EDUCATION, POLICY AND OPERATIONS COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES – MARCH 6, 2024

PUBLIC MEETING

Roll call:

Trustees:	Staff:
J. Brown G. Elliott B. Godkin (Vice-Chair) R. Hutcheon (Chair) T. Lloyd K. Maracle (regrets) K. McGregor J. Morning J. Neill (regrets) S. Ruttan (virtual) E. Eckloff (Student Trustee) (regrets) A. O'Keefe (Student Trustee) A. Wang (Student Trustee) (regrets)	K. Burra, Director of Education S. Gillam, Superintendent of Education P. Gollogly, Associate Superintendent S. Hedderson, Associate Superintendent J. Douglas, Communications Officer S. Silver, Superintendent of Education C. Young, Superintendent of Business Services
Guests:	**Recorder:**
None at this time.	S. Mitton, Executive Assistant to the Director and Trustee Liaison

Chair Godkin welcomed everyone to the meeting. He read the Acknowledgement of Territory: "The Limestone District School Board is situated on the traditional territories of the Anishinaabe and Haudenosaunee. We acknowledge their enduring presence on this land, as well as the presence of Métis, Inuit, and other First Nations from across Turtle Island. We honour their cultures and celebrate their commitment to this land. "

1. Call to Order

Chair Godkin called the meeting to order and called the roll.

2. Adoption of Agenda

MOVED BY: Trustee McGregor that the agenda be approved. Carried.

3. Declaration of Conflict of Interest

There were no conflicts declared.

4. Reports for Information

4.1 2024-2025 Budget Development Schedule

Superintendent Young introduced the report and reviewed the various dates and times of the Committee of the Whole, budget meetings for the 2024-2025 budget with Trustees. He noted that at this time, the Ministry has not announced the Grants for Student Needs for this year. The Minister has indicated that we can expect traditional timing for the release likely in April. Superintendent Young stated that June 28, 2024 is the deadline for submitting the budget to the Ministry.

An opportunity to provide feedback and input is available through the budget survey which will be released tomorrow and close on March 25, 2024. The survey results will provide Trustees with feedback and information that will assist throughout the budgeting process to identify priorities that ensure students' needs are best served in 2024-2025. Information collected will be summarized and reviewed at the Budget Committee Meeting on April 17, 2024. The Finance team will make themselves available if there are questions related to the budget.

Chair Godkin thanked Superintendent Young for his report and called on Trustees for questions.

4.2 Limestone District School Board Graduation Rate

Superintendent Silver introduced her report on graduation rate. She explained that the graduation rate has been calculated by the Ministry of Education for many years and is based on each cohort when they enter. Superintendent Silver noted that we have seen an increase in the graduation rate in Limestone in the past few years and acknowledged the work of educators and administrators. Thanks to this hard work, Limestone District School Board is making headway on the minimum of a 90% grad rate goal. She reviewed a data breakdown of graduation rates across different groups of students within Limestone.

Superintendent Silver identified the overwhelming amount of work that the Student Success Teams complete in our schools to track and support credit accumulation working towards graduation. She reminded Trustees that graduation rate is one of the priority areas for the Student Achievement Plan and shared that this data will be available on the Board website publicly in April.

Chair Godkin thanked Superintendent Silver for his report and called on Trustees for questions.

4.3 Staff/Student Absences

Superintendent McWilliams introduced her report and reviewed the typical trends in classroom educator absences. She explained that there is an increase in staff and student absences seasonally due to peak illness time periods. She noted that with the return of student activities and opportunities for staff professional development, more absences are being recorded. Despite this increase, she acknowledged the value of these activities which ultimately attribute to enhancing student achievement and wellbeing.

Superintendent McWilliams explained that the Board has a responsibility to fill these absences and the challenges associated with filling these positions. We have had much higher fill rates than previous years and an increase in sick leave requests. Superintendent McWilliams highlighted some of the trends across the different educator groups with Trustees. In order to support this work, the Board has hired an additional health and wellness staff member to assist with the increase in sick leave. Moving forward, a Provincial Working Group will be established to review sick leave with the goal of reducing where appropriate. Superintendent McWilliams also noted that efforts to supplement occasional and casual lists will continue.

Superintendent Gillam reviewed the student absences across Limestone. He emphasized that attendance is part of the Better Schools and Student Outcomes Act and is now included in the Student Achievement Plan. The trends in student absences observed remain similar to data from the 2022-2023 school year. He indicated the targeted goal is to have absences less than nineteen days per year. Monitoring of student absences continues, and reports are submitted for students who are missing a significant number of school days.

Individual schools will be working on strategies to support student attendance. Various systems of support and messages will be shared with administrators, staff and the community this spring. Superintendent Gillam noted that support and information will continue to be provided to families to assist in the continuity of learning, with a focus on Math and Literacy.

Chair Godkin thanked Superintendent McWilliams and Superintendent Gillam for their report and called on Trustees for questions.

4.4 Use of Mobile Technology and Screens in Limestone Classrooms/Schools

Chair Godkin welcomed Director Burra to present his report. He explained that this report emerged from parent concerns at multiple sites, other technology related issues occurring at Boards across the province, and the parent letter that was received by the Board in January 2024. Director Burra acknowledged that cell phones and mobile technology are ubiquitous and prevalent in school settings. For almost two decades, the Limestone District School Board has had policy in place restricting cellphone use which aligned with the Provincial ban on cellphones during instructional time emerging in 2019.

Director Burra stated that the world has changed as it relates to the access of information and there is a rising concern about device addiction and addiction to certain platforms such as social media and gaming. There is evidence to suggest that access to technology and technology platforms has increased mental health concerns, especially for girls. The Limestone District School Board's stance on cellphones has not changed much over the years. The board has a healthy device ratio for students which should eliminate the reliance on use of personal devices including cell phones.

Some of the benefits of technology include tools for personalized learning for students to access classroom resources and materials at their own pace. Educators have the ability to share feedback through the Learning Management Systems which reduces the stress in the classroom as you can review information at the appropriate time for the student.

Director Burra highlighted that understanding how to use technology is an essential skill. As new technological tools emerge, it is important to take steps to educate students and staff on how to appropriately use these tools. With the benefits of these tools, exploration on how curriculum can adjust to ensure effective and safe use.

Director Burra reviewed some recreational uses of technology and some of the consequences of poor habit development with overuse. Studies show that poor eating habits develop when in front of a screen and create a negative association. Director Burra concluded his report with some next steps which include:

- Creation of a supervision working group for Elementary lunch and breaktimes.
- Director communication to families emphasizing the importance of instructional time and cellphone expectations.
- Guidelines and expectations related to use of AI in schools.
- Incorporation of overuse of cellphones/social media into the Student Mental Health Strategy.

- Classroom resources emphasizing the importance of instructional time and cellphone expectations.

Chair Godkin thanked Director Burra for his report and called on Trustees for questions.

5. Reports for Action

None at this time.

6. Unfinished Business

None at this time.

7. New Business

None at this time.

8. Correspondence

Chair Godkin referenced the letter in the agenda package from January 2024 to LDSB Re: Screen Time During meals. Director Burra proposed that in collaboration with Chair Hutcheon, a response will be crafted to the letter received on behalf of the Board.

9. Next Meeting Date

May 1, 2024
June 5, 2024

10. Adjournment and Move into Private Session

Moved by Trustee Lloyd that the meeting adjourn. Carried.

The meeting adjourned at 7:04 p.m.