



MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL EDUCATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING WEDNESDAY, APRIL 7, 2021

Minutes of the Meeting of the Special Education Advisory Committee held on **Wednesday, April 7, 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 6:32 pm.

A. ROUTINE MATTERS

1. Opening Prayers

- Chair Racine led with an opening prayer, "Prayer for Catholic Education".

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	✓	
Burnik, Kathy	• Trustee of the Board	✓	
Huibers, Larry	• Chair 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, **David O'Rourke**, Coordinator 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 Karen Murphy
- Seconded by Serena Butera

THAT THE Special Education Advisory Committee approves the Agenda of the Special Education Advisory Committee Meeting of **April 7, 2021**.

CARRIED

4. **Declaration of Conflict of Interest**

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

5. **Approval of Minutes of the Special Education Advisory Committee of March 3, 2021**

- Moved by Madeline Zoelman
- Seconded by Karen Murphy

THAT THE Special Education Advisory Committee approves the Minutes of the Special Education Advisory Committee Meeting of **March 3, 2021** as presented.

CARRIED

B. PRESENTATION

1. **Multi-Year Strategic Plan – Maria Sanchez-Keane**

- Maria presented a slide show that explained the Multi-Year Strategic Plan to the group.
- Maria discussed the benefits of the Multi-Year Strategic Planning which includes:
 - o Promotion of Strategic Thought and Action
 - o Improved Decision Making
 - o Enhanced Organizational Responsiveness and Improved Performance
 - o Re-engagement of the People of the Organization
- The Multi-Year Strategic Planning Process has the following steps:
 - o Discovery Process (April – August)
 - o Discovery Report (August – September)
 - o Summit (September)
 - o Strategy Formulation (September – October)
 - o Comprehensive Action, 3 – 5 Year Strategic Plan (October – November)
- Maria will be returning at the June meeting for a follow-up presentation.

C. AGENDA

1. **May Presentation – Dr. Sheila Bennett**

- Presentation has been confirmed for **Wednesday, May 5th** at 7:00 pm.
- The topic of discussion will be: Inclusion Means Everyone.
- A draft copy of the promotional flyer was circulated to Superintendent Pizzoferrato, Dr. Bennett, Chair Racine and Co-Chair Zoelman earlier in the day for their review and approval.
- A draft copy was uploaded to the Chat by Jennifer Lanese during the meeting.

- Once approved by Dr. Bennett, an internal memorandum will be distributed to the schools and the other Committee Members to promote the presentation. This was the same procedure that was followed for the February presentation.

2. **Other Related Items**

2.1 **Annual Review of the Special Education Plan**

- David O'Rourke, Student Support Coordinator discussed the process of reviewing the Special Education Plan to the group.
- David highlighted the four considerations for SEAC's annual review of the Special Education Plan.
- The Special Education Plan should meet the following goals:
 1. Is the information presented in a way that is clear and easy to understand?
 2. Are there any inconsistencies in the information presented?
 3. What items or sections of the plan require further clarification?
 4. What items or sections of the plan are not relevant and/or inconsistent with the current School Board's practices?
- David showed the group how to provide feedback on the Special Education Plan by accessing the provided link of the feedback/recommendation submission form.
- The Student Support Coordinators will be reviewing and incorporating the feedback in the final version of the Special Education Plan that will later be submitted to the Ministry of Education in July.
- David explained that the Student Support Coordinators have broken down this process into three phases. They are currently collecting feedback from Phase 1 and Phase 2. Next month, they will move into Phase 3 of the annual review of the Special Education Plan.
- He concluded by encouraging the Committee Members to submit comments and feedback and thanked those Committee Members who have already submitted their feedback.
- David reminded the group that all feedback from Phases 1 and 2 was due by the May meeting.

2.2 **Letters to SEAC Chair**

- a) Regarding Prioritization of Vaccination from Hastings and Prince Edward DSB's SEAC
 - Chair Racine provided a summary of the received letter to the group.
 - A copy of the letter was uploaded to the Chat by Jennifer Lanese and each Committee Member was also emailed a copy before the start of the meeting.
 - Jennifer shared that an internal memorandum **DM 280 – Vaccinations for High Risk Staff** was circulated on **Tuesday, March 9th** on the Chat. Vaccinations were voluntary and at the discretion of the individual staff member.
 - On **Tuesday, April 6th**, the Board issued an internal memorandum, **DM 284 – Vaccinations for Elementary and Secondary School Sectors**.
 - Niagara Catholic was advised of an urgent plan to provide vaccines to all eligible education workers in the Niagara Region during the upcoming Spring Break.
 - Superintendent Pizzoferrato further explained that the Board was working on finalizing a list of interested staff members that would be eligible to receive the vaccination. This list would be forwarded to the Niagara Region Public Health Department on **Friday, April 9th**.
 - It was agreed that SEAC would prepare a letter to thank the Niagara Region Public Health Department for prioritizing the roll-out of the administration of

vaccinations for all education workers of Niagara Catholic.

- Chair Racine and Co-Chair Zoelman volunteered to draft a thank you letter on behalf of SEAC. Once reviewed and approved by Senior Staff, Jennifer Lanese would forward the letter to Michelle Johnston of the Niagara Region Public Health Department.
- The thank you letter would be shared with the Committee Members at the May meeting.

b) Letter of Support Regarding On-Line Supports from Superior-Greenstone DSB's SEAC

- Chair Racine provided a summary of the received letter to the group.
- A copy of the letter was uploaded to the Chat by Jennifer Lanese and each Committee Member was also emailed a copy before the start of the meeting.
- Discussion followed about the letter and how Niagara Catholic is addressing virtual learning for all students.

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.

4. **SEAC Sub Committees Update**

- a) The Communication Sub-Committee Members are still working on finalizing a draft of the SEAC Brochure. They will be meeting again on **Tuesday, April 13th** and they will be incorporating the feedback from the other Committee members in the re-design of the SEAC Brochure. Once finalized, the draft will be emailed to Jennifer Lanese so she can share it with the other Committee members for their final review and approval. A summary will be shared at the May meeting.
- b) The Survey Sub-Committee has also incorporated the feedback provided by the other Committee members to fine-tune the presentation and content of the SEAC survey. The group met with Superintendent Pizzoferrato earlier this month to share and discuss the proposed SEAC survey. After review and consideration, a draft of the survey was forwarded to the Student Support Coordinators for their feedback and input. Once reviewed by the Student Support Coordinators, the updated draft will be vetted by the Student Support Department. The Survey Sub-Committee will share the draft with the other Committee members at the May meeting or once the updated survey is returned to them.
- c) No update from the Policy Report Sub-Committee.
- d) No update from the Ministry Report Sub-Committee.

D. SEAC REPORT

- 1. Review and approval of SEAC Insert for Catholic School Council Agenda and School Newsletter
 - Chair Racine explained the process to the group.
 - The group decided that SEAC will have the Communication Sub-Committee prepare updates that Jennifer Lanese would share with the schools.
 - There will not be a regular submission to the schools only when there is news or stories to share.

E. AGENCY REPORTS

1. Learning Disabilities Association of Niagara Region – Madeline Zoelman

- The LDANR will begin their **Spring Reading Rocks** program starting the first week of May. They were able to offer an additional 20 spots after receiving a generous donation from the St. Catharines Rotary Club and the Ontario Power Generation. Their Fall program applications will open on **Monday, May 31st** at 6:00 am. They held their annual **Trivia Event Fundraiser** online at the end of March and they were able to raise approximately **\$3,500.00** to support families who require financial help in accessing their programs.

2. Niagara Children's Centre – Dorothy Harvey

- NIL Report

3. Indigenous Community Member – Kelsey Huxley

- Métis Nation of Ontario Infinite Reach Program:
 - o During the upcoming Spring Break from **Monday, April 12th to Wednesday, April 14th**, Métis students in grades 10 - 12 will be participating in an online interactive camp that focuses on Metis history, post-secondary and workplace planning and cultural activities.

Education Support Advocacy Program:

- o Get help navigating Kindergarten to Grade 12 school setting through the **Métis Nation of Ontario (MNO) Education Support Advocacy Program**. Through this program, the MNO's Education Support Advocates are available to help families with children and youths in the Kindergarten to Grade 12 school environment. The goal of this program is to identify and provide supports for Métis students and their families as they progress along in their learning journeys to help to improve their learning outcomes. The program supports children, youth and their families with:
 - Individual Education Planning
 - Behavioural planning
 - Specialized placement for children with exceptionalities
 - Mental health or learning disabilities
 - Communications with the school
- To access the program's services or if you would like to additional information, please contact educationadvocacy@metisnation.org.

4. Autism Ontario Niagara Region – Karen Murphy

- **Codezilla** has offered 20 spaces for children and youth on the spectrum in the Niagara Region for a gaming coding class during Spring Break. Classes will be available each day, starting on **Monday, April 12th**.
- Kindly click on the link (<https://www.tickettailor.com/events/codezillakids/507658#>) to register for Codezilla.
- The discounted cost is only **\$77.00** for the week as the usual cost is **\$92.00**.
- **Camp in a Box** is an at-home program that allows people of all ages to receive a kit with different activities. Autism Ontario will also be hosting daily zoom sessions for everyone to

come together and play games, do crafts, sing songs and socialize with both peers and familiar staff.

- What Does The Kit Include?
 - 5 Crafts
 - 5 Science Experiments
 - 2 Sensory Activities / Fidgets
 - 2 Fine Motor / Quiet Activities
 - 2 Active Games
 - Zoom Chat With Games and Activities
- You can register at aoniagara.campbrainregistration.com starting on **Friday, April 23rd**. Kits are only **\$25.00** each. Once you have successfully registered, you will receive a confirmation email. For additional information, please email programs.niagara@autismontario.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

- NIL Report

9. Pathstone Mental Health – Bill Helmeczi

- NIL Report

F. STAFF REPORTS

1. Elementary Principals – Chris Kerho

- Chris Kerho shared some good news from our Elementary Schools.

St John Henry Newman Catholic Elementary School, Niagara Falls

- One of their Grade 1 students with exceptionality caused outbursts before the Christmas break whenever he attempted to wear a mask. His mother had asked that the school support him with his mask as she would like him to learn to wear it. Once the school returned from Virtual Learning in February, the expectations of wearing a mask changed in which students in Grades 1 to 8 were now mandated to wear a mask. His mom completed a mask exception form for him, however; she did encourage him to wear a mask when possible. The classroom teacher and the support staff have used multiple strategies to support him and encourage him to wear a mask for parts of the day, without any outbursts. He has shown pride when he wears his mask for short periods of the day. Great progress has been made and the school will continue to work on this and support this student.

St Martin Catholic Elementary School, Smithville

- I was extremely lucky to be selected to write in this physical journal that travelled around the world to 25 families, each of whom has a child born with Down syndrome. Participants wrote in this book to show the world that Down syndrome is not something to be afraid of. We poured our words, emotions, and love into these pages to show the world that people with Down syndrome are amazing individuals that live loving and fulfilling lives! I was able to tell Mia's story, and hopefully help new parents to understand just how amazing a journey they are just about to embark on.
- The Down Syndrome Diary is being self-published by our group of authors, and proceeds from the sales of the journal will purchase additional diaries to be donated to doctors' offices and families of those who are facing a new diagnosis. Publication date is **Sunday, March 21st**, which is a significant date in our community; Down syndrome or Trisomy 21, occurs when there is a tripling of the twenty-first chromosome, hence our celebration of **World Down Syndrome Day** on **March 21st**, or **3/21**, and our choice of publication date. We hope to help many families with our endeavour, and I was so thrilled to be asked to take part.



- Submitted by Kimberly Cheeseman, mother of Mia who is a Grade 2 at St. Martin CES.

Sacred Heart Catholic Elementary School, Niagara Falls

- Chris Kerho shared a slide show from Sacred Heart Catholic Elementary School. Some of the Special Education students participated in a “COVID Camp 2021” during January and February spearheaded by two of their EAs at Sacred Heart CES and they documented their time at camp. They enjoyed a cupcake party, some science experiments, some math activities and they even met online with the rest of the students from the class. The students and staff had a great time!

2. Secondary Principals – Kelly Majka

- Kelly Majka shared some good news from our Secondary Schools.

Holy Cross Catholic Secondary School, St Catharines

- The Holy Cross Special Education class has found creative ways to stay connected, engaged, and keep very busy each day. They joined their virtual students for all lessons throughout the day. They listened to daily stories to inspire journal entries from their students. They completed calendar activities together and learned life skills through math lessons, manipulatives, and live worksheets.
- At the end of each day, they gather in the small gym for a socially distanced exercise program that has benefited both their physical and mental health. The students have their own (personal) equipment and they have noticed improvements in strength, flexibility, and stamina. All of the students can participate and laughter fills the air. As endurance has improved, their exercise sessions have increased in length.

- The class has just completed coiling their cookbooks that the students created as spring gifts for their families. They took their favourite recipes from their lunch-making program, added graphics, prayers, photographs and laminated it as a special keepsake. Many thanks to their librarian, Mrs. Petrie for her hard work putting this together and to Mrs. Boccia for printing them in colour for these students. If there was ever an example of "it takes a village" it is at Holy Cross Catholic Secondary School.
- An important part of their village is gifted musician, Mendelt Hoekstra, who joins all the students both in person and at home through virtual music therapy sessions. The students look forward to these biweekly sessions and put Mendelt to work with their eclectic music requests.

Blessed Trinity Catholic Secondary School, Grimsby

- On **Tuesday, March 16th and Thursday, March 18th**, their school celebrated **World Down Syndrome Day**. The Special Education class promoted this event by making a poster of their students' pictures and also decorated the poster with "crazy looking socks". On those two days, they also had the 80s and the 90s themed dress day where the staff and students wore crazy-looking socks, and their Special Education class wore their tie-dyed t-shirts.
- The Special Education class also created some different collages throughout their classroom with themes such as "***Welcome to the Jungle***", "***Welcome to Spring***", and "***Happy Easter***".
- The school is celebrating Autism Awareness Day on **Tuesday, April 6th and Thursday, April 8th** by wearing blue shirts to support the cause. The Special Education class has ordered blue shirts and they are currently working on designing them.
- Each one of the students in the Special Education class gave a slide show presentation on their lives (i.e. birth, family, interests, etc.).



Notre Dame College School, Welland

- The Special Education students at Notre Dame participated in a cooking program.
- Notes were sent home at the beginning of this semester and last semester asking parents if they would like to have their child participate in a weekly cooking program in the classroom. A small fee was attached to this activity to help cover the costs of the required groceries.
- Due to current COVID restrictions, they have set things up so that each student only deals with the food items they are making and consuming. They also have multiple small groups working on separate days to allow for proper spacing.

Students often eat what they make for lunch or a snack and they will take extras or leftovers home to share with their families. A huge thank you to Mrs. Deb Marion for her menu planning and coordination of this program during semester one and to Mrs. Deb Marion and Mrs. Ann Dimond for continuing to plan menu items and coordinate the program during semester two.



Virtual Secondary School

- The Virtual Secondary School has reported that their social time for virtual students is still going strong. They have now established a routine. They plan their activities as a collective group with students voicing their likes and dislikes. For example, last week when they were getting started to play Hangman one of the students who loves this game turns on his microphone and said, "Hey Macklem! Can we not use the Wheel of Names today and just play the game?"
- Funny, but also a huge success!!! Two months ago, that student would have just sat there, gotten upset and not said anything.
- Their social time has greatly improved. These students can now socialize with friends from their home school, but they also have new friends they have met through the virtual program. As they wait for everyone to log on, it is wonderful for the staff to just sit back and enjoy the interaction among the students. Everyone follows group guidelines in an appropriate, respectful manner. When they first started social time, this never happened. It would have been quiet until the teacher started the virtual session. The ERT has started hosting a virtual resource room via Google Meet 4 days a week. She has her regular students that come for help just like a

traditional resource room in a school. But now, students know exactly where to find her. She is pleased with how this has worked out.

Lakeshore Catholic High School, Port Colborne

- The Special Education class has made 180 Autism Awareness bracelets that they were selling to raise awareness and funds for Autism Ontario.
- April is Autism awareness month, where the school will celebrate and continue to build awareness about Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). Bringing to light the struggles and triumphs of people on the Autism spectrum.
- On **Thursday, April 1st**, Lakeshore Catholic High School will “**Raise the Flag**” for Autism, uniting their school community with families, schools, government and professionals across Canada in recognizing this special month.
- To further celebrate this special month, Mr. Oort’s talented



students, along with the support of their awesome EAs, have “hand-made” Autism Awareness bracelets. Beginning on **Wednesday, March 30th**, bracelets could be purchased for **\$5.00** outside of room 117, between noon and 1 pm daily. Proceeds will be donated to Autism Ontario.

3. Superintendent of Education – Gino Pizzoferrato

- Superintendent Pizzoferrato told the group that the Student Support Department is in the final stages of securing 2 Digital Services for our Niagara Catholic students: a reading program and a SEA equipment support program.
 - **Reading Program**
 - This program would have a tracking instrument attached to it and the Student Support Department is looking at a rollout to Elementary Students with a link for the Secondary Students.
 - **SEA Equipment Support Program**
 - This is the level of service at the desk for students who are accessing SEA equipment. This program can be referred to as a “just in time” service. It is coaching students directly to provide them with support on how to use their SEA technology that supports them with the learning in the classroom. This service could be provided in-person when the Board will be allowed that opportunity. In the meantime, it will be provided virtually as needed until the Board can move to in-person coaching. The goal is to provide coaching in a timely manner without delays.

- Superintendent Pizzoferrato closed by stating that the Student Support Department is actively exploring these opportunities and following the procurement process to finalize these purchases to have them in place for Niagara Catholic students for September.

4. Student Support Coordinator – David O'Rourke

- The Student Support Coordinators are currently taking feedback on the draft copy of the SEAC survey.
- Effective September 2021, school principals who are currently also providing the Educational Resource Teacher (ERT) role in their school communities will no longer share this responsibility. The ERT role will be staffed by a qualified teacher and every Niagara Catholic school will have a minimum of a 0.5 ERT.
- The annual Student Support Summary of Needs has been shared with all the schools. The information gathered through this process is used to help provide staffing at each school and is intended to allow schools to tell the story of the students within their communities. This is open during the month of April and it is reviewed by the Student Support Coordinators multiple times throughout the school year.

5. Director of Education – Camillo Cipriano

- NIL Report

G. TRUSTEE REPORTS

- Trustee Burtnik shared with the group that she was thankful for the approval from the Niagara Public Health Department for the roll-out of the vaccinations for Niagara Catholic's educators and the Special Education staff. Many of Niagara Catholic's staff were scheduled to get vaccinated over the Spring Break. She closed by wishing everyone a restful Spring Break and thanked Gino and the Student Support Team for their continued work and commitment to our Niagara Catholic students.

H. STUDENT REPORT

- The Student Senate has been busy launching the release of their Senate Scholarship and opening community representative applications. Student Councils across the board are busy transitioning with new elections and executives before the symposium.

I. NCPIC REPORT

- NIL Report

J. FUTURE MEETINGS / INFORMATION ITEMS

- Follow-up Multi-Year Strategic Plan by Maria Sanchez-Keane on June 2, 2021.

K. MOMENT OF SILENCE AND REFLECTION

- Chair Racine offered a moment of silence and reflection.

L. NEXT MEETING

- Next Meeting is Wednesday, May 7th at 6:30 pm (Microsoft Teams Meeting).

M. ADJOURNMENT

- Moved by Serena Butera
- Seconded by Madeline Zoelman

THAT the **April 7, 2021** meeting of the Special Education Advisory Committee be adjourned.

CARRIED

- The meeting was adjourned at 8:05 pm.