



MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL EDUCATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 11, 2023

6:30 PM

Virtual Meeting in Compliance with Education Act Section 207 and
Ontario Regulation 463/97 Section 5.1 (2)

PUBLIC ACCESS LIVE STREAM LINK
<https://niagaracatholic.ca/meetings-livestream/>

A. ROUTINE MATTERS

1. Land Acknowledgement – Chairperson – A. Filice

*Introduction:
The Niagara Catholic District School Board wishes to honour the Indigenous people who have been the protectors of this land, known as Turtle Island, for more than ten thousand years.
We begin this meeting by acknowledging the land on which we gather is the traditional territory of the Haudenosaunee and Anishinaabe peoples, many of whom continue to live and work here today. This territory is covered by the Upper Canada Treaties and is within the land protected by the Dish With One Spoon Wampum agreement. Today this gathering place is home to many First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples and acknowledging reminds us that our great standard of living is directly related to the resources and friendship of Indigenous people.*

2. Opening Prayer

Chair Somma provided the opening prayer – Our needs are known

3. Roll Call

Members	Affiliations	Yes	Excused
Somma, Monique	Community Living (Welland/Pelham) - CHAIR	X	
Glencross, Emily	Learning Disabilities Association of Niagara Region	X	
Maxwell, Michelle	Niagara Children’s Centre	X	
Kelly, Tara	Pathstone Mental Health		X
Palombo, Pina	Down Syndrome Niagara	X	
Attree, Alexandria	Autism Ontario (Niagara Region)	X	
T.B.D.	Indigenous Representative		

Smith, Lorraine	Mainstream	X	
Wencel, Sara (for Rita Smith)	Community Living (Port Colborne/Wainfleet)	X	
Joyner, DOug	Trustee of the Board	X	
Marino, Jim	Trustee of the Board	X	
Filice, Adele	Principal, Secondary	X	
Walsh, Susy	Principal, Elementary	X	
Pizzoferrato, Gino	Superintendent of Education	X	
Agretto, Mackenzie	Student Senate Representative	X	
Di Gioia, Jim	Coordinator of Student Support		X
Giancola, Danny	Coordinator of Student Support		X
Di Toro, Anthony	Coordinator of Student Support	X	

Observers	Affiliations	Yes	Excused
Harrington, Kavitha	Speech-Language Pathologist		
Brochu, Grace	Student Support Facilitator	X	
De Lisio, Angela	Behaviour Analyst		
Mancuso, Vincent	Behaviour Resource Teacher	X	
Vanderlee, Carole	Teacher of the Blind/Low Vision		
Barrick, Tania	Program Resource Teacher		
Davies, Elizabeth	Administrative Assistant/Recording Secretary	X	

4. Approval of the Agenda

Chair Somma adding item #7 to the agenda – a matter arising from October that we haven't had a chance to address.

Moved by: E. Glencross

Seconded by: M. Maxwell

5. Declaration of Conflict of Interest

No disclosure of interest were declared with any items on the agenda

6. Approval of Minutes of the Special Education Advisory Committee Meeting of October 5, 2022

Moved by: A. Attree

Seconded by: A. Di Toro

7. Matters Arising from Past Meetings

Item 1 – Addition of members to SEAC.

Currently 9 members

We are able to have 12 members – leaves 3 open spots.

Trustee Joyner recommended Krystine Donato for Community Representative

2 agency spots open (Pending Bethesda, Niagara Support Services)

1 open Indigenous spot

Moved by: Trustee Joyner – Would like to bring forward the recommendation to add Krystine Donato as a SEAC Community Member until November 2026. This motion will go forward to the next Board meeting in January.

Seconded by: Trustee Marino

Chair Somma: A unanimous vote taken to add Krystine Donato as a SEAC Community Member.

Item 2: Chair Somma - Alexandria Attree would like to represent SEAC at NCPIC as she sits on both committees.

SEAC Member vote: Unanimous to have Alexandria Attree represent SEAC at NCPIC.

B. PRESENTATION

N/A

C. AGENDA ITEMS

1. Letter from Durham District School Board – Chair Somma

As SEAC do we want to propose a letter to Ministry of Education in support of DDSB? There was discussions about the decreased change in funding after the provincial election. Superintendent Pizzoferrato agreed to bring forward at the next meeting what the situation is at Niagara Catholic, what this means to Niagara Catholic and are other Boards writing letters before we decide if we will be writing a letter in support.

2. SEAC Chair's Report (Chair Somma)

Happy New Year everyone!

As you recall in December groups were established for the two goals we presented to Gino's team. That information can be found here:

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1efNyKMwUPjMIB7foywhREA/edit?usp=sharing&EgOgi2ERYslyIRCwX>

If you have not had a chance to join one of these working groups, please add your name to the one you are interested in supporting. Each group will meet a few times over the course of the year when planning for any of the outcomes that will move forward. Your participation can be as little or as much as you are able: but we want every voice included.

Last March our former chair presented on the roles of the SEAC Committee and Membership. I want to re-share this presentation since we have several new members this year. If you are unsure of the role of SEAC as a collective and/or your role/responsibilities as a member, you can find this information and more on the slides here:

<https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1Ea1Df1O5LRIBaI2QtX66buY50KSudwi2/edit?usp=sharing&oid=112230540140545253772&rtpof=true&sd=true>

At that time, we also developed a feedback form as recommended in the SEAC documents were reviewed. You can use this form monthly preferable before each SEAC meeting to include any items you would like to be discussed on the agenda, or questions you may have. There is

also place to include a short agency update for Liz to include on the meeting minutes for each month. The form can be found here:

<https://forms.gle/Qt7npUogTggHEgmT7>

Alexandria Attrie our SEAC rep from Autism Ontario has self-nominated to represent SEAC and NCPIC as she currently holds a spot on both these important committees. For this reason, I would like to make a motion: That the NC SEAC support Alexandria Attrie as its representative on NCPIC for the 2023 calendar year.

I am grateful for the expertise each of you bring to this table and I am looking forward to a productive year ahead!

3. SEAC Sub-Committee Overview (Chair Somma)

- a. **Communications** – Brochure is printed and ready for distribution
- b. **Survey** – A Di Toro – Student Support Coordinators are working with Christine Battagli to begin formatting in the specialized software. Target release start of March 2023 with data available in April/May 2023.
- c. **Ministry Reports** – No reports recently.
Who is part of communications committee? No one.
Survey – Pina Palombo
Ministry Report – Adele Filice
Policy – Chair Somma
SEAC members can think about which committee they would like to be involved in.
- d. **Policy** – N/A

D. AGENCY REPORTS

Learning Disabilities Association of Niagara Region – Emily Glencross

We are trying to get the Niagara Catholic post-secondary transition workshop program up and running. Stay tuned for more information. We are really excited about it.

Niagara Children's Centre – Michelle Maxwell

Our new website has launched! All eligibility is now posted on the website by program. Of particular interest will likely be under "Services for Ages 4-18" (www.niagarachildrenscentre.com)

SmartStart Hub is launching this month. The website will be updated to reflect this upon the launch. Student Support Coordinators are attending an information session on Tuesday January 17th and they will be able to decide how to disseminate this information through the board.

Service Goal for 2023: Making Social Work services more available to school-aged children. Any family that is active with or waiting for any Centre service (including SSAH or a medical clinic) can access family education and workshops as well as open-registration youth groups

- Please see:
https://issuu.com/niagarachildrenscentre/docs/branded_print_out_winter_events_web

- Caregiver Connections:
https://mailchi.mp/niagarachildrenscentre/dec2021_caregiver_connections-4907019
- Family Support Opportunities: family mentorship program, online parent support group, parent talk support groups (with childcare) - <https://niagarachildrenscentre.com/family-supports> and <https://niagarachildrenscentre.com/calendar>

Transition to School Process: Information nights hosted by the Centre in December 2022/January 2023. Attended by NCD SB Student Support Coordinators. Very well received and attended by families!

We continue to support the Ontario Autism Program “Entry to School” program in collaboration with Bethesda. A new cohort begins in March 2023.

We have a new Recreational Therapist that has started with us after an unexpected hiatus in those services due to staffing. We recognize that this program is highly valued by our school-aged clients and are so happy the program is up and running again!

Pathstone Mental Health – Tara Kelly

No update

Down Syndrome Niagara – Pina Palumbo (Doris)

no update

Autism Ontario Niagara Region – Alexandria Attree

Autism Niagara met 2 days ago with Autism Ontario. They have created a paid position - SEAC Representative for Autism Ontario. We found information we were getting was inconsistent, so they are creating a newsletter across all of Ontario. I recommended that when they report have it broken up into elementary and secondary because transitions are different (into JK/into secondary).

Also the March Break Funding Lottery is closing soon but anybody with Ontario Autism Program (OAP) number you can apply. Covers activities up to \$500/\$1000 for a child to participate in activities during March break. Communication was sent out before Christmas for people with OAP numbers to register. Information that was provided will be sent to Elizabeth to distribute to our committee and get it out to our school communities.

Mainstream – Lorraine Smith

No update

Community Living (Port Colborne/Wainfleet) – Sara Wencel

We have after school cooking programs starting up next week at St Therese. Teams in secondary schools are starting back up as well. We are excited to move forward with that.

Community Living (Welland) – Monique Somma

No update

STAFF REPORTS

Secondary Principal – Adele

We are starting to plan the review of IPRC (Special Needs during exam time).

We are beginning the transition to high school process – including visits to elementary schools, conversations with parents and elementary ERT/classroom teacher visits.

Students from Niagara College ABA Services Program have been placed across Niagara Catholic and are starting their practical hours. We welcome them.

Elementary Principal – Susy

Looking forward to February where we will be working with parents of 1st year kindergarten, especially those with special education needs. We offer as many visits as possible. We welcome everyone back.

Christmas break was tough for some families. School attendance of our special needs students has been up. We are focusing on transitioning students into a comforting routine.

Student Support Department – Anthony

SEAC Survey: The Coordinators are working with Christine Battagli, Consultant for Research, Assessment and Evaluation to begin formatting the survey in Qualtrics software. Our target release to families in the system will be at the start of March 2023, with data available for analysis and discussion in April/May. The invitational letter to families may be shared at the February SEAC, and a copy of the survey questions may be shared with SEAC as part of this report.

Kindergarten transition to School: Information sharing has begun with parents. Student Support Coordinators are representing Niagara Catholic at Parent Information Nights presented by the Niagara Children’s Centre. Two virtual sessions have taken place on Tuesday December 6th, 2022 at 9:30 a.m. and Tuesday December 13th, 2022 at 6:30 pm. One additional Parent Information Night is being held in-person at the Niagara Children’s Centre on January 12th 2023 (tomorrow) @ 6:30pm. The sessions have been well attended by families who received information from Niagara Catholic and our co-terminus Niagara Boards. Question-and-answer sessions have/will take place at each presentation to address any questions regarding entry to school.

“SNAP” (Supporting Neurodiversity through Adaptive Programming): Niagara Catholic participants enjoyed the Fall Session and we are looking forward to the Winter SNAP sessions offered through Brock University. The program includes a wide range of activities such as educational gymnastics, dance and movement education, games, and other activities of daily living. Activities can be modified to meet the needs and capabilities of the individual participating. The second half of our Niagara Catholic schools have had a chance to register with their visit date being sometime during these next few months. Sessions begin February 9th and will continue through to April.

Gifted Module: Niagara Catholic is offering the next Gifted Module to those students identified. Using VEX I.Q. robotics, students will be immersed in this hands on S.T.R.E.A.M. (Science Technology Religion Engineering Art and Mathematics) based

module, working both individually and as a team to engage in a variety of problems using coding. By strengthening their understanding of coding and robotics, students will become innovators, thinkers and problem-solving leaders. This is the first of a two-part module to explore, investigate and deepen their understanding of coding, with the creation of a final project to consolidate their learning.

Superintendent Pizzoferrato – Mark May 28 to June 3 – **National AccessAbility Week** (red shirt day May 31) Under C. Mc Mullin leadership we secured \$10000 grant. We have a number of principals and staff partnering to plan an experience to develop an experience with children and families - children to develop a plan to take back to school. Very excited. Lots of work is happening behind the scenes.

SEAC Brochure – Is ready to send out to Niagara Catholic schools.

Empower – Aggressively brought it forward in Niagara Catholic. 3 schools missed opportunity. We have a creative solution to bring the experience to them in the fall.

Costs are \$5600/per site X 47 schools now and 50 as of September and involves 1 hour of focused reading instruction to small groups of 6 to 8 students every day with 5 schools that have 2 programs - 110 lessons each school year. Students are tracked upon entry to the program and exit of the program.

(provide copy of report/presentation presented to the Board)

TRUSTEE REPORTS – Trustee Joyner

With your support, I will reach out to a few Indigenous Leads to see if they are interested in sitting on our committee. If they are interested I will have them get in contact with Madame Chair.

STUDENT REPORT – Mackenzie

Student Senate is in the planning process for the formal. 150 students and 100 support staff will attend St Paul on February 24. We are finished gathering information on students – medical history, special accommodations to make the day go smoothly. Also working on transition video and booklet. There are several opportunities for students to get involved. (Leadership, culinary, photography programs etc.) We are planning different sensory activities for the day. Please share any concerns about formals.

Superintendent Pizzoferrato - Recommendation to move the Student Report at front end of our reporting after the community groups.

NCPIC REPORT

None

E. NOTICES OF MOTION

None

F. INFORMATION ITEMS

None

G. MOMENT OF SILENCE / REFLECTION OF LIFE

H. NEXT MEETING

Wednesday, February 1, 2023 at 6:30 pm in person

I. ADJOURNMENT 8:10 pm

Motion to Adjourn: Chair Somma

Seconded: Trustee Joyner