**Niagara Falls City School District**

**DISTRICT PARENT COMMITTEE**

**Minutes**

**Tuesday, September 26, 2023, at 5:30 P.M.**

**Second Floor Conference Room – Administration Building**

**Present:** Makeesha Booker, Stephanie Dolson, Laura Hood, Heather Johnson, Stacey Kok, Stephanie Lee-Martin, Jen Mettler, Lynn Pasek, Lauren Piaskowski, Charlotte Robinson, Staci Rowe, Raquel Satarian, Cindy Smith, Marlo Stearns, Annemarie Tornabene, Deanna Warren, Cathy Sullivan, Nick Vilardo, Richard Carella, Cynthia Jones, Stan Wojton and Wendy Tedesco.

**Schools Represented**: Abate, Cataract, GJ Mann, Hyde Park, Kalfas, Maple, 79th Street, LaSalle Prep, and NFHS

**Schools Missed:** Gaskill Prep and Bloneva Bond Elementary

**Contact Phone Number**: Catherine Sullivan, Central Office Ph: 286-4217 Email: csullivan@nfschools.net

**Philosophy And Purpose of the District Parent Committee:**

# Procedural Matters

1. Make your nametag when you come in and initial the sign-in sheet.
2. All concerns should be taken to your building principal or School Quality Council before being brought up at the District Parent Committee meeting.
3. The information discussed at the DPC meeting is to be relayed back to your school parent group.
4. 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.
5. The meeting agendas and minutes can be found at [www.nfschools.net](http://www.nfschools.net) under the “Parent & Guardian” tab, “District Parent Committee” heading.

**Welcome & Introductions**

Ms. Sullivan thanked everyone for attending tonight’s meeting and proceeded to introduce district staff in attendance. Ms. Sullivan asked that DPC members let her know if there is a topic they would like to learn more about or if there is anything they would like to see a presentation on at our meetings this year. Mr. Laurrie will give a District update. Mr. Kurilovitch is the presenting on Wizards fundraiser. Mrs. Rowe will provide an update on the clothes closets/McKinney-Vento supplies.

**Back to School News and Updates**

Mr. Mark Laurrie welcome everyone back and thanked the committee for their dedication to the District. He noted that Mrs. Johnson is now serving as a member of the District’s Audit Committee. The Audit Committee consists of five citizens and five BOE members. The Audit Committee provides oversight and direction to the BOE regarding District finances.

The District had a good opening to the school year. The graduation rate is at 86%, which is an improvement over 67% a few years ago. Mr. Laurrie thanked Mrs. Jones for her hard work at NFHS that helped to raise the graduation rate. The District must continue to work on the 6% drop-out rate.

The elementary schools are operating under a new schedule which consists of longer school days. Mr. Laurrie plans on visiting a school each day in order to get a good picture of what is happening at each school.

Installation of the new interactive boards has begun. So far, installation and training has been completed at Kalfas, Abate, and Gaskill. LaSalle is almost complete. Hyde Park is in the planning phase. Cataract will be next, followed by Maple. Teachers must be trained before they receive their new board in their classroom. The boards will be mobile on a stand, not mounted to the wall. This allows for more flexibility. Hoping to have all training and installation completed by January. The new interactive boards have a lot of functionality. The District Technology Integrators will provide a demonstration to the DPC soon.

The District is fully staffed this year. Some retirees were brought back to cover some high school subjects. The District now has 16 social workers, as compared to none 5 years ago. They are a very important resource in the schools.

The new Capital Project is close to State approval. Hoping to get approval in October. Because of year-long wait times on the new HVAC equipment for LPS and Gaskill, will order now to allow time for equipment to be delivered. Bullet-resistant film will be installed on all first-floor windows, as well as the library windows at NFHS. Door alarms will be installed on exterior doors so doors cannot be left propped open.

The District is looking into an additional safety product called Zero Eyes. Zero Eyes is a cloud-based AI program that works in conjunction with surveillance cameras. Will pilot first on outside cameras and then consider adding inside cameras later on. Zero Eyes can detect a potential weapon on a person in view of the camera in a parking lot, for example. Zero Eyes would then send information to a call center that would then alert police and school staff.

There will be an active shooter drill on October 20 at NFHS with all local emergency response agencies. Students will not be in attendance that day. The District hired more safety officers and an additional police officer that rotates amongst all schools. Mr. DalPorto will assign this officer wherever needed on a daily basis.

Afterschool programs will be up and running soon. There is still a bus driver shortage which continues to cause transportation issues. The District may train a few maintenance staff to get CDL license which would enable them to drive buses for student sports.

There are currently over 200 NFCSD students that do not have required immunizations under NYS DOH regulations. These students cannot enter school until they are fully immunized. There are community-based clinics and DOH immunization clinics happening to help get children immunized. The District can no longer accept an immunization appointment card to allow a student to attend school.

The District is in good shape financially. Expecting annual external audit to go well. In regards to the 2023-24 budget, the District should end up with a surplus that can be placed in reserves to be used in the future if needed. Mr. Laurrie reminded everyone that all BOE meetings are live streamed and recorded.

Mr. Laurrie noted that the purpose of this committee is to be a sounding board for any issues parents may have, though he pointed out that parents should always go to their school principal first to attempt to get the issue resolved.

The PTech grants are going well. The focus of the new grant is computer science and information systems. Grade 8 recruitment will begin soon. As a result of PTech and the efforts of the staff at NFHS, many students have earned a great amount of college credits prior to graduation.

Mr. Laurrie congratulated Ms. Sullivan regarding her wonderful presentation in Albany on early childhood. Mr. Laurrie thanked Mr. Vilardo for being supportive of the DPC.

**Harlem Wizards**

Mr. Kurilovitch has arranged for the Harlem Wizards game to take place on Saturday, January 13. He noted that the District can also opt to participate in the Wiz Fit Challenge in November in a few of the elementary schools. The Wiz Fit Challenge consists of on-line fundraising and visits by the Wizards to the schools who participate for an assembly. The cost for the Wiz Fit Challenge is $1,500 per school. The school gets to keep a percentage of the funds raised. Each student who participates will automatically receive a prize, with additional prizes based on how much they earn in donations. The Wiz Fit Challenge is also meant to build up interest in attending the big game at NFHS. The DPC and school principals will need to decide whether or not to participate in the Wiz Fit Challenge.

For the game taking place on January 13 at NFHS, there is a $1,350 deposit due. Mr. Kurilovitch has worked over the summer to obtain donations from sponsors to cover the cost of the deposit. Mr. Kurilovitch will provide a letter to DPC that can be used to obtain additional event sponsors as well as donations. The full cost to have the game is either $5,000 or 48% of ticket sales. Mr. Kurilovitch is estimating that the District should be able to sell at least 1,500 tickets. The Main Arena at NFHS can hold approximately 2,000 people. Mr. Kurilovitch was able to get the Holiday Inn to donate the hotel rooms for the Wizard players to stay for the game on January 13. Fidelis Care and Independent Health are tentatively going to donate $500 as sponsors of the event. Vision Financial is donating 15 tickets to a box suite at a Sabres game. The District will charge $100 per person for the box, which will raise a total of $1,500. The box suite ticket includes free transportation to and from the game, food and drinks. Open Door Productions, who is a local theatre group, will provide some entertainment at the game. The Buffalo Sabres are donating a signed hockey stick that can be raffled off. Ticket prices for the game are $12 for students and $15 for adults ($10 and $12 in advance). The Wizards also offer different types of VIP tickets at a higher price. Concessions can also be sold at the game. 100% of the concession proceeds will go to the schools. The Harlem Wizards bring merchandise to sell. We must provide the volunteers to sell their merchandise. The schools get to keep 25% of merchandise sales. Another way to raise additional funds is to have a 50/50 drawing during the game (all proceeds would go to the schools). Mrs. Tornabene volunteered to open up a bank account to use for the event and will go back to her parent group to find a second person to oversee the account with her. All proceeds from the event will be split evenly between all district schools.

Each school will need to have a point person to be in charge of distributing fliers to students/families and collect advance ticket sales. If any of the schools choose to do the Wiz-Fit program, the point person would have to make the arrangements, as well as field questions.

Some areas where volunteers are needed:

* Solicit donations and sponsors
* Sell Concessions
* Sell Wizards Merchandise
* Ushers/Tickets
* Driver to pick up Wizards from Airport/Hotel and drive them back (Mrs. Rowe volunteered)
* Reach out to Stewart Sports for T-Shirts (could use T-shirts from meat raffle/Char has 17 extras)
* Clean up after game.

Mr. Kurilovitch’s email is kurlomatic@aol.com if anyone has any questions. He will email a list to everyone of what volunteers are needed in what areas. The DPC must make a decision about the Wiz-Fit Program by the end of next week. Therefore, please reach out to your school principals to see if they would like to participate. Mr. Kurilovitch will attend next month’s DPC meeting to provide updates/discuss.

**Clothes Closet Update**

There are currently about 200 homeless students in the District. Mrs. Rowe spent the summer setting up/re-organizing the Clothing Closets located in each school. There is also a Clothing Closet at Head Start and at Little Wonders Day Care Center in front of NFHS. Mrs. Rowe is now a member of a few community-based committees in Niagara Falls such as Carolyn’s House. Her office is located in Room 205 at CEC where items for the clothes closets are stored along with all of the McKinney-Vento supplies. Mrs. Rowe works with Mrs. Chowhardy and Mrs. Flournoy on the McKinney-Vento grant. The Federal grant provides funding to give needed supplies to students and families. Each school has a McKinney-Vento liaison. They have regular McKinney-Vento meetings to address any needs or concerns. If a school liaison becomes aware of a family in need, they will complete an order sheet and submit it to Mrs. Rowe. Mrs. Rowe then packs all the items needed and brings them to the school liaison for distribution to families. As well as school supplies, the grant funds provide clothing, personal care items and cleaning supplies. If anyone has a clothing donation, they should bring the items to your child’s school. Mrs. Rowe will collect the donations and distribute accordingly. Mrs. Rowe can arrange confidential meetings with families as needed. Eventually, Mrs. Rowe will set up a service schedule for each closet. Mr. Carella thanked Mrs. Rowe for her dedication.

***Next Meeting: Tuesday, October 24, 2023***