



MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL EDUCATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING WEDNESDAY, JUNE 3, 2020

Minutes of the Meeting of the Special Education Advisory Committee held on **Wednesday, June 3, 2020**, at 6:30 pm Electronic Meeting in Compliance with Education Act Section 207 and Ontario Regulation 463/97 Section 5.1 (2) Public Access 1-866-862-7608, Access Code 2139996#

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

A. ROUTINE MATTERS

1. Opening Prayer

Board Trustee Burtnik and Superintendent of Education Rocca provided special Intentions.
 Vice-Principal Filice led opening prayers.

2. Roll Call

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

The following staff members were in attendance:

Pat Rocca, Superintendent of Education, **David O'Rourke**, Coordinator of Special Education, **Vincent Mancuso** – Behaviour Resource Teacher and **Jennifer Lanese**, Recording Secretary/Administrative Assistant to Superintendent Rocca. Director of Education Crocco was a special guest that evening.

3. Approval of the Agenda

- Moved by Andrew Howcroft
- Seconded by Bill Helmeczi

THAT THE Special Education Advisory Committee approves the Agenda of the Special Education Advisory Committee Meeting of **June 3, 2020**.

CARRIED

4. Disclosure of Interest

- No Disclosures of Interest were declared with any items on the Agenda.

5. Approval of Minutes of the Special Education Advisory Committee of May 6, 2020

- Moved by Andrew Howcroft
- Seconded by Kelsey Dick

THAT THE Special Education Advisory Committee approves the Minutes of the Special Education Advisory Committee Meeting of **May 6, 2020**, as presented.

CARRIED

B. PRESENTATIONS

- There were no presentations that evening.

C. AGENDA ITEMS

1. Other Related Items

1.1 *Annual Review of the Special Education Plan*

- The Ministry of Education requires district School Boards to publicly make available a comprehensive report regarding the current special education programs and services of the Board. ***Building Bridges to Services 2020 and Beyond*** is our Board's current version of the Ministry of Education mandated Special Education Plan that includes the components that are defined in *Special Education in Ontario Kindergarten to Grade 12 Policy and Resource Guide 2017* as well as the protocols established in Policy and Program Memorandum 149.
- In compliance with Regulation 464/97, Student Support staff consults with the Niagara Catholic Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) in the preparation and update of

the Special Education Plan.

- A checklist that notes the plan's parts, updated sections and the URL leading to the Special Education Plan on our Board's website is annually completed, and submitted to the London Regional Education Office by **July 31, 2020**. The 2020 Special Education Plan can be accessed from the Board's website. Select <Programs>, Select <Special Education>, Select <Special Education Plan> or by clicking on the direct link:
<https://cdn.niagaracatholic.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Special-Education-Plan-2020-WHITEBG.pdf>

1.1 Motion to Approve Provisions

- Moved by Bill Helmeczi
- Seconded by Andrew Howcroft
THAT the Special Education Advisory Committee approve the revisions to the Provisions of Special Education Programs and Services to be included in the Special Education Plan, ***Building Bridges to Services 2020 and Beyond***.

CARRIED

1.2 Ministry Advisory Council on Special Education (MACSE) Community Collaboration Form

- The due date for the submission of the completed MACSE forms was **Friday, May 22, 2020**.
- Superintendent of Education Rocca submitted the completed forms to the Superintendent of Student Achievement, Specialized Services Blair for the Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board.
- He will prepare a report of the suggested feedback and share it with the Committee Members at the next SEAC meeting.

2. 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 your name, phone number, address, and affiliation with Niagara Catholic.

Anonymous or pseudonymous submissions will not be considered

- [Equity and Inclusive Education Policy \(100.10\)](#)
 - [Retirement & Service Recognition Celebration Policy \(201.2\)302.67\)](#)
 - [Leadership Pathways Policy \(203.4\)](#)
 - [Volunteer Recognition Policy \(800.4\)](#)
- Please submit your feedback to jennifer.pellegrini@ncdsb.com by 4:00 pm on **September 11, 2020**.

D. AGENCY REPORTS

1. Learning Disabilities Association of Niagara Region – Ted Nangle

i) Online Program

- Each spring the LDANR collaborates with Brock University's Child and Youth Studies department to offer a remedial reading program. This year, it was decided to offer this program online. It has gone much more smoothly than anticipated and has allowed LDANR to serve about 30 students this spring.

ii) Webinar Series

- They have also been offering free caregiver webinars about how to support literacy, math, and coping skills at home. Past webinars can be found on their website under <resources>. There are still three weeks left in the webinar series.

iii) Summer Programming

- For the safety of our families, participants and staff, they have cancelled their SLAM camp for this summer. In place of this, they will be offering an online remedial reading program, similar to the one that was offered in the spring, for 8 weeks over the summer. These spots will be offered first to any families who were registered for their SLAM summer camp.

iv) Fall Programming

- Their fall program applications opened on May 25th, and it will remain open during the summer. As of now, they are planning to go ahead with in-person programming come the fall, although they are preparing contingency plans in the event in-person programming cannot be offered.

v) Transition Programming

- They are hoping to pilot a transition program sometime in the coming year to support students during critical transition periods, specifically with their self-advocacy skills. They have been gathering feedback from professionals in the field of learning disabilities (including the Niagara Catholic District School Board), caregivers, and individuals with learning disabilities. They will keep the community up-to-date on how this unfolds.

2. Niagara Children's Centre – Dorothy Harvey

- NIL Report

3. Autism Ontario Niagara Region – Karen Murphy

- They will be starting registration for their **Summer Camp in a Box** program starting **Friday, June 5, 2020**. Additional information is available at www.facebook.com/AONiagara/.

4. Down Syndrome Niagara – Pina Palombo

- NIL Report

5. Community Living Welland Pelham – Andrew Howcroft

- NIL Report

6. Mainstream – Lorraine Smith

- NIL Report

7. Community Living Port Colborne / Wainfleet – Rita Smith

- NIL Report

8. Pathstone Mental Health – Bill Helmeczi

- NIL Report

9. Indigenous Community Member – Kelsey Dick

- NIL Report

E. STAFF REPORTS

1. Secondary Principals – Adele Filice

- Vice-Principal Filice shared with the Committee members that all Secondary students are being supported and all students will continue to be supported until the end of this School Year.

2. Elementary Principals – Chris Kerho

- Principal Kerho echoed those comments expressed by Vice-Principal Filice. He also wanted to emphasize the dedication of the Educational Assistants (EAs) during this pandemic. He has been impressed with how the EAs have been reaching out to all students. Some EAs have even read to students. He complimented their continual commitment to all of their students.

3. Special Education – David O'Rourke

- Student Support staff continues to provide transition meetings and transition opportunities for students entering Niagara Catholic's schools in the fall. The Student Support Department is also facilitating transition meetings for students who are transitioning from one school to another.

4. Pat Rocca – Superintendent of Education

- Superintendent Rocca provided an update to the group.

i) Special Education Funding

- The Ministry of Education will be providing funding to provide supports to students with special education needs and mental health concerns over the summer. This will allow School Boards to offer voluntary summer employment to supporting staffing in the summer months. This funding will be allocated for:
 - o Regulated mental health professionals to provide direct supports to students on existing caseloads and to respond to crisis, (i.e., \$8 million).
 - o Staffing resources to support students with special education needs in both expanded and new summer program offerings including special education resource teachers and educational assistants, (i.e., \$6.4 million).
 - o The in-person transition back to school programs and/or supports in the two weeks before the start of the 2020-2021 school year for students with special education needs and mental health concerns.
 - o Superintendent Rocca had a meeting with the Ministry of Education yesterday about this. The Niagara Catholic District School Board is awaiting for more information and direction from the Ministry. Currently, all School Boards have the flexibility to design programs within their funding allocation to address student need based on local priorities.

ii) Report Cards

- All teaching staff is in the process of completing the Kindergarten Communication of Learning, Grades 1 to 8, and Grades 9 to 12 Provincial Report Cards.
- The guidelines for all staff were sent out today from the Research, Assessment, and Evaluation department regarding this process.
- The Ministry has made adjustments to its assessment, evaluation, and reporting policies to support the adaptations that staff has had to make during this time of continuity of learning.

iii) Synchronous Learning

- A Director's memo has been issued to all staff regarding the expectation to deliver synchronous teaching and learning.
- Professional development to assist staff through this has been ongoing.
- All parents and students also received a checklist that has been sent to all staff and families through a Director's memo and this information was also posted on the Niagara Catholic District School Board's Learn at Home Resource Page.
- The word "synchronous" is defined in the Merriam-Webster Dictionary as "happening, existing, or arising at precisely the same time; recurring or operating at the same periods." During this time of distance education, the delivery of synchronous learning range from several real-time, interactive platforms available for staff ranging from Google Meet/Hangout and Virtual Classroom

in the Niagara Catholic Virtual Learning Environment, e-mails, phone calls, audio and video conferencing, all of which are interactive, in real-time.

iv) Thoughtexchange

- As we continue on the journey of distance learning during the current school closures, we are extending an invitation to all students, parents/guardians, staff, pastors, and supporters of Catholic education in Niagara to participate in a Thoughtexchange on distance learning in Niagara Catholic.
- As we continue to implement Niagara Catholic's Continuity of Distance Learning Plan until at least the end of June and plan for the fall, we have partnered with Thoughtexchange to provide an online, open, interactive and transparent process to invite input from students, parents/guardians, staff and members of our community who support Catholic education as we continue to adapt to teaching, learning and supporting in a virtual environment.
- SEAC Members were invited to participate in this Thoughtexchange, which will assist Board staff in reviewing what has worked well and what we need to improve on as the Niagara Catholic District School Board plans together for the future. Thoughtexchange will provide Board staff with a summary report of all feedback. The community's voice is important to assist the Niagara Catholic District School Board in designing a plan for the months ahead and the reopening of schools.
-

v) Special Olympics

- Special Olympics Ontario will be hosting Virtual School Championships throughout June! These virtual games have been designed to celebrate the accomplishments of student-athletes and the completion of another great school year!
- Any Special Olympics student-athlete with an intellectual disability across Canada between the ages of 13-21 years old is welcome to compete and participate on behalf of their school! This event is open not only to those that had qualified for the Kingston Games but all student-athletes!
- The Niagara Catholic District School Board is currently working with Special Olympics Ontario to ensure instructions for events at home include safety considerations and are conducted under the supervision of parents/guardians. Upon receipt of that information, the Board will share this with all schools.

vi) Workshop with Bethesda

- The Niagara Catholic District School Board has teamed up with Bethesda for a joint workshop. The Board's third and fourth collaborative workshop with Bethesda took place today from 2:00 - 3:30 pm and 6:30 - 8:00 pm.
- This workshop series describes strategies based on Applied Behaviour Analysis for educators to support children in participating in learning activities at home.

F. TRUSTEE REPORTS

- Trustee Burtnik shared with the Committee members that the Board Trustees have been meeting regularly. She thanked the Chair of the Board for all his hard work ensuring that all Board Trustees were kept informed and up to date.
- She also told the Committee members that Senior Administrative Council would look much different for School Year 2020-2021 as three of the senior staff have announced their upcoming retirement. Director of Education Crocco, Superintendent Baldasaro, and Controller of Facilities Services Whitwell will be retiring on August 31, 2020. Most recently, Superintendent Iannantuono has announced his retirement too. She congratulated the retirees and thanked them for their years of service for the Niagara Catholic District School Board. She concluded by saying that Niagara Catholic is richer for having these senior staff members in our midst. She thanked all the Committee Members for serving on SEAC and wished them a happy and safe summer. She concluded by putting a motion forth.

Motion to Acknowledge and Congratulate the Retirement of Senior Staff

Moved by – Karen Murphy

THAT the Special Education Advisory Council acknowledges the tremendous efforts and dedication of the service provided by **Director of Education Crocco, Superintendent of Education Baldasaro, Superintendent of Education Iannantuono,** and **Controller of Plant Facilities Whitwell** for students with exceptional needs and all students of the Niagara Catholic District School Board. We congratulate them on their retirement and wish them all of God's blessings.

CARRIED

G. STUDENT REPORT

- Adeline did not have a report to present, as the Student Senate had not met since SEAC's May meeting.
- Adeline thanked the Committee members for welcoming her to the SEAC meetings. She enjoyed and appreciated the opportunity to serve as Student Senate for School Year 2019-2020. She told the group that attending the SEAC meetings has been an invaluable experience that taught her about the formal meeting process and provided her with a leadership opportunity.
- She closed by saying that this was her last SEAC meeting as she was graduating from Lakeshore Catholic High School in June. Adeline will be attending Carleton University in September to study Public Affairs and Policy Management.
- Superintendent Rocca and the Committee Members thanked Adeline for her contribution and attendance at the SEAC meetings and wished her success in all her future endeavours.

H. NCPIC REPORT

- Vincent Mancuso attended NCPIC's meeting last month. The Ministry of Education held a virtual meeting with Parent Involvement Committee Chairs on **April 23, 2020**. A discussion was

focused on the following three topics:

- Share the practices of your NCPIC and board that support families and support learning from home.
 - Describe challenges that learning at home may pose for parents and families.
 - How else can the Ministry be helpful during these unprecedented times?
- The next NCPIC meeting will take place on **Thursday, September 10, 2020**.
 - Superintendent Rocca asked if any of the Committee Members would be willing to represent SEAC at that meeting, as Vincent Mancuso was an alternate for Lorraine Smith.
 - Kelsey Dick has graciously offered to attend the next NCPIC meeting.
 - Superintendent Rocca thanked Kelsey for representing SEAC at the next NCPIC meeting.

I. CLOSING REMARKS

- Superintendent Rocca thanked the Committee members for their time and dedication servicing on SEAC. He concluded by congratulating Director of Education Crocco on his upcoming retirement. He extended his gratitude and appreciation to Director of Education Crocco for his exemplary leadership, tireless efforts, and mentorship. He referred the Director of Education Crocco as a champion for Special Education students. He then invited Director of Education Crocco to address the Committee members.
- Director of Education Crocco thanked the Committee members for volunteering their time and service on SEAC. He spoke about the uncertainty of how education will look like moving forward due to the COVID-19 pandemic. He assured the group that Niagara Catholic has always and will continue to follow our Board's **Special Education module**:

We Believe:

- ***All students can succeed.***
- ***Universal design and differentiated instruction are effective and interconnected means of meeting the learning or productivity needs of any group of students.***
- ***Successful instructional practices are founded on evidence-based research, tempered by experience.***
- ***Classroom teachers are the key educators for student's literacy and numeracy development.***
- ***Every child has their own unique pattern of learning.***
- ***The classroom teacher needs the support of the larger community to create a learning environment that supports students with special education needs.***
- ***Fairness is not sameness.***

- He extended his appreciation to the Chair of the Board Fera and Trustee Burtnik for being the vanguards to support Catholic Education. He shared his continued love and support for Niagara Catholic District School. He has been proud of serving all students of the Niagara Catholic District School Board. He concluding by promising that he will continue to be a strong advocate for Catholic Education.

J. FUTURE MEETINGS AND EVENTS

- Due to the COVID-19 restrictions, there is nothing to report at this time.

K. MOMENT OF SILENT REFLECTION FOR LIFE

- Vice-Chair Murphy asked all attendees to observe a moment of silence during these uncertain times.

L. NEXT MEETING

- **Wednesday, September 9, 2020 at 6:30 pm** – format to be determined based on current COVID-19 restrictions.

M. ADJOURNMENT

- Moved by Bill Helmeczi
- Seconded by Andrew Howcroft

THAT the June 3, 2020 meeting of the Special Education Advisory Committee be adjourned.

CARRIED

- This meeting was adjourned at 7:25 pm.