

SPECIAL EDUCATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

December 10, 2025

Public Meeting

Roll Call:

Trustees:	Members:
T. Lloyd K. McGregor	<p>Present:</p> <p>A. Martin, Member-at-Large (Queen's University) Z. Rogers, Community Living Kingston E. Clow, Member-at-Large K. Hill, Member-at-Large H. Clark, Autism Ontario L. Clouthier, Easter Seals Ontario G. Eaton-Smith, Learning Disabilities Association of Kingston</p> <p>Regrets:</p> <p>J. Barker, Lennox & Addington Resources for Children</p>
Invitees:	Staff:
	<p>Present:</p> <p>S. Gillam, Superintendent of Education, Learning for All D. Thompson, Principal of Educational Services W. Fisher, Educational Services and Safe Schools Lead C. Snider, Special Education Program Coordinator M. Aylsworth, Special Education Program Coordinator M. West, Special Education Program Coordinator L. Conboy, Mental Health Lead N. Dillard, Vice-Principal of Educational Services</p> <p>Regrets:</p> <p>T. Bonham-Carter, Special Education Program Coordinator J. Lalonde, Special Education Program Coordinator</p>
Recorder:	Guests:
J. Senior, Administrative Assistant	None at this time.

Limestone District School Board

The Limestone District School Board is situated on the traditional territories of the Anishinaabek and Haudenosaunee.

1. WELCOME

Superintendent Scot Gillam called the meeting to order and welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Superintendent Scot Gillam read the Acknowledgement of Territory:

“The Limestone District School Board is situated on the traditional territories of the Anishinaabek 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.”

2. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

MOVED BY: Member-at-Large Erin Clow that the agenda be approved. Carried.

3. DECLARATION OF CONFLICT OF INTEREST

None at this time.

4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

MOVED BY Trustee Tiffany Lloyd that the November 12, 2025, Minutes be approved. Carried.

5. BUSINESS ARISING FROM MINUTES

None at this time.

6. EDUCATION SERVICES UPDATE

6.1 2025-2028 Mental Health, Substance Use and Addiction Strategy and 2025-2026 Action Plan –

Laura Conboy, Mental Health Lead and Melissa West, Special Education Coordinator, delivered an in-depth presentation and the following key points were presented:

Overview

The 2025–2028 Mental Health, Substance Use, and Addiction Strategy was developed using input collected over several years from students, parents, caregivers, staff, and community partners. Data sources included School Climate Surveys, Youth Diversion Annual Reports, Public Health modules, internal service delivery data, and consultation with Educational Services staff and the Mental Health and Substance Use Leadership Committee.

The team was intentional about ensuring this strategy is connected to other key board initiatives, such as the Equity Action Plan, Special Education Review, the LDSB Strategic Plan, and the Ministry of Education PPM 169, so that the vision for mental health and well-being aligns with broader organizational goals and does not stand alone.

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The Limestone District School Board (LDSB) recognizes the important role that schools play in promoting mental health. The Board's approach to well-being is student-centered, evidence-based, trauma-informed, and respectful of students' diverse needs. The strategy focuses on the following five key areas:

- Student Mental Health; Substance Use and Addiction Support
- Engagement and Collaboration
- Pathways To, Through, and From Mental Health Care
- Enhancing Staff Knowledge
- Identity-Affirming Practices

Annual action plans are developed prior to the beginning of each school year, outlining specific goals and activities connected to each key focus area.

2025-2026 Action Plan Highlights

Student Mental Health, Substance Use, and Addiction Support

- Revised practices to age of consent for mental health services.
- Support the redesign of the LINKS District Learning Centre (DLC).
- New Grade 6 Mental Health Literacy Modules:
 - Two 60-minute lesson plans from the Ministry of Education about digital safety and substance use health.
 - Goals: Safe online practices, privacy protection, healthy digital choices, understanding substance effects, decision-making, and refusal strategies.

Engagement and Collaboration

- Partnerships with Southeast Health Unit and Algonquin and Lakeshore Catholic District School Board (ALCDSB) to share and promote School Mental Health Ontario (SMHO) *By Your Side* resource with primary care providers in Kingston, Frontenac and Lennox & Addington (KFL&A).
- Provide schools with resources that support diverse student leadership styles and promote identity-affirming mental health initiatives, including stigma reduction strategies.

Pathways To/Through/From Care

- Use of evidence-informed brief interventions and standardized measurement tools to meet students' goals of improved mental health and substance use.
- All school administrators, educators and mental health support staff will have working knowledge of the LDSB Suicide Response Protocol.
- Introduce a new life promotion and suicide prevention workshop for school staff (Prepare/Prevent/Respond).

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Prepare/Prevent/Respond Workshop

- Replaces safeTALK training; focuses on school-based suicide prevention and life promotion.
- Three sections:
 - Prepare – Promoting wellness and providing foundational knowledge.
 - Prevent – Identifying concerns and knowing what to say.
 - Respond – Managing crises and supporting students in distress.

Enhance Staff Knowledge

- Deepen staff understanding of trauma origins and the impact of adversity on brain development.
- Provide training for educators to recognize signs of mental health concerns and connect students to appropriate care.
- Promote the use of validated screening tools to identify students who may need further assessment or intervention, including:
 - Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ) – a screening tool for children ages 0–6 years (not diagnostic).
 - LDSB is one of nine central hub agencies piloting ASQ at two Families of Schools (Bayridge and Sydenham).
 - ASQ-3 focuses on general developmental areas; ASQ:SE-2 screens for social-emotional development.

Identity-Affirming Practices

- Target the prevention of violence and mental health concerns through student programming that promotes positive, healthy relationships.
- Work towards staffing complements that are more reflective of the student population.
- Strengthen staff capacity to create safe, affirming relationships.
- Introducing Stop Now And Plan (SNAP) for schools starting in January 2026 (more information to follow from Wendy Fisher at a future SEAC Meeting).
- The Social Workers team is engaging in a book student to strengthen affirming relationships and spaces. They are reading *Gender: Your Guide* (second edition by Dr. Lee Airton). Monthly group meetings include discussions on learnings, questions, and applications to support students in Limestone.

The 2025-2028 Mental Health, Substance Use and Addiction Strategy and 2025-2026 Action Plan demonstrate a comprehensive, multi-tiered approach to student mental health and well-being, emphasizing collaboration, evidence-based practices, staff training, and inclusive programming. The initiatives aim to create supportive environments for all students and families, with ongoing evaluation and adaptation based on data and feedback.

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6.2 Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) – Matt Aylsworth, Special Education Coordinator provided a comprehensive look at physical disabilities in the school environment, focusing on student profiles, accessibility, classroom supports, and the impact of Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD). Key topics covered include:

Physical Disability Definition:

Physical disabilities may result from medical conditions or differences that affect participation in activities. Examples include cerebral palsy and FASD. Disabilities can be visible or hidden, and each student's needs are unique.

Accessibility and Supports:

LDSB works to identify and remove barriers for all members of the school community. Accessibility involves not just physical changes but also recommendations from staff, families, and medical professionals. Supports include Specialized Equipment (SEA), Universal Design for Learning (UDL), and modifications/accommodations.

Assistive Technology and Equipment:

Tools such as computers, iPads, speech-to-text software, screen readers, mobility devices, adjustable desks, and communication apps are used to support students' participation and independence.

Universal Design for Learning (UDL):

UDL principles guide the creation of inclusive environments, ensuring all students can actively participate in physical activities and learning experiences tailored to their abilities and interests.

Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD):

FASD is a leading developmental disability in Canada, often hidden and complex, with lifelong impacts. Diagnosis requires confirmation of prenatal alcohol exposure and evidence of brain impairment in multiple domains. FASD can present similarly to other conditions and is associated with stigma and mental health challenges.

Key Takeaways:

- Physical disabilities represent unique learning profiles.
- Some physical disabilities are unseen.
- Presume competence in all students.
- Self-awareness helps students advocate for their needs.
- Inclusive practices benefit everyone in the school community.

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6.3 System Wide PA Day Update – Principal Deborah Thompson provided an overview of the System Wide PA Day professional learning sessions. The following highlights were noted:

Board Goals Highlighted:

- Improve achievement in math and literacy.
- Improve graduation rates and preparedness.
- Improve well-being, belonging, and engagement.
- Improve responsiveness to families and community partners.

Session Summaries

Deaf and Hard of Hearing Team

- Strategies to improve access for students who are deaf or hard of hearing.
- Emphasis on visual supports, captioning, and optimizing listening environments.

Speech and Language Team

- Focus on AAC (Augmentative and Alternative Communication).
- Modeling core vocabulary and supporting communication for minimally/non-speaking students.

Student Support Counsellors

- Creating safe, inclusive classrooms through proactive, relationship-based strategies.
- Introduction to PACE: Playfulness, Acceptance, Curiosity, Empathy.

Board Certified Behaviour Analysts (BCBAs)

- “Flipping the Script on Challenging Behaviour.”
- Behaviour understood as a skill to be taught; focus on teaching functional replacement skills.

Psychology Team

- Topics included emotional regulation, trauma-informed practices, and understanding assessment reports.
- Guidance on applying assessment findings to support programming and Individual Education Plan (IEP) development.

Intensive Support Teachers

- Introduction to the Tier 1 Toolkit: classroom regulation supports, environmental adjustments, and universal strategies.

Blind/Low Vision Team

- Supporting students with Cortical Visual Impairment (CVI).
- Use of high-contrast, simplified visuals and accessible materials.

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Educational Services – In-School Team Development

- Building effective in-school teams to support student needs collaboratively.

Special Education Coordinators

- Sessions on purposeful inclusion, collaborative assessments, supporting complex learner profiles, and community partnerships.
- Collaboration with Intensive Support Teachers and external experts (Queens University, Kids Inclusive).

Transition Planning Coordinators

- Secondary sessions on transition planning, pathway supports, and preparing students for post-secondary life.
- Emphasis on individualized, student-centered planning.

Additional Special Education Topics

- Activities and discussions on assistive strategies, inclusion, and supporting diverse student needs in elementary and secondary settings.

Overall, the themes emphasized a strong commitment to Universal Design, accessibility, and inclusive practice across the system. Staff continued to deepen collaboration within multidisciplinary teams, ensuring coordinated and comprehensive support for students. A heightened focus on regulation, communication, and elevating student voice across K–12 settings was evident throughout the sessions.

7. CORRESPONDENCE

None at this time.

8. ASSOCIATION UPDATES

None at this time.

9. OTHER BUSINESS

9.1 Administrative Report: Superintendent's Report – Superintendent Scot Gillam provided an overview of the Superintendent's Report, which was included in the Agenda Package.

10. NEXT MEETING DATE

January 21, 2026

11. ADJOURNMENT

MOVED BY: Trustee Tiffany Lloyd, that the meeting adjourn. Carried.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:41 pm.

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