



NIAGARA CATHOLIC  
DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

## Pope Francis Centre



# Pope Francis Centre



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## ALTERNATIVE LEARNING

## MISSION STATEMENT

The Niagara Catholic District School Board, through the charisms of faith, social justice, support and leadership, nurtures an enriching Catholic learning community for all to reach their full potential and become living witnesses of Christ.



*“We must restore hope to young people.  
Be open to the future and spread love.”*

*Pope Francis*

# Mandate of the Pope Francis Centre



The mandate of the Niagara Catholic Pope Francis Centre facility is to provide selected students with an alternative – school connected place to learn with individually designed programs, experiences and support within our Pathway to Care Program.

The Pope Francis Centre motto is “**A Place Where all are Welcome**”. We believe that all students learn differently and a placement such as this requires a different environment in order to achieve academic and personal goals. This program provides students who may struggle with learning in a traditional school setting with a supported learning environment where they can work on independently selected programming, credits and receive individualized supports as required.

This program and support provides an opportunity for elementary and secondary students, Grade 6 to Grade 12 to:

- Understand that they are valued members of a caring Niagara Catholic Faith Community.
- Demonstrate the Ontario Catholic School Graduate Expectations.
- Develop the skills and attitudes to be successful in school, work and the larger community.
- Progress academically through curriculum/credit attainment.
- Contribute to the community through service learning activities.



“I see that there are bumps in the road... you look a little lost... but one day you will find your path and I know you will be great.”

Anonymous

## Program and Support Design

The Pope Francis Centre provides four over-arching programs and supports:

1. Fresh Start – an alternative suspension and expulsion program.
2. Jump Start – to support students with high absenteeism.
3. Parent Support – for female or male students with an infant.
4. Mental Health and Addictions – a support program for students.
5. Supervised Alternative Learning - Support Program for students not attending school.

These programs and supports are integrated with the following opportunities:

***Independent Learning:*** With the guidance and support of staff, students work on and complete their course of study.

***Community Involvement:*** Students participate in community service activities.

***Healthy Living:*** Students participate in Healthy Living activities including physical education activities, drug addiction and mental health guest speakers.

***Nutrition for Learning:*** Providing healthy breakfasts, lunches and snacks for students to help them be ready to learn.

***Pathways Planning:*** Career planning, Co-op, trips to Niagara College, connections with Job Gym and experiential learning activities.

***Personal Life Management:*** Regular meetings with the Child and Youth Workers (C.Y.W.s) to discuss personal socio-emotional and behavioural issues and to develop the skills necessary to more effectively problem solve.

***Goal Setting:*** To develop goals related to the successful reintegration to the home school.

## Fresh Start Program

The Niagara Catholic Fresh Start Program is designed as both an intervention and prevention program for Grade 6 to Grade 12 students while serving a suspension, exclusion or limited expulsion from an elementary or secondary school within Niagara Catholic. The site's capacity is limited to fifteen (15) students from Grades 6-8 and fifteen (15) students from Grades 9-12.

Elementary and Secondary Principals are to approve the submission of a Niagara Catholic Fresh Start Student

Action Plan for consideration of student enrolment at the Pope Francis Centre. Following an intake conference with the student and the parent / guardian to review the expectations of the program, the Principal of the Pope Francis Centre, or designate, will determine admittance into the program.

A student will be considered for acceptance into the Niagara Catholic Fresh Start Program if;

- the student is serving a suspension of six (6) days or more in length as part of a progressive discipline process by a school principal, or
- the student is serving a limited expulsion with approval of the Family of Schools, Superintendent of Education, or
- the student's actions warrant the program as approved by the Principal of the Pope Francis Centre or designate, the Family of Schools Superintendent and the Superintendent of Program.

This alternative program will strive to:

- address the academic, behavioural and community supports of the student;
- develop positive relationships among parents, the community and schools to support and sustain safe schools and learning;
- provide programs containing strategies for building positive attitudes, for developing positive behaviours, for providing continuous learning and for successful re-integration into the school setting;
- reduce the recidivism of suspensions and limited expulsions;

## Jump Start Program

Jump Start is part of the Niagara Catholic Pope Francis Centre. The focus of the Jump Start Program is to provide students who are experiencing attendance difficulties an opportunity to attend school on an interim basis. Jump Start is an integrated program between elementary and secondary schools, community partners and a student's parent / guardian.

The Jump Start Program will strive to:

- address both academic and non-academic matters;
- provide students with the academic, social / behaviour skills, and supports to re-enter their home school environment with confidence;
- develop positive relationships among students, parents, and the community and schools to support regular school attendance.

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Anonymous

Provide programs containing strategies for:

- building positive attitudes;
- developing positive behaviours;
- providing continuous learning and successful re-integration into the home-school setting;
- reduce the recidivism of absences from their home school.

Student Eligibility

- In order for a student to be eligible for the Jump Start Program, a referral to the program must be made by the Principal / Vice Principal of the student's home school and / or Niagara Catholic's Attendance Counsellor.
- The student must be in Grade 6 to 12 unless otherwise approved by the Family of Schools Superintendent of Education.

## Parent Support Program

The Parent Support Program has been established to provide a safe nurturing environment for young parent(s) who may be experiencing challenges with completing school credits within a traditional school setting. With the added responsibility of caring for their child, the Parent Support Program provides an environment conducive to learning and caring for their child all within the same setting.

The Parent Support Program is for young mothers and fathers or mothers-to-be (up to 21 years of age) working to earn high school credits in an alternative learning environment and have the opportunity to bring their child to school. Parents are provided with opportunity to complete the requirements for an Ontario Secondary School Diploma and their home school's Catholic School Graduation Diploma.

The program is supported by a Designated Early Child Educator (D.E.C.E.). Young parents are offered Outreach Programs where they learn parenting skills and healthy lifestyle strategies.

The intake process is completed by a Supervised Alternative Learning Plan or by Superintendent of Education Approval. Acceptance is dependent upon nursery & daycare cap requirements.



## Mental Health And Addictions

The Niagara Catholic District School Board, through the charisms of faith, social justice, support and leadership, recognizes and honours the responsibility of the entire community to reach out in faith, hope and love to serve students and staff struggling with mental health and addiction challenges. At the Pope Francis Centre, there are programs and supports to ensure the mental wellness of our students. These include;

- Access to counselling and social work services provided by our Social Workers. This may also include drop-in sessions for the students. Social worker drop in sessions will be available two mornings per week.
- Access to drop in sessions with a Mental Health and Addiction counsellor from Community Addiction Services of Niagara. This counsellor will be situated at the Pope Francis Centre two mornings per week.
- Support from two Child and Youth Workers to assist with emotional and self-regulation. Programming will also be implemented.
- Access to programs that will allow for our students to target individual needs and interests. These programs will include working with the Child and Youth workers to learn life skills (i.e.: cooking and gardening), and leisure activities (art lessons, YMCA).
- The Pope Francis Centre will have various community partners visiting the site, to engage students in various activities. These activities will include job gym through the John Howard Society, and guest speakers from various agencies.
- The Pope Francis Centre recognizes the alignment between physical wellness and mental wellness. The Centre will provide physical activity equipment and activities (Sparking Life, weights, cardio equipment, and a ropes course) to allow the students to cope through physical activity.

## Supervised Alternative Learning Plan

Supervised Alternative Learning Plan(SALP) is used to encourage students who are at risk of not graduating to continue their education in an alternative manner. Students who are not attending school regularly are encouraged to apply to a SALP along with parental/guardian support. The goal of the SALP is to re-engage students to work towards their secondary school diploma and graduate with their peers.

Students between the ages of 14-17 years who require a Supervised Alternative Learning Plan to maintain a connection to learning may access the Pope Francis Centre as a part of their alternative schedule. A variety of supports are provided to students participating in a SALP.

Students under a SALP will maintain regular contact through Niagara Catholic's Stay in School Coordinator

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Anonymous

## Role of a Pope Francis Centre Staff Member

- Be a Catholic faith leader in the community, participating and leading students in daily reflections.
- Manage classroom procedures and at-risk student behaviours.
- Work with a support team to create an environment of respect and rapport in which student voice actively contributes to both student learning and the learning environment and helps to establish a culture for learning.
- Actively participate in healthy living and experiential learning opportunities for students.
- Liaise between Fresh Start and students' home schools by upon occasion or if required, participate in school SST meetings, and other means of communication for the students assigned to the Program.
- Arrange and conduct Fresh Start intake meetings, as well as transition meetings for students leaving Fresh Start.
- Maintain accurate student records and report on student success and other pertinent issues to home schools and families.
- Track and report daily attendance for students.
- Work with students to create achievable plans which include academic and personal goals especially for learners who are at risk.
- Engage students in learning by designing and evaluating individualized learning opportunities and student assessments aligned with curriculum expectations.
- Communicate learning goals and success criteria to students. Emphasis placed on FORGIVENESS – that staff and students from Fresh Start and home school share a common goal of forgiving each other and move forward to a successful transition.





- Demonstrate flexibility and responsiveness to individual needs of students.
- Demonstrate flexibility and responsiveness to the needs to the Fresh Start community. The purpose of our program is to refine student conduct as we attempt to assist the student redefine who they want to be, what role they can play in the community at large so that one day they “truly will be great”.
- Support and develop family and community partnerships.
- Actively participate in the Catholic professional learning community at Fresh Start including weekly and monthly meetings.
- Demonstrate a high level of professionalism, integrity and ethical conduct.
- Report to the Principal of the Pope Francis Centre or designate, assigned to oversee Fresh Start staff and programs.

## Responsibilities of a student admitted into the Fresh Start/Jump Start/Parent Support Program

At Fresh Start, all students work on the following goals, although the goals will be customized for individual students. Staff should meet regularly with students, both individually and as a group to review student expectations.

- Come to school with a positive outlook, ready to learn. BE HONEST. Let staff know if there are any implications from the previous day or night that may interfere with their regular participation in the school day.
- Attend school regularly and on time according to individualized schedules.
- If late, make up time after class or make arrangements with teacher for additional help.
- Complete all work as assigned by teachers.
- Be focused on one’s own assignments and complete work to the best of his or her ability.
- Advocate for themselves when experiencing academic difficulties.
- Use the supports provided to them as needed. Demonstrate knowledge of the supports that are available to them, and the purpose by which they can access those supports.
- Use cell phone appropriately in class (i.e. for emergencies, or to complete work and not having it interfere with ability to complete assignments and not be a distraction).
- Clean up own work area and do dishes at the end of each class.
- Take responsibility for one’s own actions and learning needs.

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- Use appropriate language in class. Understand that words cannot be taken back with a simple apology; words must be replaced with more appropriate words and actions in a timely fashion. This can look different for some students. It can be in written form or verbal. FORGIVENESS – be sure to forgive those before us so we can move forward in a positive direction.
- Use positive strategies to deal with issues that arise, either school related or personal.
- Use social/emotional supports available as needed.
- Respect the facility.
- Be aware that the Fresh Start staff work as a part of a larger support team. Personal information may be shared as required with Administrators, Guidance, and home school support staff.

## Supervision of Students

Pope Francis Centre staff is responsible at all times for the students in our care while at the centre. Staff needs to be present and actively involved in student learning opportunities whether they are in the school or off site. Never send a student home without first speaking to a parent or guardian and receiving confirmation. If you cannot contact a parent or guardian, the student must stay at the Pope Francis Centre until dismissal time. Should a student leave the site without permission, staff should contact the parent immediately, as well as contacting attendance to indicate that the student is truant and contact the Pope Francis Centre administrator.

## Discipline

Due to the unique nature of the Fresh Start program, staff will at times be called on to deal with serious discipline issues. There are times when staff may encounter students who are agitated, uncooperative or under the influence of alcohol or drugs. In these cases, always involve staff members who have a positive relationship with the student in any discussions to ensure both safety and to assist with the student remaining calm.

## Weekly Team Meetings

Site based teams meet on a weekly basis to review a student's progress, and to identify challenges and potential solutions and to update the parent/ student/school contact folder. During these meetings all relevant student issues and concerns are discussed as a staff to ensure everyone has the information and to problem solve as a team in order to plan for student programs.

## Dress Code

As a student enrolled at the Pope Francis Centre, it is an expectation that the student's dress code mirrors the dress code for the home school.

Students participating under Supervised Alternative Learning Program are strongly encouraged to wear school uniforms if they have access to them and are expected to dress appropriately for school. Spare clothing shall be provided on site.

On days when students are participating in Physical Education classes they are expected to dress appropriately for rigorous physical activity.

## Volunteers/ Tutors

Volunteers are welcome at the Pope Francis Centre to help us better serve our students. All volunteers need to complete the volunteer application/information package, which includes submitting an up to date police check.

## Educational Excursions

An integral part of the Fresh Start Program is taking students on field trips within the region to both address curriculum expectations and to provide experiential learning for the students. Prior to arranging a field trip staff should be clear on the learning goals for the trip. Prior to going on the trip, staff should work with students to identify the success criteria for the trip based on learning goals. In order to ensure the safety of all on any field trips the following protocol has been put into place.

## Educational Excursions

**PURPOSE:** To outline the planning procedures necessary to undertake educational excursions in a safe and organized manner.

## Pre -Trip Procedures

For all approved Educational Excursions, staff will ensure that:

- The Principal of the Pope Francis Centre, or designate's, approval has been obtained.
- Permission forms are properly signed by parents and students and are submitted no later than one day before the trip.
- Students will participate in identifying learning goals and success criteria for the trip.
- The students have been made aware of the rules for safety, expectations and conduct on the trip.
- For specialized trips, an itinerary (including provisions for free time) and a supervisory schedule will be prepared.
- A list of students' phone numbers is available to staff which includes students' cell phone numbers.

"I see that there are bumps in the road... you look a little lost... but one day you will find your path and I know you will be great."

Anonymous

Students in turn have staff cell phone number in case they need to contact them.

- Students' health card numbers must be documented.
- Eligibility - Every student has an opportunity to attend school trips. As a safety precaution a student's behaviour may prevent him/her from attending a trip.

## **Niagara Catholic Pope Francis Centre**

### **Location**

652 South Pelham Road, Unit B  
Welland, Ontario  
Phone: 905-735-8668  
Fax: 905-735-7887

### **Hours of Availability – Monday to Friday**

Each program within the Pope Francis Centre will have specific times for program and support.

Fresh Start: 8:45a.m. - 2:45 p.m. with a thirty (30) minute lunch

Jump Start: 8:45a.m. - 2:45 p.m. with a thirty (30) minute lunch

Parent Support: as determined in consultation with staff and student/parent

Mental Health and Addictions: as determined in consultation with staff and student/parent

## **Staffing**

Certified teachers, Child and Youth Worker, Social Workers, Attendance Support and a Mental Health Lead will be responsible to deliver differentiated programs, support services, conduct parental conferences and liaison with elementary and secondary schools.

## **Fresh Start, Jump Start and Parental Support Admittance Process**

The process for admittance into the Niagara Catholic Fresh Start, Jump Start and Parental Support Program is as follows:

- Principals / Vice-Principals identify potential student candidate.
- Student, parent / guardian will be required to attend an interview with the school Principal / Vice-Principal to complete the Student Action Plan and review program expectations.
- The Principal or Vice-Principal will contact the successful student candidate and his/her parent or



guardian of acceptance into the Fresh Start Program.

- All referring schools will provide academic modules/assignments for students to complete while in the program.
- Candidate and parent /guardian are to complete and sign Start Series Agreement, and Consent Form and Student Action Plan.

### POPE FRANCIS CENTRE

Let us build a house  
where love can dwell  
And all can safely live,  
A place where  
saints and children tell  
How hearts learn to forgive.

Built of hopes and dreams and visions,  
Rock of faith and vault of grace;  
Here the love of Christ shall end divisions;

Let us build a house where prophets speak,  
And words are strong and true,  
Where all God's children dare to seek  
To dream God's reign anew.

Here the cross shall stand as witness  
And a symbol of God's grace;  
Here as one we claim the faith of Jesus:

Let us build a house where love is found  
In water, wine and wheat:  
A banquet hall on holy ground,  
Where peace and justice meet.

Here the love of God, through Jesus,  
Is revealed in time and space;  
As we share in Christ the feast that frees us:

All are welcome, all are welcome,  
All are welcome in this place.

Photo of Pope Francis Philip Chidell / Shutterstock.com

“I see that there are bumps in the road... you look a little lost... but one day you will find your path and I know you will be great.”

Anonymous

### Student Referral Plan Form

<input type="checkbox"/> Elementary	<input type="checkbox"/> Secondary	<input type="checkbox"/> Jump Start	<input type="checkbox"/> Fresh Start	<input type="checkbox"/> Young Parent	<input type="checkbox"/> SAL
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<b>Name:</b>		<b>Grade:</b>		<b>OEN:</b>	
<b>School:</b>		<b>OHIP #</b>			
<b>Start Date:</b>		<b>End Date:</b>		<b># of School Days</b>	
<b>Reason for Attending Start Series:</b>					
<b>Days of the week they will be attending? (circle)</b>	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
<b>Has Threat Risk Assessment been initiated? (include date)</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes      Date: _____ <input type="checkbox"/> No				
<b>Student Address:</b>			<b>Student email:</b>		
<b>Student Home Phone Number:</b>			<b>Student mobile:</b>		
<b>Medical Concerns? (eg. Epipen, daily meds)</b>					
<b>Requesting Principal/VP:</b>			<b>SST:</b>		

	Mother/Guardian	Father/Guardian
<b>Name:</b>		
<b>Address:</b>		
<b>Home Phone:</b>		
<b>Work Phone : (include name of work)</b>		
<b>Cell Phone:</b>		
<b>FACS involvement &amp; contact information:</b>		
<b>SAL key contact at school:</b>		

**Attach the following electronically:**

- Maplewood Student Biographic Tab
- Discipline Reports
- Attendance Profile
- Emergency Action Plan or SBT
- I.E.P.
- Child Referral Form

**All service agencies the student currently uses:**

Services	Currently Accessed	If NO, recommend at PFC?
Chaplain	<input type="checkbox"/> yes <input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> yes <input type="checkbox"/> no
CYW	<input type="checkbox"/> yes <input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> yes <input type="checkbox"/> no
Pathstone Mental Health	<input type="checkbox"/> yes <input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> yes <input type="checkbox"/> no
Ontario Works (O.W.)	<input type="checkbox"/> yes <input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> yes <input type="checkbox"/> no
Community Addiction Services of Niagara (CASON)	<input type="checkbox"/> yes <input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> yes <input type="checkbox"/> no
Public Health	<input type="checkbox"/> yes <input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> yes <input type="checkbox"/> no
NCDSB social worker	<input type="checkbox"/> yes <input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> yes <input type="checkbox"/> no
Other:	<input type="checkbox"/> yes <input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> yes <input type="checkbox"/> no

Please submit this completed form electronically to: Vice Principal Continuing Education  
 Pope Francis Centre Teaching Staff: Ryan Dudley, (Secondary 9 – 12) **OR** Paolo Sirianni, (Elementary 6 – 8)  
 Young Parent/SAL: Bridgette Ridley

UBT

FAMILIE

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