

CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT OF THE CITY OF NIAGARA FALLS
DISTRICT PARENT COMMITTEE
Minutes

Tuesday, June 3, 2025, at 5:30 P.M.
First Floor Conference Room – Administration Building

Present: Jacqueline Blaber, Tammy Capatosto, Rory Diamond, Angela Douglas, Laura Hood, Karen Howard, Heather Johnson, Stephanie Lee-Martin, Jolene Nearhood, Dara Nowak, Charlotte Robinson, Raquel Satarian, Nick Vilardo, Mark Laurrie, Stan Wojton and Wendy Tedesco.

Schools Represented: Cataract, Hyde Park, Gaskill Prep, Maple, LaSalle Prep, and NFHS

Schools Missed: Abate, Bloneva Bond, GJ Mann, 79th Street, and Kalfas

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Procedural Matters

1. All concerns should be taken to your building principal or School Quality Council before being brought up at the District Parent Committee meeting.
2. The information discussed at the DPC meeting is to be relayed back to your school parent group.
3. At least one representative from each school should attend each meeting. If one representative cannot attend a certain meeting, they should notify their alternate representative.
4. The meeting agendas and minutes can be found at www.nfschools.net under the “Parent & Guardian” tab, “District Parent Committee” heading.

District Update

Mr. Laurrie thanked everyone for all of their support this school year. Mr. Laurrie gave special recognition to Karen Howard, who has been very involved in the District during the time her children attended Kalfas, LPS and NFHS. She has been an asset to the NFHS parent group and it has been a pleasure to have worked beside her. Congratulations to her two sons who are graduating this year. Mrs. Howard is professional and always gives her best. Mr. Laurrie wished her and her family all the best for the future.

Thank you to everyone who supported the school budget, which passed by an 83% margin, with approximately 1,548 people voting. NFCS students were formally trained and worked at 13 polling sites to teach them civics and get them involved. Will continue for next year’s budget vote.

For first time in a many years, the District had a bit of a downturn in enrollment. As of right now, the District enrollment will not reach 7,000 students for the first time. Incoming Grade 9 students is the lowest number in 25 year history of NFHS, with just over 400 students.

The 2025-26 District calendar is out. The first day of school will be September 3. Both the spring and winter breaks will be for two weeks. Schools will be closed on February 17 for the Lunar New Year. There will be no school on the day before Thanksgiving. There are three snow days built into calendar.

So far, close to 700 responses received on the cell phone survey. Survey closes tomorrow at 4 PM. Will disaggregate and disclose data soon. Next step is to have in-person town hall meetings and also a few virtual town hall meetings. The new cell phone policy must be approved by BOE by August 1. Will need to decide how phones will be stored.

The Summer Early Learning Program will be held at 79th Street School. Summer Sports and other summer programs will be at NFHS.

In regard to Capital Projects, construction of the four remaining secure vestibules will be completed over the summer. Will also get door alarms up and operational. A/C is on in first floors at both preps. In order to complete hook up of the new power lines needed, there will be a power outage on June 13 and July 16. All District schools will then have A/C. Thanks to BOE and parents for their support. Greenhouse at Bond will be available for use by all schools in September.

Protective window film is being rechecked and any issues corrected. Added our Zero Eyes to cameras at NFHS and Preps. First weekend, had 3 hits. One was from a NFHS student bringing in a squirt gun for the senior lipdub. The squirt gun was detected as a non-lethal weapon. On the Sunday before Memorial Day at LPS, the system detected paint guns as a non-lethal weapon being used near the athletic field. The paint guns are an issue which will be addressed. Will begin installation of Zero Eyes at elementaries and Central Office. In addition to Evolv scanners, may add a new x-ray type machine similar to those used at airport TSA checkpoints.

Media students at NFHS created a documentary about NFHS for the 25-year anniversary. The documentary was very well done. This year, 23 students at NFHS received the Seal of Biliteracy. The NFHS chess team has a perfect record of 15 – 0. The NFHS baseball team won the section and will play in Far West Regionals. The NFHS band went to a competition in Boston and won many awards. Some NFHS students who participated in the Big Picture program will be receiving scholarships. Recently held National Honor Society inductions at NFHS. There are many wonderful students in the NFCS and Mr. Laurie is proud of them all. NFHS Class Day and Prom will be coming up soon. June 26 is graduation, which brings everyone's hard work (students and staff) into prospective. Mr. Laurie thanked all students and staff for a wonderful school year.

Mr. Laurie discussed the Governor's cell phone ban. Will need to decide if phones can be stored in lockers or if will need locking pouches. Will need to address medical exemptions, ENL exemptions, legal exemptions, etc. Staff will also have to make adjustments to their cell phone usage. The District's cell phone policy must contain information on what happens if there is an emergency.

Title I

Mr. Richard Carella spoke about the Federal grant funds that the District receives under Title I. Parents are asked to complete the ESSA funding survey which is located on the District website. The survey link and QR code was included in many of the schools' parent newsletters as well. Mr. Carella's presentation tonight explains how ESSA funding is used and how it will impact parents and students for 2025-26. ESSA is a federal grant administered by each state under Every Student Succeeds Act. The District's federal allocation has increased year over year based on demographics of our student. Typically, the District receives about \$5 Million in funding per year, which is significant (includes Title I, II, IIIA and IV). The funds are used for school improvement initiatives (sound basic education) over and above the normal education students receive. The District sends allocations to approximately 40 private schools, both within the City or anywhere in WNY where our students are enrolled. The amount each private school receives is based on a formula. The private schools must provide the District with documentation as to how they spend the funds. As part of Title I, the District must set aside funds for McKinney-Vento students. There are funds for family engagement as well which each District school receives to support school activities, parent involvement, DPC, etc. Title I also provides funding for professional development and training for teachers, as well as remedial program for students. The grant also covers a few student support staff member salaries such as counselors and social workers.

Title I provides funding for academic intervention services for students struggling in math and literacy, as well as credit recovery for older students who are at risk of not graduating on time. Summer programs and extended

day programs are also included under ESSA. ESSA covers the purchase of academic and assessment material and partially funds the PS2 and PASS teams at NFHS. Also covered under these funds: interventionists, instructional coaches, AIS, remedial staff, program materials, books, software, and teacher training.

The Title I grant runs from September 1 to August 31. The grant application is due on August 31. Have not yet heard anything regarding the District's allocation for 2025-26. Wilson Reading will be added under the grant this year. This program can be delivered daily and would be integrated into the student literacy block. Even though the training for the new program is rigorous, quite a few teachers are interested in getting their certification.

A couple of weeks ago, the Federal Mental Health Support grant was terminated by the Trump Administration. The grant will end in December 2025. The District will have to figure out what other funds could be used to make up for the loss of this grant. Many other districts are in the same situation.

ESSA is made up of different titles. Title I is mostly for remedial services, Title IIA is used for teacher professional learning. Title III is funding for services for ELL students and immigrant students. Title IV has 3 parts: 1) use of technology (technology integrator salary is paid for here); 2) Safe and Health Students is also paid out of Title IV (Mentoring, social emotional growth); and 3) Well-rounded students which allows the District to pursue some enrichment activities (arts, foreign language). There are rumors that Titles IIA, III and IV, are in danger of being cut. All 50 states rely very heavily on these funds. We will continue to advocate for what our students need.

Mr. Carella asks that everyone take a minute to complete the survey.

AOBs

Mrs. Blaber spoke about the upcoming showing of a documentary called "Left Behind" at the Main Street library from 5:30 PM to 8:00 PM. The documentary's Director and two of the parents in the documentary will be in attendance. They will host a panel to answer questions. The City of NF helped to sponsor the event. The documentary is about changes in NYC schools that have adopted the Science of Reading. Everyone is welcome to attend, it is free. Relevant to all levels. Representatives from the NYS PTA Convention will be in attendance also. If the parents in the District advocate by showing a need and an interest, could result in the District receiving funding for the program here.

Mr. Wojton summarized the status of topics discussed at previous DPC meetings this year:

- Family/Community Engagement program – Liaisons participated in 14 community events, in addition to school events, in order to share information with the community.
- Program with Girl Scouts moving forward
- Bus tracking app – 790 parents/families have registered for the bus app. Also have First Student bus app.
- Walk the World event went well and will continue in the future. Jewish Family Services had to restructure due to funding constraints, but will continue to support the District as much as possible.
- Blue Ribbon Graduation measures moving forward. Team at NFHS is doing an amazing job.
- Say Yes – 4 pillars to ensure post-secondary success. Everyone is welcome to attend weekend events. Scholarship piece is moving forward.

Special thanks to Kevin Edwards for preparing wonderful meals for the DPC this year. Mr. Wojton thanked everyone for their support this year. Looking forward to next school year. Feel free to reach out with any questions over the summer.

Ms. Robinson ended the meeting by acknowledging Karen Howard for being an amazing mother and friend, as well as a valuable member of the DPC and the NFHS PEG.

Have a safe, relaxing summer! See you in September.