



MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL EDUCATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 1, 2021

Minutes of the Meeting of the Special Education Advisory Committee held on **Wednesday, December 1, 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. Land Acknowledgement

- Danny Giancola, Student Support Coordinator read the Land Acknowledgement.

2. Opening Prayers

- Superintendent Pizzoferrato asked the Committee Members to keep in their prayers a Student Support Staff member whose spouse had recently passed away.
- Chair Racine thanked Superintendent Pizzoferrato and then read an opening prayer.

3. Roll Call

Members	Affiliations	Yes	Excused
Cipriano, Madeline	Learning Disabilities Association of Niagara Region		✓
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	✓	
Shawanoo, Willow	Indigenous Representative		✓
Smith, Lorraine	Mainstream	✓	
Smith, Rita	Community Living (Port Colborne/Wainfleet)	✓	
Somma, Dr. Monique	Community Living (Welland/Pelham)	✓	
Burtnik, Kathy	• Trustee of the Board	✓	
Huibers, Larry	• Chair of the Board	✓	
Butera, Serena	• Student Senate Representative	✓	
Filice, Adele	• Principal, Secondary	✓	

Kerho, Chris	• Principal, Elementary	✓	
Walsh, Susy	• Principal, Elementary	✓	

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

4. **Approval of the Agenda**

- Moved by Lorraine Smith
- Seconded by Dorothy Harvey

THAT THE Special Education Advisory Committee approves the Agenda of the Special Education Advisory Committee Meeting of **December 1, 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 November 3, 2021.**

- Moved by Karen Murphy
- Seconded by Serena Butera

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

CARRIED

B. AGENDA ITEMS

1. **Format of Future Meetings**

- Superintendent Pizzoferrato thanked Chris Kerho for his years of service on SEAC representing the Elementary Principals. Tonight was Chris' last SEAC Meeting representing the Elementary Principals.
- Superintendent Pizzoferrato welcomed Susy Walsh as she will be the representative for the Elementary Principals starting in January. She will serve 2 years in this role.
- He also welcomed Dr. Monique Somma who will be representing Community Living (Welland/Pelham). She is the Assistant Professor (Ph.D., OCT), Department of Educational Studies at Brock University. She is a faculty member in the Teacher Education Program. She teaches courses on topics related to education for students with exceptionalities.
- Dr. Somma obtained an MEd and Ph.D. from Brock University. Before joining Brock University, she taught both special education and inclusive classes in several Ontario elementary schools.
- He then shared with the group that he elected to host this month's meeting virtually due to the low interest from the Committee Members to attend in-person.
- He further explained that we would be offering a hybrid format in February. He is hopeful that we will have a better turnout from the group to attend in-person at that meeting.

2. Letter from WRDSB to Minister Lecce Concerning Online Support

- A copy of the letter was circulated to all Committee Members by Jennifer Lanese before the meeting.
- Chair Racine opened the floor for discussion.

3. SEAC Sub Committee Update

a) Communication Committee

- The template is still being reviewed by Jennifer Pellegrini for feedback and input. Superintendent Pizzoferrato will contact the Communication Committee once feedback becomes available from Jennifer Pellegrini.

b) Survey Committee

- The SEAC survey is still being reviewed by the Research and Ethics Committee. The release of the SEAC Survey will be based on approval from that Committee. Once approved, Superintendent Pizzoferrato will notify the Survey Committee of the updated timelines.

c) Ministry Reports Committee

- No update to report.

d) Policy Committee

- The Policy Committee met and reviewed in detail the current policies that were being reviewed and they did not have any further feedback to submit to Jennifer Pellegrini.
- Discussion and questions followed after the Sub-Committee updates.

4. Policy Review

- The following Policies and Administrative Guidelines are currently being reviewed as part of the Establishment and Cyclical Review of Policies Policy (100.5) 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.
- [Establishment and Cyclical Review of Policies Policy 100.5](#)
- [Supporting Children and Students with Prevalent Medical Conditions Policy 302.1](#)
- [Trustee Honorarium Policy 100.11](#)
- Please submit your feedback to [Jennifer Pellegrini](#) by December 15, 2021 at 12:00 pm.

C. AGENCY REPORTS

1. Learning Disabilities Association of Niagara Region – Madeline Cipriano

- The LDANR is wrapping up their Fall programming and is still accepting Winter applications for their SOAR Secondary and Post-Secondary programs as well as their BEST program. They are still not certain whether Winter 2022 programs will be offered both in-person and online or just online. They will be offering an Assistive Technology webinar on **December 15, 2021**,

as well as a webinar about Psychoeducational assessments on **January 19, 2022**.

2. Niagara Children's Centre – Dorothy Harvey

- The Niagara Children's Centre is heading into "Transition to Schools" season. They have scheduled virtual meetings next week.
- They are waiting for additional information from the Ministry regarding the entry to school program for children with autism. Dorothy stressed that this information may impact the transition to schools.
- Dorothy has offered to make a presentation in the Spring to update the group.
- She also discussed that currently their biggest challenge is retaining staff and recruiting new staff.
- It has slightly impacted their service level, so they are working on trying to hire more staff to meet the needs of their families.
- All services have now been opened up to be parent preference.

3. Autism Ontario Niagara Region – Karen Murphy

- They have been busy relocating their office space to MacBain Community Centre. They are excited about the move as it is a better space for their staff and those families who they serve.
- Karen also announced that Autism Ontario Niagara Region will be losing their president at the end of December. Her replacement has not yet been announced.

4. Down Syndrome Niagara – Pina Palombo

- Down Syndrome Niagara is planning another drive-by Christmas party for the Down Syndrome families at Heartland Forest on **December 12, 2021**, from 2:00 pm – 4:00 pm.

5. Mainstream – Lorraine Smith

- The Mainstream is in the discussion stages of possibly moving forward with the idea of the amalgamation of services of Mainstream and Gateway.
- Mainstream continues to struggle with staff shortages and recruitment of support staff for their supported living programs.
- Lorraine concluded by extending a Christmas message to the group,
"I want to take this time to wish everyone peace and joy throughout the Christmas season".

6. Community Living (Port Colborne/Wainfleet) – Rita Smith

- Rita reported that Community Living has welcomed Joanna Mataya as their new CEO. Joanna is full of energy and they look forward to working with her.
- They are very fortunate that The Meridian Credit Union (Port Colborne) is organizing a toy drive for their children's Christmas party. Starbucks (Welland) is donating treats for this event. Santa will also be there to greet the children.
- They are running some of their after-school programs as well as their teen nights.
- Safe and affordable housing continues to be a challenge in Port Colborne. Trying to find decent living arrangements for the people they serve is very difficult. This is where they will be focusing their mandate for 2022.
- They have been receiving many referrals from Contact Niagara and the DSO for families looking for support. Recruiting staff is an ongoing dilemma.
- Rita concluded by wishing everyone a Merry Christmas on behalf of Community Living Port

Colborne/Wainfleet.

7. Community Living (Welland/Pelham) – Dr. Monique Somma

- NIL Report

8. Pathstone Mental Health – Tara Kelly

- NIL Report

D. STAFF REPORTS

1. Elementary Principals – Chris Kerho

- NIL Report

2. Secondary Principals – Adele Filice

- Adele shared a Good News Report from Lakeshore Catholic High School.
- Soleil Loisel has had a very successful coop placement at St John Bosco Catholic Elementary School. Soleil is also actively involved with the LCHS' art club and choir.
- Lauren Patterson is participating in Niagara College's CICE program. She is doing great!
- On Friday, three of their students (specifically, Samantha Jobb, Meadow Langely and Sabrina Alford) were filmed as they read scripture in the chapel for advent prayer services.
- After a year hiatus due to COVID, they are gearing up for Christmas and looking forward to their annual/traditional Christmas lunch hosted by the Special Education class. The meal will include turkey, ham, stuffing, and all the fixings. Students and staff help plan, prepare, serve and then enjoy the meal together.

3. Student Support Department – Jim Di Gioia, Danny Giancola, David O'Rourke and Gino Pizzoferrato

i) Literacy Program Update

a) Empower

- The Empower Reading program is running strong in Niagara Catholic. Empower teaching staff are delivering lessons with students daily and the feedback has been very positive. We are extremely delighted to see our students making literacy gains, no matter how significant. Preparation for training session #3 is currently being planned for teachers. Depending on the lesson that teachers are on, some staff will receive training in December. The rest of our teachers will receive their 3rd training session in January.

b) Lexia

- The majority of Principals, Vice-Principals, Educational Resource Teachers and the CEC staff participated in the Lexia Professional Learning Sessions throughout October and November. Our IT department has recently completed the technical set-up for Lexia and most students have been identified to receive a license. Students will begin the use of this program with support from their teacher and the Educational Resource Teacher.

ii) Gifted Module

- Our Program Resource Teachers will be offering our students identified as gifted to participate in a module on **December 15th** and **December 16th**. Students will have

an opportunity to explore various expressions of identity through poetry, song, quotes and/or artistic representations. Through these open-ended activities, students will create representations of their identity to share with peers. Overall, students will gain a deeper understanding of “self-identity” and how their sense of self influences their interaction with their Catholic faith, the Holy Trinity and the world around them.

iii) Student Support Staff

- Student Support staff along with our regional partners are ready to host a “Transition to School” Parent Information Session. These sessions are scheduled for **December 8th, December 9th and January 12th**. This session allows parents the opportunity to learn more about Niagara Catholic’s Kindergarten classrooms along with the transition to school process.

iv) School Meetings

- Student Support feeder of school meetings is also in the planning stages to take place in January and early February. These meetings focus on successful student transitions from grade 8 to grade 9 and those students entering Kindergarten.

4. Director of Education Cipriano

- Director of Education Cipriano proudly shared with the group that our Board of Trustees approved our Multi-Year Strategic Plan (MYSP) at our Board Meeting in November. This will be our plan for the next five years. It will direct the work of our Senior Staff that will be implemented and be reflected into our schools. He thanked the many participants including the Committee Members for their input and feedback. The process took approximately 9 months to develop the Board’s approved MYSP which included many stakeholders’ voices including the SEAC Members. He is excited and looking forward to implementing the MYSP.

E. TRUSTEE REPORTS

1. Chair of the Board Huibers

- Chair of the Board Huibers echoed Director of Education Cipriano’s excitement that the MYSP has been approved. He extended his gratitude and appreciation for the participants.
- He is hopeful that it reflects the feedback and input of the stakeholder’s voices in the plan.
- He closed by stating this Tuesday, the Board will have their Organization Meeting and they will select the new Chair of the Board and the new Vice-Chair of the Board for the next calendar year.
- The results will be posted in February along with the new alignment of Committee work.
- He is hopeful that he and Trustee Burtnik will continue to be representatives for SEAC for the next term.
- He encouraged the Committee Members to watch the meeting as it will be streamed live.

2. Trustee Burtnik

- Trustee Burtnik shared with the group that there was a special Board meeting last night and that the financial audit statement was approved. She thanked the Board’s financial

management and its commitment to our Special Education students that they receive over and above what is allotted by the Ministry.

- She also stated that those reports are available on the Board's website for viewing.
- She concluded by wishing everyone a blessed holiday season.

F. STUDENT REPORT

1. Serena Butera

- Student Senate recently launched "Lead Out Loud", a seminar for Elementary Student Senators with the focus on "Be an Upstander, Not a Bystander." This seminar was hosted on **Thursday, November 25, 2021**, with Unlearn in attendance to showcase its fantastic imagery and powerful message.
- Student Councils across the District have been working hard to facilitate engaging activities for their student body, such as "Food Truck Lunch Days", and are getting started on Christmas Celebrations!
- Some students have concerns about the change in the semesters' setup.
- A discussion followed.

G. NCPIC REPORT

- The following report was prepared by Yvonne Anderson, Recording Secretary for NCPIC.
- Chair Racine read the update below to the group.
- At the Niagara Catholic Parent Involvement Committee meeting of **November 4, 2021**, Superintendent Forsyth-Sells welcomed new and returning members and thanked them for their support of parent engagement in Niagara Catholic.
- Father Paul MacNeil, Bishop/Diocesan representative presided over the commissioning ceremony of the members of the Niagara Catholic Parent Involvement Committee, as they publicly proclaimed their commitment to promote the Mission of Catholic education and the Mission, Vision and Values of the Niagara Catholic District School Board.
- Carrie Vernelli and Chris Kouroushis were acclaimed as Co-Chairs of the Niagara Catholic Parent Involvement Committee for a term of one year.
- Diana Zlomislic was acclaimed as the Niagara Catholic, Ontario Association for Parents in Catholic Education (OAPCE) Regional Director.
- The Niagara Catholic Parent Involvement Committee meetings are being held in a hybrid model to accommodate in-person and virtual attendance. Effective **November 4, 2021**, NCPIC meetings are being live-streamed.
- Andrea Bozza, the Board's Mental Leader gave a short presentation on Mental Health and Well-Being.
- Student Support Services will be presenting, Tier One Behaviour Resource Guide "Who do you say I am?" at the NCPIC Meeting on **January 13, 2022**.
- *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). Yvonne Anderson will be providing the group with an update until a Committee Member volunteers to represent SEAC at NCPIC.*

H. NOTICES OF MOTION

- There were no Notices of Motion.

I. FUTURE MEETINGS / INFORMATION ITEMS

- Superintendent Pizzoferrato will provide the group with an update next month on the format of our future meetings.

J. MOMENT OF SILENCE / REFLECTION OF LIFE

- Chair Racine offered a moment of silence and reflection.

K. NEXT MEETING

- **Wednesday, January 12, 2021 at 6:30 pm** – Catholic Education Centre (Microsoft Teams Meeting).
- Superintendent Pizzoferrato will provide more information closer to the meeting.

L. ADJOURNMENT

- Moved by Dorothy Harvey
- Seconded by Karen Murphy

THAT the **December 1, 2021** meeting of the Special Education Advisory Committee be adjourned.

CARRIED

- The meeting was adjourned at 7:27 pm.