

**TO: NIAGARA CATHOLIC DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD
BOARD MEETING
MAY 26, 2026**

PUBLIC SESSION

**TOPIC: UNAPPROVED MINUTES OF THE COMMITTEE OF THE
WHOLE MEETING OF MAY 12, 2026**

The following recommendations are being presented for the Board's consideration from the Committee of the Whole Meeting of May 12, 2026:

7.1.1 Larkin Estate University/College Admission Awards

THAT the Niagara Catholic District School Board approve the payment of \$8825.00 for the Larkin Estate University/College Admission Awards for eligible students, as presented.



MINUTES OF THE COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE MEETING

TUESDAY, MAY 12, 2026

Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee of the Whole of the Niagara Catholic District School Board, held on Tuesday, May 12, 2026 in the Father Kenneth Burns c.s.c. Board Room, at the Catholic Education Centre, 427 Rice Road, Welland.

The meeting was called to order at 6:30 p.m. by Vice-Chair Burkholder.

A. ROUTINE MATTERS

1. Opening Prayer

Opening Prayer was led by Trustee Benoit

2. Roll Call

Vice-Chair Burkholder noted that all Trustees and Student Trustees were in attendance.

Trustee	Present	Present Electronically	Absent	Excused
Natalia Benoit	✓			
Joseph Bruzzese	✓			
Rhianon Burkholder	✓			
Danny Di Lorenzo	✓			
Larry Huibers	✓			
Doug Joyner	✓			
Jim Marino	✓			
Paul Turner	✓			
Student Trustees				
Taylor Sexton	✓			
Mason Pasma	✓			

The following staff were in attendance:

Camillo Cipriano, Director of Education; **Lee Ann Forsyth-Sells, Kim Kinney, Gino Pizzoferrato, Pat Rocca, Domenic Massi, Joseph Zaroda**, Superintendents of Education; **Giancarlo Vetrone**, Assistant Director of Education, Corporate Services; **Julia Tiessen**, Executive Officer of Human Resources; **Anna Lisa Conidi**, Recording Secretary/Administrative Assistant, Corporate Services

3. **Approval of the Agenda**

Moved by Trustee Turner

THAT the Committee of the Whole approve the Agenda of the Committee of the Whole Meeting of May 12, 2026, as presented.

CARRIED

4. **Declaration of Conflict of Interest**

No Declaration of Conflict of Interest was declared with any items on the Agenda.

5. **Approval of Minutes of the Committee of the Whole Meeting of April 14, 2026**

Moved by Trustee Benoit

THAT the Committee of the Whole approve the Minutes of the Committee of the Whole Meeting of April 14, 2026, as presented.

CARRIED

6. **Consent Agenda Items**

Trustee Marino requested Item 6.1 be held. This item was moved to Committee and Staff Reports Section C3 of the agenda.

6.1 **Extended Overnight Field Trip, Exchange and Excursion Committee 2025-2026**

Presented for information.

6.2 **Staff Development Department Professional Development Opportunities**

Presented for information.

6.3 **Student Achievement Plan 2025-2026**

Presented for information.

6.4 **Larkin Estate University/College Admission Awards**

THAT the Committee of the Whole recommend that the Niagara Catholic District School Board approve the payment of \$8825.00 for the Larkin Estate University/College Admission Awards for eligible students, as presented.

6.5 **Research Collaborations in Niagara Catholic District School Boards 2025-2026**

Presented for information.

6.6 In Camera Items G1

Moved by Trustee Di Lorenzo

THAT the Committee of the Whole adopt consent agenda items, as amended.

CARRIED

B. PRESENTATIONS

C. COMMITTEE AND STAFF REPORTS

1. International Education Program Update

Director Cipriano introduced Joseph Zaroda, Superintendent of Education. Superintendent Zaroda provided background information about the International Education Program Update and introduced Fred Wilson, Administrator of International Education.

Mr. Wilson presented and highlighted information regarding the International Education Program Update for information. Mr. Wilson introduced Ms. Ashley Adam, Coordinator of International Education Program.

Ms. Adam introduced the following international students participating in the program. Joy Hwang from South Korea a Grade 12 student at Saint Michael Catholic High School, Dhoesef Rafael from Brazil a Grade 11 student at Holy Cross Catholic Secondary School, Ainara Vicente from Spain a Grade 12 student at Saint Paul Catholic High School, Emanuele Mario from Italy a Grade 12 student at Saint Michael Catholic High School and Izzy Wong from Hong Kong a Graduate from Saint Paul Catholic High School. Each student shared their experience as an international student.

Director Cipriano, Superintendent Zaroda and Mr. Wilson answered questions of the Trustees.

2. Monthly Updates

2.1 Student Trustees' Update

Taylor Sexton and Mason Pasma, Student Trustees, presented a brief verbal update on the current activities of the Student Senate.

The Student Senate highlight Molly Mansfield is from Denis Morris Catholic Secondary High School. Molly Mansfield is a Grade 10 student who embraces school spirit by exemplifying leadership, commitment, and positivity in all that she does at Dennis Morris Catholic Secondary School.

The Student Trustees shared that at the end of the Student Symposium, Alan Sony from St. Michael Catholic High School was elected as the new Student Trustee.

2.2 Senior Staff Good News Update

Senior Staff highlights included:

Superintendent Forsyth-Sells

- Superintendent Forsyth- Sells reported that Niagara Catholic celebrated Mental-Health and Well-Being Week the first week in May with students, staff,

parents/guardians, and community partners engaged in mental-health and well-being awareness, providing information about the services and supports for Niagara Catholic students and their families from the local community. Superintendent Forsyth- Sells thanked the trustees who attended the activities.

Niagara Catholic focuses on the mental health and well-being of all students with the support of the Mental Health and Well- Being team, Social Workers, Child and Youth Workers, and Mental Health Champions. Administrators, teachers and support staff, recognize the importance of mental health and well-being so that all students are successful in school and in their daily lives.

Child and Youth Workers have provided leadership to students participating in the Catholic Education Week and Mental Health Week contest, celebrating the theme of "Pilgrims of Hope on the Path to Holiness" by answering the question, "How Will You Be a Messenger of Hope?" Students have submitted their work reflecting on how hope and faith positively impacts their mental health and well-being.

Elementary Child and Youth Workers spent the week engaging in mental health and well-being initiatives such as mental health fairs and hosting community partners with classroom- based activities. All Niagara Catholic secondary schools hosted Mental Health and Well-Being fairs. The fairs included booths with community partners and agencies, interactive components, and opportunities for secondary students to participate in learning about the mental health and well-being resources in the community. Niagara Catholic is grateful for our community partners and their support of our Niagara Catholic Students and families.

Superintendent Zaroda

- Superintendent Zaroda reported that all eight Secondary High Schools participated in Toonies for Tuition and successfully fundraised a combined total of \$6, 867.00. This achievement reflects the strong commitment of students and staff to meaningful causes, and appreciation was extended to both the schools and Trustees for sustaining this impactful program year after year.

In addition, the provincial launch of Ontario Students Against Impaired Driving (OSAID) was held at Notre Dame College School. Principal Andrew Boone, librarian Patricia Beck, and provincial representative Matt Evans organized the event, which was attended by local leaders including Mayor Champion and Deputy Chief Lagrotteria. All eight secondary schools participated with their Students Against Destructive Decisions (SADD) teams, collaborating on strategies to discourage impaired driving and promote road safety. The event also highlighted that Ontario currently has the lowest rate of impaired driving-related tragedies, underscoring the success of such initiatives and the ongoing efforts of schools ahead of the school-level launch on May 14.

Superintendent Kinney

- Superintendent Kinney reported that on May 2, 2026 at Denis Morris Catholic School the Diocese of St. Catharines hosted the Saint Carlo Acutis Challenge. It was an initiative for students in Grades 5 to 12 to use creativity, technology, and faith to evangelize as inspired by the young Saint. 32 projects were submitted from across the diocese with seven of our eight high schools represented and eight out of forty-six Elementary schools represented.

The caliber of the projects were incredible and to hear the students speak of their hard work, and faith was heartwarming. Their justifications for their ideas and how they executed them was incredible. The Diocese handed out \$3000 in prizes to our students.

The Elementary People's Choice went to Sacred Heart Private School. Third place went to Gia Mongit a Grade 8 student at Our Lady of Mount Carmel Catholic Elementary School for artwork on the seven sacraments. Second place went to Wesley Emond a Grade 8 student at Our Lady of Holy Rosary Catholic Elementary School for a Faith Board Game. First place went to Angelina Jones & McKenna Roddick Grade 7 students at St. John Catholic Elementary School who coded and built a faith website from scratch and all the activities and elements on it.

The Secondary People's Choice went Elio Caruso and Peter Faraj Podcast on lesser-known Saints. Third Place went to Keeda Haines in Grade 12 at Lakeshore Catholic High School for Painting and explanation. Second Place went to Ansh Cyriac Grade 12 at St. Paul Catholic High School on the Essay on the Immaculate Heart of Mary. First Place went to Denise Gapasin in Grade 9 at Blessed Trinity Catholic Secondary School for the Photo Essay.

Today at Saint Francis Catholic Secondary School the Home Energy Efficiency Tour (HEET) Projects find a home at Niagara Catholic. Students from across Niagara Catholic engaged in a hands-on learning experience that connected financial mathematics with real-world applications. They explored mortgages, budgeting, and the true cost of home ownership while designing and constructing energy-efficient model homes. Using Python-coded TI-Nspire calculators and TI hubs as thermostats, students-controlled heating systems, collected data, and applied thermal imaging to analyze heat loss and energy efficiency. This project helped them understand how financial decisions and sustainable design choices can reduce energy costs and environmental impact.

The initiative was facilitated by Cedric, who works with an Indigenous clean energy company and emphasizes respect for Indigenous perspectives, including their connection to the land and focus on self-sufficiency. Aiming to inspire youth to promote community resilience in the face of climate change. During the project, a group of Niagara self-identified students built the top-performing model home in heat retention. Cedric also extended the learning by delivering a career presentation to Grade 11 students at Saint Francis Catholic Secondary School, further encouraging interest in clean energy pathways.

3. ***Consent Agenda Item 6.1 Extended Overnight Field Trip, Exchange and Excursion Committee 2025-2026***

Superintendent Zaroda presented the Extended Overnight Field Trip, Exchange and Excursion Committee 2025- 2026 report for information.

Director Cipriano answered questions of the Trustees.

D. GOVERNANCE POLICIES

1. ***Governance Policies for Recommendation to the Board***
2. ***Governance Policies Prior to Vetting***
3. ***Governance Policy Review Schedule***

Director Cipriano presented the Governance Policy Review Schedule.

E. INFORMATION

1. Correspondence

1.1 Email – OECTA Niagara Secondary Unit

Vice Chair Burkholder shared an email from Brian O'Rourke OECTA Niagara Secondary Unit.

Trustees addressed the contents of the letter. Director Cipriano reported he had discussions with Bishop Bergie and the Diocesan Priests.

2. Trustee Information

2.1 Celebrating Kindergarten Through the Arts – May 15, 2026

Director Cipriano reminded the Trustees of the Celebrating Kindergarten Through the Arts Gallery Opening on Wednesday, May 13, 2026 at Our Lady of Holy Rosary Catholic Elementary School from 4:00 to 6:00 p.m.

2.2 Time to Shine – May 15, 2026

Director Cipriano presented Time to Shine Event on May 15, 2026 at Saint Francis Catholic Secondary School from 10:00 am to 1:00 pm.

Trustees were asked to confirm their attendance with Anna Lisa Conidi.

2.2 Student Art Festival Event – June 2, 2026

Director Cipriano presented the Student Art Festival Event on June 2, 2026 at Heartland Forest from 9:45 a.m. to 1:15 p.m.

Trustees were asked to confirm their attendance with Anna Lisa Conidi.

2.3 Retirement and Service Recognition Celebration – June 11, 2026

Director Cipriano presented the Retirement and Service Recognition Celebration on June 11, 2026 at Club Roma Event Centre starting at 6:00 p.m.

Trustees were asked to confirm their attendance with Anna Lisa Conidi.

F. OTHER BUSINESS

1. General Discussion to Plan for Future Action

Nil Report

G. BUSINESS IN CAMERA

Addressed within consent agenda section.

H. REPORT ON THE IN-CAMERA SESSION

SECTION B: STUDENT TRUSTEES EXCLUDED

Moved by Trustee Di Lorenzo

THAT the Committee of the Whole approve the Minutes of the Committee of the Whole Meeting - In Camera Session (Section B: Student Trustees Excluded) held on April 16, 2026, as presented.

CARRIED (Item G1)

I. ADJOURNMENT

Moved by Trustee Benoit

THAT the May 12, 2026 Committee of the Whole Meeting be adjourned.

CARRIED

This meeting was adjourned at 7:42 p.m.

Minutes of the Committee of the Whole Meeting of the Niagara Catholic District School Board held on **May 12, 2026.**

Approved on **June 9, 2026.**

Rhianon Burkholder
Vice-Chair of the Board

Camillo Cipriano
Director of Education/Secretary -Treasurer

**TO: NIAGARA CATHOLIC DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD
COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE MEETING
MAY 26, 2026**

PUBLIC SESSION

**TITLE: LARKIN ESTATE UNIVERSITY/COLLEGE ADMISSION
AWARDS**

RECOMMENDATION

THAT the Niagara Catholic District School Board approve the payment of \$8825.00 for the Larkin Estate University/College Admission Awards for eligible students, as presented.

Prepared by: Lee Ann Forsyth-Sells, Superintendent of Education

Presented by: Lee Ann Forsyth-Sells, Superintendent of Education

Recommended by: Committee of the Whole

Date: May 26, 2026



**REPORT TO THE COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE
MAY 12, 2026**

LARKIN ESTATE UNIVERSITY/COLLEGE ADMISSION AWARDS

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The funding for the Larkin Estate University/College Admission Awards is a bequest from the estate of Maria Eveleen Larkin and Aimee Theresa Larkin. The awards have been administered annually since 1969.

The Larkin Estate University/College Admission Award is a four-year renewable bursary available to Niagara Catholic graduates who are enrolled in post-secondary education at St. Michael's College, University of Toronto, at a school of nursing, or social work, or at a college or university offering such a program.

As of April 30, 2026 the undistributed earnings and the balance of the scholarship fund amounted to \$35,687.18 with projected dividends and interest in the amount of \$6,000.00 to the end of 2026.

- The first installment of the award is predicated upon the receipt of a letter of confirmation of full-time registration in Nursing or Social Work, or proof of full or partial tuition paid.
- Subsequent installments of the award are predicated upon receipt of the following:
 - an official transcript as evidence of successful completion of previous year's courses; and
 - proof of full-time registration in Nursing or Social Work, or proof of full or partial tuition paid.

The Larkin Estate University/College Admission Award will be awarded to eight recipients for the 2025-2026 school year.

RECOMMENDATION

THAT the Niagara Catholic District School Board approve the payment of \$8825.00 for the Larkin Estate University/College Admission Awards for eligible students, as presented.

Prepared by: Lee Ann Forsyth-Sells, Superintendent of Education

Presented by: Lee Ann Forsyth-Sells, Superintendent of Education

Recommended by: Camillo Cipriano, Director of Education/Secretary-Treasurer

Date: May 12, 2026

**TO: NIAGARA CATHOLIC DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD
BOARD MEETING
May 26, 2026**

PUBLIC SESSION

**TITLE: THE PROVISIONS OF SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS
AND SERVICES – SPECIAL EDUCATION PLAN REVISIONS**

RECOMMENDATION

THAT the Niagara Catholic District School Board approve the revisions, as set out in Appendix A to be included in the *Special Education Plan 2026*, as presented.

Prepared by: Gino Pizzoferrato, Superintendent of Education

Presented by: Gino Pizzoferrato, Superintendent of Education

Recommended by: Camillo Cipriano, Director of Education/Secretary-Treasurer

Date: May 26, 2026



REPORT TO THE NIAGARA CATHOLIC DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD MAY 26, 2026

THE PROVISIONS OF SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS AND SERVICES – SPECIAL EDUCATION PLAN REVISIONS

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The Ministry of Education requires district school boards to publicly make available a comprehensive report regarding the current special education programs and services of the Board. *Building Bridges to Services 2025 and Beyond* is our Board's current version of the Ministry of Education mandated Special Education Plan that includes the components that are defined in *Special Education in Ontario Kindergarten to Grade 12 Policy and Resource Guide 2017* as well as the protocols established in Policy and Program Memorandum 149.

In compliance with *Regulation 464/97*, Student Support staff consults with the Niagara Catholic Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) in the preparation and update of the Special Education Plan. Appendix A lists an Executive Summary of the revisions, as approved by the Special Education Advisory Committee at the SEAC meeting of May 6, 2026, that will be incorporated into the current Special Education Plan.

Motion 1: THAT the Special Education Advisory Committee approves the revisions to the provisions of Special Education Programs and Services to be included in the Special Education Plan as presented.

Moved by: Trustee Benoit

Seconded by: Aisha Sonekan

CARRIED

Motion 2: THAT the Special Education Advisory Committee approves forwarding the Special Education Plan 2025-2026 to the Committee of the Whole for their consideration and approval.

Moved by: Jessica Thomas

Seconded by: Trustee Benoit

CARRIED

A checklist that notes the plan's component parts, updated sections and the URL leading to the Special Education Plan on our Board's website is annually completed and submitted to the London Regional Education Office by July 31st each year. Once all revisions are finalized, the 2026 Plan will be accessible through Niagara Catholic's website, as it is a valuable resource to students, parents and caregivers, and all Board staff.

RECOMMENDATION

THAT the Niagara Catholic District School Board approve the revisions, as set out in Appendix A to be included in the *Special Education Plan 2026*, as presented

Prepared by: Gino Pizzoferrato, Superintendent of Education

Presented by: Gino Pizzoferrato, Superintendent of Education

Recommended by: Camillo Cipriano, Director of Education/Secretary-Treasurer

Date: May 26, 2026

Special Education Plan 2026 - Executive Summary of Revisions

General Revisions: Update year to reflect 2025-2026 school year

Part 1: Model for Special Education - no change

Part 2: IPRC Process - Update IPRC data numbers HOUSEKEEPING

Part 3: Special Education Placement provided by board - no change

Part 4: Individual Education Plans - no change

Part 5: Special Education Staff - Update the FTE numbers for job classes HOUSEKEEPING

Part 6: Specialized Equipment - Updates to reflect changes to SEA Guidelines and processes

Part 7: Transportation - no change

Part 8: Transition Planning - no change

Part 9: Roles and Responsibilities in Spec Ed - no change

Part 10: Categories of Exceptionalities - no change

Part 11: Prov and Demo Schools - no change

Part 12: Board's Consultation Process - no change

Part 13: SEAC - update membership information HOUSEKEEPING

Part 14 - Early identification - no change

Part 15 - Educational and other assessments HOUSEKEEPING

Part 16: Coordination of services other ministries - no change

Part 17: Specialized Health support - no change

Part 18: Staff Development - Update to reflect activities from the current school year HOUSEKEEPING

Part 19: Accessibility - Update to reflect completed projects from this year HOUSEKEEPING

**TO: NIAGARA CATHOLIC DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD
BOARD MEETING
MAY 26, 2026**

PUBLIC SESSION

**TOPIC: APPROVED MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL EDUCATION
ADVISORY COMMITTEE (SEAC) MEETING OF APRIL 8, 2026**

RECOMMENDATION

THAT the Niagara Catholic District School Board receive the Approved Minutes of the Special Education Advisory Committee Meeting of April 8, 2026, as presented for information.



NIAGARA CATHOLIC
DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

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

April 8, 2026

Minutes of the Meeting of the Special Education Advisory Committee, held on Wednesday, April 8, 2026 at 6:30 p.m., at the Niagara Launch Centre, Seaway Mall, 800 Niagara Street, Welland, ON L3C 5Z4

Chair Monique Somma called the meeting to order at 6:40 p.m.

A. ROUTINE MATTERS

1. **Land Acknowledgement**
Chair Somma led the Land Acknowledgment
2. **Opening Prayer**
Chair Somma led the opening prayer.
3. **Roll Call**

Members	Affiliations	Present In-person	Present Electronically	Excused	Absent
Jessica Thomas/ Cynthia Peterson	Autism Ontario Niagara Region	X			
Alyson Wilson/Melissa Sullivan	Bethesda Services			X	
Monique Somma (CHAIR)	Community Living (Pelham/Welland)	X			
Sara Wencil & DJ Holmes	Community Living (Port Colborne/Wainfleet)	X			
Andrea Pede	Down Syndrome Niagara		X		
Aishah Sonekan	Learning Disabilities Association of Niagara				X
Erica Simmanivong-Elizarraras/ Katrina Arcand	Mainstream				X
Chris Tawil/Kylee Daley	Niagara Children’s Centre		X		
Michelle Toy	Pathstone	X			
Patricia Ferrie	Inclusion West Niagara	X			
Community Representative					
Krystine Donato		X			
Indigenous Representative					
Cindi Lee Ecker-Flagg				X	
Secondary Student Senate Representative					
Lucas Bishop			X		
Trustees					
Trustee, Natalia Benoit			X		
Trustee, Jim Marino		X			

Regrets: Cindi Lee Ecker-Flagg, Indigenous Representative
Alyson Wilson/Melissa Sullivan, Bethesda Services

The following staff were in attendance:

Gino Pizzoferrato, Superintendent of Education, Jenna Young, Roxanne Rees, Nicole Royer, Grace Brochu, Lisa Clark, Susy Walsh, Jim Di Gioia, Kelly Keighan, Ashley Prohaszka, Vincent Mancuso, Julia Nicholson-Clarke, Jessica Mastroianni

4. **Approval of the Agenda**

Moved by: Trustee Marino

Seconded by: DJ Holmes

THAT the Special Education Advisory Committee approve the agenda of the Special Education Advisory Committee Meeting of April 8th, 2026.

CARRIED

5. **Declaration of Conflict of Interest**

No declarations of conflict of interest were declared with any item on the agenda.

6. **Approval of the Special Education Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes of March 4, 2026**

Moved by: Trustee Marino

Seconded by: DJ Holmes

THAT the Special Education Advisory Committee approve the minutes of the Special Education Advisory Committee Meeting of March 4, 2026 as presented.

CARRIED

B. PRESENTATIONS

1. **Susy Walsh – Resource Centre Update**

Susy Walsh presented:

- The pilot aims to provide students with a small, quiet setting to develop essential life skills, including social-emotional regulation, leadership, and communication with the goal of transferring these skills back into the regular classroom and home life.
- Students have shown significant growth in managing their behavior and interactions:

- Moving from physical outbursts to using words, deep breathing and waiting turns.
 - Better cooperation, sharing, and problem-solving among peers.
- The program bridges the gap between school and home:
 - Students are learning the neuroscience of their own brains, helping them understand why they feel certain emotions.
 - Parents report a reduction in “shutting down” during homework and an increased ability for students to step away and refresh rather than reacting aggressively.
- The pilot is successfully creating a “circle of support” that empowers students to move from frustration and silence to independence and active participation in their communities.

2. **Jim Di Gioia – Annual Special Education Plan Review**

Jim Di Gioia presented:

- An outline of the mandatory annual review of the Special Education Plan for Niagara Catholic, ensuring it remains compliant with the Education Act.
 - This is a retrospective review – it encapsulates the actions of the current school year rather than planning for the next.
 - The Education Act requires all school boards to maintain and annually update a special education plan.
 - SEAC is a central part of this process, providing consultation and reviewing all proposed amendments.
 - Updates include statistical data, staffing, committee logistics and annual progress

C. **POLICY REVIEW – Monique Somma**

No policy reviews.

D. **CHAIR’S REPORT-Chair Somma**

Chair Somma reported:

- Letters received from the Kawartha Pine Ridge District School Board SEAC and Huron Superior Catholic District School Board SEAC, addressed to the Minister of Education in support of retaining the elected Trustees.

A motion was put forth for SEAC Chair Somma to draft a new letter of support.

Moved by: Kristine Donato

Seconded by: DJ Holmes

THAT SEAC prepare a letter of support for the advocacy for maintaining elected trustees.

CARRIED

E. AGENCY REPORTS

1. Learning Disabilities Association of Niagara Region – Aishah Sonekan

No report.

2. Niagara Children’s Centre – Chris Tawil

Chris Tawil reported:

- The center is preparing for a two-day site visit from the Commission of Accreditation of Rehab Facilities on April 14-15
- 7th Annual Parent and Caregiver Conference is April 25. Held from 9 am – 12 pm at the Four Points Sheraton. Registration is free for anyone raising a child with special needs in Niagara via their website.
- Help Kids Shine Fundraiser is May 1. The center’s largest annual fundraiser kicks off with live radio broadcasts from the facility.
- Transition to School provides students with ongoing support. Observation visits are currently being booked.
- A full list of seasonal activities is available in the center’s digital Spring Guide and on their website.

3. Pathstone Mental Health – Michelle Toy

Michelle Toy reported:

- Expanded hours at certain locations, some now open 5 days a week, with evening hours extended until 8:00 p.m.
- As of April 1, the Crisis Support Line has been eliminated to facilitate the increase in face-to-face interactions.

4. Community Living (Port Colborne/Wainfleet) – DJ Holmes

No report.

5. Inclusion West Niagara – Patricia Ferrie

No report.

6. Down Syndrome Niagara - Andrea Pede

Andrea Pede reported:

- March 21 was World Down Syndrome Day
- March 23 schools promoted the Rock Your Socks campaign where students and staff were encouraged to wear bright mismatched socks to spark conversations about Down syndrome.
- A successful bowling event was held on March 21 at Play More Social, featuring a VIP experience for children.
- The focus this year was “Together Against Loneliness” emphasizing the importance of building friendships and reducing social isolation.
- Annual Trivia Night is April 18 at the Merritton Community Center from 6:00 p.m.- 10:00 p.m.
- Future Outings:
 - April 26: Fallsview Water Park
 - June 28: Safari Niagara
 - July 12: River Lions Game
 - August 16: Summer Picnic
 - August 30: Blue Jays Game
 - September 13: Caregiver Golf
 - September: Annual Friendship Walk
- Most upcoming events are members-only, and families are encouraged to register through the Down Syndrome Niagara Website.

7. Mainstream – Katrina Arcand

No report.

8. Bethesda Services – Melissa Sullivan/Alyson Wilson

No report.

9. Autism Ontario Niagara Region – Cynthia Peterson

Cynthia Peterson reported:

- World Autism Day was on April 2
 - Schools participated by wearing tie-dye T-shirts. The tie-dye theme was chosen to celebrate the “spectrum” and the unique individuality of every person.
- Summer Camp registration is currently open
 - The camp offers 1:1 support for those who need it
 - Runs full five-day weeks, running from 9:00 a.m. – 3:30 p.m.
 - Includes daily swimming, splash pad visits, and special outings to the zoo.

10. Community Living (Welland/Pelham) – Monique Somma

No report.

F. COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIVE REPORT - Krystine Donato

No report.

G. INDIGENOUS REPRESENTATIVE REPORT - Cindi Lee Ecker-Flagg

No report.

H. SECONDARY STUDENT SENATE REPRESENTATIVE REPORT- Lucas Bishop

Lucas Bishop reported:

- Schools held celebrations to observe Holy Week and reflect on the religious significance of the day.
- World Down Syndrome Day was celebrated with a “Rock Your Socks” event to show support.
- Upcoming events:
 - Time to Shine Formal in May, at Saint Francis. The theme is “Disco and Diamonds” and is organized by the community to enjoy.

I. STAFF REPORTS

1. Elementary Principal – Susy Walsh

Susy Walsh reported:

- Great success with the new Boccia sets each school received, and the in-school training by the para-athletes.

2. Secondary Principal – Nicole Royer and Roxanne Rees

Nicole Royer and Roxanne Rees reported:

- March 13th is the deadline for option sheets for numbers and to get account receptions.
- Special education students are given a broad-based grading system in class based on socialization, skills, independence and organization.
- Planning for the “Time to Shine Formal” is underway, including a photobooth, meal planning and group planning

3. Student Support – Jim Di Gioia

Jim Di Gioia presented:

- S.L.A.M. Summer Camp – Ages 6-11 In-Person Summer Camp
 - The Student Support Department has provided funding to the Learning Disabilities Association of Niagara Region (LDANR) to support student participation in a one-week fully funded S.L.A.M. Camp. The program provides engaging literacy activities that build phonics skills, sight word recognition, and reading fluency. Elementary schools were able to submit names of students who meet the criteria to participate in the program.
 - S.L.A.M. Camp is a full-day summer camp designed for children aged 6-11 who are one or more years behind in literacy due to a diagnosed, suspected, or identified reading disability (like dyslexia). Campers participate in engaging literacy activities that build phonics skills, sight word recognition, and reading fluency. Our approach is hands-on and playful, helping kids feel confident and capable as they strengthen their reading abilities.
- Rick Hansen Foundation Accessibility and Inclusion Training
 - Niagara Catholic District School Board’s Accessibility Committee and The Rick Hansen Foundation (RHF) are working towards a system-wide goal of educating our youth, staff and community members about accessibility, disability, and inclusion.
 - Principals, VPs, and ERTs have been invited to participate in the Rick Hansen Foundation’s Educator Inclusion and Accessibility Training Course, a module-based course focused on disability inclusion, accessibility, and equitable practices, with an emphasis on understanding the lived experiences of youth with disabilities. The course is available as of April 13th.
- Gifted Module
 - The next elementary Gifted Education module is planned for April 15th and will be a faith-centered day of engaging, hands-on learning that connects spirituality with problem-solving, critical thinking, and teamwork. Through collaborative activities focused on faith, guidance, and community, students will reflect and discuss their learning while building a strong sense of connection and belonging.

4. Superintendent Pizzoferrato – Gino Pizzoferrato

Superintendent Pizzoferrato reported:

- Secondary school transition initiatives:
 - Each secondary school is receiving a dedicated budget to fund activities that engage students and parents from feeder elementary schools

- The program now targets students as young as Grade 6 to demystify the high school transition process and build staff capacity regarding various secondary pathways.
- The goal is to provide parents and students with comprehensive information and awareness before they have to make official school program choices in Grade 8
- The department is currently drafting a transparent process and policy regarding EVAC Chairs for students with mobility needs. They are seeking the following from community partners:
 - Any specific operational procedures or policies from community groups that consider the unique needs of the individuals they serve.
 - Community members with relevant documentation or insights on evacuation safety and equipment are encouraged to share them to assist in the drafting phase.
- The board is currently investigating installation requirements and facilities support, the role of vendors in equipment maintenance and training, and funding models and financial responsibility.

J. TRUSTEE REPORTS - *Trustee Marino/Trustee Benoit*

No report.

K. NIAGARA CATHOLIC PARENT INVOLVEMENT COMMITTEE REPORT

No report.

L. NEW BUSINESS/AGENDA ITEMS

Chair Somma addressed a procedural issue regarding the March 4, 2026 SEAC meeting. It was determined that a conflict of interest during the vote to support elected Trustees resulted in a loss of quorum. Consequently, the vote has been declared null and void.

M. NEXT MEETING: Wednesday, May 6th, 2026 at 6:30 p.m., at Inclusion West Niagara, Grimsby.

N. CLOSING PRAYER/MOMENT OF SILENCE: Chair Somma led the closing prayer.

O. ADJOURNMENT

Moved by: Trustee Marino

Seconded by: Patricia Ferrie

THAT the April 8, 2026 meeting of the Special Education Advisory Committee be adjourned.

CARRIED

This meeting was adjourned at 8:00 p.m.

**TO: NIAGARA CATHOLIC DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD
BOARD MEETING
MAY 26, 2026**

PUBLIC SESSION

**TOPIC: APPROVED MINUTES OF THE NIAGARA CATHOLIC
PARENT INVOLVEMENT COMMITTEE (NCPIC) MEETING
OF JANUARY 8, 2026**

RECOMMENDATION

THAT the Niagara Catholic District School Board receive the Approved Minutes of the Niagara Catholic Parent Involvement Committee Meeting of January 8, 2026, as presented for information.



**MINUTES OF THE
NIAGARA CATHOLIC PARENT INVOLVEMENT COMMITTEE MEETING
JANUARY 8, 2026**

Minutes of the Meeting of the Niagara Catholic Parent Involvement Committee, held on Thursday, January 8, 2026 at 6:30 p.m., in the Father Kenneth Burns csc Board Room, at the Catholic Education Centre, 427 Rice Road, Welland, ON.

Catholic School Council Chairs/Co-Chairs were invited to attend the meeting virtual or in-person.

Chair Thomas called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

A. ROUTINE MATTERS

1. **Land Acknowledgement and Opening Prayer**
Superintendent Forsyth-Sells led the Land Acknowledgement and Opening Prayer.
2. **Roll Call**: Danny Di Lorenzo, Chair of the Board was in attendance in the absence of Trustee Huibers

Parent Members	Present In-person	Present Electronically	Excused	Absent
Brenda Annen			√	
Julie Bateman		√		
Rose Heron		√		
Sara Ivicic			√	
Michael McKnight	√			
Laura Thomas	√			
Carrie Vernelli			√	
Bishop/Diocesan Representative				
Fr. Paul MacNeil				√
Ontario Association for Parents in Catholic Education (OAPCE)				
Jennifer Pilzecker	√			
Secondary Student Senate Representative				
Ella Colaneri			√	
Trustees				
Joe Bruzzese	√			
Larry Huibers			√	

The following staff attended:

Lee Ann Forsyth-Sells, Superintendent of Education, **Maria Solomon**, Elementary Principal, **Chris McLean**, Secondary Vice-Principal, **Dave Peirce**, Supervisor of Clinical Services and **Yvonne Anderson**, Administrative Assistant/Recording Secretary.

Regrets Received: Brenda Annen, Ella Colaneri, Larry Huibers, Sara Ivicic and Carrie Vernelli.

3. **Approval of the Agenda**

Moved by: Michael McKnight

THAT the Niagara Catholic Parent Involvement Committee approve the agenda of the Niagara Catholic Parent Involvement Committee Meeting of January 8, 2026 as presented.

CARRIED

4. **Declaration of Conflict of Interest**

No declarations of conflict of interest were declared with any item on the agenda.

5. **Approval of the Niagara Catholic Parent Involvement Committee Meeting Minutes of November 6, 2025**

Moved by: Michael McKnight

THAT the Niagara Catholic Parent Involvement Committee approve the minutes of the Niagara Catholic Parent Involvement Committee Meeting of November 6, 2025 as presented.

CARRIED

B. PRESENTATION

Niagara Region Public Health (NRPH)

- Know the Link: Cannabis and Psychosis (30 min., plus Q&A)

Dave Peirce, Niagara Catholic Supervisor of Clinical Services, welcomed and introduced Mary Choy, Health Promoter, and Devon Noxel, Mental Health Supervisor of Clinical Services for Niagara Region Public Health.

Mary and Devon provided information on how cannabis affects the brain and body, the link between cannabis use and psychosis, signs of psychosis and how to talk to youths about psychosis. A brief Q&A followed the presentation.

C. POLICY

Chair Thomas reported that the Student Exclusion from School or Class Policy (302.6.11) is currently being vetted.

1. Feedback to be submitted on behalf of the NCPIC is to be sent to Yvonne Anderson, no later than 12:00 p.m. on Tuesday, January 20, 2026.
2. Feedback that is being submitted as an individual is to be sent directly to Anna Lisa Conidi, no later than Wednesday, January 21, 2026.

D. REPORT FROM THE DIRECTOR'S DESIGNATE, SUPERINTENDENT OF EDUCATION

1. Updates from the NCPIC Meeting of November 6, 2025

French Immersion Program

In consultation with Kim Kinney, Superintendent of Program and Innovation, Superintendent Forsyth-Sells reported that due to the minimum number of instructional hours required by the Ministry of Education for the French Immersion program, the revised entry point for the Niagara Catholic French Immersion program will now be Grade 1 only. This ensures that all students entering French Immersion will receive the full sequence of hours required to meet program expectations and achieve the intended level of proficiency.

- Students currently enrolled in the 2025-2026 Kindergarten-Year 1; French Immersion program will have a gap year during the 2026-2027 school year. These students will remain

- at their FI school in the English stream and transportation will be provided with a commitment to the Grade 1 French Immersion program in the 2027-2028 school year.
- Advanced sibling registration applies only to families who currently have a child enrolled in the French Immersion program for the 2025-2026 school year. Parents may register their child(ren) entering Kindergarten into the English stream with the intent to enter the French Immersion program in Grade 1. These students will be provided with transportation in accordance with the Student Transportation Policy (500.2).
 - Should a student withdraw from the French Immersion program, they must return to their Home School.
 - Should a student withdraw from the French Immersion program and wish to stay at the French Immersion school in the English stream as an out-of-boundary student, they may only do so if there is available space. Transportation would not be provided in accordance with the Admission of Elementary and Secondary Students Policy (301.1).
 - Parents are encouraged to review the French Immersion Program AOP (400.6) provided in the package and posted on the Board website.

Area Review-Population increase in Niagara and over-capacity in some Niagara Catholic schools.

In consultation with Giancarlo Vetrone, Associate Director-Corporate Services, Superintendent Forsyth-Sells reported that:

- Niagara Catholic continues to review the growth in Niagara, and the impact on student accommodation in Niagara Catholic schools.
- When a review is recommended for a particular area, the Attendance Area Review AOP (301.3) will be followed.
- Currently, Niagara Catholic will be launching an area attendance review this spring 2026 with recommended changes to the boundaries in Niagara Falls. This plan will be put into place once the new school on Kalar Rd. is operational.
- Niagara Catholic has also made a request to the Ministry through capital priority submissions to expand Saint Michael Catholic High School with an additional eight classrooms.
- There are no further attendance area reviews at this time.

2. Niagara Catholic Award of Distinction

NCPIC members received an email including the Niagara Catholic Award of Distinction Nomination Form on December 11, 2025 for their information.

Eligibility

Any individual or group (school, parish, home, community) who has participated in, or contributed to the growth of Catholic education in the Niagara Region.

Criteria

Nominees must have:

- Made a notable, long-time, significant, and positive contribution to Catholic education in the Niagara region.
- Demonstrated leadership that has had an identifiable impact on the Catholic character of the Board.
- Supported the ideal of the Christian community among Niagara Catholic schools and Diocese.
- Accompanied students on their Catholic faith journey.
- Demonstrated a commitment to Catholic education.

- Been an advocate for Catholic education in the Niagara region.

Nomination forms are to be submitted to Melissa Ciarlo, no later than January 14, 2026.

3. Niagara Foundation for Catholic Education Annual Benefit Gala
SAVE THE DATE: Niagara Foundation for Catholic Education Annual Benefit Gala will take place on Thursday, March 5, 2026 at Club Roma. Further details to follow.
4. School Mental Health Ontario (SMH-ON): Free webinars for parents/caregivers-March 2026
Beginning March 2026, School Mental Health Ontario will launch a new series of live parent/caregiver webinars that will be offered through the [By Your Side Learning Hub](#).

The expert-lead webinar series will provide insights and practical strategies on key topics identified by Ontario parents and caregivers. Topic areas will include:

- Balanced device usage with a focus on AI and social media
- Vaping
- Body image and eating-related concerns

In addition, parent/caregiver information sheets and past webinars on substance use, addictive behaviours and youth mental health are also available on the [By Your Side Learning Hub](#).

5. NCPIC Financial Report
Superintendent Forsyth-Sells reported on the finances of the NCPIC.

E. SECONDARY STUDENT SENATE REPRESENTATIVE REPORT-*Ella Colaneri*

Chair Thomas provided the Secondary Student Senate Representative report on behalf of Ella Colaneri:

- Niagara Catholic secondary schools completed their Christmas season with Advent Masses to celebrate the birth of Christ. Many schools participated in Christmas food drives with great success. Students at Saint Paul Catholic High School brought in hundreds of canned goods and winter essentials, making it a record-breaking year for their giving season. Special acknowledgment to one of the Grade 12 Biology classes that brought in approximately 300 boxes of cereal to support the food drive.
- Many of the feeder schools spread joy and fun in their school communities this year by participating in a Christmas roadshow. Students displayed their musical talents by performing Christmas carols to staff and students including the staff and students at the elementary feeder schools. Staff and students also participated in Christmas assemblies with Christmas themed competitions to kick off the winter break.
- On November 26, the Niagara Catholic Student Senate held the Lead Out Loud Conference, an educational event focusing on themes of equity and solidarity for the elementary school senate representatives. Lead Out Loud was extremely successful and we were able to spread the message of the true difference between equality and equity and teach the students how to navigate fairness in situations online, and how to navigate equity using God as our guide. The guest speaker chosen by the student senate representatives was Harmony Movement. The group interactively taught elementary students about personal identity and respecting the individuality of other effectively. The event used positive and responsible role models to exemplify how to stand in solidarity with others for the greater good. The students were able to interact with each other and learn about different identities such as family dynamics, backgrounds, ethnicities etc.

- Niagara Catholic Student Senate is in the early stages of planning the annual Student Leadership Symposium. This highly anticipated event will also focus on equity and solidarity, paralleling the Lead Out Loud Conference. This event will be held on May 6, 2026 during Catholic Education Week. Further details to follow.

F. DIOCESAN REPORT- *Fr. Paul MacNeil*

No report.

G. ONTARIO ASSOCIATION FOR PARENTS IN CATHOLIC EDUCATION REPORT

Jennifer Pilzecker, Niagara Catholic Regional OAPCE Director reported that:

- OAPCE continues to hold Regional Representative meetings across the province. Niagara's OAPCE meeting took place in November.
- OAPCE continues to field questions from parents in the region who may need assistance navigating Ontario's education system and many not know where to start. OAPCE does its best to point fellow parents in the right direction and also provides them with resources.
- A more substantial OAPCE update will follow in March 2026 when OAPCE provincial conference details are announced.

H. SPECIAL EDUCATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE (SEAC) REPORT

Chair Thomas on behalf of SEAC reported on the following:

- **BMS Full Certification for Educational Resource Teachers (ERTs)**
Niagara Catholic Educational Resources Teachers new to the role received full BMS certification training on January 6, 2026.
- **Empower Training**
Niagara Catholic Educational Resources Teachers new to the role will participate in part 3 of Empower training on January 21, 2026 with staff from SickKids.
- **Gifted Module**
Saint Michael Catholic High School will host the Niagara Catholic Gifted Module on January 27 and 28. This electricity module introduces students to the core principles of electrical science, including voltage, current, resistance and power. Students will explore how various components function within different types of electrical circuits and apply this knowledge by designing and building their own electric vehicle model. The module emphasizes electrical safety and includes discussions on power generation methods and career opportunities in the electrical field. Upon completion students will have both theoretical understanding and practical experience, preparing them for future projects and pathways in electrical technology.
- **Transition to School Orientation for Parents/Guardians**
The final Transition to School Orientation for parents/guardians will take place virtually on January 14, 2026 with the two previous sessions taking place in person at the Niagara Children's Centre (NCC). Niagara Catholic appreciates our partnership with the NCC and other local boards to provide this opportunity for families to learn more about transitions, ask questions, and prepare for next steps.
- **Elementary PA Day-January 16 and Secondary PA Day-January 29**
Elementary and secondary educational assistants (EAs) will participate in BMS Refresher training led by Niagara Catholic ABA trainers on their respective PA Days. They will also participate in a PD session led by Autism Ontario and facilitated by the Niagara Catholic ABA team. The session includes an autism overview with a Q&A and resources, followed by scenario-based training and real case examples to discuss best practices and evidence-based ABA interventions.

I. STAFF REPORTS-*Maria Solomon and Chris McLean*

Elementary Principal, Solomon and Secondary Vice-Principal, McLean provided elementary and secondary school updates for information.

Elementary

Principal, Solomon reported:

- From the Sports Desk: Junior Girls and Boys Basketball are well underway, Vex Robotics Competitions are taking place in various school locations throughout the Board. Students will continue to develop skills in teamwork, leadership, and coding.
- Extra-curricular activities will continue to thrive throughout all Niagara Catholic leading into Junior Boys/Girls Tripleball and Volleyball. These events also provide students with the opportunities to grow in teamwork, leadership and technical skills.
- On January 16, 2026, elementary teachers will be engaged in report card writing and select support staff will be participating in re-certification of Behaviour Management Systems (BMS) training.
- Elementary schools continue to be involved with the St. Carlos Acutis Challenge. Students are to create a project that highlights an aspect of Catholic faith they are passionate about and share it in a way that is engaging and effective. Projects may be produced in a variety of forms including: website, app, video or game, podcast or social media campaigns that spreads the love of Jesus and our faith. Submissions are due no later than April 17, 2026.
- The Ontario Catholic School Trustees' Association (OCSTA) "Pilgrims of Hope: On the Path to Holiness" Short-Video Contest closed on November 12, 2025. Out of the numerous submissions, 6 elementary and 6 secondary submissions were shortlisted. Niagara Catholic secured 4 of the 12 spots, Our Lady of Fatima CES (Grimsby), St. Patrick CES (Niagara Falls) and St. Mary CES (Niagara Falls) and Saint Paul Catholic High School. Niagara Catholic eagerly awaits the results of the contest.
- EQAO results for the 2024-2025 school year have been released. Niagara Catholic saw positive gains across all subject areas and divisions and remained above the provincial average. Senior Administration sent a message thanking and congratulating all staff for their hard work and ongoing commitment to student achievement in the Niagara Catholic District School Board.
- Elementary and secondary principals continue to work collaboratively to support grade 8 student transitions to secondary school through school visits and well-planned events such as Open Houses, Gr. 8 Day and Christmas Roadshow.
- The "Kids Helping Kids" campaign will begin on February 9.
- Kindergarten Registration will take place February 2-6, 2026 throughout Niagara Catholic.
- From the HeART Elementary Art Show will take place on February 11.
- Shrove Tuesday, will be February 17, followed by Ash Wednesday on February 18.

Secondary

Vice-Principal McLean reported:

- Some secondary schools are still hosting Open Houses throughout the month of January:
 - January 13, (6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.)-Saint Paul Catholic High School (AP Open House)
 - January 14, (6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.)-Notre Dame College School
 - January 15 (6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.)- Denis Morris Catholic High School
 - January 15 (6:00 p.m.)-Saint Michael Catholic High School

- Secondary Exams will take place, January 22 to 27, 2026 with a conflict date of January 28.
- Transition activities are continuing at the secondary level (sporting events, arts, robotics).
- Semester 2 begins January 30. Guidance teams are connecting with grade levels to prepare for next year's course sections.
- Secondary schools are entering the winter season sports playoffs in February.
- OFSAA activities commence in March.
- Participating students have been preparing for the Niagara Catholic Skills Competition which takes place on March 4. Some events include:

2D and 3D Character	Computer Animation (Teams of 2)	Horticulture & Landscape
Aesthetics	Coding	Photography
Architectural Tech Design	Culinary Arts	Plumbing
Auto Service Technology	Electrical Installations	Precision Machining
Baking	Graphic Design	VEX Robotics
Brick Masonry	Hairstyling	TV and Video Production
Cabinet Making	Heating Systems Technician	Welding Qualifier
Carpentry	Home & Team Building	Plumbing

J. TRUSTEE REPORT

No report

K. NEW BUSINESS/AGENDA ITEMS-DISCUSSION FOR FUTURE MEETINGS

No new business or agenda items were forthcoming.

L. NEXT MEETING: Thursday, March 12, 2026 at 6:30 p.m. at the Catholic Education Centre

M. CLOSING PRAYER: Superintendent Forsyth-Sells led the closing prayer.

N. ADJOURNMENT

Moved by: Michael McKnight

THAT the January 8, 2026 meeting of the Niagara Catholic Parent Involvement Committee be adjourned.

CARRIED

This meeting was adjourned at 7:28 p.m.