



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

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

### A. ROUTINE MATTERS

#### 1. Land Acknowledgement

- Co-Chair Zoelman read the Land Acknowledgement.

#### 2. Opening Prayers

- Chair Racine read an opening prayer.

#### 3. Roll Call

Members	Affiliations	Yes	Excused
Harvey, Dorothy	Niagara Children's Centre	✓	
Kelly, Tara	Pathstone Mental Health		✓
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	✓	
Zoelman, Madeline	Learning Disabilities Association of Niagara Region	✓	
Burtnek, Kathy	• <b>Trustee of the Board</b>		✓
Fera, Frank	• <b>Trustee of the Board</b>	✓	
Huibers, Larry	• <b>Chair of the Board</b>		✓
Butera, Serena	• <b>Student Senate Representative</b>	✓	
Filice, Adele	• <b>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, **David O'Rourke**, Coordinator of Student Support, and **Jennifer Lanese**, Recording Secretary/Administrative Assistant to Superintendent Pizzoferrato. **Vincent Mancuso**, Behaviour Resource Teacher was excused that evening.

4. **Approval of the Agenda**

- Moved by Dorothy Harvey
- Seconded by Madeline Zoelman

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

**CARRIED**

5. **Declaration of Conflict 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 September 8, 2021.**

- 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 **September 8, 2021**, as presented.

**CARRIED**

**B. PRESENTATION**

1. **Reading Intervention Programs – Presented by Tania Barrick, Diane Bishop and Ann Marie Criddle – Program Resource Teachers (PRTs)**

**a) Empower™ Reading Update**

- Empower™ Reading is an intensive reading program that provides struggling readers with the skills necessary to become successful readers. Empower Reading was developed by researchers at the Hospital for Sick Children (HSC) - Learning Disabilities Research Program. Over the last 25 years, the Hospital for Sick Children has refined the reading program and studied the benefits for children. The reported improvements in reading skills have been excellent for the children participating in this program.
- Niagara Catholic District School Board, along with the Student Support Department, are excited to have the “Grades 2 – 5: Decoding and Spelling” program as part of our problem solving model in the pilot schools this year.
- Frequency, duration and intensity of instruction are critical components for the program. This one year program has a total of 110 lessons that will be delivered to address decoding and spelling skills. This program is delivered for 1 hour of daily withdrawal instruction to small groups of 6-8 students. Identified school staff had received initial training on September 28<sup>th</sup> and September 29<sup>th</sup>. Empower™ Mentors from The Hospital for Sick Children will support NCDSB Empower™ staff through the year with observation days

along with two additional days of training. Student selection is targeted at those students with regular attendance, average learner profile with deficits in decoding and spelling skills.

- The Decoding and Spelling Program endeavours to turn a student with little or no word attack skills into a strategic, independent, flexible reader armed with multiple word attack strategies and a dialogue structure with which to guide them through successful application of the strategies. The instruction strives to increase reading skill and to free the reader from decoding obstacles so they can read for meaning, information, and pleasure.
- Students who are selected to be in the Empower™ Program need to have consent provided by the parent or guardians.

**b) Lexia Update**

- Niagara Catholic is pleased to be implementing Lexia Reading to support students struggling in their reading development. Lexia Reading (Core 5 and PowerUp) is an adaptive blended learning program that accelerates the development of literacy skills for students of all abilities, helping them make that critical shift from learning to read to reading to learn. Students are provided explicit, systematic, personalized learning while targeting literacy skill gaps. Lexia is considered a blended learning tool that also provides teachers with informative data and targeted lessons that aim to close the gap. The core areas of focus are: phonological awareness, phonics, structural analysis, fluency, vocabulary and comprehension. Lexia Reading – Core 5 is intended for use by students in grades 1-5. Lexia Reading - PowerUp is intended for use by students in grades 6-12. Lexia licenses will be distributed to schools through a PRT consultation. Training will be provided to Administration, ERTs and other staff for specific uses in the next couple weeks. Classroom teachers will also have access and will be provided an opportunity to join a session on how to use general resources that can be accessed in Lexia to complement literacy lessons K-12.

**C. AGENDA ITEMS**

**1. Policy Review**

- The following Governance Policies are currently being reviewed as part of the [Establishment and Cyclical Review of Policies Policy](#)
  - [Naming of a Board Facility Designated Area or Chapel Policy \(100.15\)](#)
  - [Trustee Expenses and Reimbursement Policy \(100.13\)](#)
- To be considered, all submissions must identify the specific Governance Policy and include your name, phone number, address and affiliation with Niagara Catholic.
- *Anonymous or pseudonymous submission s will be not considered.*

- Please submit your feedback to Jennifer Pellegrini ([jennifer.pellegrini@ncdsb.com](mailto:jennifer.pellegrini@ncdsb.com)) on **October 28, 2021, before 12:00 pm.**
- All Committee Members were reminded on the due date for feedback. A copy of the current policies under review were emailed to the Committee Members and also uploaded to the Chat by Jennifer Lanese.
- 1. SEAC Sub Committee Update
  - Updates were presented by the Lead representative from each of the Sub Committees.

#### **D. AGENCY REPORTS**

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

- Fall programs will begin on October 18th with both their math and reading programs are already filled. Spots are still available in their S.O.A.R. and BEST advocacy-based programs.
- They are offering a webinar series for all pertaining to learning disability related topics such as IEPs, IPRCs, and advocacy. Their first webinar will be a panel discussion with scholars, parents, and individuals discussing coping strategies, teaching skills, and general information about learning disabilities and ADHD.
- They are offering a youth support group for youth aged 16-24 who have or suspect that they have a learning disability or ADHD. There are still available spots for youth who meet this criteria.

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

- NIL Report

##### **3. Autism Ontario Niagara Region – Karen Murphy**

- Karen announced that they are moving to MacBain Community Centre (7150 Montrose Road, Niagara Falls) on **November 1, 2021.**
- They will be starting to offer in-person outdoor programs, such as trips to Howell's Family Pumpkin Farm and Heartland Forest. Families can check their Facebook page for details and registration ([Autism Ontario - Facebook Page](#)).

##### **4. Down Syndrome Niagara – Pina Palombo**

- NIL Report

##### **5. Mainstream – Lorraine Smith**

- NIL Report

##### **6. Community Living Port Colborne / Wainfleet – Rita Smith**

- NIL Report

##### **7. Pathstone Mental Health – Tara Kelly**

- NIL Report

## **E. STAFF REPORTS**

### **1. Elementary Principals – Chris Kerho**

- Chris shared news from St. Andrew Catholic Elementary School.
- One of the things that is and has been happening at St. Andrew is the before school reading program. This program engages students struggling in reading twice a week for 6 weeks for a half hour each day. Educational Assistants deliver the program that has been designed by classroom teachers. The program runs before school for 4 days per week and helps to engage EAs and students (2 groups per week).
- In partnership with the Special Olympics Ontario, students at St. Andrew will be participating in the SOO Virtual World Cup from October 18<sup>th</sup> – October 22<sup>nd</sup>. Events will be virtual and held within their gym and will be ability appropriate activities and games. The focus is to be physically active and healthy. Let's go Jaguars!!

### **1. Secondary Principals – Adele Filice**

- NIL Report

### **2. Student Support Coordinators – David O'Rourke**

#### **a) *Recognition of Down Syndrome & Learning Disability Awareness Month***

- o The Student Support Department continues to recognize October as the Down Syndrome and Learning Disability awareness month within our schools. Information and websites are shared with school resource teachers. It is worth noting that while October shines a particular light on students with these learning disabilities, every month is an opportunity to recognize the abilities of all students.

#### **b) *SEA Coaching Partnership With LEARNstyle Software***

- o Niagara Catholic has entered into a partnership with LEARNstyle software to provide technology coaching for select students who receive assistive technology through the Special Equipment Amount (SEA) process. Students who are selected for this opportunity will receive 5 - 60 minute sessions (Elementary) with a coach both in-person or virtual. Secondary students will receive 4 - 75 minute sessions.

#### **c) *Relocation of Student Support Department:***

- o The Student Support Department is currently coordinating a move of office space from the Catholic Education Centre (CEC) into 3 separate hubs located within schools throughout the Board. Discipline-based workrooms will be created within some of the vacant space at the CEC. It is hoped that this move will continue to bolster school-based support from the Student Support Department.

## **F. TRUSTEE REPORTS**

- Trustee Fera provided a summary of the MYSP Summit Meeting.
- He expressed his appreciation to the attendees and although it was a long meeting, it was a very productive meeting.
- Co-Chair Zoelman provided a summary of the MYSP Summit Meeting for the group as well.

## G. STUDENT REPORT

- The Student Senate has been working diligently to expand on social media initiatives and the launch of a variety of initiatives such as **Lead Out Loud** for the Elementary Senate, as well as the renewal of their **Mental Health Summit**.
- Students across the Board have been diligently participating in extracurricular clubs, sports teams, and working to get back to a new sense of normalcy in and outside of their schools. Student Councils are looking to launch in-school initiatives for upcoming Pilgrimages, Halloween and Colour Wars.

## H. NCPIC REPORT

### a) **The Niagara Catholic Parent Involvement Committee 2021-2022 Membership**

- The Niagara Catholic Parent Involvement Committee is seeking to fill available parent/guardian positions on the Niagara Catholic Parent Involvement Committee.
- Interested parents/guardians are to complete and submit the parent/guardian nomination form available on the Board website no later than **4:00 p.m., on Friday, October 8, 2021** to **Yvonne Anderson** at [yvonne.anderson@ncdsb.com](mailto:yvonne.anderson@ncdsb.com).
- NCPIC will continue to meet on the first Thursday of the month on a bi-monthly basis in-person or electronically. The meeting dates for the 2021-2022 school year are as follows:
  - November 4, 2021 (first meeting of the 2021-2022 membership and commissioning of the NCPIC members.)
  - January 13, 2022
  - March 3, 2022
  - May 5, 2022
  - September 2022 (TBD)

### b) **2021-2022 Parent Reaching Out (PRO) Grant**

- For the 2021-2022 school year, the Niagara Catholic District School Board has received funding from the Ministry to support parent engagement projects.
- Projects for the 2021-2022 school year are to demonstrate a commitment to respecting the role of parents in students' educational experiences by working with parents or seeking parent input on how schools can improve in at least one of the following areas:
  - addressing social inclusion and racism specifically anti-Asian, anti-Black, and anti-Indigenous racism and other prejudices toward racialized and marginalized groups;
  - creating a safe and welcoming environment;
  - demonstrating respect for parents as valued partners within the education system regarding decisions about their child's education;
  - enhancing communication with teachers; and
  - informing parents about the expectations of the Ontario Curriculum and supporting resources.
- The NCPIC will discuss a plan for the PRO Grant at the November 4, 2021 meeting.

**c) Ontario Association of Parents for Catholic Education (OAPCE)**

- The members of the Niagara Catholic Parent Involvement Committee were in support of renewing the OAPCE membership for the 2021-2022 school year.
- The Niagara Catholic Parent Involvement Committee will be confirming a representative from the committee to be a Regional Director at the November 4, 2021 meeting. The Regional Director will participate at OAPCE meetings and will communicate updates to the NCPIC and Catholic School Councils.

*We are still appealing for a Committee Member to represent SEAC at the NCPIC meetings.*

*If you're interested in volunteering, please email Jennifer Lanese ([Jennifer.lanese@ncdsb.com](mailto:Jennifer.lanese@ncdsb.com)).*

*Yvonne Anderson will be providing the group with an update until a Committee Member volunteers to represent SEAC at NCPIC.*

**I. NOTICES OF MOTION**

**MOTION**

Moved by Rita Smith

Seconded by Lorraine Smith

**THAT** the Special Education Advisory Committee presents a motion to share the Draft Parent Survey prepared by the Survey Sub Committee with Senior Administration for their consideration and support to present the survey to the Board of Trustees for distribution to gather feedback on services provided by Niagara Catholic.

**CARRIED**

**J. FUTURE MEETINGS / INFORMATION ITEMS**

***MYSP Discovery Report Summit Summary – Prepared by Co-Chair Zoelman***

- Discussed the three sections of the discovery report which included an environmental scan, internal reality, and stakeholder feedback.
- There were many key themes highlighted in each section and some that spanned across all the data represented.
- Key themes for the sections included:
  - Financial implications of staff absences/supply costs
  - Facilities Costs
  - Municipal growth rates and statistics
  - Slight decline in EQAO/OSSLT scores
  - Indigenous education offerings
  - Need for access to technology and support
  - Declining enrollment
- Key themes overall included:

- Focus on mental health and well-being for staff and students
- Equitable access to resources for all Niagara Catholic students regardless of race, sexual orientation, gender, socio-economic status etc.
- Focus on accepting and welcome all students regardless of the factors listed above (diversity and inclusion)
- Using our faith community to help us stand out
- Also brainstormed mission, vision, and values statements in small groups which centered around key themes such as catholic education, student success/fulfilling potential, respect, acceptance, inclusion, faithfulness, community, and call to serve.

#### **K. MOMENT OF SILENCE / REFLECTION OF LIFE**

- Chair Racine offered a moment of silence and reflection.

#### **L. NEXT MEETING**

- Wednesday, November 3, 2021 at 6:30 pm – Microsoft Teams Meeting

#### **M. ADJOURNMENT**

- Moved by Madeline Zoelman
- Seconded by Serena Butera

**THAT the October 6, 2021 meeting of the Special Education Advisory Committee be adjourned.**  
**CARRIED**

- The meeting was adjourned at 8:15 pm.