CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT OF THE CITY OF NIAGARA FALLS
DISTRICT PARENT COMMITTEE
Minutes
Wednesday, October 21, 2026, at 5:30 P.M.
First Floor Conference Room – Administration Building

Present: Susan Adams, Taylor Alianello, Michael and Jon'Nett Barksdale, Tammy Capatosto, Heather Johnson, Anna Lavigueur, Stephanie Lee-Martin, Dara Nowak, Melanie Place, Charlotte Robinson, Raquel Satarian, Audrey Seekins, Cindy Smith, Marlo Stearns, Keshia Vincent, Nicholas 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.

Mrs. Stearns welcomed everyone and started the meeting.

District Updates

Mr. Wojton introduced himself to everyone. Mr. Wojton has lived in Niagara Falls all of his life and has worked with the District for 22 years in many different roles. He is honored to serve as the District's Superintendent of Schools. Mr. Wojton encouraged everyone to share the information from tonight's meeting with their PEG and school community. Presentation documents from this meeting will be send along with the minutes. Inside one of the documents, there is a QR code that links to a survey for parents, students, and staff. **Please complete the survey and share with others as well so they can participate.**

Communication is important in the District community. Mr. Wojton shared a guidance document by Hanover that explains how often to share information and what types of information to share. The District currently has several different ways to get information out at different levels (print media, social media, BOE meetings, newsletters, etc.), but looking for ways to improve. The District has a Family/Community Engagement Team that goes out into community and is present at various events taking place. Last year, the Team attended 22 events. Bloneva Bond has a program where they offer family field trips/retreats in order to build up family engagement. Would like to expand this program district-wide.

This year, there is a Wolverine podcast available through Facebook. Wolverine Chronicles debuted last week which is a new program run by the media students at NFHS. Wolverine Chronicles provides an inside look at the facilities at NFHS and what is available to students to follow different educational pathways. The program airs on the 15th of

each month and will also cover events going on throughout all District schools. Currently, a link to the Wolverine Chronical episode is sent to each school principal so they can share it with their staff. The new podcast is available only through Facebook and Our Schools Channel. Looking for a better way to make both items easily available to everyone. Will look into making them available through Parent Square and/or the District webpage.

District Strategic Goals

Mr. Wojton shared a presentation that highlights the District's Strategic Goals, which covers the six pillars of education being adopted by the District. The pillars will help the District to move forward and continuously improve. As part of an organizational focus, the District now has four Assistant Superintendents (Mrs. Cheryl Vilardo, Mr. Derek Zimmerman, Mrs. Carrie Buchman, and Mrs. Lynne Tompkins). This was done in a manner that was a cost savings to the District to get the best return on investment, as we must be fiscally responsible. There are a number of labor unions that represent District employees. It is important to continue to have a good relationship with each of these unions to move the District forward.

Must provide equity in access to all students and close opportunity gaps in order for students to be successful, all while being culturally responsive. Important to remove barriers and provide the proper interventions. Hoping to expand Head Start and Universal PreK.

The District has begun AI integration, but is being cautious and thorough. Currently, the District uses three specific AI programs. Staff have received professional development on how to use each program. Nothing replaces the dynamic of student/teacher relationships, but AI is a tool that can be used to assist. Will move slowly with integration.

- MagicSchool AI is a tool teachers can use to assist them. It contains many safeguards.
- ThinkTech – Assessment data is entered into ThinkTech, which then provides feedback and reports for teachers to see what curriculum standards students may need to work on.
- Microsoft CoPilot is used by administrative staff to assist them with their everyday work (Excel spreadsheets, reports, etc.).

The new Portrait of a Graduate created by NYS is being adopted by the District. At NFHS, there are various pathways to success available to students (humanities, arts, sciences, etc.). There are currently 60 college credit offerings at NFHS. Portrait of a Graduate's main focus is to assess students in a way they can demonstrate their comprehension by doing something other than taking a test. However, Regents exams will still be offered. Graduates will receive a general diploma with various seals for different pathways. A project-based learning program, which mirrored Portrait of a Graduate, was introduced at the prep schools to see how it would go and stay ahead of the curve. The program was 3 weeks long and was a success. Students at each prep school presented their work to each other. Portrait of a Graduate will bring about a big change in how students are tested and how they will be taught

The District's goal is to take a deeper dive to assess strengths and weaknesses in each pillar and then come up with a plan in the spring. Will collect input from parents, students, staff, etc., as we must work together.

AOBs

Had a good opening of schools. Made some changes in regards to transportation. Must work with NF Coach Lines to accommodate afterschool activities, etc. Met with students from Abate in the springtime to discuss new food options in the cafeteria to make a more enticing menu. There is a dinner program available at NFHS for students involved in athletics afterschool. Bus app works well and is a good starting point, but there is room to improve in the future.

Have instituted DAP (Data Analysis Program) at the District and school levels in order to take a deeper dive into data to inform instruction.

Mrs. Vilardo (Assistant Superintendent) has done a good job with the special education program. Utilizing Functional Behavioral Assessment and Behavioral Intervention Plan to make sure students receive appropriate services.

Next meeting Wednesday, November 18, 2026