



MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL EDUCATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 6, 2021

Minutes of the Meeting of the Special Education Advisory Committee held on **Wednesday, January 6, 2021**, 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 and asked the group if there were any special intentions. Trustee Burtnik asked everyone's prayers for a quick peaceful resolution to the violent protest taking place at the United States Capitol in Washington.

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	• Trustee of the Board	✓	
Prince, Leanne	• Trustee of the Board	✓	
Butera, Serena	• Student Senate Representative	✓	
Kerho, Chris	• Principal, Elementary	✓	
Majka, Kelly	• Vice-Principal, Secondary	✓	

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** - Coordinator of Student Support, **Vincent Mancuso**, Behaviour Resource Teacher, and **Jennifer Lanese**, Recording Secretary/Administrative Assistant to Superintendent Pizzoferrato.

3. Election of Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson

- Since the format for January's meeting was a Microsoft Teams Meeting, Superintendent Pizzoferrato asked Jennifer Lanese to email all Committee Members that day to inquire if there was an interest to either "**self-nominate**" or "**nominate a Committee Member for Chairperson or Vice-Chairperson**". Based on their responses, a ballot would be prepared should one be required. Details around the voting process were clarified that evening by Superintendent Pizzoferrato before disclosing any of the results.
 - o Through the email nomination process, Anna Racine and Madeline Zoelman had been nominated as Chairperson for the Special Education Advisory Committee.
 - o They have both agreed to stand for the nominated position of Chairperson for the Special Education Advisory Committee.
 - o All present Committee Members were asked to submit their vote via email to Jennifer Lanese.
 - o After all the votes were tallied, Jennifer Lanese share the information with Superintendent Pizzoferrato.
 - o Superintendent Pizzoferrato announced that Anna Racine was elected as the Chairperson for the Special Education Advisory Committee.
 - o Through the email nomination process Karen Murphy, Anna Racine and Madeline Zoelman had been nominated as Vice-Chairperson for the Special Education Advisory Committee.
 - o Karen Murphy and Anna Racine declined to stand for the nominated position of Vice-Chairperson for the Special Education Advisory Committee
 - o Superintendent Pizzoferrato asked Madeline if she wishes to accept the position of Vice-Chairperson for the Special Education Advisory Committee.
 - o Madeline Zoelman accepted the position of Vice-Chairperson for the Special Education Advisory Committee.
- Congratulation to Chairperson Racine and Vice-Chairperson Zoelman!

4. Approval of the Agenda

- Moved by Madeline Zoelman
- Seconded by Pina Palombo

THAT THE Special Education Advisory Committee approves the Agenda of the Special Education Advisory Committee Meeting of January 6, 2021.

CARRIED

5. Disclosure of Interest

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

6. Approval of Minutes of the Special Education Advisory Committee of December 2, 2020

- Moved by Bill Helmeczi
- Seconded by Karen Murphy

THAT THE Special Education Advisory Committee approves the Minutes of the Special Education Advisory Committee Meeting of **December 2, 2020** as presented.

CARRIED

B. PRESENTATIONS

- No Presentations that evening.

C. AGENDA ITEMS

1. Parent Outreach

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

- The results from the survey were distributed to both Terri and Lidia.
- Their presentation will be tailored based on the survey results.
- Terri and Lidia will discuss - ***Special Education and the Church: How Your Parish and Faith Life Can Enhance Your Child's Well-Being.***
- We are all looking forward to an exciting evening and discussion.

1.2 Dr. Sheila Bennett (May 2021 Presentation)

- No new information was available at this time.
- Superintendent Pizzoferrato will wait for Dr. Bennett's return from her sabbatical and then will finalize the details of her presentation.

2. Other Related Items

2.1 Annual Review of the Special Education Plan

- Superintendent Pizzoferrato then discussed the guidelines for the Special Education Plan. He emphasized that we need to consider the following:
 - Does the Special Education Plan answer questions that parents have?
 - Is it easy to understand?
 - Is it handed out annually to every parent of a child with Special Education Learning needs?
 - Is the plan and supporting resources readily accessible?
- The floor was opened to questions and discussion.

2.2 Sub-Committees Update

- The Lead from each of the Sub-Committee provided an update to the group.
 - The Communication Sub-Committee is still finalizing a draft of the SEAC Brochure.
 - No update was provided by the Ministry Report Sub-Committee or the Policy Sub-Committee at this time.
 - The Survey Sub-Committee was looking for direction from Superintendent Pizzoferrato for any additional updates.
- Superintendent Pizzoferrato and the Student Support Coordinators confirmed that the rationale for creating surveys is in line with the mandate of SEAC.
- He further stressed that we need to be mindful of "survey overload".

- Pina Palombo stressed the importance for all Agencies to provide feedback.
- There will be more information to follow at upcoming meetings.
- The floor was opened to questions and discussion.

2.3 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

- NIL Report

E. AGENCY REPORTS

1. Learning Disabilities Association of Niagara Region – Madeline Zoelman

- They have moved their office to the Branscombe Centre and their new mailing address is **1338 Fourth Avenue, Unit S215, St. Catharines, ON, L2S 0G1**. Please note, that their phone number remains the same (i.e., **905-641-1021**).
- Finally, just a reminder that registration is still open for these programs:
 - The **S.O.A.R. Post-Secondary** (College/University Transition Support) which is geared towards students in Grade 11 and Grade 12.
 - The **S.O.A.R. Secondary** (High-school Transition Support) which is geared towards students in Grade 7 and Grade 8.
 - The **BEST Program** (Social Skills Program) which is geared towards students in Grades 3 through Grade 5.
- For more information, please contact info@ldanigaraa.org or you can apply online at www.LDANiagara.org.

2. Niagara Children's Centre – Dorothy Harvey

- NIL Report

3. Indigenous Community Member – Kelsey Huxley

- On **Wednesday, February 24, 2021**, there will be a **Virtual Indigenous Student Career Fair**. Self-identified Niagara Catholic students will have the opportunity to learn about and explore pathways for future success by connecting with recruiters from various universities, colleges and community-based programs. Hosted in partnership with the Niagara Catholic District School Board, the District School Board of Niagara, Niagara College Canada and Brock University self-identified students are encouraged to join this exciting event. Please watch for an upcoming poster to follow.
- Save the date for the upcoming **Career Exploration Conference!** From **Thursday, February 25, 2021 to Sunday, February 27, 2021**, there will be a **Niagara Peninsula Aboriginal Area Management Board - Opportunity Knocks Virtual Conference**. This event is for self-identified Niagara Catholic students who are approaching graduation. They will be provided with an

overview of opportunities and possibilities for creative career pathways. Students also have the opportunity to connect with inspirational speakers and Elders from the community. For additional information, please contact **Cathy Smith, Job Developer and Recruiter** at cathys@npaamb.com or **Jackie Poulin, Fort Erie Youth Service Officer** at jackie@npaamb.com. For a list of the many services provided by the NPAAMB Indigenous Youth and Employment & Training, please visit their website at www.NPAAMB.com.

4. Autism Ontario Niagara Region – Karen Murphy

- NIL Report

5. Down Syndrome Niagara – Pina Palombo

- NIL Report

7. Community Living Welland/Pelham – Kerry Thomas

- NIL Report

8. Mainstream – Lorraine Smith

- 2021 has begun with Mainstream offering only essential supports at this time, due to the new COVID-19 restrictions. All community programs have been reduced in hours and all community supports will be offered virtually or through some form of social media. They will strive to reach out to the families and the people they support to ensure some connection and support is offered during these trying times.
- Happy 2021 to all. Lorraine closed by wishing everyone a new year with renewed hopes, new opportunities, new ways to give and love and much happiness and good health.

9. Community Living Port Colborne / Wainfleet – Rita Smith

- Due to the most recent lockdown all programs have stopped again. All-day programs have been put on hold as the day support staff have been deployed to work in their group homes.
- Rita has been connecting with families via zoom and/or phone calls. The pandemic has been tough on parents as the respite that they were used to receiving from Community Living has had to stop for now. Some of the families have stated that doing online school work has been challenging, but they were so thankful for the support they have been receiving from the Educational Assistants as well as from their teachers. A couple of the young people that she spoke to stated that they have been doing better online than in person at school. They contribute that to fewer interruptions.
- Meridian held the **Community Kindness Tree** and donated toys and gift certificates to the children and teens that are supported by Community Living. Thanks to Meridian's donations, 40 children received gifts this year.
- **Second Harvest** is the largest food rescue organization in Canada. They recover perishable and/or unsold food before it spoils and distributes food to over 1200 social services agencies in Canada. Thanks to Second Harvest, 215 communities across Canada are being helped during this pandemic. **Between March to June 30, 2020, \$30.9 million worth of food was rescued and redistributed.**

Thanks to Second Harvest CLPCW was able to help several of our most at-risk families and people supported in the community with meals.

- Rita closed by stating that she wanted to recognize and thank the teachers of Niagara Catholic for working so hard to provide the best lessons for the students. These teachers have worked tirelessly during the holidays to ensure that they were ready for online learning in January. She is proud to be a SEAC member for the Niagara Catholic District School Board.

10. Pathstone Mental Health – Bill Helmeczi

- Pathstone Mental Health, is now open **by appointment only**. For more information visit www.pathstonementalhealth.ca/. Their **Crisis & Support Line remains open 24.7 by calling 1-800-263-4944**. The line remains open so callers can speak with a counsellor about any problem, big or small.

F. STAFF REPORTS

1. Elementary Principals – Chris Kerho

- Chris started by thanking Superintendent Pizzoferrato for his earlier comments and echoed that the staff have embraced online learning and that the quality of online learning for our students has greatly improved when compared to last School Year. Educational Assistants are engaging students in Breakout Rooms that allow more direct instruction to students who require the support. He is looking forward to sharing some good news from our Elementary Schools at upcoming SEAC Meetings.

2. Secondary Principals – Kelly Majka

- Kelly started by saying that she was hesitant to say that she did not have any good news to share from the Secondary Schools because even though staff just got back from the Christmas break and although it may not be typical business as usual (during these COVID times), there are all kinds of wonderful things happening in the Virtual world at our Secondary Schools within Niagara Catholic.
- She continued by saying that at Notre Dame College, (where she is one of the School's Vice-Principals), she shared that the Special Class Teacher has a very creative NCVLE/Google Classroom up and running, filled with virtual class trips, music, art, literacy/numeracy, sensory room. You name it, it is there!!! Also, the Educational Resource Teachers and the Educational Assistants have been busy supporting students directly within the Virtual Setting.
- Furthermore, the Special Education staff at all of our Secondary Schools have been busy communicating this week with families to identify which Complex Special Needs students would benefit from returning to in-person learning commencing this **Monday, January 11, 2021**. That has been the main focus of this week, they are all planning to ensure that all is ready to go (i.e., staffing, programming, transportation, etc.) and that it is a seamless transition for our students and families.
- Kelly concluded by saying that she looks forward to capturing all the GOOD NEWS stories that are happening both virtually and in-person throughout January from our Niagara Catholic Secondary Schools and she will be sharing these stories with the group at upcoming meetings.

3. Superintendent of Education – Gino Pizzoferrato

- Superintendent Pizzoferrato reviewed SEAC's mandate to the group:
 - o Publicly funded education in Ontario is delivered through a decentralized system of school boards established by the provincial legislature to administer the education system at the operational level. The Ministry of Education is responsible for providing the regulatory and policy framework within which school boards exercise their responsibility. The Education Act and the regulations made under it establish school boards as independent corporations that are governed by elected trustees. The Act and regulations also set out various duties of boards which include establishing policies and committees of the school board including the legal obligations of school boards regarding the provision of special education programs and services. School boards are also responsible for establishing a Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) and the regulation made under the Education Act sets out the requirements for that committee.
 - o Each school board and school authority in Ontario must establish a Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC). A SEAC is a committee of a school board or a school authority that provides important advice on special education to that particular school board.
- The SEAC:
 - o Provide important advice on special education to their local board or school authority.
 - o Comprises trustees and representatives of local associations that further the interests and well-being of exceptional children or adults.
 - o Make recommendations to their board on any matter affecting the establishment, development and delivery of special education programs and services for exceptional students.
 - o Must be established at each school board and school authority in Ontario.
 - o Have requirements set out in Regulation 464/97.
- The floor was opened to questions and discussion.

4. Student Support Department – Jim Di Gioia

- The Student Support Department is currently engaging with schools and staff to support remote learning for students during the school closure. Program Resource Teachers and Behaviour Resource Teachers are sharing resources about pivoting In-Person learning accommodations and modifications to online learning. Itinerant Resource Teachers continue to engage and directly support their students while they are online at home. All extended Student Support staff are offering their expertise and experience to keep students actively engaged both online and off-line, depending on their ability to learn synchronously or asynchronously.
- As well, the ABA Team are preparing professional development presentations and activities for the upcoming February PA Day; the ABA Team and the Special Needs Facilitators are preparing for the annual Behaviour Management Systems (BMS) refresher certification for all support staff. Finally, the Student Support Coordinators are preparing to support transitions for next year's incoming Kindergarten students who require specialized supports and have complex needs.

5. Director of Education – Camillo Cipriano

- Director of Education Cipriano expressed his appreciation and gratitude for the staff of Niagara Catholic. He also thanked Superintendent Pizzoferrato and the Student Support Department for

all their work ensuring that our complex special needs students are being supported. He thanked the group for their discussion and comments.

G. TRUSTEE REPORTS

- Trustee Burtnik and Trustee Prince were both in attendance that evening. Trustee Burtnik acknowledged the compassion and care shown by staff for Niagara Catholic students. She closed by telling the group that we are waiting for further direction from the Ministry on when the schools will re-open and in what capacity.
- Trustee Prince echoed Trustee Burtnik's comments and appreciation to the staff of Niagara Catholic. She thanked everyone for their dedication and commitment to servicing the students of Niagara Catholic.

H. STUDENT REPORT

- This past month, Student Councils across our Secondary Schools have facilitated a variety of Christmas themed initiatives, including carol videos, give away prizes and a variety of other activities.
- Student Senate is currently working on planning a **Student Mental Health Summit** scheduled for **February 5, 2021** from 10:30 am - 12:00 pm. Through trivia, workshops and games, participants can learn about mental health. Each participant will earn two (2) community involvement hours towards the secondary graduation requirement. All students are encouraged to attend.

I. NCPIC REPORT

- Since we do not have a representative from NCPIC, any updates will be provided to either Superintendent Pizzoferrato or Jennifer Lanese following NCPIC's scheduled meetings. These updates will be shared at upcoming SEAC Meetings.

J. NOTICES OF MOTION

- There were no Notices of Motion.

K. FUTURE MEETINGS / INFORMATION ITEMS

- Giancarlo Vetrone, Superintendent of Business and Financial Services will be providing a short presentation at March's SEAC meeting.

L. MOMENT OF SILENCE AND REFLECTION

- Chair Racine offered a moment of silence and reflection.

M. NEXT MEETING

- **Wednesday, February 3, 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.

N. ADJOURNMENT

- Moved by Serena Butera
- Seconded by Lorraine Smith

THAT the **January 5, 2021** meeting of the Special Education Advisory Committee be adjourned.
CARRIED

- The meeting was adjourned at 8:15 pm.