



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

**WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 10, 2024
 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/>

APPROVED

ROUTINE MATTERS

1. Land Acknowledgement – Susy 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

Roll Call Members	Affiliations	Yes	Excused
Somma, Monique	Community Living (Welland/Pelham) - CHAIR	x	
Cipriano, Madeline	Learning Disabilities Association of Niagara Region	x	
Maxwell, Michelle	Niagara Children’s Centre	x	
T.B.D.	Pathstone Mental Health	-	
Andrea Pede	Down Syndrome Niagara	x	
Attree, Alexandria	Autism Ontario Niagara Region		x
T.B.D.	Indigenous Representative	-	

T.B.D.	Mainstream	-	
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	
Cipriano, Camillo	Director of Education	x	
Filice, Adele	Principal, Secondary	x	
Walsh, Susy	Principal, Elementary	x	
Pizzoferrato, Gino	Superintendent of Education	x	
Alli, Babra	Student Senate Representative		x
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
Keigan, Kelly	Speech-Language Pathologist	x	
Brochu, Grace	Student Support Facilitator	x	
Nemcko, Julia	Behaviour Analyst	x	
Mancuso, Vince	Behaviour Resource Teacher	x	
Bailey, Babette	Teacher of the Deaf/Hard of Hearing		x
Hornick, Tina	Special Initiative Teacher	x	
Loughhead, Brooke	ABA Lead	x	
Davies, Elizabeth	Administrative Assistant/Recording Secretary	x	

4. Approval of the Agenda

Moved by: Alyson

Seconded by: Madeline

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 December 6, 2023.

Moved by: Trustee Marino

Seconded by: Madeline

B. PRESENTATIONS

1. Pathways to Potential – Ann Marie Criddle – Student Support Coordinator Niagara Catholic

C. AGENDA ITEMS

1. Chair's Report – Chair Somma

Welcome back! I feel energized as we enter the new year and continue the work of our committee that aims to support the excellent work Niagara Catholic does each day to support the children and families that our organizations serve. Upcoming we look forward to the role out of a goal 2 outcome to have community organization information shared through school newsletters beginning in February. Also, the continued work of the special education staff and school principals regarding goal 2 and improved transition for students namely from elementary to secondary but also beyond. We also look forward to the great work of the accessibility committee and partnerships that are being developed with other community organizations which only enhances the school experiences of all children in Niagara Catholic.

Purpose of SEAC

- Help advocate for students with special-education needs by reviewing board policies and practices that impact our students
- Play a vital role in the delivery and development of special-education programs and services
- SEAC Members are able to make recommendations about any matter that affects the establishment, the development, and delivery of special-education programs/services
 - Regarding these recommendations, SEAC members should be given an opportunity to be heard by the board and before any committee of the board to which the recommendations pertain to.

Membership Roles & Responsibilities

- To Review the annual Special Education Plan
- Special Education Plan Checklist (Ministry mandated)
- Special Education Budget review
- Involved in identifying budget priorities
- Board Improvement Plan for Student Achievement
- Indicators and measures documented to support student achievement and needs. SEAC may be involved in development of BIPSA goals or review of document

Useful Resources:

- PAAC on SEAC: Effective Practices Manual – <http://www.paac-seac.ca/wp-content/uploads/PAAC-on-SEAC-Effective-Practices-Handbook-2016-Oct-12-2016-FINAL.pdf>
- PAAC on SEAC: Funding Resource Guide – <http://www.paac-seac.ca/wp-content/uploads/PAAC-on-SEAC-Funding-Resource-Guide-2021-.pdf>
- PAAC on SEAC: SEAC Annual Calendar - <http://www.paac-seac.ca/paac-on-seac-annual-calendar-2020-2021/>

- SEAC Regulations –
https://www.ontario.ca/laws/regulation/970464?_ga=2.234502750.1931620326.1646683090-302171904.1646683090
- SEAC Handbook Example –
https://p14cdn4static.sharpschool.com/UserFiles/Servers/Server_210898/File/Elementary/Special%20Education/SEAC-Handbook%20-%20Copy.pdf

2. Accessibility Committee Update – Chair Somma

The Rick Hansen Foundation's Educator Inclusion & Accessibility E-Learning Course was offered to interested staff in December 2023 (over 50 registrants participated)

The committee received **\$140,000 grant** to continue with accessibility awareness initiatives within the school board community. They have identified 3 goals:

- 1. Continued momentum from 2023 All Access HOME events** - The 2022/2023 school year accessibility events and initiatives were overwhelmingly positive. Students, Educators and Community Partners shared that their experiences helped them gain a better understanding about disability, inclusion and accessibility, and what their role can be in our community moving forward.
- 2. Reach a further audience (secondary)**- This year we are looking at involving the secondary students in an experiential day to provide a similar experience had by the elementary students. As well as additional in school events for the special education classrooms.
- 3. Build capacity and awareness within Niagara Catholic schools and community**- Continuing to raise awareness, recognition and understanding of barriers that affect our students and will empower individuals to make a difference for others in the most meaningful ways.

Events in the planning stages:

Evening Accessibility Event - April 15 2024, Holiday Inn St. Cath (tentative)- for parents, educators and community partners

All Access HOME (Helping to Open Minds Encounter) Secondary Student Conference- April 16, 2024- Approximately 20-30 secondary students from each high school (grades 9 -12)

Educational Assistant PA Days - June 7 and 27- Elementary and Secondary EA's and Intervenors

Aiden Lee - Art From the Heart- March 2024- Secondary Special Education Classes • 8 High Schools

A Youth Accessibility Ambassador (YAAs) Day- Adapted Sports- TBD

Movie Night - Kick off Accessibility Week - TBD

3. **Goal #2 Update** – Michelle Maxwell

Improve/promote access to services outside of the school board and organizations including paraprofessionals and government funding options

This is for students, parents, teachers – everyone – so they can understand what options they have in the Niagara Region.

We have created an *Use of Information* form for agency use to stream line and centralize everything and share with our schools so they can share the information in their newsletters, on social media, etc. Each month a different agency is featured.

The Niagara Children’s Centre will provide the first report for February 2024.

Gino’s office will connect with communications officer for consistency to send to each of our schools.

Agency Information Form - <https://forms.gle/BzSdMLRerHdKZHS07>

4. **Minister’s Advisory Council on Special Education (MACSE)** – Superintendent Pizzoferato
Reported under Student Support Section F3

D. AGENCY REPORTS

Learning Disabilities Association of Niagara Region – Madeline Cipriano

Programs begin the week of January 29th. Spots still available in BEST, and our Student/Parent Socials (information can be found on our website: <https://ldaniagara.org/>). We will be running our Trivia Night on March 22nd and our Appreciation Event on April 5th. Madeline will be going on maternity leave following the June meeting.

Niagara Children’s Centre – Michelle Maxwell

1. We have been extremely busy over the last two months, with the launch of a brand new Electronic Health Record system taking up a lot of time and energy. We also underwent Accreditation in early December and look forward to the results of that survey.

2. The Centre has officially launched the SBRS OT Tiered Model Pilot with Niagara Catholic in 10 Schools. We are really excited about the opportunity to partner with the Board, and so far have received positive feedback from teachers and school staff who are getting started.

3. We are participating in a new Transition to School season as our staff prepare to support our clients through their entry into Kindergarten across the region. We look forward to helping our families have a successful transition into school!

4. We continue to have a variety of family opportunities at the Centre this Winter into Spring, including some great information sessions for families around the preschool to school transition and preparing for summer. We encourage our community partners and families to keep an eye on our Event Calendar on our Website for some of these opportunities and share them:

<https://niagarachildrenscentre.com/calendar>

Pathstone Mental Health – Vacant

N/A

Down Syndrome Niagara –Andrea Pede

World Down Syndrome Day – Thursday, March 21st, 2024

World Down Syndrome Day is of utmost significance as it contributes to the global awareness of Down syndrome, a generic condition with an estimated occurrence ranging from 1 in 1,000 to 1 in 1,100 live births worldwide. This day is dedicated to promoting inclusion, understanding, and acceptance of people with Down syndrome. There are societal stereotypes that people with Down syndrome face every single day, and it is critical for organizations to highlight the capabilities, achievements, unique perspectives, and life experiences of these beautiful individuals. The #LotsOfSocks campaign serves as a World Down Syndrome Day initiative, aiming to spark conversations. When someone asks about your socks, “I’m wearing them to raise awareness of Down syndrome”. Choose socks that are patterned, mismatched, or colourful, to let people know that you support World Down Syndrome Day!

2. DSN Trivia Night – Saturday, March 23rd, 2024

Gather your friends, family, and colleagues for an unforgettable evening filled with brain-teasing questions, laughter, and friendly competition. Test your knowledge across a variety of categories, from pop culture to history, and compete for some fantastic prizes! More details to come!

Important Items:

1. Childcare Accessibility:

For many of our local members, including parents of children with Down syndrome from other regions, finding childcare is extremely difficult. Childcare spots are disproportionately scarce for children with disabilities. The responsibility is frequently attributed to insufficient funding from the provincial government, a shortage of childcare workers, and lengthy waitlists where a child's numerical order cannot be identified, as numerous factors come into play during the registration process. The struggle is real and emotionally taxing for dual income families whose alternative options are very limited.

The following CBC article underscores the necessity for both the province and boards to guarantee the inclusion or prioritization of children with disabilities in accessing childcare services.
<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/hamilton/down-syndrome-child-care-1.7030417>

Child Care staffing issues with Down Syndrome Children. CBC featured an online article.

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/hamilton/down-syndrome-child-care-1.7030417>

Autism Ontario Niagara Region - Alexandria Attree

N/A

Mainstream – Vacant

N/A

Bethesda Services – Alyson Wilson

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.

Bethesda and the Niagara Children’s Centre will be working together to serve 90 children across five classrooms through the Ontario Autism Program’s **Entry to School Program (ETS)**. The next program is scheduled to start the first week of March and will run through to the end of August. We are currently working closely with families to complete intakes and help families prepare to start the program in March 2024.

Entry to School (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. Consultations from members of the Interdisciplinary team are still available. Educators can request consultations by emailing entrytoschool@bethesdaservices.com.

A special thank you to Julia Nemko for joining Bethesda’s staff appreciation day on December 22nd. Julia shared kind feedback with our team and highlighted the value of our collaboration with school partners.

Community Living (Port Colborne/Wainfleet) – Rita Smith

One of our biggest issues we are currently encountering is trying to find spaces for individuals who require group living or residential support because they have extreme aggressive behaviour. The St Catharines hospital currently has 12 individuals living in psych ward at hospital. We are working on how to better support these individuals.

On a positive note we had some sponsors who helped us over Christmas – Meridian helped with Christmas gifts for kids, Little Ceasars pizza donated pizza and gift certificates, etc.

Community Living (Welland/Pelham) – Monique Somma

The library tutoring program is halfway through their first session. There are 16 students enrolled and

2 of those students come on both days. It was advertised at both the catholic and public school boards and Community Living. It runs out of the main branch one night and the second night at Diamond Trail.

E. STUDENT REPORT

Student Senate Representative - Babra

N/A

F. STAFF REPORTS

Secondary Principal – A. Felice

Holy Cross hosting Valentine Day celebration for our Special Education students on February 13th. All secondary schools invited. Transportation will be provided.

2. Elementary Principal – S. Walsh

Any conversations that put students at the centre are welcomed.

Elementary schools working with self-advocacy to review IEP going out in term 2. Reassessing students to determine which changes need to be made.

If ever a family feels frustrated, we want to know so we can take care of our students. Please encourage them to bring their concerns to us. It only benefits the students.

It is difficult to come to this table with a report. I struggle with what to share so I am giving you homework. If you ever wonder what happens at the elementary level I will bring it to the table to share.

3. Student Support Department - Superintendent Pizzoferrato

MACSE Form – Superintendent Pizzoferrato

The SEAC Committee did an awesome job with the Ministry Advisory Council for Special Education. Your responses were very comprehensive. I thank you for how much you put into making sure that we took full advantage of this opportunity.

This opportunity exists again. You have received a copy of the MACSE survey on the meeting notice. If you could look at it over the next week and return it to my office, that will give the coordinators time to collate all the information.

Department Structure Update will be provided at our next meeting

Ann Marie Criddle

January Educational Resource Teacher and Special Education Classroom Teacher meeting

will be held January 24th at Our Lady of the Holy Rosary in Thorold for the morning session and the Pope Francis site in the afternoon. This meeting will be specifically for elementary staff. The morning will focus on providing an introduction of the new electronic IEP, and the afternoon will have Elementary ERT's and Student Support Department staff completing the physical portion of their BMS certification. Secondary ERTs and Secondary Special Education Classroom Teachers are scheduled to complete their BMS certification at the end of the month.

January / February Gifted module

An upcoming Gifted module will focus on collaboration, communication and teamwork skills through various activities, including a faith-based Escape Room and an “Amazing Race” activity. Students will examine the importance of teamwork and Catholic servant-leadership as followers of Christ as well as ways they can continue to strengthen these skills through service projects at their schools.

BMS Certification

Our Educational Assistants, Early Child Educators, Library Technicians and Child and Youth Workers are receiving training this month. The Theory portion of BMS training for employee groups including principals, vice principals, educational resource teachers, secondary special education classroom teachers and Student Support Staff is complete. The physical portion to complete certification will continue into the end of January. Thanks are extended to all who facilitated and participated in the training sessions.

Lexia PowerUp

Throughout November Professional Learning Sessions were offered virtually to assist staff with continued implementation of this reading program, including data interpretation. These recorded sessions are now available for staff to access via pre-recorded webinars through the end of the school year.

G. TRUSTEE REPORTS – Trustee Marino

I would like to relate to you a good news story which I believe reflects the true spirit of Christmas, and is an excellent example of a caring and charitable quality derived from having had a Catholic school education.

I learned that a separate school supporter grandmother who will remain anonymous has a grand-daughter in one of our elementary schools petitioned some of her friends for donations of personal care items and cash so that she could arrange gifts for students and their families who may have needed some joy at Christmas. She put together 25 gift bags valued at \$65.00 each which were delivered to students in need in various schools and she also collected an additional \$1,150 in cash which purchased 23 food gift cards for families requiring assistance. These were also delivered to various schools.

I also learned that this same grandmother on Christmas night prepared 6 hot turkey and ham Christmas dinners and had two of her family members tour the streets of Niagara Falls to give them to homeless people. I am told that the recipients were delighted and very grateful, and there were tears of thankfulness.

The grandmother is an elementary and secondary school product of the Niagara Catholic District School Board system and obviously was taught and practices the act of charity.

I'm sure the grand-daughter was greatly impressed and hopefully influenced by her grandmother's act of kindness and learned the lesson of lending a helping hand to those in need.

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, February 7, 2024 at 6:30 pm

M. ADJOURNMENT:

Motion to Adjourn: Chair Somma

Seconded by: Madeline