



NIAGARA CATHOLIC  
DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

## MINUTES OF THE NIAGARA CATHOLIC PARENT INVOLVEMENT COMMITTEE MEETING

JANUARY 12, 2023

Minutes of the Meeting of the Niagara Catholic Parent Involvement Committee, held on Thursday, January 12, 2023 at 6:30 p.m. held virtually and in-person in the Father Kenneth Burns csc Board Room, at the Catholic Education Centre, 427 Rice Road, Welland, ON.

Co-Chair Annen called the meeting to order at 6:32 p.m.

### A. ROUTINE MATTERS

#### 1. *Opening Prayer*

Fr. Paul MacNeil led the Land Acknowledgement and the Opening Prayer.

#### 2. *Roll Call:*

Parent Members	Geographical Area	Present In-person	Present Electronically	Excused	Absent
Lindsey Spanik	Grimsby/Lincoln/West Lincoln				√
Alexandria Attree	Merritton/Thorold	√			
Ian Woods	Merritton/Thorold	√		Joined at 6:49p.m.	
Julie Bateman	Niagara Falls	√			
Marilyn Fabiano	Niagara Falls		√	Joined the meeting at 7:07pm	
Olivia O'Reilly-Romanoff	Niagara Falls	√			
Luciano Robazza	Niagara Falls	√			
Brenda Annen	St. Catharines/Niagara-on-the-Lake	√			
Rita Colling	St. Catharines/Niagara-on-the-Lake		√		
Jeremy Harb	St. Catharines/Niagara-on-the-Lake	√			
Stephanie Ireland	St. Catharines/Niagara-on-the-Lake	√			
Melanie Oakes-Flegg	Welland/Pelham	√			
Carrie Vernelli	Welland/Pelham		√	Joined the meeting at 7:07pm	
Fr. Paul MacNeil	Bishop/Diocesan Representative	√			
Ava Venzon	Secondary Student Senate Representative	√			
<b>Trustees</b>					
Natalia Benoit	Trustee	√			
Joe Bruzzese	Trustee	√			

The following staff attended:

**Lee Ann Forsyth-Sells**, Superintendent of Education, **Joe Tornabuono**, Elementary Principal, **Josie Rocca**, Support Staff, and **Yvonne Anderson**, Recording Secretary/Administrative Assistant.

Regrets Received: Camillo Cipriano and Kevin Timmins

**3. Approval of the Agenda**

Moved by: Jeremy Harb

**THAT** the Niagara Catholic Parent Involvement Committee approve the agenda of the Niagara Catholic Parent Involvement Committee Meeting of January 12, 2023 as presented.

**CARRIED**

**4. Declaration of Conflict of Interest**

No conflict of interested was disclosed.

**5. Approval of the Niagara Catholic Parent Involvement Committee Meeting Minutes of November 3, 2022**

Moved by: Trustee Benoit

**THAT** the Niagara Catholic Parent Involvement Committee approve the minutes of the Niagara Catholic Parent Involvement Committee Meeting of November 3, 2022 as presented.

**CARRIED**

**B. PRESENTATION**

Decodable Books-K-12 Consultants: Andrea Stranges and Mary Vetere  
Superintendent Forsyth-Sells welcomed and introduced Superintendent of Education, Kim Kinney responsible for Program and Innovation. Superintendent Kinney provided a brief overview of the new approach to structured literacy based on the science of reading before introducing presenters Andrea Stranges and Mary Vetere, K-12 Consultants.

Mary shared that as a result of the Ontario Human Rights Commission *Right to Read* report issued in February 2021, the Ministry of Education will be making changes to the Ontario Language and English Language Curriculum (September 2023) to support literacy for all students.

In alignment with the Multi-Year Strategic Plan, Niagara Catholic will focus on literacy (K-2) through evidence-based cognitive neuroscience of teaching and learning. Andrea presented on the importance of decodable text and books as a tool/resource to support structured literacy, cognitive recognition, and build vocabulary and confidence in student reading. A variety of fiction and non-fiction decodable books were distributed for review.

Mary shared that leveled reading books will eventually be replaced by decodable books. Instead of identifying what level your child can read, the focus will be on what can my child do? what can they read? and, how do they read? Bookmarks created by Kim Lockhart, were also provided to support parents to recognize the skills required for their children to read and write. Mary suggested and encouraged that all parents listen to the podcast series “Sold a Story” by Emily Hanford, as it will change your perspective and how you think about things. A question and answer period followed the presentation.

**C. SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS**

1. Faith Formation

- No report.

## 2. Goals/Parent Engagement Events

Proposals for parent engagement events were put forward for consideration:

1. Literacy Family Night-the Literacy Family Night will be similar to the Math Family Game Night in the 2021-2022 school year. This event would host two guest speakers, Kim Lockhart (French Immersion) and Kate Winn to address the importance of early reading and the changes that will be seen in our classrooms to support student literacy and provide strategies for parents to support their children with reading at home. Participants will be provided with family engaging games and resources to support student learning at home.
2. Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Workshops by Family of Schools.
3. Board wide convention with various guest speakers and workshops for parents to choose from i.e., literacy, numeracy, equity, diversity and inclusion, Pro Life, technology etc.

Co-Chair Annen requested that all members send an email to both Co-Chairs with their intent to participate on the Faith Formation and/or Goals/Parent Engagement Events no later than January 16, 2023. Once the subcommittees are formed, meetings will be scheduled to further discuss Faith Formation and Parent Engagement options.

## D. POLICY

Co-Chair Annen reported that the Accommodation Review Policy (701.2) is currently being vetted:

1. Feedback to be submitted on behalf of the NCPIC, is to be sent to Yvonne Anderson no later than 12:00 p.m. on Tuesday, January 31, 2023.
2. Feedback being submitted as an individual, is to be sent directly to Anna Pisano no later than 12:00 p.m. on Wednesday, February 1, 2023.

## E. CO-CHAIR REPORTS-*Brenda Annen and Carrie Vernelli*

- No report.

## F. OAPCE REPORT-*Ian Woods*

Ian Woods thanked the NCPIC members for their support and faith in him to explore the role of the Niagara Catholic OAPCE Regional Director. Ian shared that this role has brought forth numerous connections and a committed level of service that he has not experienced before.

Ian also provided the following OAPCE updates on their year-end reports:

### Feb 2020 - Jan 2021

1. OAPCE increased their advocacy for parent involvement to the Ministry of Education (MOE), and specifically to the Minister of Education.
2. Hosted multiple virtual events with great attendance and success.
3. Provided direct support to parents with the Return to School plan, by facilitating a town hall meeting in Toronto with 1000+ in attendance.
4. Organized and hosted Webinars. *Visit the [oapce.org](http://oapce.org) website for current webinar offers.*

5. New Strategic plan created to ensure positive governance, structure and policies was implemented.

#### Feb 2021 – Jan 2022

1. New executive roles created to foster new growth and add additional accountability.
2. Increased organization of IT services which allowed bigger presence through Zoom meetings, Webinars and our Website.
3. Website changes implemented. New resource pages added (Prayer, speakers etc.).
4. OAPCE Resource Tool Kit mailed out across the province. Tool kit included books, info pamphlets, OAPCE swag and OAPCE info brochures.
5. Attended Partner meetings (ICE, CEFO etc.) to ensure the parent voice was paramount in all discussions surrounding school closures and reopening.
6. Established *Parents 4 Press* to provide direct information. Still in continued use and provided with a simple email signup. Visit [oapce.org](http://oapce.org) for more details.

#### **Current:**

OAPCE continues to provide parents with information and a voice at the table when it comes to their children's education and by providing our webinars – Catholic Virtual Ontario parent webinar was posted on November 26, 2022, is also available on [oapce.org](http://oapce.org) and YouTube. OAPCE continues to grow and strengthen the connection between our Parents, Schools and Parishes. We have all come together to reconnect and reengage in the education of the next generation.

As the Niagara Catholic OAPCE Regional Director Ian stated the he will share OAPCE updates as they become available. There will be new Social media pages created, which will be provided as they go live on Instagram, Facebook as well as LinkedIn. Ian stated that he will also share information from the MOE to keep parents informed and have access to all available resources.

#### Updates:

1. First Regional OAPCE Meeting on January 25<sup>th</sup> – Location and Time TBD
2. Most Reverend Bishop Yvan Mathieu accepted the OAPCE Bishop Liaison position.
3. OAPCE volunteered to organize the 2023 ICE symposium and will be available at the registration table and throughout the venue for information and location details. Further details will be available on the [ICE website](#).
4. Details for the 2023 Conference held in Kingston, ON will be shared as they become available.
5. The OAPCE March Break Movie guide is available on the OAPCE website under Resources: [click here](#)

#### **G. REPORT FROM THE DIRECTOR'S DESIGNATE SUPERINTENDENT OF EDUCATION**

1. NCPIC Meeting of May 4, 2023-Reschedule  
Superintendent Forsyth-Sells requested that the NCPIC Meeting of May 4, 2023 be rescheduled due to the Blessing of Our Lady of the Holy Rosary School with Bishop Bergie. The NCPIC Meeting of May 4, will be rescheduled to Thursday, May 11, 2023 at 6:30 p.m. at the Catholic Education Centre.
2. Ministry Summary-November 2022 Meeting with PICs and Board Leads  
Superintendent Forsyth-Sells reported that the Ministry of Education continues to host virtual engagement series with PICs and Board Leads to share local challenges, successes, and promising practices to support parent engagement in their children's school and in their learning. Government of

Ontario priorities/programs have also been shared during these sessions and participants are invited to provide feedback. The Ministry Summary-November 2022 Meeting with PICs and Board Leads was provided to all members for information and has been posted on the Board website under the NCPIC portal for parents/guardians.

3. 2023-2024 School Year Calendar Consultation Process

Superintendent Forsyth-Sells reported that as part of the consultation process, stakeholders are invited to provide feedback on the Draft 2023-2024 School Year Elementary and Secondary Calendars. Superintendent Forsyth-Sells reviewed the draft calendars and stated that the calendars are drafted in consultation with the District School Board of Niagara and Niagara Student Transportation Services. NCPIC members were provided with the draft 2023-2024 School Year Calendars and feedback template. Feedback is due no later than February 1, 2023 to [andrea.towne@ncdsb.com](mailto:andrea.towne@ncdsb.com) for consideration by the School Year Calendar Committee.

4. NCPIC Financial Report

Superintendent Forsyth-Sells reported on the finances of the NCPIC.

***Niagara Foundation for Catholic Education Annual Benefit Gala***

Superintendent Forsyth-Sells shared that the Niagara Foundation for Catholic Education Annual Benefit Gala with honorary guest Most Reverend Gerard Bergie, D.D., Bishop of St. Catharines will take place on Friday, March 3, 2023 at Club Roma Event and Conference Centre at 6:00 p.m. Proceeds from the Gala will continue to support student scholarships and students in need. NCPIC members were encouraged to attend the Gala. Tickets are available until February 23, 2023.

## **H. SEAC REPORT**

- SEAC welcomed new Trustees, Trustee Doug Joynar and Trustee Jim Marino to the committee.
- People Helping People Achieve presented in November 2022 – they are a group of self-advocates with intellectual disabilities who are working together to weave themselves into the fabric of the community. They have been active for 22 years.
- SEAC has developed a pamphlet explaining the purpose and composition of our committee which will be distributed to our schools.
- Learning Centres of Excellence Program (LCE Program) provides students in grades 5 through 8 with a low ratio classroom environment that concurrently supports developing learning and social skills as part of a safe, inclusive and responsive school community. The Individual Education Plan (IEP) will continue to address student’s modifications, accommodations and learning goals.
- Lexia Professional Learning Centres took place in November to support staff with implementation. Professional Development consisted of refresher sessions and staff that are new to the program.
- Empower Training 3 was provided for new staff from Sick Kids Hospital.

- Coordinators participated in Transition to School Parent Information Sessions with the Niagara Childcare Centre to support students and families who are transitioning to year 1 Kindergarten for September 2023.
- Our first school year Gifted Module was offered to students identified as gifted. During this module, students took an introspective look into the artist Norval Morrisseau, also known as Cooper Thunder Bird. He was an Indigenous Canadian artist who significantly impacted the culture and influence of art design in his images, colours and overall presentation. Students had an opportunity to create their own piece in the style of Morrisseau.
- SNAP (Supporting Neurodiversity through Adaptive Programming) sessions were 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.

#### **I. BISHOP/DIOCESAN REPORT**-*Fr. Paul MacNeil*

As a result of the synod listening sessions that took place last winter and spring the diocese heard a number of priorities that need to be addressed if we are to move forward as a diocese in a healthy way. They include the following, specifically:

1. Quelling fear and judgement
2. Pastor/Bishop as leader and shepherd
3. Improving Collaboration and Promoting the Laity (especially women) in Leadership
4. Improving Communication
5. Need for Healing
6. Creating Parish Cultures of Welcome and Belonging
7. Providing Opportunities for Evangelization, Catechesis and Discipleship
8. Strengthening School - Parish Partnerships
9. Outreach and Ministry to Youth, Young Adults and Families
10. Bridging Division

In response to the above, the diocese has identified 3 areas of focus: Leadership, Communication and Prayer. Here is an update on our progress so far:

- Leadership: Last November all of the clergy met for our annual study days to discuss the implementation of parish pastoral councils. The bishop expects every parish to have one in place by Pentecost. To assist us with this task, we have contracted with Ron Huntley, a parish leadership consultant who leads our study days. He is currently making a series of videos tailored specifically for our diocese to help our pastors implement the parish councils. The bishop is also mandating a diocesan lay council to help guide the diocese in its decision making and its programming.
- Communication: We will be meeting with representatives from a communication company called Flocknote to see about using this platform at the diocesan level to improve communication among our parishes and at the diocesan level. It is a platform similar to Mailchimp only specifically designed for parish churches. I have used Flocknote with great success at the parish level both at Our Lady of the Scapular and St. Alexander.

- The Vineyard, our diocesan newspaper, has transitioned to an electronic format, which can be accessed through the diocesan website here: <http://www.saintcd.com/diocesan-directory/the-vineyard>

**J. STUDENT SENATE REPORT-Ava Venzon**

Ava shared that:

- Student Senate will be hosting a dance for the special education students across all Niagara Catholic secondary schools. With the support of SEAC, the ‘Niagara Catholic Ties and Shine’ formal event will be held on February 24, 2023 from 10:00 a.m. - 1:15p.m., at Saint Paul Catholic High School. Crafts and activities will be supported by student senators, and personalized trophies are being created for students. Student Senate expects approximately 150 students and 100 support staff to in attendance. All necessary accommodations are being provided to ensure the event runs as smoothly as possible. Senate students are very excited for this event, and would like a similar one to continue annually post-pandemic.

**K. STAFF REPORTS-Joe Tornabuono**

Elementary Principal, Tornabuono provided elementary school updates for information.

- During January Niagara Catholic elementary schools will begin preparing for Kindergarten Open House and Registration. Kindergarten Registration is a very important component of Catholic Education as it the entry point for hopefully 14 years of Catholic Education. Each elementary school will create a video and post it on their school website that provides families with more information about the kindergarten program as well as the registration process.
- Elementary schools will be working with their local Catholic secondary schools to support student transitions from elementary to secondary school. Secondary School Student Services Department have visited the grade 8 classes to review grade 9 course selections, the Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD) requirements and answer any questions.
- On Monday, January 16, On-line Registration for French Immersion opens. This program is designed specifically for students whose first language is not French. French Immersion in the Niagara Catholic District School Board is an optional program. All French Immersion Catholic Elementary Schools will accept registrations for Grade 1 along with Kindergarten.
- In addition, during January elementary schools will be promoting and recognizing Family Literacy Day on January 27. The purpose of Family Literacy Day is to raise awareness about the importance of reading and engaging in other literacy-related activities as a family. Taking time every day to read or do a learning activity with children is crucial to a child’s development and improving a child’s literacy skills. The Theme for Family Literacy Day 2023 is Celebrate your Heritage. Children love the feeling of closeness when a parent, grandparent or other caregiver reads to them. When children find out that reading with a loving adult can be a warm, happy experience, they begin to build a love of reading that will last a lifetime. Reading together not only nurtures positive relationships, it also helps children learn specific things about books and words. Things like-how to hold a book, the proper direction flow, how to turn pages one at a time, and that both words and pictures help to tell the story.
- Bell’s Let’s Talk Day will take place on January 25, 2023 to bring awareness of good mental health and well-being for our students, staff and parents.

- February marks the end of Term One for staff and students. This is an ideal time for students to pause and reflect on their effort and achievement. While looking back, students can celebrate successes and consider ways to build upon them....going from good to great and then excellent to extraordinary.
- During the week of Feb 13, all elementary students will receive their Term I Ontario Provincial Report Card. If parents would like to discuss their child's strengths and next steps, please contact the classroom teacher.
- In extracurricular news, during January most elementary schools will create Intermediate Basketball teams and compete in a few friendly games against other schools from their area.
- Finally, on behalf of all of our Principals, Vice Principals, teachers and support staff we want to thank you for your ongoing support of Catholic Education in Niagara Catholic.

**L. TRUSTEE REPORTS-***Natalia Benoit and Joe Bruzzese*

Trustee Bruzzese reported that Danny Di Lorenzo was elected as the Chair and Rhianon Burkholder was declared as the Vice-Chair of the Board.

**M. NEW BUSINESS/AGENDA ITEMS-DISCUSSION FOR FUTURE MEETINGS**

Co-Chair Annen addressed a concern that inappropriate content was accessible on the NCVLE through a third party link to students. Superintendent Forsyth-Sells stated that this was new information. Trustee Bruzzese requested that Superintendent Forsyth-Sells further investigate the concern and provide an update.

By consensus the meeting of the Niagara Catholic Parent Involvement Committee was extended as per the By-Laws to a longer meeting of no more than 30 minutes beyond the two hour limit to discuss new business/agenda times.

**N. NEXT MEETING:** Thursday, March 2, 2023 at 6:30 p.m. at the Catholic Education Centre.

**O. CLOSING PRAYER:** Fr. Paul MacNeil led the closing prayer.

**P. ADJOURNMENT**

Moved by: Trustee Bruzzese

**THAT** the January 12, 2023 meeting of the Niagara Catholic Parent Involvement Committee be adjourned.

**CARRIED**

This meeting was adjourned at 8:58 p.m.

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