



**MINUTES OF THE
SPECIAL EDUCATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING**

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 4, 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/>

ROUTINE MATTERS

1. Land Acknowledgement – Suzy Welsh

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

3. Roll Call

Members	Affiliations	Yes	Excused
Somma, Monique	Community Living (Welland/Pelham) - CHAIR	x	
Morrison, Emily (for Emily Glencross)	Learning Disabilities Association of Niagara Region		x
Maxwell, Michelle	Niagara Children’s Centre	x	
Kelly, Tara	Pathstone Mental Health		x
Andrea Pede	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	
T.B.D.	Student Senate Representative		
Di Gioia, Jim	Coordinator of Student Support		x
Giancola, Danny	Coordinator of Student Support	x	
Criddle, Ann Marie	Coordinator of Student Support		x

Observers	Affiliations	Yes	Excused
Marcella-DiMatteo, Lori	Speech-Language Pathologist	x	
Brochu, Grace	Student Support Facilitator	x	
Price, Angela	Behaviour Analyst	x	
Mancuso, Vince	Behaviour Resource Teacher	x	
Bailey, Babette	Teacher of the Deaf/Hard of Hearing	x	
Fisher, Amber	Niagara Support Services (NSS)		x
Hornick, Tina	Special Initiative Teacher		x
Fuller, Kayla	ABA Facilitator		x
Loughhead, Brooke	ABA Lead		x
Davies, Elizabeth	Administrative Assistant/Recording Secretary	x	

4. Approval of the Agenda

Moved by: Trustee Joyner

Seconded by: Trustee Marino

5. Declaration of Conflict of Interest

No disclosure of interest was declared with any items on the agenda.

6. Approval of Minutes of the Special Education Advisory Committee Meeting of September 6, 2023

Moved by: L. Smith

Seconded by: R. Smith

B. PRESENTATIONS

N/A

C. AGENDA ITEMS

1. SEAC Chair's Report- Oct 4, 2023

I can't believe it is already October- welcome back everyone, I am so grateful to see you all here. As I look back on what we have accomplished over the last school year, these are the things that are notable to me; we have planned goals to support our families and students to

better access information that we will roll out this school year; we have shared many presentations about important information to support our families and teachers to access services, learn about opportunities, programs and history; we have a better understanding of the NCDSB special education initiatives that directly impact students and families; we have welcomed many new board members making our SAEC more robust than before with fresh energy. I look forward to an exciting year ahead.

1. For our meeting today, we will be spending time organizing our work for the coming year, collaborating with staff from the special education team and creating action plans.

2. We want your feedback and need you to contribute. Before each monthly meeting, please complete the google form with your information to share at the meeting. If you do not like the form, please simply email Liz your monthly update, so she can include it in the agenda and the minutes of the meeting. We are trying to streamline the number of emails Liz needs to send out to the committee members each month. Even if you do not have a report, please indicate so on the form or in an email. We would like this information ahead of the meeting in order to share it more efficiently.

3. Please consider any presentations that would be beneficial for one of our meetings and send me an email (even if we spoke about it in the spring, please message me again).

2. Ministry Advisory Council on Special Education (MASCE) Form – Superintendent Pizzoferrato

Traditionally MASCE went through Student Support. A change introduced by the Trustee Association for MASCE to go to them and they will co-relate it with Superintendent of Special Education. This change means now it must go to the Board for approval. The new model intentionally seeks partner input and is open to feed back. It provides an opportunity for you to be part of SEAC as an advisory. This will happen twice a year. Deadline is October 20th. Feedback is required by tomorrow at 2pm.

3. Goals – Working Groups – Chair Somma

Each working group will focus on the goals established last year and vetted through Gino's team to develop an action plan for implementation of suggested activities and others where appropriate.

Choose one group to join first then we will pause and switch so you can participate in both groups.

Each group will select a note taker and a facilitator to use the form provided.

Goal 1: Improve transitions for all students (into school for the first time, from elementary to secondary, from secondary to post-secondary and beyond, integrated transition plan.)

Goal 2: Improve/promote access to and knowledge of services outside of the school board and organizations including paraprofessionals and government funding options.

3. Future Meetings – volunteers to host?

D. AGENCY REPORTS

Learning Disabilities Association of Niagara Region – Emily Glencross
N/A

Niagara Children’s Centre – Michelle Maxwell

Consultations by clinicians as part of the transition to school process are available at school staff's request. These are available across disciplines and services for eligible students until Christmas break.

Please consider supporting our **Superhero Run** (volunteer, participate or donate!). We are back at Brock this year with a 1K family fun walk, as well as a 2.5K and 5K run.

Saturday October 14th <https://niagarachildrenscentre.akaraisin.com/ui/superherorun2023>

Please continue to check and share our Events calendar:

<https://niagarachildrenscentre.com/calendar>

Pathstone Mental Health – Tara Kelly

N/A

Down Syndrome Niagara –Andrea Pede

Annual Friendship Walk 2023:

o Down Syndrome Niagara hosted our annual Friendship Walk on Sunday September 24 at the Grantham Lions Club, and it was a very successful and fun filled day. DSN members, among families and friends, walked together along the Welland Canal Path in St. Catharines to raise awareness about Down Syndrome. Our mission has always been to advocate for individuals with Down Syndrome and their families in the Niagara region, provide our members with current and up to date information about available resources or educational opportunities, and foster a genuine sense of belonging to those looking for guidance or support.

• **DSAO Conference – “Down Right Amazing”:**

o Down Syndrome Niagara is proud to partner and be a sponsor for this year's annual DSAO conference, which is being held at Great Wolf Lodge.

Note: Booking accommodations at GWL is over, but there are still tickets for the event.

o Conference tickets may be reimbursed via training funds (i.e., teachers, Educational Assistants, community organization staff).

• **Upcoming Annual DSN events:**

o Halloween Party on **Saturday, October 28th, 2023 from 3-7 pm @ Church of St.**

Columba, St. Catharine’s, with *special spooky guests!*

o Christmas Party – TBD

Bethesda Services – Alyson Wilson

Bethesda and the Niagara Children’s Centre provided service to 87 children across five classrooms through the Ontario Autism Program’s (OAP) **Entry to School Program (ETS)** between March and August.

ETS is a six-month curriculum-based service that helps prepare children to enter kindergarten or grade 1 for the first time. Children received up to 15 hours a week of interdisciplinary group service. The team prepared Integrated Transition to School Reports that were shared with

caregivers and school staff.

The ETS Program also includes consultations to families and educators to help support the child's transition to school throughout the first term. Educators can request consultations from the ETS team by emailing entrytoschool@bethesdaservices.com.

Bethesda is offering a **Skill Enhancement Group for caregivers of children with Down syndrome**. The program runs weekly on Wednesday from 9:30-11:30am from November 8 through to November 29th, 2023. For more information about the event, please visit [Skill Enhancement Group for Parents of Children with Down Syndrome — Bethesda Services](#).

Bethesda offers a variety of different **Foundational Family 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
- Social Recreational Groups
- Clinical Group Services
- Family Activities and Community Events
- Family and Sibling Support Groups
- 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

Mainstream – Lorraine Smith

No Update

Community Living (Port Colborne/Wainfleet) – Rita Smith

After School Cooking Program - CLPCW has started hosting an after-school cooking program at St. Therese Elementary School. We hope to be able to partner with other schools to host other programs in our local elementary schools.

Social Skills Game Night - CLPCW has partnered with Bethesda in offering a social skills Games Night program at the center in Port Colborne. This program has been beneficial for those families who find travelling to the Bethesda site in Thorold difficult.

We hope to continue working with Bethesda to offer more programs.

Community Living (Welland/Pelham) – Monique Somma

Annual Dinner Dance and Silent Auction is back! This year we will also be celebrating our 70th Anniversary.

Tickets are now available!

This is our signature event and the night is a lot of fun not to mention it is the best meal in town. We would like to be sold out again this year!

Dinner Dance Details:

November 18, 2023

Croatian National Home

Symposium and Auction - 5:30pm – 7:00pm

Dinner at 7:00pm

Dance will begin after last item is awarded

Tickets are \$75.00 each and you can reserve tables of 8 or 10 people

Please contact Kerry Thomas for tickets. kthomas@clwp.ca

The **Tutoring Program** in partnership with the library will begin shortly. We are currently recruiting tutor and students through Brock, Niagara College; and local schools.

The program will run for 11 weeks on two evenings with two tutors and 6 children (12 total).

This will be repeated in the winter.

If you know anyone interested in tutoring or a family who would benefit, or have any questions, please contact Erin Swatman. eswatman@clwp.ca

CL held their **AGM** on Sept 27 and also commemorated their 70th anniversary.

They developed a history walk with banners showcasing the advances and service the organization has done in partnership with other organizations of the decades to support the education, training and social outcomes for people with developmental disabilities in Niagara. Banners will be on display at the Welland Public Library for the month of October. They are worth checking out.

E. STUDENT REPORT

Student Senate Representative –

N/A

F. STAFF REPORTS

Secondary Principal – A. Felice

Elementary Principal – S. Walsh

1. Student Support Department - Danny Giancola

Upcoming Oct. 6 PD Day

Student Support will be hosting all Niagara Catholic Educational Assistants and intervenors for our upcoming PD day on Oct. 6. Through our partnership with Brock University's SNAP program, our Student Support Facilitators have co-planned the day's events. In this workshop, Educational Assistants will explore interactions and intersections between biological and social factors in developing, designing, implementing, and evaluating meaningful activity programs with diverse school-age populations. We hope that this workshop will give Educational Assistants further meaning behind why/how Brock SNAP is developed for students.

2. Empower

All Niagara Catholic ERTs have completed the Full Empower training or refresher. Elementary schools are now in the process of selecting the best student candidates for this intensive reading program. Lesson delivery should begin in early October. We would like to thank all elementary principals and ERTs for their commitment and dedication to this program.

3. Our next ERT and Special Education Classroom Teacher meeting

will be held October 24 here at the CEC. The day will highlight reading intervention from Andrea Stranges (Literacy Consultant), mental health updates from our Mental Health Lead Andrea Bozza, School Based Rehab Services presentation and updates, Lexia training and refresher and much more.

4. Let's Read After-School Reading Program

We are getting closer to our first Let's Read program session with our LDANR partners. Many students are now enrolled for this program which will begin on Oct. 24. School staff are continuing to find the best candidates for this intensive reading program. We again extend our thanks to school staff for helping to make this opportunity available to our families and to the LDANR for their continued partnership.

5. Applied Behaviour Analysis Specialized Education Program (ABASE) Update

Our ABA team has been working to finalize details and vet student candidates for this program. After months of planning, we are happy to report that our first students have now entered this placement at St. Charles. All ABASE staff are committed to supporting and assisting students to meet their most challenging goals.

6. Deaf/Hard of Hearing Staff workshop

Was held on Sept. 26. 53 Niagara Catholic joined this workshop that focused on teaching deaf students or those with hearing impairments. Our Itinerant Program Resource Teacher team along with our Provincial School partner lead this professional development session.

7. Gifted Student Update

Gifted students in grades 5 – 8 are participating in an outdoor education module held at St. Johns Valley Centre. Students will have the unique opportunity to collect and analyze data about the water system to assess the ecosystem's health. Additionally, students will explore the natural and human-made habitats on the property by working together to design and build a shelter that will withstand the harsh conditions of the upcoming winter.

G. TRUSTEE REPORTS – Trustee Marino

At our May meeting I mentioned some concerns about the serious lack of funding for school nutrition programs that many students depend on, and made reference to for the generous \$40,000 donation from an anonymous Thorold business that would assist in sustaining the food program in Thorold schools until the summer break. I would just like to give an update on some recent actions because the magnitude of the problem is escalating and the search is on for both increased and new funding.

Niagara Nutrition Partners says that a greater increase in the number of students depending on

school nutrition programs, plus higher costs for food and delivery have triggered budgetary challenges, and if there is no increase or newly found funding, there could be serious program cuts, for example from a well-rounded meal to perhaps only a granola bar. The lack of funding is not a restricted worrisome situation faced only in Niagara, but province and country wide.

A letter seeking support which our school board received from the Toronto Youth Cabinet states that Ontario is facing a calamitous hunger crisis, and is calling on the government to create a universal food program for schools.

Efforts are also being made to have the free food program not only in all Ontario schools, but schools all across Canada.

In an attempt to achieve that goal, petitions are now being circulated in different areas of the country, soliciting the required number of signatures in order that local members of parliament can raise the issue in the house of commons.

Petition Information Link:

<https://petitions.ourcommons.ca/en/Petition/Details?Petition=e-4586>

Some of the information it contains states that Canada is the only G7 country without a national school food program and also that 388 million children in at least 161 countries are receiving free or subsidized school meals at school.

New data from Statistics Canada indicates 1 in 4 children in Canada lives in a food-insecure household. Niagara Nutrition Partners is doing a great job in getting the word out, and there is a very informative article containing an interview with a Niagara Nutrition Partners' employee that was published in Niagara area dailies just a few days ago. The article explains the need to be concerned. I don't know if you have read it, but if you are interested, I have run off copies. Please feel free to take one.

Personally speaking, I think it's a problem that could affect many of our partner agencies.

[Benefits of School Food Programs](#)

H. NCPIC REPORT

N/A

I. NOTICES OF MOTION

N/A

J. INFORMATION ITEMS

N/A

K. MOMENT OF SILENCE / REFLECTION OF LIFE

L. NEXT MEETING

Wednesday, November 1, 2023 at 6:30 pm

M. ADJOURNMENT: 8:35 pm

APPROVED