



# MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL EDUCATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING

**WEDNESDAY, APRIL 12, 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 – J. DiGioia**

*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**

Superintendent Pizzoferrato provided the opening prayer.

**3. Roll Call**

<b>B. Members</b>	<b>Affiliations</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Excused</b>
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 (President)		x
Attree, Alexandria	Autism Ontario Niagara Region		x
T.B.D.	Indigenous Representative		
Smith, Lorraine	Mainstream	x	
Smith, Rita	Community Living (Port Colborne/Wainfleet)		x

Wilson, Alyson	Bethesda Services		x
Donato, Krystine	Community Representative		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
Grzybala, Kathy (for Keighan, Kelly)	Speech-Language Pathologist	x	
Brochu, Grace	Student Support Facilitator	x	
De Lisio, Angela	Behaviour Analyst	x	
Mancuso, Vincent	Behaviour Resource Teacher	x	
Bailey, Babette	Teacher of the Deaf/Hard of Hearing	x	
Criddle, Ann Marie	Program Resource Teacher	x	
Fisher, Amber	Niagara Support Services (NSS)		x
Davies, Elizabeth	Administrative Assistant/Recording Secretary	x	

**1. Approval of the Agenda**

**Moved by:** Trustee Marino

**Seconded by:** Trustee Joyner

**2. Declaration of Conflict of Interest**

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

**3. Approval of Minutes of the Special Education Advisory Committee Meeting of March 1, 2023**

**Moved by:** L Smith

**Seconded by:** A. Wilson

**C. PRESENTATIONS**

**1. Niagara Children’s Centre SmartStart Hubs-** Rebecca Main, Clinical Manager (absent)

**2. Student Support Facilitators - Janet Rylett, Grace Brochu, Tara-Lynn Bidal**  
**“Creating Safe and Inclusive Spaces for Students with Developmental, Physical and Mental Needs”** (Attachment)

Trustee Joyner – In process of building some new schools, when do you talk about lifts, tracks etc. is there anything specific we need to know? Do you get involved? How do we do that?

Janet – We have a very close relationship with facilities. Whenever a new school is built, we focus

on the students there and what their needs are to make school every aspect of the school is accessible. Once ceilings are complete, facilities will call upon us. We can also accommodate with portable equipment. We are graciously invited for input all the time.

Trustee Joyner – Is it mandatory to put sensory rooms in our schools?

Janet – I am not aware of it being mandatory. All our high schools have a sensory room, most elementary schools don't have a lot of room. We tend to put "cozy corners" – matted, bean bag chairs, sensory items, breathing & visual ques. We don't have a lot of EA's so we try to teach a child to self-regulate in the classroom.

Trustee Marino – I think the presentation was excellent. I have a special love for children with special needs. I have seen miracles happen through the children's centre. We are experiencing positive change, big changes.

#### **D. AGENDA ITEMS**

- 1. Near North DSB – Special Incidence Portion Claim Funding letter to Minister Lecce -**  
(Superintendent Pizzoferrato)  
Receipt of letter from SEAC Committee regarding SIP funds. Letter is in support of the letter received from Durham DSB.  
**Motion to receive:** Trustee Marino  
**Seconded by:** Trustee Joyner
- 2. Finances – Questions from the Committee Membership -** (Superintendent Pizzoferrato)  
Superintendent Vetrone is invited to SEAC Committee to share how funding relates to Special Education. You are invited to send your questions to Elizabeth Davies so we can incorporate them in his presentation to our Committee. Provide at least 2 weeks prior to our next meeting (May 10, 2023). We will put out as reminder before-hand.
- 3. SEAC Handbook Development (By-laws & Guidelines) -** (Superintendent Pizzoferrato)  
We have gone through an evolution of sorts and are now back into an in-person model we have come across some items/situations. As a result, we would like to develop a handbook to guide us through these scenarios. As an example, our chair is away tonight and we do not have a vice-chair, so we would like to have some consistency for how we address these types of situations. We would like a fuller presence of all committee members. Elizabeth will oversee the project. If you are interested, please share your name with her so we can build a resource for our by-laws and guidelines.
- 4. GOALS Update -** (Superintendent Pizzoferrato)  
SEAC Agency Information Form – Lorraine Smith  
Working on Goal # 2 - To improve access of services outside the school board the sub-committee created this form (attachment) to share with our schools to highlight one agency each month with a brief over view, highlight events, activities or philosophies.

Trustee Marino – Is there going to be any room for success stories?

L. Smith – Each agency can determine what items they want to highlight. It is a good way to capture what we do.

## E. AGENCY REPORTS

### **Learning Disabilities Association of Niagara Region – Emily Glencross**

N/A

### **Niagara Children's Centre – Michelle Maxwell**

N/A

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

N/A

### **Down Syndrome Niagara – Pina Palombo (Andrea Pede)**

Saturday, June 3, 2023 Upcoming Trivia Night Event at Meriton Community Centre

### **Autism Ontario Niagara Region – Alexandria Attree**

2023 Scholarship Opportunities - Autism Ontario' Education Scholarships open on April 1, 2023. For eligibility criteria and information on how to apply

visit: <https://www.autismontario.com/programs-services/adults/awards-and-funding/scholarships> or email [scholarships@autismontario.com](mailto:scholarships@autismontario.com)

- Eleanor Ritchie Education Scholarship: \$500 for individuals on the autism spectrum entering their first year of a post-secondary program
- Jeanette Holden Education Scholarship: \$500 for siblings of individuals on the autism spectrum entering their first year of a post-secondary program
- MacDonald Family Education Scholarship: \$500 for students with a parent on the autism spectrum entering their first year of a post-secondary program

**Celebrate the Spectrum:** Celebrate the Spectrum is our theme for World Autism Day 2023 celebrations. It is an opportunity for positive action to provide spaces of support and advocacy for our diverse communities while learning about autism and how to make our communities better for people on the autism spectrum. The campaign is flexible, and there are many great ways to get your students involved, including: Registering for the Celebrate the Spectrum, School Giving Challenge and fundraise in support of Autism Ontario and Creating a 'strengths link' with your class Donating to Autism Ontario

Autism Ontario is launching Celebrate the Spectrum to enhance our activities and celebrations throughout the whole month of April.

- Elementary and Secondary Toolkits can be downloaded here: <https://celebratethespectrum.com/toolkits/>
- Sign your school up at <https://www.autismontario.com/CTS-Form>
- <https://celebratethespectrum.com/>

If you are interested in participating in our Celebrate the Spectrum campaign you can connect with your [local Autism Ontario Region](#) or email [celebratethespectrum@autismontario.com](mailto:celebratethespectrum@autismontario.com).

**Celebrate the Spectrum School Giving Challenge:** Students and their schools are some of our most active supporters. In honour of these young autism champions, we're launching the Celebrate the

Spectrum School Giving Challenge which will run throughout April.

The school that raises the most donations in support of Autism Ontario will be eligible to win special recognition including an article in Autism Matters magazine. Each school's top fundraising student will be eligible for a chance to win an iPad!

More detail and the registration form can be found through the Celebrate the Spectrum website at <https://celebratethespectrum.com/school-giving-challenge/>.

Please help us promote this challenge with your schools and school board, let's urge all our school contacts to register and challenge a rival school!

#### **Other news**

Please encourage your families in your community to sign up for Autism Ontario newsletters for more information about local events, webinars and more: <https://www.autismontario.com/newsletter>

#### **Mainstream** – Lorraine Smith

We are in search of a new Executive Director.

#### **Bethesda Services** – Alyson Wilson

N/A

#### **Community Living (Port Colborne/Wainfleet)** – Rita Smith

N/A

#### **Community Living (Welland/Pelham)** – Monique Somma

N/A

### **F. STUDENT REPORT**

#### **Student Senate Representative** – Mackenzie

Time to Shine formal happening next week on April 18, 2023 at St Paul. We are very excited about it along with all of the students participating. Autism Ontario is coming to run a sensory room and crafts, Mendelt is coming in to do his music therapy – as a surprise. We also have a limo organized to pick up some of the students coming instead of a bus.

Superintendent Pizzoferrato – If you are planning to attend please let Elizabeth know. Mackenzie and another student invited me to meet with them at St Paul so they could propose this idea to me. I was humbled by their ideas. This came about because Mackenzie invited her friend to a formal and started to volunteer her time in the Spec. Ed. Classroom. Mackenzie should be very proud of the things she does intuitively. It makes a huge difference. Sets the example especially under the leadership of students. I thank you in advance of the event for making sure you put all of the moving pieces together. Congratulations to you and your community. Keep doing what you are doing. We look forward to sharing that experience with you.

## **E. STAFF REPORTS**

### **Secondary Principal – A. Felice**

#### **Notre Dame:**

- Received a donation from the Optimist Club that will be used to purchase bus passes to provide opportunities for students with Special Needs to get out in the community
- ND is in the planning stages of the return of ND Raptors Basketball tournament. The proposed date for this event is June 9<sup>th</sup> 2023. We plan to have a BBQ lunch and Therapy Tails join us for the tournament to provide lunch and rotating teams of dogs for the duration of the event

#### **Blessed Trinity:**

- External Co-op placements for some of our Special Education Classroom students at Giant Tiger and Gateway Niagara
- Internal Co-op placement for some of our Special Education Classroom students, fulfilling all necessary tasks associated with a Vending Machine operation, including taking inventory, stocking the machine, and calculating revenues weekly
- Several of our Special Education students help to manage and support our Breakfast Program each day
- One of our Special Education Classroom students participated fully in our Swim program, reaching the podium in several events at SOSSA
- One of our Special Education Classroom students is the Manager of the Thunder Baseball Team for the current season
- We have provided other experiential opportunities for the students of the Special Education Classroom this semester, including such outings as Bowling trips

#### **Lakeshore Catholic:**

- ASD- student is registered to participate in the TIPS workshop through the Learning Disabilities Association of Niagara Region @ STP.
- Our class now has an indoor garden station. We're growing various herbs for the culinary arts program. Also created a plant sharing program where we have invited parents and staff to share houseplants. Students learn to propagate and take care of plants.
- We are off and running with the NCDSB mustard seed challenge, our plants are doing great!
- Our class once again made bracelets in support of ASD awareness. Sales will continue until the end of the month (\$5 each), with proceeds to be donated to Autism Ontario (Niagara Chapter).
- This past autumn students from our class planted over 75 new tulip bulbs in our front showcase garden. Looking forward to seeing these new additions bloom in the near future!
- Our class is very much looking forward to the Time to Shine formal event hosted by STP.

### **Elementary Principal – S. Walsh**

N/A

## **Student Support Department - J. Di Gioia**

**1. ALL ACCESS HOME: ACCESSIBILITY CONFERENCE FOR ELEMENTARY STUDENTS ON APRIL 18, 2023**  
The Niagara Catholic District School Board Accessibility Committee is planning an elementary student conference called ALL ACCESS HOME (Helping to Open Minds Encounter) to support students in becoming accessibility champions in their school communities. Educating youth about accessibility, disability, and inclusion supports Niagara Catholic in removing barriers so that all students can succeed and feel at HOME as themselves, and as part of their school communities.

The conference supports the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) to ensure that all Ontarians have fair and equitable access to programs and services, and improved opportunities for persons with disabilities. The ALL ACCESS HOME conference has been made possible through a successful grant application to the Ministry of Education that was prepared by members of the Accessibility Committee.

Five students from grades 5 to 8 will be selected by the school Principal from each elementary school to participate in the conference at the Holiday Inn & Suites Parkway Conference Centre on Ontario Street in St. Catharines on Tuesday, April 18, 2023.

The conference will include a keynote address by Unstoppable Tracy and interactive workshops, along with refreshments, lunch and transportation by bus to and from the home schools. Student participants will share their learning in their home school communities following the conference.

**2. TIPS -** Niagara Catholic's Student Support and the Learning Disabilities Association of Niagara Region (LDANR) have collaborated to offer a one-day workshop titled TIPS for Post-Secondary to support grade eleven and twelve students who meet the eligibility criteria below with a focus on preparation and transition to post-secondary education.

This free workshop will take place on Wednesday, April 26th, 2023, at Denis Morris Catholic High School from 9:30 am – 6:30 pm. Student arrival will take place between 9:00 and 9:45 am with dinner starting at 5:30 pm.

**3. Final Lexia Professional Learning Sessions** for this school year are occurring on April 12, 18, and 25, offering professional development that will specifically focus on student data collected by the myLexia® dashboard.

**4. 2023-2024 School Year Planning** is already underway, including: professional development schedule for ERTs, EAs, and Special Education Classroom Teachers; school organization and support staff deployment; transition to a new IEP development tool; preschool transition meetings.

**Special Education Plan 2022** – attachment

**SEAC Special Education Plan Fact Sheet 2023** - attachment

Superintendent Pizzoferrato

**All Access HOME (Helping to Open Minds Encounter)** April 18, 2023 for elementary students. 5 students from each elementary school will be attending to experience our training sessions for our accessibility champions. The day includes Guest Speaker Unstoppable Tracy, 7 breakout sessions (experience first-hand to become our champions) and Music by Mendt Choir performance as a surprise.

**Parent Conference** – April 17 2023 at the Holiday Inn & Suites St Catharines at 6:30 pm

Unstoppable Tracy and Dr Lauren McNamara are presenting to our community to raise



All Access HOME  
Conference April 17,

awareness for accessibility.

**Unstoppable Tracy** has committed to visit each of our 8 secondary schools following the conferences and speak to our high school champions.

The committee has done an excellent job planning these events to set our schools up to have a wonderful experience.

#### **TRUSTEE REPORTS - Trustee Joyner/Trustee Marino**

**Trustee Marino** - There were some very positive programs and services that will benefit both students and staff alike that were presented and discussed at last night's (Tuesday, April 11, 2023) meeting of the Niagara Catholic District School Board's Committee of the Whole. All presentations were excellently done, very informative and generated a great deal of discussion and questions. One presentation in particular that really "jumped out" for me personally demonstrated the desire for leadership skills that many of the board's staff are striving to further develop through the Niagara Catholic Aspiring Leaders Program.

The program is available to all board employees interested in developing and furthering leadership roles in a variety of opportunities such as consultants, administrative assistants, coordinators and school administration. The initial first session enrollment had 85 participants, and predictions are that the course will become so popular that it will eventually blossom into gigantic epidemic proportions. That fact in my mind speaks volumes about the high quality of dedicated and vibrant employees at all organizational levels that the board is blessed to possess.

Various spring and fall workshops will deal with instruction on dealing with tension, moving beyond mediocrity to highly effective leadership, building team trust, workforce change and innovation, and developing skills of healthy communication. All of these factors should assist participants to achieve a high sense of personal wellbeing and the ability to become an outstanding, faith-inspired leader. Such remarkable achievements will not only benefit successful staff course participants, but also Niagara Catholic District School Board students in their efforts to achieve a rewarding education.

#### **G. NCPIC REPORT**

1. At the NCPIC Meeting of March 2, Grant Frost, Chief Information Officer and Jeff Maxwell, TELTc Consultant provided a presentation on Niagara Catholic Technology, Cyber-Security and the Niagara Catholic Virtual Learning Platform.
2. Superintendent Forsyth-Sells shared that the Institute for Catholic Education is undergoing a renewal of the Family Life Education program, *Fully Alive*. Every Ontario Catholic school board was asked to gather feedback from their Catholic Parent Involvement Committee about their hope expectations for the Family Life Education program, *Fully Alive*. Superintendent Forsyth-Sells presented the PowerPoint presentation provided by the Institute for Catholic Education



and reviewed the three questions. Parent members were invited to provide feedback. Feedback received will be submitted to the Institute for Catholic Education on behalf of the NCPIC.

The three questions are:

1. How would you express your deepest hope for your children in Family Life Education in their Catholic school?
  2. Is there anything about the current program that you especially like?
  3. Is there anything about *Fully Alive* that you would want to see in new program?
3. The Ministry of Education continues to host virtual meetings with PIC Chairs/Co-Chairs and Board Leads to support parent engagement. The meeting of February 21, 2023 focused on student mental health and well-being, as good mental health is fundamental to a student's ability to learn and to succeed at the school and in life. The Ministry also hosted breakout sessions for parents and for Board Leads to discuss best practices and resources to continue to support student mental health and well-being. The Niagara Catholic Mental Health Team, with the Mental Health Lead, Social Workers, Child and Youth Workers, School Mental Health Champions, and the Board Mental Health Leadership Team continues to focus on the importance of mental health and well-being for all students using the resources provided by the Ministry of Education through School Mental Health Ontario.
4. The 84<sup>th</sup> Ontario Association of Parents in Catholic Education (OAPCE) Annual Conference will be held on April 22, 2023 in Kingston, ON. The theme this year is "Deepening Our Faith as Engaged Parents". Guest Speakers include Dr. Josephine Lombardi, Coach Martinez and Theresa Kennedy. A vendor mall will also be on site. Registration opens on Monday, April 6, 2023 and all parents are encouraged to attend. Travel bursaries are available through OAPCE. Further details can be found on the OAPCE website at <https://www.oapce.org/>.
5. On May 3, 2023 the NCPIC will host a Faith Formation/Parent Engagement Event with the theme a "Cultural Approach to Catholic Education" featuring guest speaker Fr. Tony Ricard, followed by Parent Workshops at Denis Morris Catholic High School from 5:30 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.

After the keynote address, parents/guardians will also have the opportunity to participate in two workshops of their choice: Decodable Books, Math/Coding, Internet Safety, Pro Life and Equity and Inclusion.

To support parent participation childcare will be provided. Secondary students will be invited to participate and could receive Community Service Hours. Students will have an opportunity to create a Rosary, as May is the month for mothers and our Blessed Mother Mary.

#### **H. NOTICES OF MOTION**

None

#### **I. INFORMATION ITEMS**

None

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

**K. NEXT MEETING**

Wednesday, May 10, 2023 at 6:30 pm virtual

**M. ADJOURNMENT** 8:10 pm

**Motion to Adjourn:**

**Seconded:**