

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

Wednesday, October 22, 2025, at 5:30 P.M.
First Floor Conference Room – Administration Building

Present: Jacqueline Blaber, John Caldwell, Dasha Colvin, Stephanie Dolson, Andrea Douglas, Heather Johnson, Anna Lavigueur, Alyssa Neadow, Dara Nowak, Lauren Piaskowski, Charlotte Robinson, Cindy Smith, Marlo Stearns, Jolene Nearhood, Cheryl Vilardo, Stan Wojton and Wendy Tedesco.

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

Schools Missed: Bloneva Bond

Contact Phone Number: Stan Wojton, Central Office Ph: 286-4189 Email: swojton@nfschools.net

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.

NYS PTA

Mrs. Stearns spoke regarding the New York State PTA conference. As one of the Niagara Falls representatives, she attended the regional conference this year and is obtaining a lot of new information. NYS PTA has decided to have their annual convention in Niagara Falls. Therefore, it is important that Niagara Falls show good representation at the convention. Would like to collaborate with school PEGs. Please contact Mrs. Stearns if interested.

Every Person Influences Children (EPIC)

Ashley Green, Director of Niagara County programs for EPIC, informed the DPC about the Family Opportunities Center located at 175 Walnut Street, Suite 5 in Lockport which opened in 2023. A Connect Niagara bus stop is located right near their center. They work closely with Niagara County Department of Social Services and service all families in Niagara County. Their main hub is located in Buffalo and has been in operation for 45 years. They offer services virtually (if transportation is an issue), as well as in-person. At the Center, they offer a free, daily open play where families can come with children in a safe environment (geared towards children ages 7 and under, but also have activities for older children). The Center also hosts a free family fun night each month. Recently, they hosted family events at the Aquarium of Niagara and the Culinary Institute. They cover the costs of these events and provide a meal during the event. In order to attend these events, families must register through the Center. Families can sign up to receive the Center’s monthly newsletter and fliers. Can register by scanning QR code located on their website and FaceBook page.

Each year, they plan to offer a free Halloween costume swap at the Center. In conjunction with Cornerstone Federal Credit Union, they are offering a family budgeting virtual workshop tomorrow. They also support families by offering

parenting education and case management services. Their financial assistance program is on pause right now, for which they have a full waiting list. Funding will renew in March. In order to be eligible for their services, must be a Niagara County resident and have a child(ren) under the age of 18. There are no income restrictions. People who participate in their 4-week virtual parenting class are then eligible to receive help with extracurricular activities, security deposits, and kitchen appliances. On Wednesdays and Fridays, they offer information/workshops on early intervention services for caregivers who have children with special needs.

On December 8, will hold a holiday toy swap at the Lockport YWCA. Donations of new or lightly used toys are now being accepted. In order to accommodate as many families as possible, each family receives 5 tickets per child to "purchase the gifts". Toy donations can be placed in the designated box at the Lockport Center. They are looking for businesses that would be willing to be a collection site. EPIC employees would come to collect the bins.

Now offering a new program called "Every Bottom Covered" that provides 50 free baby diapers and wipes on a monthly basis, along with some other hygiene products. Families with a child under 3 can complete an application to be eligible. They are coordinating with the Family Resource Center at Bloneva Bond Primary School so that families can pick up the diapers and wipes from there.

EPIC offers parenting workshops at schools. Workshops can be tailored to meet the needs of parents in the NFCSD. Ms. Green will provide all fliers and information to Mr. Wojton via email so that he can share with District staff and families.

Ms. Nicole Pusatieri, also from EPIC, spoke about the waiver program through Medicaid. They offer people help with such things as moving costs, housing assistance and cooking supplies (plates, kitchen appliances, etc.). Also offer assistance with transportation and food delivery. She encouraged any families/individuals who already receive Medicaid to reach out to them to see how they may be eligible to get further assistance. Can meet with people in-person, by phone, or virtually, and have the ability to work with families who don't speak English. EPIC gets a lot of referrals from pediatrician offices. They also assist with job training and employment opportunities.

ENL Family Engagement Celebration & Messaging

Mrs. Mallory Leo presented on the ENL Program and District Messaging. The NFCSD is made up of a diverse group of students and families with different cultures and languages (over 25 different languages). Not all of these students require ENL services, as some students are bilingual. Beliefs, customs and traditions are very important to them. As part of the ENL program, it is important to honor special holidays and celebrations of different cultures. For example, at GJ Mann there are two students who are celebrating Diwali this week. The parents of the students came to the classroom to share information on Diwali.

The ENL program is funded through a Federal grant. The amount of the grant fluctuates from year to year. With these grant funds, the District holds an ENL summer camp in August at one of the elementary schools. During the summer camp, the District brings in community vendors to interact with students. The annual Walk the World event will take place on April 25 which showcases and celebrates all the various cultures. The ENL Program also offers an ENL parent orientation at the annual ENL Family Engagement Celebration. This event will take place tomorrow. Everyone is invited. At the ENL Family Engagement Celebration, they offer diverse foods and bring in community resources that are important that families may not have access to normally. The Parent Bill of Rights is presented to the parents as well. For the first time, will be recognizing 25 students who have tested out of the ENL program. District staff received training on a new translation program called Wordly.

Mrs. Leo worked with Mrs. Stearns, Mr. Wingert and Ms. George on the District Messaging last school year. They incorporated trauma informed messaging to reach out to parents, staff and students. Mrs. Leo displayed the messages they created and would appreciate feedback so they can make changes/improvements. She would also like feedback on the best way to send these messages out (text, email, autodial, community events). The District

Messages were made to be eye catching, helpful and impactful. Mrs. Blaber suggested creating messages through the lens of families/caregivers who have students with disabilities. Ms. Leo provided a QR code for everyone to scan so they can provide feedback.

District Update

Mr. Wojton noted that have had two successful Say Yes Saturday Academies so far. One was held at Cataract and the other at Bloneva Bond. There were over 200 participants at each event. He encouraged everyone to attend. All are welcome and there are activities for everyone. The next Saturday Academy will be held at Abate on November 1, then the next is at Gaskill on November 15.

The Elementary One-Mile Run has been moved to next Wednesday due to rain.

This past week, there was a power outage at LPS and students had to be sent home. LPS staff did a good job in making sure students got home safely.

Next week, trick or treat for Halloween is from 4 to 7 PM. Many schools have special events going on as well.

End of the 10-week marking period for Secondary is coming up on November 14.

Fall sports are closing out. Will be a quick turn to winter sports. Parents should scan the QR code to update and upload student physical, which must be done for each sport season.

Sandy Hook reporting system training will finish up next Friday for District staff at NFHS, GPS and LPS. There have been 101 tips reported since inception of this valuable program.

Next meeting Wednesday, November 19, 2025
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