Catholic School Council

Improving student achievement and school performance.

Meeting Minutes
September 28, 2026
6:00pm-7:30pm
Notre Dame – Staff Room

Attendance

Administration: Mark Freeman (Principal), Vanessa Aquilina (Vice-Principal), Bryan Dunn (Chaplain), Melanie Facca (Staff Rep) and Kristen Runciman-Bentivegna (Staff Rep)

Name	Sep 28, 2026	Oct 26, 2026	Dec 7, 2026	Feb 15, 2027	Apr 12, 2027	Jun 21, 2027
Alfredo Pulido	✓					
Andrea Boudreau	✓					
Bryan DeSousa	X					
Cathy Blanchard	✓					
Debbie Cheretas	✓					
Donna O'Connor	✓					
Erica Nieuwenhuis	✓					
Helen Biggs	X					
Julie Tippett	✓					
Karla McRae	✓					
Krystal Ferguson	✓					
Laurie Cabanas	✓					
Lisa Stepanic	✓					
Marysia Papagianis	X					
Michelle Brockie	X					
Reannah Vandenberg	✓					
Sandy Estrela	✓					
Stacy Brown	✓					
Sunny Francis	✓					

1. Opening Prayer and Land Acknowledgment

M. Freeman welcomed everyone to the first meeting of the School Council for the 2026-27 school year and invited Chaplain Brian Dunn to lead the group in an opening prayer and land acknowledgment. M. Freeman provided introductory remarks about the School Council's objectives, the meeting schedule and expectations for School Council members. He referenced the by-laws which were provided to each School Council member for reference.

2. Welcome and Introductions

M. Freeman facilitated roundtable introductions of those in attendance.

3. Election of 2026-27 Catholic School Council

The following individuals were unanimously elected to the respective positions:

- Chair – Reannah Vandenberg
- Secretary – Laurie Cabanas
- Fundraising Reps – Julie Tippett/Karla McRae/Debbie Cheretas
- Parish Reps – Sunny Francis (St. Gabriel), Donna O'Connor (St. Paul the Apostle)
- Community Rep – N/A
- Treasurer – Erica Nieuwenhuis
- OAPCE Rep – Alfredo Pulido

4. Catholic School Council Oath

Elected School Council members were asked to sign and submit the Catholic School Council Oath.

5. Council Chair

M. Freeman noted the proposed meeting dates for 2026-27; as February 15, 2027 is Family Day, the meeting will be rescheduled.

6. Principal's Update

M. Freeman provided a summary of the recent New 2 You Sale that took place at the Grade 9 Orientation Day in September. The initiative was very successful raising most of the funds through point of sale and the remaining through cash. M. Freeman acknowledged the efforts of everyone involved who made the event a success, especially J. Tippett. M. Freeman noted that the school is required to report to School Council on its finances three times per year. An update on the school generated funds will be presented during the months of November, March and June.

M. Freeman also provided an overview of two upcoming initiatives for the school year:

- Special Education Coffee Cart Initiative (cost $500) - School Council members voted in favour of supporting the Special Education Coffee Cart Initiative as described by M. Freeman.
- Scoreboard Fundraising Campaign – M. Freeman shared that there is a need to replace the scoreboard outdoors which is no longer functioning. More information about how to donate will be communicated to the community in the time ahead.

The following upcoming events were highlighted for School Council members:

- Council of Chairs Meeting – October 21
- Evening with Bishop Crosby – Date TBD

- Construction Updates – recent enhancements have been made at the front of the school to improve accessibility for the school community, cosmetology renovations are almost complete, a complete upgrade of the culinary is ongoing and will be completed in the coming months, the improvements to the waste centre keeps waste and recycling contained; M. Freeman noted that the impacts of the culinary and cosmetology renovations on students is minimal and strategies were put into place to accommodate delays so as not to significantly impact students taking those courses)
- Parent Teacher Interviews – October 22
- ND Showcase Night – October 29, M. Freeman shared new advertising strategies that will be implemented this year to attract students and families on the border of Burlington and Waterdown to attend ND as parents and families in those areas have expressed interest in the programs and opportunities offered in the school
- Extracurriculars:
  - Sports teams updates: sports teams are underway as expected with the exception of a senior girls basketball team due to a lack of coach for the team
  - Clubs: a day is planned to provide students with an opportunity to learn about the various clubs at Notre Dame, students are encouraged to start a new club if there is interest among a group of students
  - Play: School Council members are encouraged to save the date for the play which will be held on December 2

7. New Business

The following topics were discussed by School Council members which were not on the agenda:

- There was a suggestion to consider pool tables, games and other activities to bring students together in a common area that could be supervised on a rotating basis; the purpose of the space would be to provide an engaging area for students who are looking for something to do during their lunch or breaks
- Commencement will take place on June 25, 2027 in the school's gymnasium rather than First Ontario Place in Hamilton, which will provide more flexibility and reduce the cost for families – the shift from graduation to commencement will enable more students to participate and is meant to promote inclusivity; School Council members had a discussion about photography at the ceremony, ideas shared during the meeting will be explored further in the months ahead;
- The school organized a blood drive after a pause of approximately 15 years; the day went smoothly and Canadian Blood Services expressed appreciation to the Notre Dame community which has the largest blood donation contingent in Halton;
- A new Healthcare SHSM will be starting this year which staff and students are excited about;
- A number of STEAM activities and field trips are planned for the school year including: Power Plant/Butterfly Conservatory/Take Flight (October 2026), Wastewater Treatment Plant (November 2026), W. J. McCallion Planetarium at McMaster University (December), Canadian International Auto Show (February 2027), fostering baby chicks (March 2027), and Teen Ranch (May 2027).
- A brief discussion took place about Notre Dame's social media presence.

8. Motion to Adjourn

School Council members unanimously voted in favour of closing the meeting.

9. Closing Prayer

M. Freeman and V. Aquilina thanked everyone for their active engagement and led the group in a closing prayer.