



REGIONAL CATHOLIC PARENT INVOLVEMENT COMMITTEE MEETING
Wednesday, November 24, 2021 – 7:00 p.m.
Virtual Microsoft Teams Meeting

- Present:** Carol Luciani (Trustee), Robert De Rubeis (Superintendent of Education), Marcia DeDominicis (Principal Lead), Keri Chartrand (Principal, St. Theresa), Holly Claicovo, Samantha Declair, Megan Flexman, Jennifer McLaren Gibbons (Principal, St. Gabriel), Megan Gillanwater, Angela Hogeveen, Taren Hopkin, Chloe Huszczo, Rebecca Johnson, Peter Marchand (Principal, Our Lady of Providence), Stephanie Marr, Melanie Montague, Tara Morris, Heidi Pasztor (Principal, Our Lady of Fatima), Tammy Pogorzelski, Chantelle Purdy, Katherine Reko, Stéphane Rouleau (OAPCE Director), Jessica Spencer, Ella Stypa Jones, Marie Teskey (Chair), Gregory Wilson
- Guests:** Amanda Detmar (Clinician at Woodview), Heather Rosser (Social Worker), Dianne Wdowczyk (Mental Health Lead), Deb Young (Director of Services at Haldimand-Norfolk REACH)
- Regrets:** Melodie Spencer (Co-Chair)
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1. Opening Prayer / Land Acknowledgement

Marcia DeDominicis, RCPIC Principal Lead and Principal of Christ the King in Brantford, led the group in the opening prayer and provided the land acknowledgement by recognizing the Indigenous land on which we gather.

2. Welcome and Opening Comments

Superintendent De Rubeis welcomed Trustee Carol Luciani, all participants, and guests to the meeting. He briefly introduced the special presentation on mental health matters.

3. Approval of Agenda – November 24, 2021

Moved by: Marie Teskey

Seconded by: Rebecca Johnson

THAT the RCPIC approves the agenda of the November 24, 2021, meeting.

Carried

4. Declaration of Interest - Nil

5. Approval of the Minutes – June 9, 2021

Moved by: Tammy Pogorzelski

Seconded by: Stéphane Rouleau

THAT the RCPIC approves the minutes of the June 9, 2021, meeting.

Next meeting dates, time, location: February 23rd, 2022, April 27th, 2022, May 25th, 2022 @7:00p.m., Virtual Teams Meeting



Carried

6. Farewell and Welcome - Stéphane Rouleau & Marie Teskey

Superintendent De Rubeis thanked Stéphane Rouleau for his prior work and involvement as the RCPIC Chair and Co-Chair, as well as his continued work as an Ontario Association of Parents in Catholic Education ("OAPCE") Director and representative for the Board and region. Stéphane Rouleau shared that he has been a member of RCPIC for the past seven to eight years and thanked the members of the committee for the opportunity to act as Chair. Superintendent De Rubeis welcomed Marie Teskey as the new RCPIC Chair for the 2021-22 academic year and wished her well in her new role. Marie Teskey shared that she has been a member of RCPIC for five years and thanked the members of the committee for the opportunity to work alongside Melodie Spencer as Co-Chair for the current academic year.

7. Parents Reaching Out ("PRO") Grant Applications – Deadline December 17, 2021

Superintendent De Rubeis recalled that parents and guardians play a vital role in the support of student achievement and wellbeing. PRO grants encourage parent engagement at the local, regional, and provincial levels by providing Regional Public and Catholic Parent Involvement Committees and School Councils funding to develop programs, events, or materials to support parents in their school communities. Each year, the school councils of publicly funded schools in Ontario are encouraged to identify potential project opportunities and apply for grants to support school-based initiatives focused on engaging parents in the education system. Examples of projects may include:

- Parent Workshops – math, reading
- Mental Health Information nights
- Social Media and Being Safe presentations
- Guest Speakers – on a topic of interest among parents at a specific school
- Workshops on Self Regulation
- Developing resources for parents to use – translation of key communication documents from the school / Board
- Virtual Yoga / exercise nights for parents

Parents and parent council chairs are encouraged to contact and work with their school administrator to share ideas or express an interest in organizing an event that can be supported through PRO Grants. A request of funds up to \$1,000.00 can be made to promote parent engagement within school communities. The deadline for applications to the Board is December 17th, 2021.

8. Ontario Association of Parents in Catholic Education ("OAPCE") Update

Stéphane Rouleau shared that he is now acting as an OAPCE Director and representative for the Board and region. He reported that OAPCE is the voice of parents and guardians of children enrolled in the publicly funded English Catholic System of Education in the Province of Ontario since 1939.

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OAPCE is the only Catholic parent association recognized by the Ministry of Education and is mandated through the Education Act in Regulation 612 School Councils. OAPCE provides a voice for parents who share a common goal in supporting the continuation and preservation of publicly funded Catholic Education in the province. OAPCE's central mandate is to share information with parents, to have them better informed of local school boards and Ministry of Education policies. He reported that the 'Rebuilding Resilience as Parents' webinar series was presented last Saturday with guest speakers Miguel Martinez, who spoke about coping through challenging times, and Sarah Wesbrooke and Paul Davis, who spoke about online safety and social media practices. OAPCE is planning to host its Annual General Meeting in Spring 2022. Information related to the AGM and the business of the meeting will be brought forth at the next meeting. Superintendent De Rubeis thanked Stéphane for his service as an OAPCE Director.

9. Parent Mental Health – Promoting Well-Being: Mental Health Matters

Superintendent De Rubeis briefly recalled the mental health stresses experienced by parents/guardians, students, and staff brought on by the pandemic. He introduced and welcomed the following guest speakers: Dianne Wdowczyk, BHNCD SB Mental Health Lead, Heather Rosser, BHNCD SB Social Worker, Deb Young, Director of Services at Haldimand-Norfolk REACH, and Amanda Detmar, Clinician at Woodview. He noted the evening's presentation will focus on exploring mental health services available for children, youth, and families in Haldimand-Norfolk and Brantford/Brant, exploring ways to promote mental health and well-being of children and youth, and exploring ways to promote mental health and well-being of parents/guardians.

Dianne Wdowczyk thanked the members in attendance for welcoming her and her colleagues to the meeting. Dianne informed members in attendance that they would be provided with resources and links to assist with mental health and well-being. She began by stating that knowing when to reach out is the best way to support a child, recognizing when they are struggling and knowing where to get professional help.

9.1 Deb Young – Director of Services Haldimand-Norfolk REACH

Deb Young thanked group members in attendance for welcoming her to the meeting. She shared her extensive background in social work. She noted that Haldimand-Norfolk REACH serves children and youth up to 18 years and their families who may be experiencing mental health issues. REACH provides access to child and youth crisis support, quick access support, and virtual and face to face services. She noted that there are opportunities to book an appointment for a "Discovery" meeting with a therapist. The Discovery is a collaborative process that provides a plan to explore service options, next steps, and available post Discovery programs. Other community services may be called into partnership to support children, youth, and families. Information can be found at www.hnreach.on.ca or by calling Contact H-N 1-800 265-8087 x 350. REACH's crisis line and walk-in clinics are options for children, youth, and families who may need more immediate intervention.



9.2 Amanda Detmar – Clinician at Woodview

Amanda Detmar thanked group members in attendance for welcoming her to the meeting. She shared the various community mental health services available in Brantford, specifically St. Leonard's Community Services, Contact Brant, and Woodview. Access and services are like those provided at Haldimand-Norfolk REACH. Woodview's mental health clinics have increased their capacity due to an increased demand for services. Families can book time with a clinician and receive an appointment within a week. Appointments are available 7 days week, either virtually or in person. Information can be found at www.woodview.ca or by calling 519-752-5308 press 0 or texting 226-920-4427. Services include youth drop-in sessions four days week, quick and intensive services, elementary and secondary day services, "stop now and plan" services, anxiety and autism services, and "wrap around" programs for families with complex mental health needs. There are caregiver peer-support groups also available once per month.

9.3 Dianne Wdowczyk – Mental Health Lead for the Board

Dianne Wdowczyk shared work being done at the Board to promote mental health and well-being to remove the stigma of seeking help. She noted that there is a tiered approach to mental health supports at the Board. Tier one is the foundation where our Catholic educators provide the first steps to identifying and addressing mental health concerns with students, families, and staff. Pathways to care creates partnerships with Board special education resource teachers, social workers, child and youth workers, parishes, and families to provide school based mental health supports to enable students to succeed.

Dianne shared statistics currently showing a 45% increase in stress for children and youth over the past 30 years, not accounting for the current pandemic. Dianne spoke to the group about resiliency, the ability to deal with, recover from and overcome from hardship, misfortune, change or shock, and the ability to "bounce back" due to current changes. She noted that parents/guardians can't give their children resiliency, but parenting does have a major impact on resiliency. It is important to build strong, healthy relationships and to make quality time for each other as educators, parents/guardians and children who all have experienced ongoing stresses from the pandemic.

9.4 Heather Rosser - MSW for the Board

Dianne Wdowczyk welcomed Heather Rosser, MSW for the Board. Heather works predominantly out of Holy Trinity Catholic High School in Simcoe and the Haldimand-Norfolk area. Heather noted that if services provided by the Board do not address a child or youth's mental health needs, the Board has access to other services within the community to provide the best "fit." Any child under the age of 18 requires parental consent to gain access to mental health services; however, engagement with children may be kept confidential but parent/guardian support is recommended. She noted that self-care for parents/guardians is key to help support resiliency in children and youth. She shared that all parents/guardians are using more screen time with their children due to employment and school needs;



however, it is important to schedule time with each child to enjoy time together. Regression during the pandemic can be normal as children and youth may not be hitting development milestones.

Further to Dianne's update, Heather reiterated the importance of staying connected with our children and how we are all impacted by the pandemic. Heather focused on taking the time to listen to our children through good communication and to pay attention to what they are saying to validate their feelings. Heather encouraged parents/guardians to be respectful and model the respect to their children and continue to give them the space to express how they are feeling. It was recommended for parents/guardians to avoid the use of cellphones to communicate with children to engage in meaningful conversations.

Dianne provided an update on the different types of parenting, for example, authoritarian; no room for negotiation and laissez-faire, where not a lot of guidance is being provided. Dianne and Heather encouraged parents/guardians to help their children understand the "why" and recognize consequences to help our children make independent decisions. Supporting resiliency can be taught by optimistic thinking which may be difficult during the pandemic; however, parents/guardians are encouraged to gently challenge negative thoughts, demonstrate a more positive view, and model optimistic thinking. Supporting resiliency can also help children deal with stress by eliminating or minimizing most harmful kinds of stress; however, the goal should not be to eliminate all sources of stress but to teach children to help themselves or seek help from others. Dianne and Heather recalled the past 20 months and what they have taught us about being resilient and to be hopeful for the future, specifically preparing for a stress-free Christmas break and a January return to routines. Dianne and Heather concluded with tips for parents/guardians to help their children and themselves to maintain healthy habits, promote self-care, good mental well-being, and how to be kind to oneself.

Links to additional resources are included here:

For information on how to promote well-being at home visit: <https://smho-smso.ca/blog/online-resources/easy-and-fun-mental-health-activities-for-home/>

For information for parents who may have concerns with their child's mental health visit:

<https://smho-smso.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Info-sheet-noticing-concerns.pdf>

<https://smho-smso.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Tip-Sheet-How-Do-You-Know-If-You-Should-Be-Concerned.pdf>

For information for parents who want to learn more about suicide prevention visit: [PREPARE; PREVENT; RESPOND: A Suicide Prevention Guide for Parents and Families During COVID-19 and Return to School \(smho-smso.ca\)](#)

For information about the free webinar being hosted by Bayridge Counselling Centre - Monday November 29th, 2021 [Families Fractured by COVID-19 \(learnworlds.com\)](#). New users will need to make a free account first to register.

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For information about **BounceBack®** - a free skill-building program managed by the Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA). Visit: <https://bouncebackontario.ca/>. This program is designed to help **adults and youth 15+** manage low mood, mild to moderate depression and anxiety, stress or worry. It is delivered over the phone with a coach and through online videos and includes access to tools that can support you on your path to mental wellness. Remember, it's essential to take care of YOU!

Closing Remarks/Adjournment

Superintendent De Rubeis and Marcia DeDominicis thanked members and guests for their continued support and for taking the time to attend the meeting. The next RCPIIC meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, February 23rd at 7:00p.m.

The meeting adjourned at 8:45p.m.