



MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL EDUCATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 6, 2024

6:30 PM

Virtual Meeting in Compliance with Education Act Section 207 and
Ontario Regulation 463/97 Section 5.1 (2)

APPROVED

ROUTINE MATTERS

1. Land Acknowledgement – Susy 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

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		X
Andrea Pede	Down Syndrome Niagara	X	
Attree, Alexandria	Autism Ontario Niagara Region		X
T.B.D.	Indigenous Representative		X
T.B.D.	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	
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
Taylor, Paige	Administrative Assistant/Recording Secretary	X	

4. Approval of the Agenda

Moved by: Table this item

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 February 7, 2024.

Moved by: Table this item

B. PRESENTATIONS

1. Giancarlo Vetrone – Financial

C. AGENDA ITEMS

1. **Chair's Report** – Chair Somma
2. Future SEAC meetings offsite
April – Community Living Port Colborne
May – Community Living Welland/Pelham
June - Bethesda
3. **Accessibility Committee Update** – Chair Somma
4. **Goals Update**

D. AGENCY REPORTS

Learning Disabilities Association of Niagara Region – Madeline Cipriano

The LDANR's Summer SLAM Camp Applications are open on our website. The camp is for children ages 6-11, and sites will be held in both Thorold and St Catharines this year. Eligible families can register for as many weeks as they would like. For more information and to register, please visit our website at ldaniagara.org

We will also be opening our Spring Applications on Monday, March 18th at 6:00 am for our BEST, Reading Rocks, Student Social, and Parent Social programs. The information can also be found on our website.

We will be holding our annual trivia night on Friday, March 22nd to help support our programs and services. You are welcome to register a table, or register as an individual where we will pair you up with other individual registrants. There will be free pizza, lots of prizes, and some tricky questions – so come out to help us support our organization.

The LDANR would also like to provide information about an event not held by our organization, but by another community organization, Gallery Players. They will be hosting a free Adaptive Performance for neurodiverse individuals on Saturday, April 6th to help them engage with classical music. The free performance will be held by the distinguished String Ensemble, The Eybler Quartet, at the Thorold Senior Centre. They will have quiet space available for attendees, fidget devices, reserved seating, and other accessibility friendly measures to ensure that all attendees enjoy the night. For more information, please visit their website at [Intimate Chamber Music | Gallery Players of Niagara](#).

Niagara Children's Centre – Michelle Maxwell

This month's report contains a continuation of two great new initiatives that have been brought forward previously. Our continued roll out of the tiered model for therapy services, and planning for our new extensive needs program. As the lead alongside Contact Niagara for the extensive needs program, we are continuing to design and implement. A presentation could be made available to ERTs if interested.

Within our school-based OT services we are just finishing up this month with our first 10 schools for

early roll out of the tiered model. Focus was on k-3. The program manager will be confirming on Thursday with Student Support Coordinators the next number of schools. There will be 7 this time round due to staffing challenges related to retirement vacancy and mat leaves. Verbal reports received thus far from SSF's and therapists, have been very positive. Lots of shared mutual learning between therapists and educators.

The therapists report they have had a greater feeling of connectedness with the schools due to the concentrated frequency of visits and they have reported that the schools have been exceptionally welcoming. They have found being embedded within the classrooms during contextual learning activities has helped with "in the moment" relevant modeling, coaching and dialogue to facilitate opportunities of implementing universal design activities in a proactive way, ideally mitigating need for future referrals as concern being addressed in timely manner, while also supporting inclusivity.

We will be following up with a survey monkey to the 10 schools after March Break to do further analysis and look for opportunities for continued development and improvement.

We are knee deep in the preschool to school transition process with functional checklist meetings completed for the first round of children and All About Me's starting to be completed with families for dissemination to boards. To date we have had an increase over last year at this time, in parents telling us they have not yet registered for school and we also had only a 50% uptake on the observation sessions for children not attending child care. We will continue to follow up with new referrals and new pickups that are a 2020 date of birth to assist them with the transition process.

Pathstone Mental Health – Vacant

Down Syndrome Niagara –Andrea Pede

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

World Down Syndrome Day is a global awareness day which has been officially observed by the United Nations since 2012. This year on World Down Syndrome Day, we are asking supporters around the world to call for an end to stereotypes! People with Down syndrome and intellectual disabilities encounter stereotypes every day. This can lead to people with disabilities being underestimated, excluded, treated poorly, and even abused. Join us in creating a single, global voice during March by sharing the **#EndTheStereotypes** message. Help raise awareness and start conversations at school, work, and everywhere you go by wearing colourful or mismatched socks.

In the past, many global landmarks have lit up for World Down Syndrome Day. The Niagara Falls are often lit in special colours for many registered charities marking a significant date in support of their cause. **This year on World Down Syndrome Day, Niagara Falls will be lit up blue and yellow from 10:15 – 10:30 pm.**

WDSO School Resources

Leading up to World Down Syndrome Day, the CDSS is reminding school administrators about their Education Hub which is filled with shareable, printable resources and quick guides that include practical tips and suggestions to help support students as they learn together in the school community. The WDSO website also offers FREE, downloadable resources, including a guide for children, that educators can use in the classroom created to talk to children about Down syndrome, intellectual disabilities, and stereotypes.

DSN Annual Trivia Night

Gather your friends, family, and colleagues for an unforgettable evening filled with brain-teasing questions, laughter, and friendly competition. There will be a silent auction, 50/50 draw, and many prizes to be won.

Autism Ontario Niagara Region - Alexandria Attree

Mainstream – Vacant

N/A

Bethesda Services – Alyson Wilson

Extensive Needs Service – Niagara Collaborative

Community Living (Port Colborne/Wainfleet) –

Community Living (Welland/Pelham) – Monique Somma

E. STUDENT REPORT

Student Senate Representative - Babra

2. STAFF REPORTS

Secondary Principal – A. Felice

Elementary Principal – S. Walsh

3. Student Support Department - Superintendent Pizzoferrato/Danny/Jim/Ann Marie

Secondary Special Education Classroom Events

Holy Cross Catholic Secondary School graciously hosted a Mardi Gras themed Special Education Formal event for Special Education Classroom students from across Niagara Catholic on February 13th.

Students enjoyed a wonderfully colourful Mardi Gras parade complete with festive beads, a photo booth and a video of top song requests from the various schools from Mendelt Music

Therapy. Participants were also treated to an art showing from keynote speaker and Art from the Heart artist, Aiden Lee. This was followed by a delicious lunch and lively dance. We wish to give

heartfelt thanks to the staff and students of Holy Cross for their warm and generous hospitality. A wonderful time was had by all who attended.

We are pleased to announce that Saint Michael Catholic High School will be hosting a Mustang Event for the next board-wide Special Education Event which will take place on Friday May 17th at the Heartland Forest in Niagara Falls. Students will have time to explore the many exciting aspects of the forest including the Nature Discovery centre, Accessible Nature trails and Sensory Garden. They will be able to engage with a variety of stations prepared with guided activities such as face painting, bubbles and active games, to name a few. Following lunch, there will be music for those who want to show off their best line dance moves! Thanks are extended to the staff and students of Saint Michael in advance of this exciting event.

Student Support Learning Sessions for Educational Resource Teacher and Special Education Classroom Teachers

Student Support has completed Secondary schools Family of Schools meetings with Elementary and Secondary ERTs focusing on grade 8 to 9 transitions and continuing conversations around pathway planning including the Transitional-Aged Youth (TAY) process.

Gifted module

The next Gifted Module, hosted at Notre Dame College School in Welland, will engage students in hands-on learning to complete a set of science experiments. Students will investigate the concepts of space and time while exploring their thinking related to distance and speed. While collaborating in small groups, students will be challenged to maximize outcomes for the various experiments.

F. TRUSTEE REPORTS –Trustee Marino

In an earlier report, I mentioned the serious financial problems facing supporters of nutrition programs in schools all across Canada. Reasons include higher costs for food and delivery compounded by a large increase in the number of students depending on school nutrition programs. Now concerted efforts are being made to have increased assistance at provincial and federal government levels.

As a follow up to the federal government's National Review of Food Policy conducted in 2023, the Ontario Catholic School Trustees' Association has just sent a letter to the Federal Minister of Finance with suggestions regarding the 2024-2025. The letter supports the concept of a universal national food policy and program for publicly funded schools, with certain requirements. The Association claims the program could provide a variety of benefits that include: improving access to nutritious food for students, allowing all students to focus on learning in school, addressing food insecurity and the resulting anxiety and mental challenges that affect students, and improving student achievement and well-being.

Recommendations say the food program should be available at every publicly funded Catholic school: Be accessible, at no cost to the student or their care provider, their school or school board: Offered in a manner that is stigma free. There are other recommendations and requests in the letter and I have copies to distribute. The Association is calling on the government to move forward with its 2021 election commitment of \$1 billion dollars over five years, with a minimum of \$200 million per year to be included in the 2024 budget for a National Food Program. It was included in 2022, but not 2023.

On Thursday, March 21, three long-time supporters of Catholic Education will be honoured with the presentation of the Niagara Catholic Education Award of Distinction.

They are John Belcastro senior, a former principal, vice principal, trustee and board chair. Sister Mary Kay Camp who has been involved in Catholic Education for 50 years in Niagara. She is a former teacher and Principal, and is currently Diocesan Director, Office of Religious Education. The third recipient is Angelo Di Ianni, a former Director of Education who is known for having established faith formation programs, religious education credit programs, was instrumental in creating the province's first regional Catholic Council, and the Italian Heritage Language program, leading to government support and funding of all international language programs. The Awards will be presented at the Niagara Foundation for Catholic Education's Annual Benefit Gala at Club Roma in support of students in need and scholarships. The honorary guest is His Excellency Bishop Gerard Bergie.

G. NCPIC REPORT – Read by Gino Pizzoferrato

The Niagara Catholic Parent Involvement Committee is pleased to invite all Niagara Catholic parents/guardians to a Faith Formation/Parent Engagement Event on Thursday, April 11, 2024 at Holy Cross Catholic Secondary School. Fr. Paul MacNeil will open the evening with Faith Formation for parents with the topic of Family Prayer.

Parents/guardians will have the opportunity to participate in two workshops presented by Niagara Region Public Health: ***Adolescent Brain and Substance Use Prevention, Raising Competent, Confident Kids, or Youth Connectedness-Helping Students Thrive.***

Agenda:

5:00 p.m. - Light Refreshments

5:30 p.m. - Fr. Paul MacNeil-NCPIC Diocesan representative, appointed by the Bishop of the Diocese of St. Catharines

Parent Workshops

6:00 p.m. - 7:00 p.m. Breakout Session 1

7:00 p.m. - 8:00 p.m. Breakout Session 2

Parents/guardians are asked to register for this event no later than Friday, April 5, 2024. Childcare will be provided for school age children up to 12 years of age.

H. NOTICES OF MOTION

N/A

I. INFORMATION ITEMS

J. MOMENT OF SILENCE / REFLECTION OF LIFE

NEXT MEETING

Wednesday, April 3, 2024 at 6:30 pm at Community Living Port Colborne

K. ADJOURNMENT