

**TO: NIAGARA CATHOLIC DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD
BOARD MEETING
FEBRUARY 25, 2025**

PUBLIC SESSION

**TOPIC: UNAPPROVED MINUTES OF THE COMMITTEE OF THE
WHOLE MEETING OF FEBRUARY 11, 2025**

RECOMMENDATION

THAT the Niagara Catholic District School Board receive the unapproved Minutes of the Committee of the Whole Meeting of February 11, 2025, as presented.

The following recommendations are being presented for the Board's consideration from the Committee of the Whole Meeting of February 11, 2025:

7.1.1 Elementary and Secondary School Year Calendars: 2025-2026

THAT the Niagara Catholic District School Board approve the Elementary and Secondary School Year Calendars for the 2025-2026 school year, as presented.



MINUTES OF THE COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE MEETING TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 11, 2025

Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee of the Whole of the Niagara Catholic District School Board, held on Tuesday, February 11, 2025 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 Di Lorenzo.

2. Roll Call

Vice-Chair Burkholder noted that Trustee Benoit joined electronically.

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				
Emilio Geremia	✓			
Taylor Sexton	✓			

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**, Superintendent of Business & Financial Services; **Julia Tiessen**, Executive Officer of Human Resources; **Anna Pisano**, 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 February 11, 2025, 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 January 14, 2025**

Moved by Trustee Huibers

THAT the Committee of the Whole approve the Minutes of the Committee of the Whole Meeting of January 14, 2025, as presented.

CARRIED

6. **Consent Agenda Items**

6.1 **Elementary and Secondary School Year Calendars**

THAT the Committee of the Whole recommend that the Niagara Catholic District School Board approve the Elementary and Secondary School Year Calendars for the 2025-2026 School Year, as presented.

6.2 **Niagara Student Transportation Services Annual Plan**

Presented for information.

6.3 **Staff Development Department Professional Development Opportunities**

Presented for information.

6.4 **Capital Projects Progress Report Update**

Presented for information.

Moved by Trustee Di Lorenzo

THAT the Committee of the Whole adopt consent agenda items.

CARRIED

B. PRESENTATIONS

C. COMMITTEE AND STAFF REPORTS

1. Math Achievement Action Plan 2024-2025 Mid-Year Report

Kimberly Kinney, Superintendent of Education presented the Math Achievement Action Plan 2024-2025 Mid-Year Report.

Superintendent Kinney answered questions of Trustees.

Moved by Trustee Marino

THAT the Committee of the Whole recommend that the Niagara Catholic District School Board continue to endorse the Niagara Catholic District School Board Math Achievement Action Plan 2024-2025.

CARRIED

2. Monthly Update-s

2.1 Student Trustees' Update

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

2.2 Senior Staff Good News Update

Senior Staff highlights included:

Superintendent Rocca

- February 14th professional activity day featured two distinguished guests, Dr. Jean Clifton, child psychiatrist at McMaster University and Leela Madhava Rao, former Executive Director of Human Rights and Equity at Brock University. These sessions will be made available in our learning management system library.

Superintendent Forsyth-Sells

Niagara Catholic is proudly commemorating Black History Month with a range of activities and resources. The Government of Canada's slide is on our website banner, highlighting our commitment. Our bishop and director support this initiative, which includes the Equity and Inclusive Education memo and the diverse saints Quilt Kit, available at the Catholic Education Center and in all schools. This handmade kit, along with books, serves as a teaching tool throughout February and beyond, promoting respect, acceptance, and belonging.

We have provided resources from the Government of Canada, Ontario, the Ministry of Education, and various educational associations. School Mental Health Ontario has contributed a Cultural Humility self-reflection tool for staff, encouraging personal growth and awareness.

Our school presentations feature Tubman Tours Canada with Leslie Harper, and additional resources are available through the NCVLE. We have partnered with Future Black Female to support Black students in exploring their identities and enhancing leadership skills through cultural clubs and affinity groups.

Chief Commissioner Patricia DeGuire of the Ontario Human Rights Commission will speak to students and staff about her experiences and Ontario Human Rights.

Director Cipriano

- The From the HeART Elementary Art Show was a fantastic opportunity to highlight the incredible talent of our elementary school students, featuring artwork from grades one to eight.

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. **Trustee Information**
 - 1.1 **CCSTA AGM & Conference June 5-7, 2025**

Director Cipriano highlighted the CCSTA AGM & Conference being held on June 5-7, 2025

Trustees were asked to confirm their attendance with Anna Pisano.

F. OTHER BUSINESS

1. **General Discussion to Plan for Future Action**
 - 1.1 Trustee Turner extended an invitation to the 14th Annual Julia's Hope Cup on Saturday, February 15, 2025.

G. BUSINESS IN CAMERA

Moved by Trustee Joyner

THAT the Committee of the Whole move into the In Camera Session.

CARRIED

The Committee of the Whole moved into the In Camera Session of the Committee of the Whole Meeting at 7:22 p.m. and reconvened at 8:25 p.m.

H. REPORT ON THE IN-CAMERA SESSION

Moved by Trustee Joyner

THAT the Committee of the Whole report the motions from the In Camera Session of the Committee of the Whole Meeting of February 11, 2025.

CARRIED

SECTION B: STUDENT TRUSTEES EXCLUDED

The board received an update on Employee Groups and Capital Priorities.

I. ADJOURNMENT

Moved by Trustee Marino

THAT the February 11, 2025 Committee of the Whole Meeting be adjourned.

CARRIED

This meeting was adjourned at 8:26 p.m.

Minutes of the Committee of the Whole Meeting of the Niagara Catholic District School Board held on **February 11, 2025.**

Approved on **March 4, 2025.**

Rhianon Burkholder
Vice-Chair of the Board

Camillo Cipriano
Director of Education/Secretary -Treasurer

**TO: NIAGARA CATHOLIC DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD
BOARD MEETING
FEBRUARY 25, 2025**

PUBLIC SESSION

**TITLE: ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOL YEAR
CALENDARS: 2025-2026**

RECOMMENDATION

THAT the Niagara Catholic District School Board approve the Elementary and Secondary School Year Calendars for the 2025-2026 school year, as presented.

Prepared by: Domenic Massi, Superintendent of Education

Presented by: Domenic Massi, Superintendent of Education

Recommended by: Committee of the Whole

Date: February 11, 2025



NIAGARA CATHOLIC
DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

REPORT TO THE COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE MEETING FEBRUARY 11, 2025

ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOL YEAR CALENDARS: 2025-2026

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The *Education Act, Regulation 304 - School Year Calendar, Professional Activity Days* outlines the requirements and timelines for preparing and submission of school year calendars to the Ministry of Education for approval.

For the 2025-2026 school year calendars, there are 195 possible school days between September 1, 2025 and June 30, 2026. Within this total, elementary and secondary schools must have a minimum of 194 school days, of which seven (7) days must be designated as professional activity days. Secondary schools may have a maximum of ten (10) instructional days set as examination days. The remaining school days shall be instructional days.

CONSULTATION PROCESS

The 2025-2026 School Year Calendar Committee met to discuss and review the draft calendar and the consultation process.

Members of the 2025-2026 School Year Calendar Committee are:

Domenic Massi	Superintendent (Chair)
Lee Ann Forsyth-Sells	Superintendent
Gino Pizzoferrato	Superintendent
Antonio Cardamone	Elementary Principal
Lou Stranges	Secondary Principal
Anthony Corapi	Coordinator of Staff Development
Anna Maxner	C.U.P.E. President
Jennifer McArthur	Niagara Elementary Unit OECTA
Joseph Sorrenti	Niagara Elementary Unit OECTA
John Piccoli	Niagara Secondary Unit OECTA
Laura Thomas	Niagara Catholic Parent Involvement Committee
Monique Somma	S.E.A.C.

The consultation process provided the elementary and secondary draft calendars to all elementary and secondary Principals, Vice-Principals, Catholic School Council Chairs/Co-Chairs, the Niagara Catholic Parent Involvement Committee (NCPIC), the Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC), OECTA Elementary and Secondary Presidents, CUPE President and staff for feedback by February 3, 2025.

Simultaneously, there has been on-going consultation with the co-terminus Board to achieve a similar school year calendar, where possible.

SUMMARY OF THE ATTACHED CALENDARS

Highlights of the Proposed School Year Calendars for 2025-2026.

Professional Activity Days

In accordance with the Education Act, Regulation 304 - School Year Calendar, the following seven (7) days have been identified as Professional Activity Days.

Elementary:

Friday, September 19, 2025
Friday, October 10, 2025
Friday, November 28, 2025
Friday, January 16, 2026
Friday, February 13, 2026
Friday, June 5, 2026
Friday, June 26, 2026

Secondary:

Friday, September 19, 2025
Friday, October 10, 2025
Friday, November 28, 2025
Thursday, January 29, 2026
Friday, February 13, 2026
Thursday, June 25, 2026
Friday, June 26, 2026

Secondary Examination Days

Semester 1 – Thursday, January 22, 2026 to Wednesday, January 28, 2026
Semester 2 – Thursday, June 18, 2026 to Wednesday, June 24, 2026

Board and Civic Holidays

Civic Holiday	Monday, August 4, 2025
Labour Day	Monday, September 1, 2025
Thanksgiving Day	Monday, October 13, 2025
Christmas Break	Monday, December 22, 2025 – Friday, January 2, 2026
Family Day	Monday, February 16, 2026
March Break	Monday, March 16 to Friday, March 20, 2026
Good Friday	Friday, April 3, 2026
Easter Monday	Monday, April 6, 2026
Victoria Day	Monday, May 18, 2026
Canada Day	Wednesday, July 1, 2026

To comply with the timelines outlined in *Regulation 304 - School Year Calendar*, school boards are required to submit Board approved school year calendars to the Ministry of Education by March 1, 2025 and Board approved **regular** school year calendars to the Ministry of Education by May 1, 2025.

Based on feedback from the consultation process, discussions with the School Year Calendar Committee, Senior Administrative Council and the coterminous board, the 2025-2026 Elementary and Secondary School Year Calendars will be submitted immediately following the Board Meeting of February 25, 2025 for approval.

Appendix A: *Proposed Elementary School Year Calendars for 2025-2026*

Appendix B: *Proposed Secondary School Year Calendars for 2025-2026*

RECOMMENDATION

THAT the Committee of the Whole recommends that the Niagara Catholic District School Board approve the Elementary and Secondary School Year Calendars for the 2025-2026 school year, as presented.

Prepared by: Domenic Massi, Superintendent of Education
Presented by: Domenic Massi, Superintendent of Education
Recommended by: Camillo Cipriano, Director of Education, Secretary/Treasurer
Date: February 11, 2025

School Year Calendar 2025 - 2026

Legend ▶ **H-** Statutory Holiday **E-** Scheduled Examination Day **P-** Professional Activity Day **B-** Board Designated Holiday Half Day

Elementary Draft Calendar

Month	Number of Instructional Days	Number of Professional Activity Days	Number of Scheduled Examination Days	1st Week					2nd Week					3rd Week					4th Week					5th Week									
				M	T	W	T	F	M	T	W	T	F	M	T	W	T	F	M	T	W	T	F	M	T	W	T	F					
August 2025								1	4	5	6	7	8	11	12	13	14	15	18	19	20	21	22	25	26	27	28	29					
September 2025	21	1		1	2	3	4	5	8	9	10	11	12	15	16	17	18	19	22	23	24	25	26	29	30								
October 2025	22	1			1	2	3	6	7	8	9	10	13	14	15	16	17	20	21	22	23	24	27	28	29	30	31						
November 2025	20	1		3	4	5	6	7	10	11	12	13	14	17	18	19	20	21	24	25	26	27	28										
December 2025	15			1	2	3	4	5	8	9	10	11	12	15	16	17	18	19	22	23	24	25	26	29	30	31							
January 2026	20	1				1	2	5	6	7	8	9	12	13	14	15	16	19	20	21	22	23	26	27	28	29	30						
February 2026	19	1		2	3	4	5	6	9	10	11	12	13	16	17	18	19	20	23	24	25	26	27										
March 2026	17			2	3	4	5	6	9	10	11	12	13	16	17	18	19	20	23	24	25	26	27	30	31								
April 2026	20					1	2	3	6	7	8	9	10	13	14	15	16	17	20	21	22	23	24	27	28	29	30						
May 2026	20							1	4	5	6	7	8	11	12	13	14	15	18	19	20	21	22	25	26	27	28	29					
June 2026	20	2		1	2	3	4	5	8	9	10	11	12	15	16	17	18	19	22	23	24	25	26	29	30								
July 2026						1	2	3	6	7	8	9	10	13	14	15	16	17	20	21	22	23	24	27	28	29	30	31					
TOTAL	194	7		<p>Note: The 2025-2026 calendar provides for 196 possible school days between September 1, 2025 and June 30, 2026. The school year shall include a minimum of 194 school days of which three days must be designated as professional activity days with respect to specific provincial education priorities as outlined in the Policy/Program Memoranda 151 and up to four extra days may be designated by the board as professional activity days. The remaining school days shall be instructional days. The boards may designate up to ten instructional days as examination days</p>																													

School Year Calendar 2025 - 2026

Legend ▶ **H** - Statutory Holiday **E** - Scheduled Examination Day **P** - Professional Activity Day **B** - Board Designated Holiday Half Day

Secondary Draft Calendar

Month	Number of Instructional Days	Number of Professional Activity Days	Number of Scheduled Examination Days	1st Week					2nd Week					3rd Week					4th Week					5th Week									
				M	T	W	T	F	M	T	W	T	F	M	T	W	T	F	M	T	W	T	F	M	T	W	T	F					
August 2025								1	4	5	6	7	8	11	12	13	14	15	18	19	20	21	22	25	26	27	28	29					
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January 2026	20	1	5				1	2	5	6	7	8	9	12	13	14	15	16	19	20	21	22	23	26	27	28	29	30					
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June 2026	20	2	5	1	2	3	4	5	8	9	10	11	12	15	16	17	18	19	22	23	24	25	26	29	30								
July 2026						1	2	3	6	7	8	9	10	13	14	15	16	17	20	21	22	23	24	27	28	29	30	31					
TOTAL	194	7	10	<p>Note: The 2025-2026 calendar provides for 196 possible school days between September 1, 2025 and June 30, 2026. The school year shall include a minimum of 194 school days of which three days must be designated as professional activity days with respect to specific provincial education priorities as outlined in the Policy/Program Memoranda 151 and up to four extra days may be designated by the board as professional activity days. The remaining school days shall be instructional days. The boards may designate up to ten instructional days as examination days</p>																													

**TO: NIAGARA CATHOLIC DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD
BOARD MEETING
FEBRUARY 25, 2025**

PUBLIC SESSION

**TITLE: MATH ACHIEVEMENT ACTION PLAN 2024-2025
MID-YEAR REPORT**

RECOMMENDATION

THAT the Niagara Catholic District School Board continue to endorse the Niagara Catholic District School Board Math Achievement Action Plan 2024-2025

Prepared by: Kim Kinney – Superintendent of Education, Board Math Lead

Presented by: Kim Kinney – Superintendent of Education, Board Math Lead

Recommended by: Committee of the Whole

Date: February 25, 2025



REPORT TO THE COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE FEBRUARY 11, 2025

MATH ACHIEVEMENT ACTION PLAN 2024-2025 MID-YEAR REPORT

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The Ministry of Education launched Ontario's Math Achievement Action Plan during the 2023-2024 school year to support student achievement and results in math across the province. The ministry brought together experts in mathematics education to better understand next steps for math improvement in Ontario. Through this work, the ministry developed *Taking Action in Mathematics* (Appendix A), an iterative framework to capture areas of focus and guide improvement actions.

Math Achievement Action Plan

Informed by the ministry's *Taking Action in Mathematics* framework, the Board Math Lead, along with the Math Facilitators developed a board Math Achievement Action Plan, which included three sections:

- All schools report to provide board-wide improvement efforts and results in mathematics
- Priority Schools report to provide intensive improvement efforts
- Priority Schools Provincial KPI (Key Performance Indicators) report to provide intentional monitoring of student achievement KPI's common to all priority schools across the province.

The Math Achievement Action Plan outlines the board's concrete, visible, and measurable strategies as well as key performance indicators at the board, school, and classroom level under the four areas of focus:

1. Curriculum Fidelity
2. Math Content Knowledge for Teaching
3. Knowing Your Student
4. Measurable Results: Improvements in Math Achievement

The Math Achievement Action Plan is to be endorsed by the Director and trustees of the board and will be submitted to the ministry under the following timelines:

- November 15, 2024 (Initial): Initial strategies and KPI's
- March 15, 2025 (Progress): Incorporate data from Term 1/Semester 1
- July 15, 2025 (Final): Incorporate data from Term 2/Semester 2

All schools continue to engage in the work of their Math Achievement Action Plans.

- All staff Kindergarten – Grade 8 continue to receive job-embedded Literacy and Numeracy Professional Learning during Chaplaincy Visits through the year targeting the three priority actions identified by the Ministry

- Grade 3 and 6 staff at Priority schools receive additional support and professional development from the Board Math Facilitators (Math Consultant and Math Coaches)
- Professional learning related to the Ministry’s Priority Actions are included in Elementary and Secondary PA Days
- Principals continue to participate in Principal Learning Teams concentrating on leading math learning in their schools.
- Positive feedback from the Ministry of Education on the submitted Math Achievement Action Plan and data, specifically the progress that has been identified in relation to the Key Performance Indicators which link observable student outcomes /progress to the educator knowledge and actions.
- Some changes were made to Priority schools, recognizing the measurable improvements in student achievement at those schools. Through a gradual release of support, schools initially named Priority Schools make way for other schools to benefit from additional support from Math Facilitators (Consultant and Coaches).
- First Term Report Cards will soon be complete and provide a data source to measure impact.

Appendix A – Taking Action in Mathematics

RECOMMENDATION

THAT the Committee of the Whole recommend that the Niagara Catholic District School Board continue to endorse the Niagara Catholic District School Board Math Achievement Action Plan for 2024-2025.

Prepared by: Kim Kinney, Superintendent of Education, Board Math Lead

Presented by: Kim Kinney, Superintendent of Education, Board Math Lead

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

Date: February 11, 2025

Taking action in mathematics | Look-fors by provincial action

Math achievement efforts across the province should include multiple proven evidence-informed strategies and approaches to address local learning needs in schools.

The ministry has worked with researchers, math specialists, and school boards to identify three interwoven math actions to be prioritized in the 2023–24 school year. Board Math Leads, as they determine board and school priorities in mathematics achievement, will develop, implement, and monitor a Math Achievement Action Plan that includes meaningful and measurable key performance indicators (KPIs) aligned with each of the priority actions below.

A mathematics community of excellence: In order to promote effective math instruction, it is important for educators to foster mathematics communities in classrooms and schools, and to recognize that not all students learn math in the same way or within the same time frames. Effective math instruction is supported by an inclusive, positive, and safe learning environment where all students feel valued and engaged, and in which educators clearly communicate expectations and establish norms and routines with their students at the beginning of instruction. Educators at all levels of the school system have a role to play in establishing a culture of excellence in mathematics and setting conditions for success. This includes leaders reviewing practices to determine barriers to success, creating accountability, and attending to mathematics attitudes and mindsets in school and system improvement plans.

PRIORITY ACTION: Ensuring fidelity of curriculum implementation and use of instructional and assessment practices with a proven track record of enhancing student achievement	PRIORITY ACTION: Engaging in ongoing learning to strengthen mathematics content knowledge for teaching	PRIORITY ACTION: Knowing the mathematics learner, and ensuring mathematical tasks, interventions and supports are relevant and responsive
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● How are all educators throughout the system focused on developing a comprehensive understanding and precise implementation of the mathematics curriculum? ● How do grade, course, and daily lesson plans reflect the current curriculum, including the mathematical processes and connections between curriculum strands? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● What systems, supports, and resources are available to support teachers and leaders in determining a focus area for their math content knowledge development? ● How are all educators engaged in ongoing learning that strengthens their own mathematics knowledge, skills, and attitudes about math teaching and learning? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● How is student assessment data and prior mathematics knowledge used to guide interventions and planning? ● How do educators learn about the mathematics strengths, needs and interests of all students to inform their instructional decisions? ● How are educators supporting inclusion and engagement for all students, especially those with diverse learning needs?
<p>Board</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Prioritize understanding of the curriculum and the continuum of learning across grades ● Align resources, including staffing, with mathematics priorities ● Provide guidelines, resources and supports for mathematics curriculum-aligned long-range plans, unit plans, and lesson plans ● Leverage digital math resources to support curriculum-linked practice at home 	<p>Board</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Utilize student achievement data and student work to establish focus areas for mathematics professional learning ● Understand the importance of the relationship between mathematics content knowledge and effective mathematics instruction, as it relates to student achievement ● Prioritize mathematics content knowledge for teaching in professional learning opportunities and in allocation of resources, including staffing 	<p>Board</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Align Math Improvement Action Plan with board improvement planning, including using student assessment and demographic data to identify areas of focus ● Build capacity in data analysis resources to understand mathematics achievement from a variety of sources, including alignment between EQAO, report cards, and locally-developed assessment tools/tasks ● Provide a digital math tool to support student mathematics learning at home and/or at school, that can be used by teachers to understand current student learning levels and provide targeted supports for students ● Develop a system-wide attendance strategy for students with more than 10 days of absences as part of board's existing prolonged absence strategy

**TO: NIAGARA CATHOLIC DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD
BOARD MEETING
FEBRUARY 25, 2025**

PUBLIC SESSION

**TOPIC: APPROVED MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL EDUCATION
ADVISORY COMMITTEE (SEAC) MEETING OF JANUARY 8,
2025**

RECOMMENDATION

THAT the Niagara Catholic District School Board receive the Approved Minutes of the Special Education Advisory Committee Meeting of January 8, 2025, as presented for information.



AGENDA AND MATERIAL



SPECIAL EDUCATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING

WEDNESDAY, JAN 8, 2025

6:30 PM

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

A. ROUTINE MATTERS

1. Land Acknowledgement

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 Monique Somma

3. Roll Call – Gino confirmed quorum

4. Approval of the Agenda – Chair Monique Somma

5. Declaration of Conflict of Interest

6. Approval of Minutes of the Special Education Advisory Committee meeting of *November 6, 2024 and December 4, 2024.* – Motion to approve November minutes by Alison and seconded by trustee Joyner Motion to approve December minutes Andrea and trustee Marino.

B. PRESENTATIONS

1. Michael Jacques – The Power of Community

Michael's Introduction:

-Michael shared that he has autism and works at Sobeys. He is also a public speaker and participates in basketball and baseball through the Special Olympics.

-He relies on technology to assist with tasks he finds challenging.

Rings of Influence:

-Michael discussed the key influences in his life: **Himself, Family, Friends, Education, and Community**, and how these groups impact him and vice versa.

ReAction4Inclusion Program:

-Michael joined the **ReAction4Inclusion** program in grade 10, where he initially participated as a student. He later became an organizer and is now a presenter for the program.

-The program is a weekend conference featuring workshops developed by high school students for students both with and without challenges.

-The focus of the program is on leadership and authentic inclusion. Students learn strategies to make their schools and communities more inclusive and were encouraged to bring these strategies back to their schools.

Education and Achievements:

-Michael graduated with a diploma after 7 years at Notre Dame College, with the support of staff and appropriate accommodations.

-Key takeaways for educators:

- Get to know your students.
- Ask questions and allow space.
- Think outside the box and ensure inclusivity.
- Encourage open discussion.
- Set achievable goals and find ways to make learning fun.
- Focus on what students can do, rather than what they can't.

Professional Accomplishments:

-Michael works at Sobeys, which employs individuals with disabilities and sponsors Special Olympics Canada.

-He managed to get his book distributed to stores across Canada.

-He served as a board member for **Community Living Ontario** and was President for two years.

-He was a member of the **Fonthill Rotary Club** for four years and received the **Paul Harris Award**.

-Michael was appointed by the **Minister of Education** to join the **Minister's Advisory Council on Special Education**. He is the only member with lived experience.

Inspiring Impact:

-Michael has made significant contributions despite challenges in reading and writing, including becoming an author. He presents to universities, colleges, and agencies to share his story and advocate for individuals like himself across Ontario.

-Through his work, Michael has raised over **\$12,000** in donations for various organizations he supports.

C. AGENDA ITEMS

1. **Chair's Report** – Chair Somma

Goals now shared with QR Code and like is also on agenda. SEAC will revisit in February to discuss the items.

2. **Google Form for goals work** <https://forms.gle/y8nZeug8uG7Q9SKW8>

3. **Letter to Ministry of Education on behalf of all SEACs in Ontario**

Seeking support for Call to Action from other SEAC. The focus on insufficient funding for special education programs and services in combination with the critical shortage of Educational Assistants. The province is facing a severe shortage of qualified Education Assistants. A lack of appropriate staff and support can also result to keep students at home. 72% of elementary schools and 67% of secondary schools that have daily shortages are recommending students that require EA support stay home. Some strategies were provided: Free tuition for EA Programs, Retention Bonuses, Living wage and benefits, Enhanced Professional Development, Improved working conditions, Stable Employment, Increase and improve all special education resources. They are asking us to consider as Niagara Catholic SEAC to support this letter.

-How could "living wage and benefits" be spoken about by SEAC?

-Agreement that a lot of suggested ideas do not have to do with SEAC, very important but more data will be needed to support this.

-We are in the process for planning for the inevitable shortage of EAs. Mohawk college has already shut down their program due to lack of interest. We are preparing in schools for worst case scenarios already. We have onboarded 22 new EAs in December. There are concerns on supporting this letter because we have the MACSE survey. Would like to support the cause and include it in our submission for MACSE. Paige will send it to everyone to review.

-start a small committee to meet before the deadline and work through the MACSE form. Paige will make it a shared document for everyone to share on it. Follow up with a brief meeting to discuss what is contributed to the shared form.

4. **Director's Performance Appraisal**

Province has determined that a Directors Performance Appraisal is now required. Paige will share the link with everyone to complete the survey. This is a confidential online survey, participation is voluntary. This is managed outside the board and remains confidential.

5. Niagara Catholic Education Award of Distinction

-A member from SEAC is invited to represent and have a vote on the committee. The meeting is February 4 at 1:00 pm. Let Chair or Gino know.

6. Co-Chair Still looking for a co-chair if anyone is interested.

D. AGENCY REPORTS

Learning Disabilities Association of Niagara Region – Madeline

Niagara Children's Centre –Michelle

-Thank Niagara Catholic for support and partnerships in the roll out of the tiered model.

- Extensive needs service continues this is the ENS that is co-led by Niagara Children's Centre in Contact Niagara. Receiving positive feedback regarding the impact of the program regarding children's participation at school and engagement and routines.

- Transition to school season has begun. Functional checklists have been utilized and getting prepared meetings with board staff have already been booked for end of January and early February. Specifically the entry to school program in the fall with Bethesda done with children born in 2020 or earlier.

-New Winter event guide is out for January to March. Wo new "Tween" group for age 8 – 13; working on tabletop games, crafts, conflict resolution and general social interaction. Another program is Prepared Pals that also has a focus on tweens and they develop skills such as baking, environmental safety, money management and basic personal care.

Pathstone Mental Health – vacant

Down Syndrome Niagara – Looking for responses from interested community members for a survey to assist in planning next DSAO conference in the fall, this is poste on their FaceBook page.

-World Down Syndrome is on March 21st, theme is "we call on all Governments to *Improve Our Support Systems*"

Bethesda Service – Ramping up Spring program with 90 children that will start the program in March and will run through until the end of August, this is in partnership with the Niagara Children's Centre. At this time there have been 70 intakes and plans in place. They have been using space in Niagara Catholic Schools – St. Gabriel Lalemant, St. Augustine and St. Teresa of Calcutta, it is a wonderful opportunity to offer the program in kindergarten classes and the school support teams have been great to work with. The launch of the winter service guide is on the Bethesda website. They run recreational and clinical groups during the week; the groups are from two years up to adults.

Autism Ontario Niagara Region – Alexandria

Mainstream – Erica

Community Living (Port Colborne/Wainfleet) – Christine

Community Living (Welland/Pelham) – Monique

E. STUDENT REPORT

All 8 secondary schools held their Christmas assemblies, masses and spirit weeks leading up to the holidays. Each school also held their food drives and they have been supporting specific cases at their schools.

STUDENT SENATE REPRESENTATIVE

F. STAFF REPORTS

SECONDARY PRINCIPAL – Preparing for IPRC meetings

ELEMENTARY PRINCIPAL – Reminder that schools are preparing to welcome families to their open houses. All dates will be posted on the website.

STUDENT SUPPORT DEPARTMENT – Snack and Chat, this is system wide and it involves the Early Years Lead, the Behaviour and communication services Lead, the behaviour Analysts and Speech and Language pathologists. This aims to foster communication skills, turn taking, active listening and peer interactions during both snack and lunchtimes in our kindergarten classrooms, while reducing screen time. – Gifted modules are taking place January 21st and 22nd this upcoming module will be on wood construction and aim to teach students about the art and science of carpentry. Students will explore the different types of wood, their properties and how they are used in construction they will also be gaining valuable skills in safety, design, measuring and cutting. Also, BMS recertification for elementary EAs, CYWs and ECEs will be taking place on the January 17th PA Day. The day will begin with Dr. Jody Carrington who is renowned for her expertise in solving complex human-centred problems, as well as promoting authentic human connection. The secondary EAs, CYWs and student support department and Social workers will have the same session on the January 29th PA Day.

Gino would like to extend the invitation to SEAC for the 17th at Club Roma or on the 29th at White Oaks there will be a table reserved for you if interested. Julia Nemcko and her team have been working on a proposal that has been supported through the finance department to offer 21 different initiatives between January and August for the Behavioural Analysts. These are newer opportunities to collaborate with chefs in our schools for programming for different ages of students. **TRUSTEE REPORTS** – In December, trustees and senior administrative staff met one evening at Holy Cross for an annual faith retreat. It was blended with social time, joining them was principal Filice and some of the staff at the school who were hosting. Members of the board Chaplains gave trustees and the staff education and skills in making pizza and how each ingredient compared with the ingredients of our Catholic faith.

G. NCPIC REPORT

H. NOTICES OF MOTION

I. INFORMATION ITEMS

J. MOMENT OF SILENCE / REFLECTION OF LIFE

K. NEXT MEETING – February 5th at CEC

L. ADJOURNMENT