

NIAGARA CATHOLIC
DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD



427 Rice Rd., Welland ON

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www.niagaracatholic.ca

Danny Di Lorenzo
Chair of the Board

Camillo Cipriano
Director of Education

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We are a
CHRIST-CENTERED
CATHOLIC FAITH community
that **celebrates diversity**
and fosters **SPIRITUAL GROWTH**,
inspiring ALL to REACH
their **FULL potential** in
MIND, BODY, & SPIRIT

ENCOUNTERING SOULS
AND OPENING MINDS
SO
that **all students**
SUCCEED

NIAGARA CATHOLIC HONOURS LEADERS IN CATHOLIC EDUCATION WITH AWARD OF DISTINCTION

John Belcastro, Sr., Sister Mary Kay Camp and Angelo Di Ianni have all left a lasting impact and legacy on the Niagara Catholic District School Board.

The trio were endorsed as the 2024 recipients during a Special Board Meeting on February 13. They will be presented with their awards at the Niagara Foundation for Catholic Education's Annual Benefit Gala at Club Roma March 21.

"I have been fortunate to have served with all three recipients of the Niagara Catholic Education Award of Distinction during my career at Niagara Catholic, and I can confidently say all three are very worthy of this honour," said Danny Di Lorenzo, Chair of the Niagara Catholic Board of Trustees. "Each played a very different leadership role within Catholic education in Niagara, and they impacted the lives of thousands and thousands of students over their years of service. Many of these young students have since gone on to do great things in their own fields of study. I believe that the legacies of John Belcastro, Sister Mary Kay Camp, and Angelo Di Ianni will be spoken about for years to come across Niagara."

Director of Education Camillo Cipriano called the contributions of our 2024 Award of Distinction recipients humbling.

"We know that we have people across Niagara Catholic, which includes our partners at local parishes and the Diocese, who have given their lives to Catholic education in Niagara in many different ways," said Mr. Cipriano. "But when you sit down and you read the things these three recipients have done to enhance and advance Catholic education here and across Ontario, it is truly humbling to know you are a part of that same system. I look forward to celebrating our honourees at the annual Benefit Gala next month."

The 2024 Niagara Catholic Education Awards of Distinction are the first awards presented in five years. The last recipients, Bill Amadio and Pat Hudak, were honoured in 2019.

Biographies of each recipient follow. Photos are attached.

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John Belcastro, Senior

John Belcastro, Sr., known to many as “Boxer” Belcastro, graduated from Notre Dame College School in 1952, returning to the school as a teacher, vice-principal, and principal. He became the school’s sixth principal in 1981 and was the first vice-principal and principal from outside the clergy.

Mr. Belcastro spent his entire career at Notre Dame save for brief sabbaticals in Kenya in 1965 and attending UCLA to obtain his Master of Education in 1967. As principal, Mr. Belcastro oversaw the implementation of full funding for Catholic secondary education in 1984 and remained at Notre Dame until his retirement in 1994.

An active supporter of Catholic education, Mr. Belcastro frequently canvassed neighbourhoods throughout Welland, asking families who sent their children to Catholic school to ensure they directed their tax support to the English-Separate board.

While a student, Mr. Belcastro excelled at sports. He brought that love of athletics back to the school as a teacher and coach. But what he offered students transcended sports. Mr. Belcastro nurtured young student-athletes not only to better their skills but to better themselves through the development of their faith and character. Generations of students were inspired by him and carry not only a lifetime of memories of their time at Notre Dame, but also lifelong lessons thanks to his firm and gentle care.

Following his retirement, Mr. Belcastro continued to support Catholic education as a school board trustee, serving as a trustee from 2000-2010, including a term as Chair of the Board.

For his lifetime of support for Catholic students in Welland and across Niagara, we are pleased to honour John “Boxer” Belcastro with a Niagara Catholic Education Award of Distinction.

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Sister Mary Kay Camp

Sister Mary Kay Camp has been an advocate for Catholic education in Niagara for almost 50 years. A member of the Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary (the Loretto Sisters) since 1961, Sister Mary Kay was principal of Loretto High School (the former Loretto Academy) from 1977-1982.

She played a key role in transitioning Loretto High School to Saint Paul Catholic High School. Loretto High School was then transformed into the Loretto Christian Life Centre, offering retreats for youth and adults. Sister Mary Kay was a strong advocate for the SCOEP retreat program for Grade 8 students at the Loretto Christian Life Centre from 1982-2005. She supported the SCOEP program (later renamed Journey) as it continued at the former Our Lady of Grace Catholic Elementary School in Ridgeway. Sister Mary Kay was very supportive of chaplaincy and helped with the creation of Niagara Catholic's elementary chaplaincy team.

She was a dedicated Catholic educator in all her roles and has devoted her time to Catholic education unreservedly and passionately. Sister Mary Kay is always available for advice, stands tall against injustice, and is fearless in speaking her mind. She has impacted the lives of thousands of Catholic students and educators in her role as a teacher and principal and as Director of the Diocesan Office of Religious Education, a role she has held since 1989. She has acted as liaison between the Bishop and school board and works closely with agencies such as the Institute for Catholic Education (ICE), the Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association (OECTA), directors of education and in supporting parish ministries. She is also editor of the diocesan newspaper, *Vineyard*, where she ensures Catholic education in Niagara is highlighted and celebrated.

Sister Mary Kay was a 1999 recipient of the papal honour *Cross Pro Ecclesiae et Pontifice*, an award founded in 1888 by Pope Leo XIII to recognize clergy, religious, and laypeople who are outstanding examples of how to follow Christ in our lives. For her dedication to the foundational history of establishing Catholic education in Niagara, and her lifetime of support for Catholic education, we are proud to honour Sister Mary Kay Camp with a Niagara Catholic Education Award of Distinction.

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Angelo Di Ianni

Angelo Di Ianni is Niagara Catholic's founding Director of Education, serving first as the Director of the Welland County Roman Catholic Separate School Board from 1995-1997, then as the Director/Secretary Treasurer of the newly amalgamated Niagara Catholic District School Board from 1998-2008.

While serving and promoting excellence within Niagara Catholic, Mr. Di Ianni served as Chair of the English Catholic Council of Directors of Education (CODE) from 2002-2003. In that role, he was an enthusiastic advocate for the importance of a strong Catholic education system in Ontario. Mr. Di Ianni was the 2006 recipient of Niagara University's Canadian Administrator of the Year and received the Ontario Catholic Supervisory Officers' Association Distinguished Leadership Award in 2007.

Mr. Di Ianni created faith formation programs for teachers, principals, and trustees, including the annual Advent celebration for the Bishop, parish priests, and administrators. He also created and oversaw faith formation opportunities for non-teaching employees and Board-sponsored religious education credit programs for all employees through Christ the King Seminary.

Mr. Di Ianni recognized the importance of the home-school-parish triad in supporting the faith and educational life of students. Through this, he recognized the importance of Catholic School Councils and Parent Involvement Councils and was instrumental in the creation of the province's first regional Catholic School Council.

The Niagara Foundation for Catholic Education was created under Mr. Di Ianni's leadership, as was the Niagara Catholic Education Award of Distinction and the Italian Heritage Language program, leading to government support and funding of all international language programs.

For his leadership in Catholic education and his innovation in ensuring students are offered relevant programming, we are proud to honour Angelo Di Ianni with a Niagara Catholic Education Award of Distinction.

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