

Student Success

Learning to 18 Lighthouse
Mentor-Connector Program



Handbook for Teacher Candidate Volunteer Mentors

Prepared for

The Niagara Catholic District School Board

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Adapted from materials written

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for The Virtual Volunteer Project



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A handbook for Teacher Candidate Volunteer Mentors

<http://mentor.ncdsb.com/>

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Student Success/Learning to 18 Mentor-Connector Program

A Handbook for Teacher Candidate Volunteer Mentors

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Student Success/Learning to 18 Mentor-Connector Program

A Handbook for Teacher Candidate Volunteer Mentors



Congratulations!

You are about to embark on a truly worthwhile mission.

Mentoring individuals helps them to gain the confidence necessary to succeed. With your help, students will have the opportunity to succeed in their education through a trusting relationship. Our easy-to-use Web portal provides the tools necessary for communication that is convenient for both you and the high school students that you meet “virtually” to tutor and mentor. The Mentor Connector program will also enhance your on-going professional development as you embark on your own professional career.

We congratulate you for initiating a process that will provide a rewarding experience for you and the students in the program. Your commitment and dedication to this voluntary effort is greatly appreciated..

Why This Program Has Been Launched:

Information on what this program is, the organizations launching it, the children involved, the GOALS of this program, and how we hope it will benefit participating students

A primary goal of any form of mentoring is to **establish a trusting, nurturing, positive relationship between a mentor (often an adult) and a young person**. Mentoring programs also usually take on other goals as part of their endeavor -- to help youth learn a particular trade, to tutor them in a subject, to help them with classroom projects, and so forth.

The Student Success/Learning to 18 Mentor-Connector Online Program has been set up to help support the academic goals of NCDSB's Grade 9 students as well as provide a safe and encouraging environment for a positive, trusting relationship between online adult participants and the students. Other outcomes we hope to achieve include providing guidance and support for Grade 9 students as they experience the critical transition from Grade 8 to Grade 9. And, a final outcome would be the development of positive attitudes about technology from the viewpoint of all participants—students, teachers, mentors, and parents—as well as provide teacher candidates with additional opportunities to practice essential teaching facilitation skills, techniques, and strategies with real students.

Mentoring is connection -- it brings people together. Mentors give, but also receive something in return. This can also be said about the Internet: Cyberspace is connection -- it brings people together. Internet users both give and take online. We hope that this program will provide all participants, mentors and youth alike, with meaningful human connections.

How This Online Tutoring/Mentoring Program Will Work

This program will involve Grade 7-10 students in the Niagara Catholic District School Board. The average age of these students is twelve-fifteen years of age. Because the initiative is linked to the Student Success/Learning to 18 Program, teacher candidates will be working with Student Success Teachers (SST) who will assist in recruitment of student participants and provide campus support for teacher candidates. Based on subject area expertise, teacher candidate mentors will be assigned to special groups, called Rooms, where students can come for subject area tutoring. Personal information will remain confidential as both mentors will be using pseudonyms for identification purposes.

After training sessions for both teacher candidate mentors and student mentees have taken place, participation in the portal will “go live.” In other words, both student mentees and mentors will have access to the portal. Although the tool is available 24 hours a day, the teacher candidate mentors will be officially online for tutoring, advice, and active facilitation of the portal during these hours:

Monday-Thursday: 5:30 PM—9:30 PM

NOTE: These hours may change due to demand.

Program Benefits: Why Volunteer For This

Information on benefits to mentors, Student Success Teachers, parents, and other adults providing their valuable time to the program!

For the mentor, having a trusting, nurturing, positive relationship with a young person can be a wonderful experience. It can:

- give you a fresh or very different outlook on life
- provide you with what it is like to be a student today from a YOUTH'S point of view
- give you insights that can help you in interactions, on or offline, with all youth
- expose you to people with backgrounds and experiences different from your own
- allow you to provide a positive influence on the life of a young person.
- give you the opportunity to help support a student's academic performance, and build skills that will serve the youth for the rest of his or her life.

In addition, we hope that by participating in this program, mentors will

- learn how the Internet can be a positive influence on the lives of youth
- share technology expertise with youth, to help them use computer and Internet tools to pursue their dreams, and connect with resources that can make their lives better
- learn first hand how the Internet can be used effectively to enhance student academic achievement
- learn first hand how volunteers can help enhance student learning
- learn how to use technology to impact their own teaching strategies and understand the usefulness of online mentoring in classroom settings

We want this program to benefit BOTH youth and mentors!

Also, we hope parents and teachers in the Niagara Catholic District School Board, through this program, will

- learn how the Internet can be a positive influence on the lives of youth
- learn first hand how the Internet can be used effectively to enhance student academic achievement
- learn first hand how volunteers can help enhance student learning
- become actively engaged in the learning process of student participants

Program Expectations for Online Mentors

Information regarding how much time this program will take, the do's and don'ts as part of a mentor's participation in this program, how long of a commitment a mentor makes, and other important items mentors want to know!

The Basics. . . .

As a mentor, on or offline, you will work to be a **supportive, caring online adult friend**. You may occasionally counsel, advise or teach. **HOWEVER**, in this program, you are **NOT** a substitute parent, a substitute teacher, or a professional counselor, nor are you expected to be as part of this program.

The Vermont Mentoring Association (<http://www.vtmentoring.org/>) suggests that you think of a mentor in this way:

A Mentor is:

- A Guide
- A Friend
- A Listener
- A Coach
- A Responsive Adult

A Mentor isn't:

- A Savior
- A Foster Parent
- A Therapist
- A Parole Officer
- A Cool Peer

Conversations between teacher candidate mentor and student protégés will center on homework assistance, classroom activities directed by the Student Success Teacher and other classroom teachers, books the youth are reading, as well as and other topics the student might wish to discuss. Other topics of conversation such as those listed in the section called “Online Activity Ideas for Mentors and Protégés” are suggested as a way to keep your conversations flowing.

Basically, you should expect the following:

- At minimum, you should be prepared to spend at least one hour online in the portal **every week** through **June of the current school year**. This facilitation will provide the core of your relationship with the mentees, and are the priority of this program.

Also, you are expected to read and, as appropriate, respond to all e-mails from the Student Success Teachers, classroom teachers, and the project researchers (which will be infrequent).

In addition to these minimum requirements, and as your schedule and interests allow, we encourage you to interact with other mentors in the special online area set up for Teacher Candidates in NCDSB's Web Portal to talk about experiences and ask questions of each other

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We will provide updates to all participants before the pilot period is completed about the future of this program, and how you can, if you choose, continue your participation.

- Don't be surprised if there are ups and downs in the students' contacts with you. At the beginning of the experience, youth will probably drop in often. This may taper off suddenly when the interactions aren't "novel" anymore. Refer to the section called "Online Activity Ideas for Mentors and Protégés" to help keep the conversations flowing.
- Chat and e-mail exchanges with students will not be accessible by other program participants or the general public at any time. For safety reasons and program evaluation, all correspondence in the portal WILL be accessed and reviewed by the research team and be accessible to the NCDSB Advisory Team.

Messages will be rejected if a mentor has violated the guidelines outlined in this online manual, attempted to engage in or encourage criminal activity, or if the supervisor feels the subject matter is inappropriate for the youth.

Otherwise, **no exchange will ever be reproduced or forwarded to any other person without your express approval.**

- For security and privacy reasons, there are some things you should never share with your protégés, and that the youths should never share with you:
 - Your "real" e-mail addresses (those you use outside of this program)
 - Your postal mailing address
 - A phone number
 - Aliases you may go by in any online discussion group
- You are strongly discouraged from sharing e-mails or chat conversations from a student with others, unless directed to do so by the project researcher or supervisor.
- NEVER arrange to meet a protégé face-to-face or over the phone without explicit approval and direction from the Student Success Teachers. Such visits will not be permitted as we must keep in mind parents' safety and approval concerns, and the appropriateness of such encounters.

Also, NEVER arrange to interact with a protégé electronically outside of this program's portal tool. That means do not arrange to "meet" via any online discussion group or chat room on any web site not associated directly with this program.

- No press/media outlet will be notified about your participation or your activities in this program without your express approval.

In a nutshell. . . .

As a Teacher Candidate you will be assigned the responsibility for guiding Grade 7-10 students who are participants in the Student Success initiative sponsored by the NCDSB. Students will contact you through the Web portal provided by NCDSB on an "as-needed" basis, so it is appropriate for your to inquire about

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upcoming assignments and tests and offer your help. Remember that you will be a mentor/tutor to the student, and NOT anything else—you should not act as a parent, teacher, or guidance counselor. Your task will be to encourage the student and offer your help and guidance. You can do this through assisting students in specific assignments, helping them to understand and complete them. You are not to direct the students to do things your way, but rather offer suggestions and positively reinforce strategies that will help them. You will be using a pseudonym and are not to offer any personal information to the student. You will also be required to keep a reflective journal of your experiences which will later be collected and reviewed.

As for the students, this Mentor-Connector program is not mandatory. Students may choose not to participate, even though they have been encouraged to participate in the project. You can try various strategies to encourage student participation; however, you must never demand the student's participation. The best approach is make your first interactions successful—did the student get the help or assistance required when they contacted you? Successful interactions will leave to future contact! Keep in mind that it is the student's responsibility to accept the help that is being offered to him or her. The student is not permitted to share any personal information with you.



Are You Ready to be an Online Mentor?

Take this quick, short survey to find out!

Setting your own schedule is one of the chief attractions of online/virtual mentoring vs. face-to-face mentoring. However, there is nothing virtual about the commitment you are making. There is a young person out there counting on you to respond to his or her inquiries and thoughts, and who wants to hear your feedback on what he or she has to share. It is so easy to say yes to mentoring via the Internet that many people sign up to do so before really considering their expectations and availability, and before thinking about the commitment they are making.

Before you volunteer to be an online mentor, consider the following to determine if you are ready:

- **Do you have regular, ongoing access to the Internet?**
If you are going to take a month-long trip where you will not have access to the Web, or your computer is not currently working properly, now is probably not a good time to be an online mentor. You will need to have consistent, ongoing access to the Internet from now through June of the school year to participate in this program.
- **Do you know how to communicate well via written communication?**
Most of your communication during this experience will be via e-mail or chat. Good writing skills are important, as is the ability to understand the uniqueness of online culture -- for instance, "smileys" [:-)]
- **Do you like reading text online? Or surfing around on a web site? Or reading directions and guidelines online? Or chatting using an online tool?**
This program is going to involve reading and responding to written communications. It is conducted 100% online! That means you are going to be using e-mail, chat rooms, and surfing the web. If these are not activities you enjoy or can commit to, this program is probably not right for you.
- **Can you make a commitment to check your e-mail (via our web site) every week during the duration of this program?**
Again, there is nothing virtual about your commitment in this program! There is someone out there counting on you!
- **Do you have a set time of day or week when you will participate in this program?**
Don't just assume that you will have some time that pops up each week to check on protégés and read messages. Schedule a time each week. Commit to the facilitation schedule!
- **Is this the right time for you to take on a project like this?**
If you are feeling overwhelmed by other responsibilities, now is probably not a good time to be an online mentor.
- **What benefits do you expect out of volunteering virtually? What do you hope to accomplish? What do you hope your protégé gets out of this relationship?**
Answering these questions for yourself will help you know if your expectations are in line with our project goals and defined benefits to adult participants.

If you answered no or had difficulty answering any of these questions, perhaps you are not ready for online mentoring at this time.

Online Mentoring Guidelines and Activities

Information regarding how much time this program will take, the do's and don'ts as part of a mentor's participation in this program, how long of a commitment a mentor makes, and other important items mentors want to know!

Who are The Student Participants??

Student participants are the Grade 9 students in the Niagara Catholic District School Board. The board has established Student Success Teams aimed at providing support to students in the critical Grade 8 to Grade 9 transition period. Research indicates that positive experiences with academic and social events during this critical transitional time lay the foundational skills needed to enable youth to grow into productive and satisfying adult lives. The Mentor-Connector Program is only one of the initiatives designed to provide that support.

More information about high schools in the NCDSB, as well as a list of student days off and other related information for NCDSB, is available on the NCDSB web site (<http://www.niagararc.com/> under the link to Schools: PA and Holidays).

Most Grade 9 students are 14 or 15 years old. According to the Ohio Professionals for School Age Children (<http://www.opsac.com/Attachments/Resources/developmental%20characteristics.pdf>), the following are characteristics of these age groups (but keep in mind that all children are different, and that the following is a very general list):

Physically -- the child:

- May appear awkward as a result of rapid physical growth
- Is experiencing the beginning of puberty
- Tends to tire easily
- Has a high activity level and appetite
- Enjoys cooperative games and competitive games
- Differs greatly in their own maturation rate from others their age

Intellectually -- the child:

- Has the ability to think about their thoughts
- Is capable of high level of abstract thought
- Is beginning to think about their future life roles
- Is able to postpone gratification
- Can plan ahead and organized tasks with little or no guidance from adults
- Is able to construct ideals and reason realistically about them

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- Is able to reason about counter-examples to propositions
- Understands metaphors

Socially -- the child:

- Is sensitive to their appearance
- Is establishing a personal moral code
- Is unsure of their place in society
- Depends on their peer group to develop identify
- Is critical of their parents and home
- May adopt extremes and fads in clothing, speech, handwriting, and mannerisms
- Forms close one-to-one friendships
- Enjoys small, peer-dominated group discussions
- Has a strong desire to assert individuality and independence

Grade 9 students express themselves via written language fairly easily at this developmental stage. However, you may still find glaring errors in their communications. Mentors will encourage their mentee to express their ideas in writing regardless of how well they have mastered the mechanics of the language. Therefore, we ask our mentors to praise their mentees for the content of their messages and for expressing themselves, and THEN, as appropriate, correct spelling with the students. The focus of the project is the development of a safe and nurturing environment for expression of ideas, but gentle correction of spelling, grammar, and punctuation in email correspondence may be appropriate. Of course, in chatrooms, many of our rules for grammar and punctuation are ignored—so be prepared!

Students in the NCDSB work towards academic goals as defined by the Ontario Ministry of Education in their Grade 9 Curriculum Documents found at <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/curriculum/secondary/grade9.html>. The Ontario Ministry of Education provides an enormous amount of information on their web site (<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/index.html>) which is NOT required reading, but might prove helpful to our teacher candidate mentors.

The program has expanded to Grades 7-10. The focus is still on supporting the Grade 8 to 9 transition by providing students with opportunities to build routines and practices that seek answers to learning needs when required before the critical Grade 8 to 9 transition. Opening the project to Grades 7-10 allows students these opportunities.



Tips for Online Mentors

How to get started, how to introduce yourself, things to keep in mind during exchanges with your protégé, where to go for assistance as part of your program participation, how to handle crisis situations, and other information.

Preparation and Things to Keep In Mind

Before you begin, you need to review this! Included here are the essential steps in launching your online relationship successfully.

- PREPARATION
 - Plan a time every week to spend on this project. It won't take **much** time, but it will take **real** time. At the very least, it will mean reading messages and monitoring a chat room for several hours at a time. You may also have messages from the research team or Student Success Teachers you will need to read and, sometimes, answer.
 - We suggest you plan for 20 minutes a week in addition to your scheduled chat room time. This can be at anytime, day or night, that you choose!
 - It may be possible for you to introduce yourself to the students in your group via your blog. Briefly describe your background or interests. Encourage the students to tell similar things about themselves. Do not be disappointed if you do not have this opportunity.

- VERY IMPORTANT THINGS TO KEEP IN MIND
 - Students have received an orientation from their teachers explaining what youth can expect from this online experience. Remember that all messages are being archived and reviewed by the research team and the Project Advisor, and that parents may review exchanges by their child and mentors upon request.
 - You, as a mentor, need to set the tone for this online relationship, and be as open and chatty as you hope your protégé will be. Remember that these are ninth graders; they have a different writing style than adults. They may write in short sentences, and may only offer a few sentences in each reply.
 - Grade 9 is the age when students are learning to master expression of their thoughts via written language even though the mechanics of the language may not be mastered at this point.
 - A person may fear that a youth will forever write "while" as YL or spell "looks" as LUKS. You may find other "short-hand" messages that youth are using as a result of their frequent participation in chat rooms and sending text messages on cell phones. Do not hesitate to ask students to explain to you what the "short-hand" means, but do use caution in correcting spelling. Research indicates that children who are encouraged to write without fear of critique write more frequently, write longer passages, and in the process, develop stronger reading and comprehension skills.
 - So always praise kids for their subject matter of their messages and for expressing themselves, and THEN, as appropriate, correct spelling with the student. (For the most part, you will notice that, while sometimes the spelling is not the best, the flow of content in the e-mails, as well as the grammar, is generally good, for the most part! This is what you, as a mentor, want!)

- Don't be surprised if there are ups and downs in the level of exchanges with youth online. At the beginning of the experience, youth will probably participate more. This may taper off suddenly when the interactions are not "novel" anymore. Refer to the "Online Activity Ideas for Mentors and Protégés" section for suggestions on how to keep the conversations flowing.
- There may come a time during your conversations online that you feel the student would benefit from additional assistance from many of the social and academic support programs NCDSB makes available to its students. A list of the support programs/personnel to contact for these services is available in Appendix B. Be sure to review this material before starting so you will know what is available.

Getting Started

How to get started, how to introduce yourself, etc.

Begin participating in the project by providing the training session coordinator with your signed Consent Letter. Also, if you are going to participate in this program from your work computer, secure permission from your supervisor for your participation in this program. The tasks that will be expected of you include the following:

- **Check your Mentor-Connector Portal mentor account at your assigned time**

Be sure to check the email feature as well as any blogs you have established.

- **If you are provided with email addresses of protégés, quickly send an email to them to introduce yourself!**

Tell the young person how excited you are to be working with him or her, that you are grateful for the opportunity, and that you are really glad to have the chance to get to know them. Encourage them to log in to the chat room when you will be facilitating.

The following is a sample introduction:

Hi, Ann! I have chosen the pseudonym of Marie for this project! [Perhaps, explain why you chose the pseudonym!]

[Mention a fact about yourself and ask a question the mentee will need to answer] I live in St. Catharines, but I was born in Toronto. Have you ever been to Toronto? Are there places you've visited that you would like to call home at some point?

[Tell a bit about your work or your area of interest. Then, ask another question that needs a response.] Even though I am working on my teaching certification at Brock University, I work as a Communications Director for the ABC Corporation. That means I spend most of my time writing, and reading what other people have written. Do you like to write? Would you like to write for magazines or just for your own personal satisfaction?

[Mention a favorite book, movie that you have seen recently, or recent video game played. Then, end by encouraging them to participate in the portal.] Do you like Science Fiction stories? My favorite movies, the Matrix series, are science fiction! Plus, I'm a really into the use of digital

graphics and visual effects! Visual messages is another part of my job—the part that makes my job really fun to do every day! What movies do you like to see? Any favorites? What happens in those stories?

The portal is open to you all the time so you can log in and visit with other students anytime. The mentors will be online in the portal chat room during the following hours:

Monday—Thursday: 5:30PM—9:30PM

We can visit more by e-mail, or I will be in the portal (and give your personal schedule).

If you need any help with assignments, I'm here and if I don't know the answer, I'll find someone who does. I am looking forward to communicating with you and supporting your studies!

During the Relationship

The following are guidelines to keep in mind during your online mentoring experience, and to help you know where to turn if problems arise:

- Make sure you let your protégé and the Project Advisor know when and if you are going on a vacation or business trip that will make you inaccessible for a significant period of time, so they worry why you are not online.
- Share ideas with other mentors! Submit your suggestions and questions to the area in the Mentor Coordinator Portal that is set up for mentors. Feel free to share your information with the other mentors there or ask questions.
- Be sure to respond to emails quickly—within 48 hours—and include open-ended questions that require a follow-up message from the student.
- Remember that protégés are mostly 14 and 15 years old. You need to be familiar with this age group before you begin so be sure you have reviewed the age level characteristics of these learners (refer to the list on pages 12-13 of this handbook.)
- Every online relationship is going to be different; some protégés will write long e-mails; others will spend most of the time in the chat rooms visiting with other students; some will seek out specific mentors. We are hoping to see many exchanges during the week.
- Pace Yourself! Don't try to do it all! We have provided dozens of suggestions on things you and your protégé can do together online, to keep the conversations flowing (See “Online Activity Ideas for Mentors and Protégés” for these ideas.)
- PLEASE proofread all your **e-mail** messages before sending them to protégés. Some people write their messages in a word-processing program first, spell check it, and then cut and paste it into a message for their protégé (1). You may also find a spell-check feature on the Mentor-Connector Portal message interface which allows spell-checking messages before sending.
- A fun way to show emotion via written communication is with "smileys" or :-)
The Unofficial Smiley Dictionary (<http://paul.merton.ox.ac.uk/ascii/smileys.html>) has a listing of just about every "smiley" imaginable!

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- A mentor says, in so many words, "I will help you be whomever you wish to be," not "be like me." Give your protégés lots of options, but don't make choices for them.
- Remember that your protégés, however young, have experienced many things you have not and has knowledge you don't have. Respect their experiences and knowledge, and let them teach you something whenever possible!
- Don't forget that there are many additional social and academic support programs made available to students in the NCDSB. Refer to the list of the support programs/personnel to contact for these services in Appendix B.
- Try to avoid questions that would have "yes" or "no" answers. Some examples:
 - What is that like?
 - Why do you enjoy that?
 - If you do that, what do you think will happen?
 - What do you dislike about that?
 - How could I find out more about this? How could you?
 - How do you think that could be improved?
- Be Patient. Building trust, let alone an online relationship, takes time. A young person may not show it at first, but your encouragement may be just what is needed.
- Praise Is Power! A word of praise in a critical world works miracles in the life of a child.
- A student may ask, "Why can't I meet you" or "Why can't you come here?"
If you live outside of the Niagara area, the answer should be easy—you live too far away. When a student asks this question, you should also remind them that the focus of this program that you both are participating in is to build online (computer) relationships that improve writing and other academic skills. You can also explain that written communication using a tool such as the NCDSB's Web Portal is "cutting-edge" technology and will become a very common way for students and teachers to visit with each other in the near future.
- Communicate with the Student Success Teacher whenever you have a question or concern about a protégé. They will answer questions quickly, and help you in any way possible.
- Help us evaluate and improve the effectiveness of this program by completing the surveys (they will be SHORT and INFREQUENT!)
- And, finally, this terrific advice from online mentors who have worked with students in the past—Have patience. Your students will improve.

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The Vermont Mentoring Partnership (3) publishes a list of common worries novice mentors express. That list is reproduced with the permission of the Vermont Mentoring Partnership below:

What if ...

... my help isn't wanted?

It's not easy to trust a stranger, especially if you're a young person who's had a lot of bad experiences with adults in the past. It may take a whole lot to build up trust. Don't interpret caution as a rejection. A young person may not show it -- in fact, he or she may not even know it fully -- but your help is definitely wanted.

... something really serious comes up?

While most mentoring relationships develop and flourish without serious problems, things do happen. Mentors have an important role, but that role does not include medical or psychological treatment, or family counseling. There are support systems in place for real emergencies. The most a mentor is expected to do -- and should do -- is to help guide a young person to the appropriate source of professional help.

... I'm too different to relate well?

Many first-time volunteers worry that differences in age, race, religion, education, or gender will be insurmountable barriers. Actually, most experienced mentors report that mentoring a young person from a different background broadened their own horizons and deepened their understanding of other people and cultures.

... for some reason I can't mentor anymore?

This is a very serious concern. Mentoring is a deep commitment. It will do far more harm than good to enter a young person's life, build up trust, and then abandon the relationship. Be as honest as possible with yourself when committing to be a mentor -- for everyone's sake. If you aren't sure about in-depth mentoring, try one of the many shorter-term alternatives, such as tutoring, or one-time projects.

... I do something wrong?

If you are there for your young friend no matter what; if you listen and really hear what's being said; and if you do your best to counsel and not to judge, you will have done everything right. Some young people are readier than others for a mentor. Some may test a mentor's commitment. Try not to take such behavior personally. Just keep trying your best and keep doing the right things. Gauge your success by your actions, not your mentee's.

... the person I mentor is a disappointment?

A better question is, "What encouragement can I give if my mentee disappoints himself or herself?" Mentors are in the business of helping young people achieve their fullest potential. You can be sure that mistakes will be made. You won't be able to help a young person learn from a mistake if you can't handle it yourself.

FOOTNOTES

(1) Adapted from PEPHE Telementoring Pilot Project by the University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio (UTHSCSA) Health Education Training Centers Alliance of Texas (HETCAT)

(2) Adapted from Handbook for HP Mentors A resource for participants in the HP E-Mail Mentor program

(3) Included here with permission from the Vermont Mentoring Partnership (<http://www.vtmentoring.org/cwmentor.shtml>)

Inappropriate or Crisis Communications

What to do in inappropriate or emergency situations with your protégé.

The odds of a mentor encountering an inappropriate or crisis situation with a student online in this project are quite slim. You will probably not encounter any situation with your protégés that will require an emergency response.

HOWEVER, we want to make sure that you are aware of what constitutes an emergency situation, and what to do in case of one. **NEVER try to handle any of these situations on your own!**

Remember that all e-mails sent by mentors and chat logs of conversations are automatically archived and reviewed at some point by the research team and the NCDSB Advisory Team for this project.

If a protégé brings up an inappropriate or "crisis" subject matter, you should notify the Student Success Teacher IMMEDIATELY and ask for assistance. If the situation requires it, you should also call the Student Success Teacher or Pat Mete using the contact information given to you during your training sessions (refer to the front page of this handbook!)

Crisis communications from your protégé that should prompt you to ask for assistance via e-mail from the Student Success Teacher can include a protégé:

- expressing interest or participation in a crime
- expressing interest in running away from home
- expressing interest or participation in drug (including alcohol) use
- talking about pornography or hate-related web sites he or she visits regularly or enjoys
- revealing a self-abuse condition, such as an eating disorder or self-tattooing

Emergency communications from your protégé, where the life or health of someone is in danger, that you should ask for assistance via our special crisis phone number (for Pat Mete) can include a protégé:

- expressing interest or participation in suicide
- expressing interest or participation in physically harming someone
- talking about physical or sexual abuse they are experiencing

REMEMBER, you are obligated to report these types of communications even if a protégé states that they do not want this information shared. Mandatory reporting laws require you to contact the Student Success Teacher immediately should you encounter any of the above; they will advise you **immediately** on how to proceed in any of the above circumstances, either by phone or by e-mail. If you cannot reach the Student Success Teacher immediately, begin calling the emergency contact numbers recorded for you at the front of this handbook. It is critical that you reach someone immediately.

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In such situations, we will work very hard to balance the trusting relationship you are building with this young person with the legal and proper procedures to ensure this youth's safety. Mentors will either help participate in any necessary intervention, or be kept informed of any actions taken.

The formal definitions, policies and procedures followed by the NCDSB for sexual harassment, child abuse, and drug abuse can be found at the NCDSB web site (<http://www.niagararc.com> and follow the Board>Policies links) or in Appendix A.

Ending a Mentoring Relationship

When, why and how to end an online relationship with a youth, or to withdraw completely from this program.

This online program has a planned end for all relationships—June of the current school year (if that end date changes, you will still get the option of withdrawing from the program at that time). It is our hope that the natural end of this program can be a time for celebration and reflection: mentors writing congratulation letters to youth, the class taking a group photo to share with mentors, mentors and students talking about what they learned from this program, and so forth.

However, an online mentoring relationship could end before the year is up for a variety of unplanned reasons:

- the youth moves to another class, or another school
- a sudden crisis in the lives of the adult or the youth that prevent that person from continuing in the program
- the youth decides he or she does not like the mentor and wants another one (highly unlikely, but still a possibility)
- the adult withdraws from the program because he or she decides it isn't right for him or her
- the entire Internet is hacked and becomes inoperable for the rest of the year (even more unlikely) and so forth....

Regardless of why the relationship ends, whether naturally at the end of the program or with a sudden, unplanned reason, participants can find the end difficult. It can bring up feelings of sadness, abandonment, anger, fear of change, and even guilt.

We hope to provide as many resources and as much support as possible to ensure the success of every relationship, but we don't want anyone hanging on to a relationship that is unhealthy or negative for either participant.

If you decide you need to end your online mentoring relationship

The **FIRST** thing to do is to contact the NCDSB Advisory Team immediately -- **DO NOT** contact individual protégés. Be honest and open about the reason you need to end this relationship. We will help you draft a final message to your protégés and set a date for that final message (or messages) to be delivered via your blog.

If the NCDSB Advisory Team directs you to write a final message to your protégés, be honest with them about why you are ending this relationship. Talk about your thoughts and feelings about these circumstances. Encourage your protégés to do the same. Be positive and supportive, especially about what the future may hold for your protégés. Do **NOT** make promises you may not keep, such as saying that you will somehow keep in touch or that you will send a goodbye gift. We will work hard to make sure this termination is as easy as possible, and to find your youth a new mentor as quickly as possible.

Online Culture

What is it like to communicate solely or mostly via e-mail?

People have many, many different personality "styles" in e-mail and other online exchanges, and, collectively, mentors and protégés will probably represent all of them:

- Some write e-mails exactly as they talk, using punctuation and "smileys" to show emotion or expression.
- Some write formally.
- Some write short and to the point.
- Some write often.
- Some interpret silence as approval. Others interpret silence as disapproval or rejection.
- Some interpret short, quick answers and sentences as being "direct." Others interpret the same messages as "curt."
- Some e-mail you, and if they don't hear from you in a day, e-mail you again, out of fear the technology failed.
- Some write e-mails littered with punctuation, spelling and sentence structure errors, but are very articulate on the telephone or in person.
- Some are not completely aware of all of the functions on their e-mail software
- Some are "documenters" and some are "snippers": Some feel it is necessary to keep the full reply even if it is the sixth message passed. Others like to respond in a concise manner, so much so that it can be hard to figure out what they are responding or referring to (this may not be a culture difference, as much as a difference in e-mail systems or the person's technical know how).

Whether using e-mail or a chat room, communicating in a text-only format can be a challenge. Written online exchanges can't tell you everything about a person, and can even be unintentionally misleading. Sometimes, you have to interpret people's written communication and even help them be more clear and effective online.

Never make assumptions about what you are reading. Don't think that a person is mad at you unless they have said, "I am mad at you." Don't assume someone does not want to talk to you because they've written a very short note instead of a long one. Ask questions, double check, and read what you've written a few times before you send it off.

LEARNING MORE

None of the following is required reading! But if you want to learn even more about the nuances of communicating with people online, become a part of an online discussion group. Note, however, that **NONE OF THESE GROUPS** are affiliated with this mentoring program. Start by joining groups that interest you personally -- for a particular hobby, your favorite author, a sports team you follow, even a political issue. You can find online discussion groups for just about any subject you can think of at these site:

<http://www.lsoft.com/catalist.html/>

<http://www.tile.net/>

<http://www.supernews.com/>

<http://groups.google.com/>

As you observe (or "lurk") on these groups, notice the variety of ways people relate to each other via written communications, the differences in communication styles among people of different age groups, professions, or geographic areas. The more you read, the more comfortable you will become at your own abilities to communicate online.

EVEN MORE RESOURCES

For those of you who want to really delve in depth into the subject of online culture further (again, it's NOT required reading; we just thought it would be helpful to those of you really interested in such):

- The **Virtual Volunteering Project** (<http://www.serviceleader.org/new/virtual/>) links to a variety of online resources to help you learn about the dynamics of online culture (available at <http://www.serviceleader.org/old/vv/culture/index.html>), as well as how to facilitate online groups via e-mail or live chat. This information shies away from "techy" talk, instead concentrating on the human elements and language needed to successfully engage people online. This site includes Connecting Humans: Essays on the Positive Side of Online Culture, providing information, essays and examples that illustrate how cyberspace is bringing us together, not closing us off to each other.
- **Netiquette** guides are good ways to learn good online manners. We recommend :
 - Netiquette Guidelines, (available at <http://www.dtcc.edu/cs/rfc1855.html>) by Sally Hambridge of Intel Corporation, includes an excellent bibliography for more information as well.
 - Netiquette, (available at <http://www.albion.com/netiquette/book/index.html>) by Virginia Shea, published by Albion Books, is an online edition contains all the text and graphics from the bound book.
 - Open Directory's Netiquette Links, (available at <http://dmoz.org/Computers/Internet/Etiquette/>) is a list of categories of links to specific netiquette needs.
- **E-Mail Communication and Relationships**
(Available at <http://www.rider.edu/users/suler/psyber/emailrel.html>)
Dr. John Suler of the Department of Psychology at Rider University, presents a very detailed document that explores the psychological dimensions of environments created by computers and online networks. Part of an even larger work, **Psychology of Cyberspace**, also available on this Web site.
- **Online Community Toolkit**
(Available at <http://www.fullcirc.com/community/communitymanual.htm>)

A great set of tools regarding online communities, from what they are to how to facilitate them to sample online community guidelines, rules and member agreements. This collection of helpful articles are by Full Circle Associates Nancy White, Sue Boettcher and Heather Duggan.

- **Social MUSHes and the Anxiety of Communication**

(Available at <http://www.brandeis.edu/pubs/jove/HTML/v3/larsen.html>)

An abstract for a study by Christopher N. Larsen of Harvard on why online interactions are particularly appealing for those who experience anxiety during face-to-face conversation and for people with disabilities, as well as the characteristics that can emerge on an online community. This is part of the Journal of Virtual Environments (<http://www.brandeis.edu/pubs/jove/>), a "refereed electronic journal" which publishes academic research that relates to Virtual Environments or makes use of Virtual Environments. Of particular interest are psychological, anthropological, sociological approaches, as are the practical and technical aspects of creating, maintaining and administrating VEs.

- **Psychology of Virtual Communities**

(Available at <http://webpages.charter.net/stormking/>)

Created and maintained by Storm A. King, this is an index of online journals and e-mail discussion groups that deal with the psychology of virtual communities and links to sites for researchers interested in the psychology of virtual communities.

- **Resource Center for Cyberculture Studies**

(Available at <http://rccs.usfca.edu/default.asp>)

This not-for-profit organization works to research, study, teach, support and create diverse and dynamic elements of cyberculture.

- **Online Communities: Opportunities and Challenges**

(Available at <http://www.eto.org.uk/etd/files/ica0519/index.htm>)

This site provides information on getting a community to become "effective online," and lessons from experience.

Online Activity Ideas for Mentors and Protégés

More than 50 suggestions of activities you and your protégé can do together online.

We've identified these online activities for online mentors and students to do as part of this program. We are always looking for additional topics! The research team behind this project is also happy to help guide you at any time during your mentoring relationship. These suggestions are to help keep conversations flowing, but should be used as guidelines, not as the only things to talk about online. You may receive periodic reminders from the teachers in this program regarding classroom activities they would like for you to discuss with students in particular.

Many of these topics will take longer than just one e-mail exchange or chat room conversation to fully explore. DON'T try to do lots of activities at once. Also, revisit topics, and don't be afraid to ask a question again if you didn't get an answer the first time.

The activities listed below are not synchronous (happening at the same time). You may find that you need ideas for working one-on-one with specific protégés! Remember that you are **never** to arrange an online meeting with your protégé via another web site, chat room, or communication system outside this NCDSB Mentor-Connector Portal web site.

Finally, mentors should remember to share as much information as they are asking for, to do the same online activities listed below that students are doing, and to use these suggestions to sometimes switch roles—let the student guide the mentor!

Suggested E-mail and Web Browsing Activities

1. Talk about why you got involved in this online mentoring program, what you are looking forward to, what makes you nervous about it, what you hope to get out of it, and what you hope to give as part of it.
2. Refer to what you know about each other already, per the online profiles you've shared with each other. Note what you have in common, and what you would like to hear more about the other.
3. Talk about your favorite movies/celebrities/performers/historical figures/heroes/sports figures or teams, etc., why you like them and what you learn from them.
4. Read the books the protégés are reading, and discuss them.
5. Talk about your favorite foods to eat, and your favorite foods to cook (and how to cook them!). Try out each others' favorite foods and discuss what you thought about them.
6. Share information and details of things that might be unique to your particular culture or geographic area (clothing, ceremonies, music, traditions, food, etc.).
7. Share your favorite uses of the Internet, and the Web sites and online discussion groups you find most helpful or entertaining. Visit each other's favorite web sites and offer your own opinion about them.

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8. Talk about your favorite uses of computers and software (including games) you find the most helpful or entertaining. If you discover that you both play the same computer games, talk about which "levels" you've attained, tips/hints you've found helpful, etc.
9. Seek out and share Web sites you think your mentor or protégé would enjoy, based on what you know about him or her.
10. Talk about your pets. Talk about animals that particularly intrigue you and why.
11. Share positive stories about your family.
12. Share stories about family conflicts/difficulties and how they were resolved -- or how you wish they had been resolved.
13. Ask your protégé about the school -- what activities he or she has done so far, what he or she has liked best, what activities are coming up, and so forth.
14. Mentors: talk about your job, how you trained for it, what you do, if it is different than what you planned on doing when you were in high school, other jobs you've had, jobs you had in high school and what you learned from them, etc.
15. Students: talk about homework you have recently been assigned or a school activity in which you are involved; mentors, help protégés find online resources that might help them with their homework or this activity.
16. Discuss your favorite music and performers.
17. Describe your dream home and the qualities it will have.
18. Describe your dream car and the qualities it will have.
19. Participate in one or two of the many online interactive areas provided by various federal agencies, and talk about your experiences in using them, what you learned, what you liked, what you didn't like, etc. Some federally-sponsored sites with online interactive activities include:
 - NASA for KIDS (available at <http://www.nasa.gov/audience/forkids/home/>) and For Kids Only: Earth Science Enterprises (available at <http://kids.earth.nasa.gov/>)
 - Canadian Space Agency (available at <http://www.space.gc.ca/asc/eng/kidSPACE/kidSPACE.asp>) for ages 8-17
 - Canadian Broadcasting System (available at <http://www.cbc.ca/kids/>) for ages 8-14
 - Environment Canada-Canadian Wildlife Service (available at www.cws-scf.ec.gc.ca/theme.cfm?lang=e&category=8) for ages 6-17 and features bird and mammal facts, as well as facts regarding the Great Lakes or acid rain.
 - Check out Great Sites for Kids (available at <http://www.collectionscanada.ca/education/008-2011-e.html>) for a great list of resources!
20. Discuss fashion -- clothing and hair styles you like, that you don't like, what's in style now, what used to be in style, etc.
21. Refer back to previous discussions, or events that the student mentioned. "How did that test go?" or "How was dinner at your aunt's house?" or "How is your baby sister?"
22. Talk about what you do outside of work/school (hobbies, things you collect, how you spent your weekend, etc.)

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23. Share your own original short stories, poetry, song lyrics, art work or other original materials.
24. Describe your dream job, however far-fetched it might be, and the qualities it would have. Are there ways to pursue real jobs that would have some of those qualities, or activities outside of the work place that would have those qualities?
25. Watch the same TV program, and discuss what you saw, what you learned, what you enjoyed, and what you didn't.
26. Share what you have faith in, what you believe in, and why.
27. Talk about when you have volunteered to help another person or an organization (a church, a school, a cause you believe in, etc.)? Why did you do it? How did the person or organization benefit from your service? How did YOU benefit from your service? What kinds of volunteering would you like to do? What kinds of volunteering could a young person do with his or her class or with his or her family
28. Talk about an adult who has (or had) a positive influence on you, and why.
29. Talk about peer pressure (mentors, remember that adults experience peer pressure too!).
30. Talk about the future. What are you most hopeful about for the future? What are you most scared of? What can you do to make a better future for yourself?
31. Have the protégé give a "virtual tour" of his or her community -- provide URLs for the local paper, community groups the protégé is interested in or considers particularly active, etc. The mentor can then comment about what he or she learned about the area, and then do the same for his or her own area -- either where he or she lives now, or where he or she grew up.

If you have suggestions for additional activities, please contact the NCDSB Advisory Team. We are always anxious to share successful ideas!



Information for Parents

Specific information for parents of children participating in this program.

All of the materials in this handbook will be made available to parents of students participating in this program, to keep them well-informed about what their child is doing in this program. It provides complete details about the goals of this program, and how this program will work.

To have their child participate in this program, parents must have signed and returned a permission slip, which was sent home with students before participation was allowed.

Online Safety: A Message to Parents

We have taken a number of precautions to ensure the safety of ALL participants in this program:

- The online exchanges between your child and the tutor/mentors can take place only via the NCDSB's Mentor-Connector Portal site.
- None of your child's contact information (address, phone number, e-mail address, etc.) will ever be made available to the tutor/mentors. Likewise, the mentor's contact information will never be made available to the student. This will ensure that no interactions of any kind, on or offline, can take place between mentors and students outside of the NCDSB's Mentor-Connector Portal site.
- All exchanges between mentors and students are subject to review by the research team, NCDSB Advisory Team, classroom teachers, and Student Success Teachers.
- All potential mentors were selected from teacher candidates who have completed the required Ontario police check and are currently enrolled in courses at either Niagara University or Brock University. In addition, the research team and the NCDSB Advisory Team have a record of all contact information for online mentors participating in this program.
- No child will be identified by their real name in public materials as participating in this program.
- The Student Success Teachers working with your child will provide an orientation to students participating in this program, stressing the importance of online safety and responsible computer use, as part of this or any online program.
- Best practices and research findings from this program (but no real names or contact information of participants) may be shared via conference presentations and research articles by the research team.
- We strongly encourage you to talk about this program with your child, discussing what kinds of activities and topics they are talking about with their mentor, what their mentor is like, etc.
- If you ever wish to communicate with the program team for this project, please email the NCDSB Advisory Team or the Research Team Advisors. All messages are answered within 48 hours of receipt (two business days; excludes holidays and weekends).
- If you wish to view the exchanges that have occurred to date between your child and his or her online mentor, please contact the Project Co-ordinator.
- If you have an emergency regarding this online mentoring program, please see our guidelines for handling crisis situations.

About Student Success/Learning to 18 Mentor-Connector Program

Who Are the People Behind This Program

About the Research Team and the NCDSB Advisory Team with contact information

The research team consists of the following:

	Name	Position	Dept./Address	Phone No.	E-Mail
NCDSB Advisory Team	John Crocco	Superintendent of Education	Niagara Catholic District School Board, Welland, ON	905.735.0240;E xt. 228	John.Crocco@ncssb.com
NCDSB Advisory Team	Mary Barchiesi	Education Officer : Student Success/ Learning to 18 Implementation Training & Evaluation	Ministry of Education	905.735.0240, Ext. 126	mary.barchiesi@ncdsb.com
NCDSB Advisory Team	Pat Mete	Secondary Consultant: Program Developer	Niagara Catholic District School Board, Welland, ON	905.735.0240, Ext. 119	pat.mete@ncdsb.com
NCDSB Advisory Team	Glen Sharp	Manager of Computer Systems	Niagara Catholic District School Board, Welland, ON	905.735.0240, Ext. 244	glen.sharp@ncdsb.com
Principal Investigator	Candace Figg, Ph.D.	Assistant Professor	Faculty of Education Brock University	905.688.5550, Ext. 5347	Candace.Figg@brocku.ca
Co-Investigator	Ron Matsushita, M.Ed.	Instructor	Faculty of Education Brock University	905.688.5550, Ext. 3341	rmatsushita@brocku.ca
Co-Investigator	Vince Rinaldo, Ph.D.	Associate Professor	Department of Education, Niagara University	716.286.8459	vjr@niagara.edu
Co-Investigator	Thomas Sheeran, Ed.D.	Professor	Department of Education, Niagara University	716.286.8552	tjs@niagara.edu
Co-Investigator	Raphael Heaggans, Ph.D.	Assistant Professor	Department of Education, Niagara University	716.286.8315	rch@niagara.edu

Review of all archived documents will be conducted by the research team and/or the Niagara Catholic District School Board Advisory Team. Questions, comments, suggestions, or concerns regarding the program can be submitted to the Research Team Advisors (Candace Figg or Vince Rinaldo) or the Niagara Catholic District School Board Advisory Team members (Pat Mete or Glen Sharp) using the contact information above.

Who Were Asked to be Mentors?

Only a very select group of people were asked to participate in this online mentoring program. A variety of resources were also used to develop this Web site.

Online mentors for the current year's program were recruited from the teacher candidates enrolled in a teacher education program seeking certification at the intermediate/senior level in Ontario and/or in the state of New York (20 or more from Brock University and 20 or more from Niagara University) who will volunteer to tutor and mentor students in the NCDSB's Mentor-Connector Portal during the school year.

And Where Did All This Material Come From?

These materials are adapted from online materials for the Sanchez Elementary Online Mentoring Program (available at <http://www.coyotecom.com/sanchezov/index.html>) written and designed by **Jayne Cravens** (www.coyotecomcommunications.com) formerly of the Virtual Volunteering Project and based on research by the Virtual Volunteering Project (<http://www.serviceleader.org/old/vv/>) and these resources:

- AISD Partners in Education Mentor Manual
A print publication used to train face-to-face mentors in the Austin (Texas) Independent School District.
- PEPHE Telementoring Pilot Project
A Project of the University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio (UTHSCSA) Health Education Training Centers Alliance of Texas (HETCAT)
- PowerUP Online Mentoring Program
Materials in draft form, being created by the National Mentoring Partnership and the Virtual Volunteering Project for a program in collaboration with America Online and People Magazine.
- National Mentoring Partnership
mentoring.org
Various publications by NMP contributed to the Sanchez Elementary School Online Mentoring Program.
- "It's a Simple Idea, But It's Not Easy to Do: Practical Lessons in Telementoring" (Available at <http://emissary.wm.edu/templates/content/publications/October96LLT.pdf>)
by Judi Harris of the University of Texas at Austin and the Electronic Emissary Project
- Cyberspace Seniors/InterAge CyberPals Classroom Project (Available at <http://aztec.asu.edu/cyberspaceseniors/CSS01.html>)

Appendix A: NCDSB Policies, Procedures and Guidelines for Crisis and Emergency Situations

The following NCDSB official policy guidelines for topics relevant to the Student Success/Learning to 18 Mentor-Connector Program. Other policies are available from the NCDSB web site (<http://niagararc.com>) and clicking on the links to Board>Policies. For your convenience and quick reference, you will find the relevant policies included in this manual:

- Safe Schools Policy
- Electronic Meetings (Board and Committees)
- Electronic Communications System Policy (Employees)
- Electronic Communications Systems Policy (Students)
- Code of Conduct Policy
- Handling of Complaints
- Sexual Misconduct
- Employee Workplace Harassment

Niagara Catholic District School Board SAFE SCHOOLS POLICY	
Adopted: January 31, 2006 Revised: May 28, 2002	Policy No. 302.6

STATEMENT OF POLICY

The Niagara Catholic District School Board and its schools will strive to maintain safe and secure learning environments for students, staff and community members involved in school programs.

In keeping with this goal and in compliance with [Bill 81](#), the *Education Amendment Act* (An Act to increase respect and responsibility, to set standards for safe learning and safe teaching in schools), the Niagara Catholic District School Board will establish policies which foster increased respect, responsibility and civility which support the mission of Catholic Education in our schools.

The Niagara Catholic District School Board, in consultation with Catholic School Councils and other Board Stakeholders, will develop policies congruent with the Safe Schools Act which include:

- [Opening or Closing Exercises](#) (s.304 Ed.Act) 302.6.1
- [Code of Conduct](#) (s.303 Ed.Act) 302.6.2
- [Access to School Premises](#) 302.6.3
- [Student Suspension](#) 302.6.4
- [Expulsion](#) 302.6.5
- [Dress Code](#) 302.6.6
- [Criminal Background Check](#) 302.6.7
- [Anti-Bullying](#) 302.6.8
- [Police and School Board Protocol](#)
- [Family and Children's Services/Board Proto-](#)

Niagara Catholic District School Board	
<i>ELECTRONIC MEETINGS (Board and Committees)</i>	
Adopted: October 25, 2005 Revised:	Policy No. 100.8

STATEMENT OF POLICY

1. The Niagara Catholic District School Board recognizes that while there is greater value in having members of the Board sit around the table and debate when conducting its meetings, electronic meetings are a good substitute for physical attendance in the event that a member is unable attend a meeting. The Board therefore recognizes the need to make provision for the use of electronic means to allow for participation in meetings of the Board and its committees, including the Committee of the Whole Board.

2. Therefore, it is the policy of the Niagara Catholic District School Board that at the request of any board member or pupil representative, the board shall provide the member or representative with electronic means for participating in one or more meetings of the Board, the Committee of the Whole Board, or of a committee of the Board. Such request shall be made to the Director of Education in writing at least 48 hours (excluding weekends or holidays) prior to the date of the meeting, but not sooner than 10 days prior to the meeting date.

3. Subject to any condition or limitations provided for under the Education Act or under Regulation, a member of the board who participates in a meeting through electronic means shall be deemed to be present at the meeting for the purposes of every Act.

4. The electronic means shall permit the member or pupil representative to hear and be heard by all other participants in the meeting.

5. The electronic means shall be provided in such a way that the rules governing conflict of interest of members are complied with.

6. Pupil representatives who are participating through electronic means shall not participate in any proceedings that are closed to the public in accordance with the Education Act.

7. On specific occasions, the Board and/or the Director of Education may authorize that the public may be invited to participate in meetings or classes of meetings through electronic means. All rules and legislation pertaining to "In Camera" and Public meetings shall apply.

<p>Niagara Catholic District School Board</p> <p><i>ELECTRONIC MEETINGS</i> <i>(Board and Committees)</i></p> <p><i>CONTINUED</i></p>	
Adopted: January 31, 2006 Revised:	Policy No. 201.12

8. At every meeting of the Board or the Committee of the Whole Board, or of a committee of the Board, the following persons shall be physically present in the meeting room of the Board:
 - i. the Chair of the Board or his/her designate;
 - ii. at least one additional member of the Board; and
 - iii. the Director of Education or his/her designate.
9. At every meeting of a committee of the Board, except the Committee of the Whole Board, the following persons shall be physically present in the meeting room of the committee:
 - i. the Chair of the Committee or his/her designate
 - ii. the Director of Education or his/her designate
10. When the requirements outlined in paragraphs 8 and 9 above cannot be met, the Board may refuse to provide a member with electronic means of participation in a meeting of the Board, or a meeting of any other committee of the Board, where to do so is necessary to ensure compliance.
11. The meeting room of the Board or of a committee of the Board, as the case may be, shall be open to permit physical attendance by members of the public at every meeting of the Board or of the committee of the Board, where the meeting is not closed to the public.

Definitions:

1. ***Electronic Meetings*** Electronic meetings are meetings of the Board, which utilize either teleconferencing or videoconferencing technology.

The Director of Education will establish Administrative Guidelines for the implementation of this policy.

Reference:

Ontario Regulation 463/97 amended to 234/04
Education Act (s.208.1; s. 229 (a))
Board By-Laws

Niagara Catholic District School Board	
<i>ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATIONS SYSTEMS POLICY</i> <i>(EMPLOYEES)</i>	
Adopted: January 31, 2006 Revised:	Policy No. 201.12

STATEMENT OF POLICY

The Niagara Catholic District School Board encourages the use of electronic communications to share information and knowledge in support of the Board's mission. Towards this end, the Board provides its employees with access to the Board's electronic communication systems**.

The system is also meant to increase communication, enhance productivity and assist the Board in sharing information internally, as well as externally with the local community, including parents, social service agencies, government agencies and businesses.

Information technologies such as computers, software, e-mail, network, Internet and the Intranet are to be used as productivity enhancement tools by Board staff in support of Board-related activities. Information technology systems and all data and messages generated on, or handled by Board equipment are considered to be the property of the Board and are not the property of users of the information technology.

There should be no expectation of privacy when communicating using any of the Board's electronic communication systems.

Those who use the Board's electronic communication services are expected to do so responsibly. Access to the Board's electronic communication services is a privilege that may be wholly or partially restricted by the Board at any time.

Any breaches of this policy may lead to discipline up to and including dismissal.

The Director of Education will establish administrative guidelines and procedures for the implementation of this policy.

****Definitions:**

The term "*Electronic communications systems*" as used in this policy refers to any electronic means used to send and receive information, including graphic images and photographs. They include, but are not limited to, Internet, Intranet, Electronic Mail, Fax, Telephone, Pagers, Personal Electronic Devices (PEDs), TV, DVD, CD and Radio.

Niagara Catholic District School Board <i>ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATIONS SYSTEMS POLICY</i> <i>(STUDENTS)</i>	
Adopted: March 28, 2006 Revised:	Policy No. 301.5

STATEMENT OF POLICY

The Niagara Catholic District School Board recognizes the educational value of students utilizing electronic communications systems to enhance their learning through the responsible access to global information and communication. The Board further recognizes the critical role that parents play in educating their children on the appropriate use of electronic communication systems and in monitoring their use of these systems. This partnership of parents and schools is essential in achieving success in ensuring appropriate use of this ever-changing technology.

This policy governs acceptable student use of educational on-line systems and resources provided by the Niagara Catholic District School Board in all of its elementary and secondary schools.

Furthermore, students are accountable for the appropriate use of all Board on-line systems in an ethical and appropriate educational manner, which must be in compliance with all relevant federal and provincial legislation, the Mission Statement, Beliefs, Gospel Values and policies of the Niagara Catholic District School Board.

The Niagara Catholic District School Board recognizes that students may have in their possession personal electronic devices while at school or at school related activities. This policy governs the acceptable use of personal electronic systems by students while at school or at school related activities. At all times, the use of these devices are prohibited where they are deemed to interfere with their personal learning or the learning of others. Academic staff at the school and at the Board level shall determine what, if any, use is interfering with learning.

The Ontario Code of Conduct, Niagara Catholic District School Board Code of Conduct Policy and school Code of Conduct provide disciplinary consequences for students who violate this Policy.

The Director of Education will issue administrative guidelines in support of this policy.

Niagara Catholic District School Board <i>CODE OF CONDUCT POLICY</i>	
Adopted: June 26, 2001 Revised: May 28, 2002	Policy No. 302.6.2 Safe Schools

STATEMENT OF POLICY

In keeping with the [Safe Schools Act 2000](#) and the provincial [Code of Conduct](#), schools within the Niagara Catholic District School Board, in consultation with their Catholic School Councils, staff, students and parents, shall have in place local Codes of Conduct. These locally developed Codes shall be in compliance with the Ministry's and Board's Code of Conduct. The Standards of Behaviour incorporated in the Code of Conduct which promote respect, responsibility and safety, along with justice, integrity and accountability are consistent with the Gospel values embodied in our schools. Respect for oneself, others and the traditions of our Catholic faith is central to the vision of a Catholic Education.

The Niagara Catholic District School Board shall endeavour to ensure that student learning and teaching take place in a non-threatening environment where everyone learns in an atmosphere of mutual respect, dignity and trust.

All participants involved in our Niagara Catholic School System — students, parents or guardians, volunteers, Trustees, teachers and other staff members — are included in this Code of Conduct whether they are on school property, on school buses or at school authorized events or activities.

The new Ontario Code of Conduct sets clear standards for behaviour and outlines mandatory consequences for students not complying with these standards. The code is based on the following guiding principles:

- All members of the Niagara Catholic District School Board (students, parents or guardians, volunteers, teachers, other staff members and especially persons in positions of authority) are to be treated with respect and dignity whether they are on school property, on school buses or at school-authorized events or activities.
- Appropriate participation in the civic life of the school community promotes responsible citizenship. Active and engaged citizens are aware of their rights and accept responsibility for protecting their rights and the rights of others.
- Members of the school community are expected to use non-violent means to resolve conflict.
- The possession, use or threatened use of any object to injure another person endangers the safety of oneself and others.
- Schools will work co-operatively with police, drug and alcohol agencies to promote prevention strategies and, where necessary, respond to school members who are in possession of, or under the influence of, alcohol or illegal drugs.
- Insults, disrespect, bullying and other hurtful acts disrupt learning and teaching in a school community. Members of the school community have a responsibility to maintain an environment where conflict and differences can be addressed in a manner characterised by respect and civility.

Niagara Catholic District School Board CODE OF CONDUCT POLICY CONTINUED	
Adopted: June 26, 2001 Revised: May 28, 2002	Policy No. 302.6.2 Safe Schools

STANDARDS OF BEHAVIOUR

The Ontario Code of Conduct sets clear provincial Standards of Behaviour which are incorporated into individual school Codes of Conduct. The Code of Conduct specifies the mandatory consequences for student actions that do not comply with these standards.

The Standards of Behaviour address:

A. Respect, civility and responsible citizenship

All school members must:

- respect and comply with all applicable federal, provincial and municipal laws;
- demonstrate honesty and integrity;
- respect differences in people, their ideas and opinions;
- treat one another with dignity and respect at all times, and especially when there is disagreement;
- respect and treat others fairly, regardless of their race, ancestry, place of origin, colour, ethnic origin, citizenship, religion, gender, sexual orientation, age or disability;
- respect the rights of others;
- show proper care and regard for school property and the property of others;
- take appropriate measures to help those in need;
- respect persons who are in a position of authority;
- respect the need of others to work in an environment of learning and teaching.

B. Physical safety

Weapons

All school members must:

- not be in possession of any weapon, including but not limited to firearms;
- not use any object to threaten or intimidate another person;
- not cause injury to any person with an object.

Alcohol and Drugs

All school members must:

- not be in possession of, or under the influence of, or provide others with, alcohol or illegal drugs.

Niagara Catholic District School Board CODE OF CONDUCT POLICY CONTINUED	
Adopted: June 26, 2001 Revised: May 28, 2002	Policy No. 302.6.2 Safe Schools

Physical Aggression

All school members must:

- not inflict or encourage others to inflict bodily harm on another person;
- seek staff assistance, if necessary, to resolve conflict peacefully.

MANDATORY CONSEQUENCES

Police will be involved, as indicated by the police/school protocol, and the student will be immediately suspended and proceed to an expulsion hearing for the following:

- possession of a weapon, including, but not limited to firearms;
- trafficking in drugs or weapons;
- robbery;
- use of a weapon to cause bodily harm, or to threaten serious harm;
- physical assault causing bodily harm requiring professional medical treatment;
- sexual assault;
- providing alcohol to minors.

Immediate suspension will be the minimum penalty faced by a student for:

- uttering a threat to inflict serious bodily harm;
- possession of illegal drugs;
- acts of vandalism causing extensive damage to school property or property located on school premises.

In these instances, police will be involved, as required, and conditions to return to school will be specified in accordance with school board policies.

A student will be immediately suspended for:

- swearing at a teacher, or other person in authority;
- being in possession of alcohol;
- being under the influence of alcohol.

Discretionary Suspensions

A student from within the Niagara Catholic District School Board may receive a discretionary suspension for a fixed period of time because of:

- persistent truancy,
- persistent opposition to authority,
- habitual neglect of duty,
- the wilful destruction of school property,
- the use of profane or improper language,
- conduct injurious to the moral tone of the school or
- conduct injurious to the physical or mental well being of others in the school.

<p>Niagara Catholic District School Board</p> <p><i>CODE OF CONDUCT POLICY</i></p> <p><i>CONTINUED</i></p>	
Adopted: June 26, 2001 Revised: May 28, 2002	Policy No. 302.6.2 Safe Schools

A student may be suspended from:

- School and all school related activities;
- One instructional day to 20 instructional days;
- One or more school-related activities;
- Any combination of 2 and 3.

Mitigating Circumstances

The suspension of a pupil is not mandatory if,

- (a) The pupil does not have the ability to control his or her behaviour;
- (b) The pupil does not have the ability to understand the foreseeable consequences of his or her behaviour; or
- (c) the pupil's continuing presence in the school does not create an unacceptable risk to the safety or well being of any person

Niagara Catholic District School Board <i>HANDLING OF COMPLAINTS</i>	
Adopted: April 28, 1998 Revised:	Policy No. 800.3

STATEMENT OF POLICY

The Niagara Catholic District School Board believes that a close working relationship among all partners in the educational community is essential to the development and maintenance of a truly Christian community. The Board encourages its employees to develop effective communication programs and procedures. While encouraging each partner to carry out his/her role in this educational community, it is recognized that differences of opinion and problems may arise from time to time.

Where these differences of opinion and/or problems arise, it is expected that common courtesy and Christian charity will be used to obtain a resolution as expeditiously as possible, by identifying the issues and seeking solutions which are in the best interests of all concerned.

The Director of Education will issue Administrative Guidelines in support of this policy.

Niagara Catholic District School Board <i>SEXUAL MISCONDUCT</i>	
Adopted: June 26, 2006 Revised:	Policy No. 201.13

STATEMENT OF POLICY

The Niagara Catholic District School Board believes that all students, employees, volunteers and other individuals who have a legal right to be at sites owned, leased, operated or being used by the Board, have a right to study and work in an environment free from sexual misconduct.

For purposes of this policy and its guidelines, the school environment includes all activities common to an educational environment, including co-instructional and summer programs.

For the protection of the complainant and the accused, this policy and resulting guidelines, have equal rights at all steps throughout the process.

This policy supports the following laws, legislation, Board Policies and Board Protocols as amended from time to time.

[Child and Family Services Act](#)

[Criminal Code of Canada](#)

[Education Act and Regulations](#)

[Ontario Regulation 521 / 01 - Collection of Personal information](#)

[Ontario Regulation 298 - Operation of Schools - General](#)

Niagara Catholic District School Board Policies/Protocols

[Anti-Bullying](#)

[Assault on an Employee](#)

[Employee Workplace Harassment Policy](#)

[Family and Children's Services/Board Protocol](#)

[Police and School Board Protocol](#)

[Ontario College of Teachers Act, 1996](#)

[Professional Misconduct Regulation 437 / 97](#)

[Ontario Human Rights Code](#)

[Ontario Safe Schools Act, 2000](#)

[Ontario Schools: Code of Conduct, 2000](#)

[Student Protection Act, 2002](#)

[Teacher Profession Act](#)

Other References:

[Robins Report](#)

Ontario College of Teachers

[Professional Advisory - Professional Misconduct Related to Sexual Abuse and Sexual Misconduct](#)

[The Standards of Practice for the Teaching Profession](#)

[The Ethical Standards for the Teaching Profession](#)

The Director of Education will issue administrative guidelines in support of this policy.

Niagara Catholic District School Board <i>EMPLOYEE WORKPLACE HARASSMENT</i>	
Adopted: March 26, 2002 Revised:	Policy No. 201.7

STATEMENT OF POLICY

The Niagara Catholic District School Board will endeavour to provide a work environment that promotes the treatment of every employee with dignity, respect and equity.

The Board believes that the eradication of harassment in the school / workplace is the joint responsibility of the employer and the employee.

Where the occasion of a complaint of harassment arises, the Board may achieve resolution through a formal or informal process. During the process all information gathered is to be kept confidential.

It is the intention of the policy and the resulting guidelines to attempt to protect both the complainant and the accused. Therefore, each party has equal rights at all steps throughout the process.

The Director of Education will issue administrative guidelines in support of this policy.

Appendix B: NCDSB Contact Information for Additional Programs/Support for Students

Student Success Teacher (SST)

The Student Success Teacher is the initial secondary school contact and first line of communication when dealing with the Mentor Connector Program. This individual is responsible for the successful transition of potentially at-risk students from elementary to secondary school. Their responsibility is to: track, monitor, schedule, counsel and assist these students in becoming more successful. Any concerns, problems or positive gains are communicated to the SST. They are your liaison and link to all school staff, parents, and professors.

Educational Resource Teacher (ERT)

The Educational Resource Teacher works in the Special Education Department of a secondary school. Their primary responsibilities are to develop and implement programming for exceptional students, monitor and support mainstream students, and assist teachers within their classes. Essentially, they are advocates for students and a support liaison for teachers within the school. Students are encouraged to visit the resource teacher and discuss assignments and academics.

Child Youth Worker

The role of the Child Youth Worker is to discuss problems that students may be having. The students may be referred to outside agencies for support when the issue or matter is beyond the abilities of school staff. Please encourage students to see a Child Youth Worker when you feel they need to speak to a caring adult for advice. These individual offer one to one support in many areas of home and school life.

Chaplain

The role of the Chaplain is to offer spiritual support for students and the entire school community They deal with issues like grieving, broken homes, etc. The Chaplain is an excellent source of encouragement by a caring individual who is empathetic to the needs' of students. Students may receive financial support for school related activities, uniforms, breakfast, and lunch. In addition, the Chaplain can help students with their community service hours required to graduate and offer the students the opportunity to get involved in retreats, prayers services, and social justice issues. All students are encouraged to join the Chaplains Crew to get involved in school life and organizing such events as school liturgies.

Appendix B: NCDSB Contact Information for Additional Programs/Support for Students (Continued)

Vice-Principal

The Vice-Principal deals primarily with Code of Conduct issues. Students should seek the assistant of the Vice-Principal if they feel threatened or ill-treated by other students, i.e., bullying. The Vice-Principal ensures that all students have access to a fair and equitable educational experience and that they are able to learn and grow in a non-threatening school environment.

School Nurse

The role of the school nurse is to see students who may require medical interventions and to make proper referrals and recommendations. An example may be an eating disorder. Students are free to make appointments and discuss their well being with the school nurse who will offer professional support and advice.

Pathway Preparation Program (P3)

Niagara Catholic Secondary Schools provides the P3—Pathways Preparation Program—daily after school to support students wishing to improve their current academic standard or prepare for upcoming EQAO literacy or numeracy tests. Subject specific teachers are scheduled daily after school to help and encourage students with their homework and assignments. These teachers are kind, caring individuals dedicated to student success. Please recommend P3 to all students you mentor.

Student Service—Guidance Counselor

The primary role of a Guidance Counselor is to assist students with pathways planning and implementing program selection for the next level of study or entry to the workplace. Any students having difficulty with scheduling or future planning should be referred to the Guidance Department. Students Services is an excellent resource for struggling students who require academic assistance of modifications or adjustments to their schedule. Guidance Counselors also arrange for tutors or refer to P3.

NOTES

NIAGARA CATHOLIC DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

