



MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL EDUCATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING

WEDNESDAY, MAY 10, 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 – S. Walsh

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 – “I Am the Vine”

3. Roll Call

B. 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	
Palumbo, Pina	Down Syndrome Niagara	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: L. Smith

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 April 12, 2023

Moved by: L. Smith

Seconded by: Trustee Marino

C. PRESENTATIONS

1. Special Education Finance - Giancarlo Vetrone

2. Community Living Port Colborne “Truths About Institutionalization” - Jennifer Palermo

D. AGENDA ITEMS

1. Down Syndrome Letter – New Committee Member Andrea Pede – Chair Somma

Pina retiring. Nomination letter for new representative Andrea Pede

Motion to approve: L. Smith

Seconded: P. Palumbo

2. **Special Education Plan Update** – Superintendent Pizzoferrato

Overview of proposed updates

General Update:

Learning Centre of Excellence is undergoing change. Classrooms will not be operating in the fall. Communication still ongoing with families. Learning has been beneficial. Intent was good but over-all did not receive a good response. (12 students only). Families want students to remain connected to their home schools.

Dan Giancola: Executive summary of revisions to the plan shared.

Removal of reference to Learning Strategies Social Structure (LSSE)

1. A motion was put forward by Trustee Marino at the May 10, 2023 SEAC meeting to approve the revisions presented of the Special Education Plan 2023 2024.

Moved By: Trustee Marino

Seconded By: R. Smith

VOTE: 8 approved/0 opposed/0 abstentions

2. Chair Somma put forward a motion at the May 10, 2023 SEAC meeting to forward the approval of the Special Education Plan 2023 2024 to CW for consideration

Approved By: Chair Somma

Seconded By: K. Donato

VOTE: 8 approved/0 opposed/0 abstentions

3. **Ministry Survey on In Person Attendance Requirements for Board and Committee Meetings** –

Superintendent Pizzoferrato

Copy of email attached

E. AGENCY REPORTS

Learning Disabilities Association of Niagara Region – Emily Glencross

N/A

Niagara Children’s Centre – Michelle Maxwell

- Our annual **Help Kids Shine Campaign** launched May 1st. We invite our community partners and families in the community to participate in our fundraising events. You can find details here: <https://niagarachildrenscentre.akaraisin.com/ui/helpkidsshine2023>
- Please continue to check and share our Events calendar: <https://niagarachildrenscentre.com/calendar>
- We have included opportunities for families preparing children to attend school, as well as information sessions about community services.
- Our Transition to School Process continues. Our clinicians are consistently picking up new children off our waitlists and ensuring that we encourage families to register for school and then supporting that process.
- Our SBRS OT/PT Tiered Model pilot in partnership with Catholic Board continues and we are so grateful for this collaboration that will inform the future of SBRS services.
- One of our other Clinical Managers, Rebecca Main, will be coming to the June SEAC meeting to present on SmartStart Hubs.

Pathstone Mental Health – Tara Kelly

Riverhouse location is coming along. Should be complete in the next couple of weeks.

Down Syndrome Niagara – Pina Palombo (& Andrea Pede)

- Trivia Night 2023 returning on June 3, 2023 at the Merritton Community Centre
- DSN will be back participating in the Niagara Children Centre Plasma Car Race on May 25 th. DSN Team is made up of our awesome DS athletes and they are the team to beat this year!! All are invited to come out and show their support for this annual fundraiser for the Help Kids Shine Campaign.
- Cross fit work outs are still happening at BILT cross fit gym in Welland and is 100 % funded by the Homies with Chromies foundation. All people with Down Syndrome are invited to attend!
- DSAO (Down Syndrome Association of Ontario) offers CAMP 321 and registration is open now <https://camp321.ca/>
Camp 3-21 is an exciting family experience where children and adults alike can receive some respite from the hectic pace of everyday living. Camp 3-21 offers a wide variety of activities and experiences for families and provides an excellent opportunity for families to network. Register now before spots fill up!
- Some great world news to share – Mattel has the First Down Syndrome Barbie!! Featured all around the world. Global News featured the article about the First DS Barbie

<https://globalnews.ca/news/9649094/barbie-down-syndrome-mattel/?fbclid=IwAR0BYqsVFoNlgUIJtLibC65K2UEeJGIT7s9Z5uSAnhFYeHI28MdXLvnc8>

Mainstream – Lorraine Smith

Pathways to Success will be at the Seaway Mall Thursday May 25 from 1:00 to 7:00 p.m.

Bethesda Services – Alyson Wilson

Entry to School Program: Bethesda and the Niagara Children’s Centre welcomed 88 children across five classrooms to the Ontario Autism Program’s (OAP) Entry to School Program (ETS) in March.

ETS is a six-month curriculum-based service that helps prepare children to enter kindergarten or grade 1 for the first time. Children receive up to 15 hours a week of interdisciplinary group service from March through to the end of August.

The team offers consultations to families and educators to help support the child’s transition to school in the Fall.

We are grateful for support from the NCDSB to offer the ETS program in 3 schools across the region, including: St. Augustine in Welland, St. Vincent de Paul and St. Gabriel Lalemant in Niagara Falls. The other two classrooms are at Bethany Church in St. Catharines and Bethesda’s Niagara Family Centre.

Bethesda offers a variety of different services and supports that are available to families registered with the Ontario Autism Program or Children’s Behaviour Services. Our latest Service Guide can be found on our website - <https://bethesdaservices.com/en/youth/home>. All of the services are free and immediately available to families!

Services include:

- Caregiver and Youth Workshops

- Summer Camps
- Social Recreational Groups
- Outdoor Adventure Activities
- Clinical Group Services
- Family Activities
- Brief Consultation Services (SLP, OT, ABA and Mental Health Services)

For more information about the services offered at Bethesda, please contact our Service Coordinators at (905) 684-6918, ext. 170 or serviceinfo@bethesdaservices.com.

Autism Ontario Niagara Region - Alexandria Attree

N/A

Community Living (Port Colborne/Wainfleet) – Rita Smith

Day programming – I am working closely with Lakeshore Catholic. Parents are looking for programming for students who are finishing high school.

We are planning our summer programs.

On Friday, May 12, 2023 Community Living Day. The City of Port Colborne is doing a community flag raising. Pie guys are donating all of their chocolate chip cookie sales as well.

Community Living (Welland/Pelham) – Monique Somma

May is Community Living Month – The Welland main street bridge was lit up blue and green as well as the CN Tower in Toronto.

CL received a grant to use over the summer in partnership with the Welland Library for tutoring.

F. STUDENT REPORT

Student Senate Representative – Mackenzie Agretto

N/A

E. STAFF REPORTS

Secondary Principal – A. Felice

Unstoppable Tracy presented to all secondary schools after the Accessibility Event on May 18, 2023.

Secondary schools are busy with transition visits with students graduating from grade 8

Elementary Principal – S. Walsh

Students came back to school truly excited sharing their experiences.

Students were very motivated. It was a great opportunity/experience for our students.

Elementary schools are preparing for EQAO

Student Support Department - D. Giancola

As a follow-up to the ALL ACCESS HOME Accessibility Conference for elementary students held on April 18, Accessibility tool kits have been prepared for all elementary schools across the system in preparation for National AccessAbility Week May 28-June 2. Theme of the toolkits is Unstoppable Tracey's (who served as keynote address at the conference) message "No Child Left Behind" (teacher resources, school recess project resources).

1. The **Rick Hansen Foundation** is working with Niagara Catholic to produce accessibility modules for High School students.
2. **LDANR Award:** Niagara Catholic is very grateful for our growing partnership with the Learning Disabilities Association of Niagara Region (LDANR). We have built a strong relationship over the last several years, and we have seen the benefits of this in our students. It is our privilege to have the opportunity to contribute to the Learning Disabilities Association of Niagara, and Niagara Catholic is honoured to be recognized with the “**Outstanding Contributor Award**”. This award speaks to the on-going collaboration and partnership in offering important programs to students with Learning Disabilities and related profiles. Our focus thus far has been grade eight to nine and grade 12 to post secondary transition preparation; however, other program opportunities will also be explored in Literacy and Numeracy to support student achievement. A special thank you to Samantha Sendzik-Sinclair (Executive Director) and her team, for her ongoing support and willingness to partner on a variety of initiatives and programs. The Learning Disabilities Association of Niagara Region have been a pleasure to work with.

We thank the LDANR for this award and we look forward to many more years of collaboration in offering these crucial programs that continue to support student achievement and our families.

3. A capacity-building poster series spearheaded by the Behaviour Resource Teacher Team will soon be distributed to schools connected to self-regulation and mindful practice related to Student Support Professional Development that occurred earlier this year.
4. **Gifted Modules** - This science focused module offered this month hosted by our Program Resource Teachers at Notre Dame College School will engage students in hands-on experience to complete set experiments. Working in the lab, students will learn about lab safety related to the science experiments they will be engaged in. Students will have the opportunity to set up apparatus and use Bunsen Burners as part of their learning. Students implement the scientific method to explore thinking related to boiling points of various solutions and flame tests with learning rooted in particle theory. Thank you to central staff and Notre Dame College staff for coming together to offer our students this wonderful experience.
5. The Student Support department is currently working on a 2023-2024 professional development schedule for ERTs, EAs, and Special Education Classroom Teachers to offer in-services and capacity-building on a regular meeting schedule and on board-designated Professional Activity Days next year. The focus of these sessions is on supporting student independence through implementation of universal support strategies that benefit all students but may be essential for some through a focus on Niagara Catholic’s problem-solving model.
6. Student Support is in the process of data collection from each of our schools to determine the most appropriate supports next school year. This Summary of Needs process allows school staff to flag students that may require support beyond the classroom teacher. Some of this support may be in the form of an Educational Assistant; however, other supports also serve to build and improve student independence. Our central staff serve system staff to build capacity and to

promote a mind-set of being able to handle the next challenge. It's our responsibility to provide our students, families and staff with a variety of support measures that include not only Educational Assistants, but those that will address the academic, social/emotional and spiritual well-being of all students.

TRUSTEE REPORTS - Trustee Marino

An increase in the number of students depending on school nutrition programs for food and higher costs for food and delivery has triggered budgetary challenges and an unprecedented need for financial support to maintain the current levels of quality food programming in Niagara schools. At the May 4, 2023 blessing of Our Lady of the Holy Rosary school in Thorold, Mayor Terry Ugulini delivered some good news for Thorold school nutrition programs with the announcement of an anonymous \$41,000 donation to Niagara Nutrition Partners from a Thorold business person. In his remarks, Mayor Ugulini indicated that the anonymous donor was grateful for having a successful business in Thorold and looks upon his financial support of the school nutrition program as a way of giving back to the community. Our Lady of the Holy Rosary school's share of the contribution is \$19,390, and Saint Kateri Tekawitha Catholic Elementary school will also be a beneficiary.

I'm confident that we are deeply grateful to the unidentified Thorold business person for the very generous contribution with possible hopes of others in a compassionate and caring Niagara Region similarly catching the spirit of giving in support of the schools' nutrition program shortage of funds. It should be noted that some other businesses and citizens of Thorold have made donations and their support is also appreciated.

Thanks to concerted efforts by Niagara Nutrition Partners, the magnitude of the financial problems facing the nutrition program in Niagara schools has received widespread publicity through the electronic and print media and local MPP's have delivered these concerns to the hallowed halls of Queens Park. The message has also been carried in several parish bulletins and the Diocesan Vineyard news and there have been some positive results. Sadly, if no increase or newly found funding is forthcoming, the essential nutrition program to feed students in need in Niagara schools will result in disappointing cutbacks and all of us associated with social agencies that have faced similar experiences can truly sympathize.

TVO is doing a special about the funding shortfalls, highlighting Niagara Nutrition Partners, while identifying that the problem is not only isolated to the Niagara Region. They will be doing a deep dive across the province and the growing need for student nutrition.

G. NCPIC REPORT – Superintendent Pizzoferrato

On May 3, 2023 the Niagara Catholic Parent Involvement Committee hosted a **Faith Formation and Parent Engagement Event** at Denis Morris Catholic High School.

The evening began with an energetic and engaging presentation delivered by Fr. Tony Ricard and his team from New Orleans, followed by parent workshops that included Decodable Books, Equity and Inclusion, Internet Safety, Math/Coding and Pro Life. Light refreshments and childcare were provided. Children had the opportunity to make their own rosaries and complete activities that focused on the month of May and Mother Mary. Children also had the opportunity to make Mother's Day cards in celebration of their own mothers.

Positive feedback has been received from parents/guardians, administrators and staff that were in attendance.

H. NOTICES OF MOTION

None

I. INFORMATION ITEMS

None

J. MOMENT OF SILENCE / REFLECTION OF LIFE

K. NEXT MEETING

We are looking for an organization to volunteer to host our next meeting. It's an opportunity to show case your agency.

Wednesday June 7, 2023 at 6:30 pm location T.B.D.

L. ADJOURNMENT: 9:00 p.m.

Motion to Adjourn: Chair Somma

Seconded: Trustee Marino