



## MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL EDUCATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 2, 2020

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Minutes of the Meeting of the Special Education Advisory Committee held on **Wednesday, December 2, 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 Phone Number: 1-647-749-124 (Tolls), Conference ID # 745 739 256

Chair Racine called the meeting to order at 6:30 pm.

### A. ROUTINE MATTERS

#### 1. Opening Prayers

- Chair Racine led opening prayers with an Advent prayer and gave special intentions for Adele Filice who is recovering at home from a recent medical emergency.

#### 2. Roll Call

Members	Affiliations	Yes	Excused
Harvey, Dorothy	Niagara Children's Centre	✓	
Helmeczi, Bill	Pathstone Mental Health	✓	
Huxley, Kelsey	Indigenous Community Member	✓	
Murphy, Karen	Autism Ontario Niagara Region Chapter	✓	
Palombo, Pina	Down Syndrome Niagara	✓	
Racine, Anna	Community Member	✓	
Smith, Lorraine	Mainstream		✓
Smith, Rita	Community Living Port Colborne/Wainfleet		✓
Thomas, Kerry	Community Living Welland/Pelham	✓	
Wilson, Wendy	Indigenous Community Member	✓	
Zoelman, Madeline	Learning Disabilities Association of Niagara Region	✓	
Burtnik, Kathy	• <b>Trustee of the Board</b>	✓	
Butera, Serena	• <b>Student Senate Representative</b>	✓	
Fera, Frank	• <b>Trustee of the Board</b>		✓
Majka, Kelly	• <b>Vice Principal, Secondary</b>	✓	
Kerho, Chris	• <b>Principal, Elementary</b>	✓	

Christalla (Chris) Kouroushis was an observer from NCPIC that evening. The following staff members were in attendance: **Gino Pizzoferrato**, Superintendent of Education, **Camillo Cipriano**, Director of Education, **Jim Di Gioia**, **Danny Giancola** and **David O'Rourke** - Coordinators of Student Support, **Vincent Mancuso**, Behaviour Resource Teacher, and **Jennifer Lanese**, Recording Secretary/Administrative Assistant to Superintendent Pizzoferrato.

**3. Approval of the Agenda**

- Moved by Bill Helmeczi
- Seconded by Kelsey Huxley

**THAT** THE Special Education Advisory Committee approves the Agenda of the Special Education Advisory Committee Meeting of **December 2, 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 November 4, 2020**

- Moved by Karen Murphy
- Seconded by Madeline Zoelman

**THAT** THE Special Education Advisory Committee approves the Minutes of the Special Education Advisory Committee Meeting of **November 4, 2020** as presented.

**CARRIED**

## **B. PRESENTATIONS**

**1. Update from our Virtual Schools on Special Education – Carla Bianco**

- Carla Bianco introduced herself to the group before starting her presentation.
- She shared with the group that the Virtual Schools have 3 Elementary Educational Resource Teachers (ERTs) and 1 Secondary ERT on staff.
- There are approximately 2700 elementary students currently attending the Virtual schools and approximately 500 of these students are on IEPs.
- The Virtual Learning staff are maintaining a positive, strong connection with the Home Schools.
- This is to prepare those students who eventually will be transitioning back to their Home Schools.
- The Virtual School's staff and the Home School's staff have been working very collaboratively together to ensure that these students have a successful year.
- Discussions followed.
- Dorothy Harvey gave her perspective and appreciation to both the DSBN and the NCDSB for supporting these students.
- Through her family contacts at Niagara Children's Centre, she has received a lot of positive feedback.
- Carla Bianco and the Virtual team have been working through this new type of learning

and things are improving daily.

- Carla Bianco emphasized how committed her staff is, especially being very creative in keeping their students engaged in the virtual world.
- Carla Bianco and the Virtual teams are addressing some of the challenges and are working towards ensuring that all students are successful.
- Superintendent Pizzoferrato thanked Carla Bianco for her update and all the work that she and the Virtual Team have accomplished.
- Superintendent Pizzoferrato ended by concluding that it has been a team effort. Through everyone's efforts, it has been a very positive and successful program.
- Superintendent Pizzoferrato thanked the tremendous work provided by the Virtual Teams specifically Maria Ruggi Dietsch, Adele Filice, Penny Macklem and the Student Support Coordinators.
- Superintendent Pizzoferrato concluded by saying, these students may be learning virtually at a distance, but they are certainly present receiving all available resources and support.

## C. AGENDA ITEMS

### 1. Parent Outreach

#### 1.1 Terri Pauco and Lidia Di Lorenzo (February 4, 2021 Presentation)

- The deadline to return the completed survey was extended to **Friday, December 11, 2020.**
- The Committee Members were reminded to return the Presentation Surveys by the due date.
- All completed surveys will be forwarded to Lidia and Terri to help them prepare and plan their presentation.
- Their presentation will take place during February's SEAC meeting.

#### 1.2 Dr. Sheila Bennett (May 2021 Presentation)

- Superintendent Pizzoferrato will forward the completed surveys to Dr. Bennett.
- Her presentation is still tentatively scheduled for the upcoming May's SEAC meeting.
- Once Dr. Bennett returns from her sabbatical, she will confirm the presentation date with Superintendent Pizzoferrato.

### 2. Other Related Items

#### 2.1 Brochure Updates

- Karen Murphy and Serena Butera provided an update to the Committee Members that they were exploring to modify the format of the current SEAC Brochure to a more condensed version.
- The Communication Sub-Committee Members were looking at possibly making a video to promote SEAC to Niagara Catholic families.
- This video would give parents access to available resources more readily.
- The Communication Sub-Committee were planning to meet again. They hope to have a "draft" copy of their proposed updated SEAC Brochure to share with the Committee Members at the next SEAC meeting.

- Chris Kerho suggested if the Committee Members would be open to creating a SEAC Instagram page.
- Discussion followed and it seemed well-received by all Committee Members.
- Serena Butera noted that she was concerned about having regular content on the Instagram page. She stressed without regular content, there may be a risk of loss of interest which ultimately would result in losing our audience.

## 2.2 Annual Review of the Special Education Plan

- Superintendent Pizzoferrato discussed the options of completing the annual review of the Special Education Plan.
- Superintendent Pizzoferrato will follow-up with the Student Support Coordinators to discuss this process so we are handling it in more manageable sections of the Special Education Plan.
- More information to follow at upcoming meetings.

## 2.3 Sub-Committees Update

- Jennifer Lanese asked for the name of the “Lead” representative from each Sub-Committee.
- The Committee Members were provided with an updated Sub-Committee list that identified the “Lead” representative for each Sub-Committee.
- Each Lead representative provided an update to the group.

## 2.4 Policy Review

- There are currently no Policies and Administrative Guidelines being reviewed as part of the cyclical Policy and Administrative Guidelines Review process at this time.

# D. SEAC REPORTS

## 1. Learning Disabilities Association of Niagara Region – Madeline Zoelman

- Program applications opened on November 23<sup>rd</sup> and they already had a waitlist of approximately 20 for JUMP Math and 20 for Reading Rocks.
- This week they will be wrapping up all Fall programs. They have received very positive feedback from their participants.
- They will be sending out a strategic plan survey (as their strategic plan is coming due on July 2021 and will be in effect for the next 3 years). They have also received a lot of feedback that families want to continue participating virtually.
- They will continue to run JUMP Math, Reading Rocks, BEST, and SOAR programs in the Winter
- During the week of December 16<sup>th</sup>, they will be moving their office to a new location.
- Their new address will be **1338 Fourth Avenue, Unit S215, St. Catharines, ON L2S 0G1.**

**2. Niagara Children's Centre – Dorothy Harvey**

- They are now offering appointments virtually and in-person, where virtual appointments are not appropriate or preferred. Parents and caregivers can choose the best option for their child(ren) and their family to ensure their child(ren) continue to reach their goals and potential.
- They are working to expand their services for clients available via video conference, including their parent and caregiver educational workshops and family support.
- To learn more about their COVID response, please visit their website:  
<http://niagarachildrenscentre.com/ncc/information-for-families/covid-19-response>.

**3. Indigenous Community Member – Kelsey Huxley**

- NIL Report

**4. Autism Ontario Niagara Region – Karen Murphy**

- The Holiday Season is approaching quickly! Due to the pandemic, Autism Ontario, Niagara Region has had to put fundraisers on hiatus.
- This year, they will be holding a holiday decoration contest to spread some holiday cheer and to help raise funds for their chapter to continue to offer programs and services to families across Niagara. A portion of the registration fees will also go towards United Way Niagara.
- There will be 2 Contest:

*i) **Register Your Home***

- o Register online from **Monday, November 23, 2020 to Friday, December 11, 2020** and email your pictures to Allyesa Stewart at [programs.niagara@autismontario.com](mailto:programs.niagara@autismontario.com).
- o It is only \$10.00 to Register and the Grand Prize is a \$200.00 Pre-paid VISA Card.

*ii) **Vote Your Favourite House***

- o Starting **Monday, December 14, 2020 to Thursday, December 31, 2020**, people will be able to go online to vote for their favourite houses.
- o Each vote cost \$2.00.
- o All those who cast a vote will be put into a draw to win a wine basket, valued at \$60.00.
- o Vote or Register at [Sign-in | Autism Ontario - Niagara \(campbrainregistration.com\)](http://Sign-in | Autism Ontario - Niagara (campbrainregistration.com)).

**5. Down Syndrome Niagara – Pina Palombo**

- NIL Report

**6. Community Living Welland/Pelham – Kerry Thomas**

- NIL Report

**7. Mainstream – Lorraine Smith**

- NIL Report

**8. Community Living Port Colborne / Wainfleet – Rita Smith**

- Community Living wanted to share the following information:
  - In celebration of International Day of Persons with Disabilities, ARCH is pleased to send you their latest edition of ARCH Alert.
  - INSIDE THIS ISSUE:
    - Note from the Editors.
    - MAiD Gone Wrong: Disability Community Outraged By Bill C-7.
    - Running for Inclusive Education.
    - Ontario Government Confirms the Ontario Triage Protocol is Not to be Followed
    - Celebrating a lifetime of advocacy: Peter Park, Co-founder of Respecting Rights, turns 80!
    - ARCH Intervenes in R v Slatter at the Supreme Court of Canada.
    - Mandatory Mask use in Ontario.
    - Honouring the Legacy of a Tireless Leader and Dedicated Disability Rights Advocate.
    - ARCH Receives the Pat Worth Award!
    - 10 Years After: Reflections on my Legal Battle for Accessibility.
    - Connecting People to Home and Community Care: Survey.
    - OP Lab: Learning, Sharing, Actioning!
    - Do the Rights Thing.
    - Federal Chronic Pain Task Force releases Report.
    - ARCH on Social Media.
  - To access the ARCH **Alert**, copy and paste or select the link directly below:  
[https://archdisabilitylaw.ca/arch\\_alert/arch-alert-volume-21-issue-3/](https://archdisabilitylaw.ca/arch_alert/arch-alert-volume-21-issue-3/).
  - The ARCH Alert can be downloaded in RTF format at the end of the page in the link  
[https://archdisabilitylaw.ca/arch\\_alert/arch-alert-volume-17-issue-1/](https://archdisabilitylaw.ca/arch_alert/arch-alert-volume-17-issue-1/).
  - For more information, please contact the ARCH Disability Law Centre at **1-866-482-2724** or by email at [archintake@lao.on.ca](mailto:archintake@lao.on.ca).
  - To help prevent the spread of COVID-19 in the community, protect our staff, and avoid overwhelming our health care system, ARCH is operating remotely until further notice. Please note, they are asking that anyone requiring their services, please do not come to their office/in-person. Kindly call or email the services you require.

**9. Pathstone Mental Health – Bill Helmeczi**

- NIL Report

**E. STAFF REPORTS**

**1. Elementary Principals – Chris Kerho**

- i) **St Alexander Catholic Elementary School**
  - They had a new, very high-needs Grade 2 student with autism transfer to St Alexander Catholic Elementary School from DPCDSB on November 1, 2020.

- Yvonne Benyo, Principal of St Alexander School reported the following: *“Our ABA team has been incredible. Julia Nemko, Julia Nicholson and Darcy Fox have been with us every step of the way attending virtual wrap-around meetings with the previous board, meeting parents, planning transitions, assisting with scheduling and programming and supporting Educational Assistants and our Resource teacher, Kara Eller throughout. They have been outstanding in supporting and assisting us with this student’s transition. Their presence, engagement, hands-on approach and dedication to this process is certainly noteworthy. The child has significantly benefited from their collaboration and building of capacity with our Resource TEAM. I specifically can’t say enough about the work of Darcy Fox who has been teaching and implementing programs such as Stop and WAIT and the READY program with our staff and student. We are so grateful and the good news is Judah is progressing well because of it.”*
  
- ii) **Sacred Heart Catholic Elementary School**  
Some good news that was shared by Greg Lewis, Educational Resource Teacher from Sacred Heart Catholic Elementary School. *“I just wanted to pass along a "good news" item from Sacred Heart as it pertains to one of our students with exceptionalities, Aidan Kam. Aidan has a myriad of health concerns and learning difficulties, and recently underwent surgery to have a feeding tube inserted. The absence of Aidan in our building was felt deeply by both students and staff. This morning, Aidan's father was able to bring his son for a drive-by visit to our school, where he was met by a teacher and Educational Assistant arranged, student-focused, a socially distant welcome party wishing him a speedy recovery. We all miss part of our family, and wanted him to know it.”*  
  
*“The students made signs with the Boston Bruins logo on them. Intramural ball hockey has long been a Sacred Heart tradition. With the new COVID rules, this year's season was obviously in doubt. But the kids deserve some responsible fun too. Instead of games, we are doing a shootout between teams each recess, with social distancing/sanitized equipment in place, and a sound system that allows for music to be played and a microphone to be used to introduce the shooters and do the play by play. During the student-led draft, Aidan Kam was picked in the 2nd of 8 rounds. During his first shootout game, with the entire school listening from their assigned playground cohorts, Aidan Kam broke on the net with his stick and ball and scored 5 goals, each time raising his stick in celebration higher than the last. The students chanted "Aidan, Aidan", much as they did today, holding their signs for a young man who has been so much, and means so much to the Sacred Heart family.”*
  
- 2. **Secondary Principals – Kelly Majka**
  - i) **Notre Dame College Virtual Music Therapy Sessions**
    - Although this school year in the Special Education classroom at Notre Dame College is vastly different from last year, they were able to maintain their Music Therapy sessions with the music therapist, founder and director of Momentum choir, Mendelt Hoektra.
    - Instead of Mendelt coming to their classroom every other week, they now meet virtually through Google meet. Students were sent invites through their Board’s Gmail account which allows those who are at home to also participate. Students logged in

using their Board's Google account allowed Mendelt to see every participant's name. He would address each student in Google meet directly, providing personal interaction with everyone involved. The chat feature is used by the Special Education Teacher and the Educational Assistants, or parents in the case of students who are at home, to request songs or comment on what someone liked. At Notre Dame College, they had students singing, clapping and swaying to the music and they even saw lots of at home dancing, clapping and mouths moving as some of them sing along as well.

- These sessions are incredible in person and most preferable when that is allowable again. But in the meantime, they are thrilled that this format, (meeting virtually) has been so successful.

**ii) Virtual School -- Weekly Social Skills Class SUCCESS**

- All 8 of our secondary schools participated and/or are currently participating in the Virtual Social Skills Class and it most definitely has had positive effects on all who have joined.
- Essentially each week a different topic is introduced to the group which provides students with the opportunity to share their ideas, ask questions and simply interact with one another. Additionally, students work on taking turns, speaking, reading verbal and non-verbal cues, and being an active listener. We discuss topics that focus on reading body language, facial expressions, empathy, and conflict resolution.
- It is amazing how when this all started in September, most of the students didn't really know each other but now they look forward to this time together. They have built friendships and relationships where they can interact with one another in a safe setting where every thought and opinion matters. Students have grown socially and in maturity over the past couple of months while developing genuine friendships even when they are not in-person. Some students who were not inclined to socialize in the past have developed skills that make them want to socialize, contribute and meet with friends.

**iii) Saint Francis Showcasing Co-op Placements**

- Saint Francis is excited to have 2 of their students who are taking part in Cooperative Education Placements for both terms 3 and 4 (November 16<sup>th</sup> – February 5<sup>th</sup>):

Student #1– Swiss Chalet (Fourth Ave, St. Catharines)

- She works in the kitchen preparing salads and cutting vegetables.
- She also cleans tables and disinfects high touch areas.

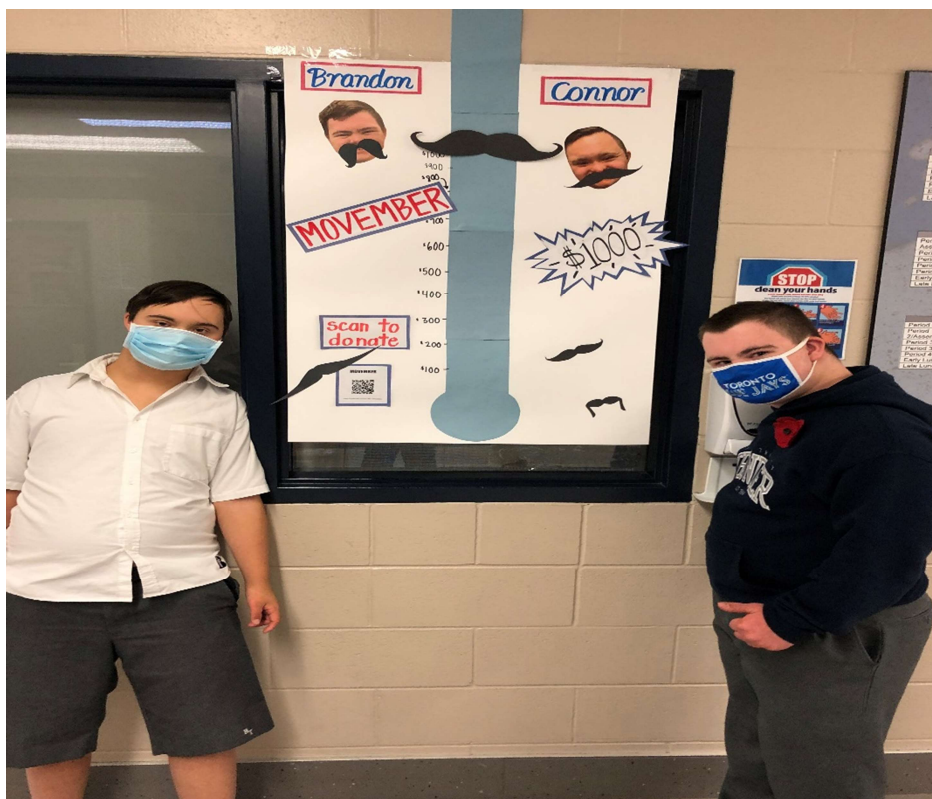
Student #2 – Best Western Hotel (North Service Rd, St. Catharines)

- He works in the housekeeping department. He folds towels, vacuums, mops floors and disinfects high touch areas. He, along with an Educational Assistant, take the city bus to and from his placement.
- NOTE: The Saint Francis Special Education Classroom students also continue to help us to organize food for our "Grab and Go" breakfast program each morning (which was previously highlighted in the October SEAC Report).



**iv) Blessed Trinity Movember Fundraiser**

- November Fundraiser was a HUGE success. Two young men in Blessed Trinity's Special Education Class are participating in a Movember Fundraiser. To date, together they have raised a total of **\$2,035.00**. With the assistance of an Educational Assistant, the boys set up a "Mo Space" online to receive donations, which has surpassed their initial fundraising goal of **\$500.00**. They are so proud to be contributing to such a great cause while building community. They are also so proud to be showing off the mustaches they were growing.



**v) Lakeshore Catholic Co-op and Remembrance Day Showcase**

- Lauren Patterson (a LCHS student) is currently doing an amazing job at her Co-op placement at Sobey's in Fort Erie. She is working in the bakery department. She is keeping up with the pace of things and is now beginning to show confidence in communicating with other staff and clients.
- Josh Kerton is in his last year of secondary school. He is on his way to earning an OSSD. We are very proud of the work he has put in. He has completed a Co-op placement at Sobey's in Port Colborne and a work placement at Thruway Muffler (via Community Living Port Colborne). Josh is currently connected to adult services (Community Living PC) and will continue developing employability skills via Job Gym after his time at Lakeshore Catholic.
- Their Special Education class walked to the Port Colborne cenotaph for Remembrance Day, and they were highlighted in the newspaper!!! Click on the link below for the newspaper article:
- <https://www.wellandtribune.ca/news/niagara-region/2020/11/11/port-colborne-residents->

[show-up-at-cenotaph-despite-remembrance-day-ceremony-being-cancelled.html](#)

- Furthermore, their class enjoyed making homemade poppies for students, staff, Senior Administrative Staff including the Director of Education, Mr. Cipriano. All recipients wore their poppy proudly on Remembrance Day!



### 3. **Special Education – Danny Giancola**

- Student Support welcomes our four new Educational Resource Teachers (ERTs) to the Virtual Elementary School: Joseph Ferrusi, Thomas Cottringer, Jessica Mastroianni, and Joseph Macoretta. Penny Macklem has been placed as an ERT for the Virtual Secondary School. We are looking forward to the service they will provide our Virtual students, teachers and support staff. Our department will be available to support them in their new roles.
- Student Support hosted an ERT meeting on **Thursday, December 3, 2020**. Some of the highlights of the meeting included connecting school ERT staff with the virtual ERT staff, School-Based Rehab process and changes, eLite updates and improvements, LDAO/Trillium School information and SEA Claim Process Updates. Thank you to the ERTs and the Special Education Classroom Teachers who were able to participate.
- For your advanced planning, on **Wednesday, February 10, 2021**, Student Support's Behaviour Resource Teachers: Maria Kish, Alfonso Monachino and Anthony Di Toro will be discussed with parents/caregivers what the Individual Education Plan (IEP) and Identification, Placement, Review Committee (IPRC) process is and what changes they may see when their child transitions into Secondary School. Thanks to those individuals for preparing and delivering this important information.
- The students previously enrolled in the Virtual School Secondary Special Education Class have since returned to their homeschool to receive this same virtual education. These students who

have re-connected back to their homeschool will allow for an improved experience with staff who are familiar with their strengths, programming and goals. We thank the parents who have supported this challenging transition back to their home environment but we know that this will be in their best interest for the long term.

- Niagara Catholic has been working closely with School-Based Rehabilitation Services to launch new referral forms that allow for a more streamlined process when Education Resource Teachers are referring students for Occupational Therapy or Physiotherapy. These new referral forms are now available for use by school staff. We appreciate the close collaboration with SBRS which enables us to best serve students of Niagara Catholic.
- Kindergarten Transition to School, (as early as it may seem), preliminary discussions have begun concerning our young students transitioning to Kindergarten – Year 1 in Niagara Catholic. Given the current circumstances, Niagara Catholic is in communication with our Community Partners to identify necessary changes to the process for everyone's safety and well-being. In the next several months, the Student Support Coordinators will begin discussions with the Agency Resource Consultants concerning specific students entering Kindergarten – Year 1 requiring transition support. Niagara Catholic will participate in Parent Information Sessions confirmed for **December 9, 2020, December 10, 2020 and January 13, 2021.** Parents will be invited to join a session to receive information regarding the transition to school process. More information will be available soon.

## **F. TRUSTEE REPORTS**

- Trustee Burtnik thanked all Committee Members for their time and commitment sitting on SEAC.
- Trustee Burtnik also extended a special thanks and appreciation for the continued commitment and dedication of all Niagara Catholic staff.
- She shared with the group that Larry Huibers was elected Chair of the Board and that Daniel Moody was elected as Vice-Chair of the Board at the Annual Organizational Meeting on **December 1, 2020.**
- Trustee Burtnik also shared that there may be a change in the Trustee representatives on SEAC. This will be decided at the next Board meeting.
- At the last Committee of the Whole Meeting, they approved the audited financial statements for the year ending August 31, 2020. She emphasized that Niagara Catholic is committed to serving all of our students.
- She concluded by wishing everyone a blessed and joyful Christmas season.

## **G. STUDENT REPORT**

- This month, members of Student Senate have been working on Inclusive Christmas Festivities within their school councils, as well as finalizing their mask stickers' fundraiser which was a huge success! As a Student Senate, they are working on a variety of projects, such as facilitating the mental health summit, and another summit for elementary school engagement.

## **H. NCPIC REPORT**

- Carrie Vernelli was elected as the Chair of the Niagara Catholic Parent Involvement Committee (NCPIC) to hold a term of office from November 5, 2020 to September 2021. Chris Kouroushis will continue as the Co-Chair for the 2020-2021 school year.
- A bimonthly report will be sent to Principals of all schools to be inserted in the newsletter.

## **I. NOTICES OF MOTION**

- There were no Notices of Motion.

## **J. FUTURE MEETINGS / INFORMATION ITEMS**

1. Planning of the Parent Night Presentations
2. Proceeding of Election Night – January 6, 2021.

## **K. MOMENT OF SILENCE AND REFLECTION**

- Chair Racine offered a moment of silence and reflection.

## **L. NEXT MEETING**

- **Wednesday, January 6, 2021 at 6:30 pm** - format to be determined based on current COVID-19 restrictions. The Committee Members would be notified by email of the format of the meeting.

## **M. ADJOURNMENT**

- Moved by Kerry Thomas
- Seconded by Dorothy Harvey

**THAT the December 2, 2020** meeting of the Special Education Advisory Committee be adjourned.  
**CARRIED**

- The meeting was adjourned at 8:25 pm.