report

3. Special Education – Danny Giancola

- Upcoming modules for our students identified as *Gifted* will be taking place on **January 29, January 30, February 5 and February 7**. This module focuses on **S.T.R.E.A.M** - Science, Technology, Religion, Engineering, Art and Mathematics where students use coding and computational thinking to solve an “escape room” like problem.
- Kindergarten screenings is a new process for screening Kindergarten students is underway. Our department’s Speech Language Pathologists (SLPs) have taken on the responsibility of screening Kindergarten students who have been identified with having speech or language needs. School Based Rehab Services have formerly completed this task. Our department has identified many benefits to internal screening, the most obvious one being service delivery and shorter wait

periods.

- **SEA-IT** is an on-line portal that increases our efficiency with assigning and monitoring equipment for students that supports learning, accessibility and mobility in our schools.
- **PermissionClick** is a new online tool that will streamline our communication with parents in order to provide faster, more efficient service to students. PermissionClick will allow forms and documents to be digitally signed by parent(s)/guardian(s) that will help place our support staff more quickly in our schools.
- **ELITE** is another digital tool that will empower school staff to create documents such as School Based Teams and Case Conferences in a more efficient manner. ELite will create a more streamlined and paperless approach for communication between the school staff and the Student Support Staff. ELITE is also being built to record and track the intervention to students provided by the Student Support Staff.
- Kindergarten transitions are underway. Student Support is beginning phase one of transitioning our new September 2020 Kindergarten students with special education needs. The goal is to provide a smooth and seamless entry into Kindergarten with proper supports in place.
- Grade 8 Transitions to high school is also underway. Student Support is beginning the process to support elementary/secondary schools with the initial stages of transitioning students who require additional support into grade 9.
- **Canadian Cognitive Abilities Test (CCAT)** is now in full implementation. This is a new screener which has been purchased to support our process for identifying students who may be Gifted. This screener also assists teachers and ERTs with developing a student profile of strengths and needs.
- Our revised **Request for Student Support** form which is what the school staff completes to access support from our department. This form is geared towards building on student goals and their current level of independence. Our support staff uses this form in order to assist students to achieve the next level of independence in identified areas.

G. TRUSTEE REPORT

- The next Committee of the Whole Meeting will take place on **Tuesday, January 14, 2020**. Kathy Burtnik will update us at the next SEAC Meeting.
- Kathy Burtnik shared some exciting news about Michael Jacques. Vice President of CLO and member of CLWP Board, (and alternate NCDSB SEAC alternate), Michael Jacques has been recognized on the “Queens Commonwealth Trust” platform for his advocacy work, his influence as a public speaker and for the success of his book. The trust was established approximately two years ago by Queen Elizabeth and the President of the Trust is Prince Harry. The site showcases young adults that are making a change in their community among the 53 commonwealth countries.
- We are so proud to see the way Michael continuously inspires change in his community and beyond. Congratulations to him on this milestone! Be sure to visit the site and read his story: www.queenscommonwealthtrust.org/inspiration/michael-jacques-cant-read-cant-write-heres-my-book/.
- OECTA will be in a legal strike position on **Monday, January 13, 2020**.

H. STUDENT REPORT

- NIL Report

I. NCPIC Report

- NIL Report

J. FUTURE MEETINGS/ INFORMATION ITEMS

1. Election Proceedings – January 8, 2020.

- Elections were deferred to next month's meeting due to no quorum.

K. NEXT MEETING

- **Wednesday, February 5, 2019 at 6:30 pm at the CATHOLIC EDUCATION CENTRE**

L. ADJORNMENT

- This meeting was adjourned at 7:30 pm.