

**York Catholic District School Board**  
**MINUTES**  
**STUDENT SUCCESS & PATHWAYS COMMITTEE**  
**Monday, October 23, 2023**

**Attending:**

**Trustee Committee Members:** F. Alexander, M. Barbieri, M. Iafrate, A. Saggese, J. Wigston

**Other Trustees:** E. Crowe,

**Absent with Notice:**

**Administration:** A. Arcadi, J. Sarna, D. Scuglia,

**Recording:** L. Coquim

**Presiding:** A.Saggese, Committee Chair

**OPENING PRAYER:** (The Land Acknowledgement was recited after the Prayer)

**ROLL CALL:** All Present

**APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA**

**THAT** the Student Success & Pathways Committee Agenda be approved as presented.

**MOTION: Iafrate/ Wigston**

**CARRIED**

**APPROVAL OF THE PREVIOUS MINUTES**

**THAT** the Minutes of the Student Success & Pathways Committee Minutes held on May 15,2023 be approved as presented.

**MOTION: Deferred**

**CARRIED**

**BUSINESS ARISING FROM the MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING: NIL**

**PRESENTATION(S):**

**Curriculum Updates Presentations**

**a. Religious Education Updates - *presented by David Pimentel, Principal of Religious Education***

- The 'Growing in Christ, Growing in Faith' FDK materials have been distributed to all elementary schools. The program consists of picture cards, poster packs, manipulatives and big books. The kit is highly interactive with Gospel retellings, prayers, Scripture references, and stories that connect students to students' faith and everyday life.
- The development of the Grade 9 GIFGIC resource outline is in progress, emphasizing the theme of 'Discipleship' and organizing concepts into units, with an ongoing review process.

- The *Fully Alive* program remains the only Bishop-authorized foundational resource for the instruction of the Family Life curriculum and is currently available in grades 1-8. The Fully Alive program is currently undergoing a review for the purposes of a refresh publication. The retirement of the current version will only take place with a retirement notification from The Institute of Catholic Education (ICE). ICE is responsible for creating the curriculum, while the Assembly of Catholic Bishops of Ontario approves it and selects a publisher. The goal is to finalize both the curriculum and the publisher by November 2023, with hopes to launch a grade 1 program in Fall 2024.
- The religion department will provide in-service training for one staff representative from each school to build capacity concerning the Family Life curriculum and Fully Alive program.

There are several upcoming events to mark on your calendar:

- WFMP Youth Forum on October 26, 2023, and WFMP from October 27-28, 2023
- YCDSB Annual Board-Wide Mass of Reconciliation and Renewal on March 21, 2024
- Catholic Education Week, which will run from May 5 to May 10, 2024

During the religion presentation, there was a continuous and open exchange of ideas and discussions. Trustee Crowe inquired about the budget allocation for acquiring FDK *Growing in Faith, Growing in Christ* resources, to which Principal Pimentel affirmed that the necessary funds had been allocated from this year's budget. Trustee Saggese also inquired about the availability of the resources in both print and media formats, to which Principal Pimentel confirmed that indeed, both platforms had been acquired.

Trustee Crowe highlighted that recent years have seen extensive deliberations regarding the Family Life resource. She also noted that while the YCDSB curriculum aligns with the Ministry curriculum, incorporating a Catholic perspective, some level of discord among stakeholders remains evident.

Trustee Crowe expressed her utmost satisfaction with the proactive approach undertaken by the Religion Department, which involves the appointment of Family Life leads at each school and the provision of professional development to ensure consistent messaging and support as needed. Both Trustee Crowe and Trustee Saggese emphasized the paramount importance of actively promoting this initiative on our social media platforms.

Furthermore, Trustee Crowe sought clarification on the specific roles and responsibilities of the Family Life leads within the schools, with Principal Pimentel indicating that they would receive guidance and training in best practices.

When the discussion shifted to Faith Ambassador events, Trustee Crowe emphasized that in the past, trustees had been invited to participate in these offerings and that the trustees had not been included in the invitations last school year. Trustee Crowe requested that going forward, they be invited. Trustee Saggese echoed and shared the same sentiment.

Trustee Alexander noted that attendance at the Day of Reconciliation Mass has seen a decline over the past two years. He suggested that there be efforts made to promote and actively engage students in attending this event.

**b. School Improvement Plan - presented by Daniel La Gamba, Coordinator of Elementary Programs & Cristina Mazzeo, Coordinator of Secondary Programs**

- The Ministry has replaced the Board Improvement Plan (BIP) with the Student Achievement Plan (SAP), and three of the school's improvement priorities derive from the SAP. Additionally, this year, the new Multi-Year Strategic Plan (MYSP) has been implemented, with two of the school's improvement priorities deriving from the MYSP.
- Collaborating with both the IT department and Student Services, the Curriculum department has created Google SIP templates. These templates enable schools to collaboratively work on goals and strategies aligned with the Minister of Education's directives, as informed by the EQAO results from previous reports.
- The new school improvement priorities have replaced the previous pillars. Each priority consists of a single School Improvement Plan (SIP) goal that identifies areas for improvement and establishes a quantifiable indicator related to student performance. These indicators are then reformulated into SMART goals, with each SMART goal outlining a strategy to achieve the school's predefined benchmarks.

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Coordinator Mazzeo started the presentation and provided a brief demonstration of the steps required to complete the template. Additionally, she noted that the smaller set of strategies is more manageable for monitoring and aligning with the YCDSB MYSP.

Trustee Alexander further inquired whether data collection would take place at both the school and board levels. In response, Coordinator LaGamba indicated that the ministry mandates reporting at both levels and the template has been crafted with the capacity to accommodate this requirement.

Trustee Saggese also asked about the data entry process, specifically whether only the principal could input data into the template. In response, Coordinator LaGamba clarified that staff have access to the Google template version for drafting purposes, but once the principal approves their school's plan, the final submission is only through the principal via the SIP app.

Trustee Saggese also conveyed that she had received positive feedback from staff during the initial release of this template on the PA day rollout. Users have found the form user-friendly and helpful in encouraging staff to set goals for the school. She concluded by extending congratulations to everyone involved in this initiative.

Director Scuglia echoed the sentiment that previous tools had been challenging to use and navigate. However, feedback from staff indicates that the new template is not only more engaging but also easier to navigate. He, too, extended congratulations to all those who contributed to the development of this template.

Superintendent Arcadi concluded this segment of the presentation by giving special recognition to his department, IT, Student Services, and Marcelle McShine Quao for their contributions in developing this template for use in schools.

### **c. UFLI Foundations - presented by Marlene Perry, Consultant, Literacy & Maxine Highet, Consultant K-8, Focus on Early Years**

The Ministry of Education has introduced a new language curriculum designed for gr.1-9 students, with implementation scheduled to commence in classrooms across the province starting from September 2023.

- CAD created PDF versions of the curriculum which were shared via system memo. These can be found on the CAD website.
- The curriculum expectations have been restructured into four distinct yet interconnected strands:
  1. Strand A: Literacy Connections and Applications
  2. Strand B: Foundations of Language
  3. Strand C: Comprehension: Understanding and Responding to Texts
  4. Strand D: Composition: Expressing Ideas and Creating Texts
- Strands A, C and D are largely familiar to teachers. They contain expectations carried over from the previous curriculum. Strand B is new to Ontario teachers. Within Strand B, section B.2 has an accompanying continuum titled, Appendix A: Language Foundations Continuum for Reading and Writing grades 1-4.. The continuum contains the scope and sequence of phonics instruction mandated for grades 1- 4.
- The Ministry B.2 continuum is directly aligned with the UFLI Foundations phonics instruction program. The Curriculum Department has officially endorsed the use of the UFLI Foundations manual in all elementary schools.
- The Curriculum Department swiftly responded to the Ministry's communication released in June 2023 by creating a system memo that includes links to PDFs of the ministry documents. Additionally, the Curriculum Department has released teacher implementation guidance and support via system memos.

- Two, optional, after-school virtual PD sessions were offered to help teachers implement UFLI in their classrooms. Well over 300 teachers attended. A recording of the webinar was released the following week
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- While the UFLI resources are available for schools to purchase, it's important to note that these resources are sourced from the US, which can result in longer delivery times.
- The CAD continues to assist teachers in their understanding of the newly implemented curriculum with school visits and "PD on the Fly" videos. These short videos, which can be found on the CAD website, provide teachers with instructional support and attached tangibles to be used with students.
- Consultant Hight's presented a short demonstration of a portion of a UFLI lesson involving phonemic awareness, visual drill, and auditory drill.

Trustee lafrate asked questions about the cost of the resource and whether funding had been allocated to schools for its purchase. Consultant Perry indicated that each school had procured at least one copy of the resource and that it would be advantageous for each teacher using the program to have their copy.

Trustee lafrate also inquired about the possibility of purchasing these manuals in bulk. Consultant Perry responded that there are logistical challenges related to the number of copies the vendor can ship across the border.

Trustee Alexander expressed concerns related to how the new curriculum may impact special needs students. Consultant Perry suggested that Student Services would be better suited to respond to those concerns.

Trustee Crowe inquired about the levelled readers that were acquired for each school and their compatibility with the new literacy curriculum. Consultant Perry affirmed that there is still a role for these leveled readers, particularly for ESL students and for teachers to address expectations involving vocabulary and background knowledge which are essential components of reading instruction. One option would be for students to take home both decodable texts (to address the new curriculum) and levelled readers, ensuring continued support for their literacy development.

Trustee Crowe expressed her enthusiasm for the current program initiative and its implementation, offering compliments on a well-executed presentation.

#### ***d. Pathways Updates - Introduced by Nicholas Galatianos, Principal of Student Success***

##### ***OYAP - presented by Nat Gencarelli: Pathways Consultant: OYAP***

- This school year's priorities are program growth, improved completion rates, and promoting girls' exploration of trades.
- Educational opportunities include the Level Up Skilled Trades Fair and teacher industry tours.
- Key focuses include increasing employer engagement, boosting completion rates, supporting apprenticeships, and aiding graduates in job placement.
- Initiatives like Women in Trades and upcoming events like Dreamer Day aim to help students explore tech-based careers.
- OYAP funding is tied to participation rates, which can vary annually. YCDSB has recovered from a COVID-19-related decline over the past two years.
- With current enrollment, further growth is expected in 2023-2024, providing more opportunities for students and teachers to explore skilled trades.
- The Women in Trades Symposium concluded a year dedicated to introducing young women to skilled trade careers. Over 200 girls from York Region engaged in career exploration, learned from tradeswomen, and networked with peers. Activities included hands-on projects and a speaker panel with women from various trades, resulting in high engagement.

- CRH Canada's Career Day offered a remarkable experience for 80 students from six secondary schools, hosted by CRH Canada, the parent company of Dufferin Construction and sister companies. Students enjoyed networking, career insights, hands-on experiences, habitat rehabilitation, and a tour of Canada's largest quarry, along with freebies and a catered lunch.

**FOY - presented by Germaine Falzone: Pathways Consultant: Experiential Learning**

- The Focus on Youth program is designed to support at-risk high school students in their transition to adulthood by offering quality employment opportunities. The YCDSB is one of the 24 school boards that participate in this program.
- YCDSB staff assess students for program eligibility based on various factors, including academic performance, school engagement, socioeconomic challenges, experiences of systemic racism or discrimination, limited access to community support, and safety concerns.
- In the summer of 2023, YCDSB received 59 referrals and conducted interviews. Out of these, 29 students were hired as mentor/camp counsellors for YCDSB Summer camps.
- The program included a variety of workshops during the summer, covering mental health, leadership, and technology, where students designed unique skateboards.
- Overall, 29 students were successfully hired with a high completion rate of 96.6%. These students collectively earned 54 credits, and the program leveraged seven YCDSB programs/partners for added impact. Results from exit surveys were also shared

**e. Artificial intelligence - presented by Anthony Arcadi: Superintendent of Curriculum & Assessment**

- The presentation discussed AI in education and its practical implications for school administrators, teachers, students, and parents. Due to time constraints, not all aspects of AI in education were covered.
- AI, particularly Large Language Models (LLMs) like Chat GPT or Bing, plays a significant role in various natural language processing tasks. It was emphasized that LLMs are not a replacement for human intelligence, as they do not possess real thinking capabilities.
- In 2022, an artist named Jason Allen gained attention for submitting an AI-generated artwork in an art competition. This highlights the advancements in AI-generated art since then.
- The presentation explored key areas, including Academic Integrity, Assessment, Privacy, and Digital Literacy.
- Challenges in detecting AI-generated work were discussed, emphasizing the importance of promoting academic integrity, encouraging students to declare AI use and the limitations of current detection programs.
- A common educational best practice is focusing on the process leading to the final product and regularly engaging with students during various project stages.
- AI in K-12 education has transformative potential but raises privacy concerns. Adhering to clear values, ethics, and laws is essential. Privacy guidelines, addressing bias and equity, and considering the perspective from which AI responses are generated are crucial.
- Educational staff must stay informed about AI advancements and their use by students. Collaboration with school boards and professional development is essential for this purpose.
- The Ministry of Education has limited mention of AI in education, but it's referenced in the Science curriculum and the upcoming grade 10 Computer Studies Curriculum.

- The presentation included a brief demonstration of AI tools, which can serve students as mentors, coaches, tools, tutors, teammates, and simulators. AI tutoring is becoming increasingly popular at all educational levels.

Trustees Saggese and lafrate expressed gratitude to Mr. Arcadi for the informative presentation. They emphasized that while this is a valuable tool, it should not replace the essential human touch of teachers in education.

**9. ACTION ITEMS:**

- Promote Family Life Lead at Each School - Raise awareness through social media
- Invite Respective Trustees to Faith Ambassador Events - Inform schools
- Enhance Student Participation in the Reconciliation Mass by initiating early event promotion to engage students.
- Request Quote for Bulk UFLI Resources
- Acquire EQAO/OSSLT Results by School and Trustee
- Compare Enrollment in Trades with Other Boards

**10. DISCUSSION / INFORMATION ITEMS: NIL**

**11. NOTICE OF MOTION: NIL**

**12. FUTURE AGENDA ITEM(S): NIL**

**13. NEXT MEETING DATE: Monday, December 4, 2024**

**14. ADJOURNMENT: 9:10 p.m.  
ON MOTION: lafrate/ Crowe  
CARRIED**