

Education, Policy and Operations Committee Meeting Minutes –

June 4, 2025

PUBLIC MEETING

Roll Call:

Trustees:	Staff:
G. Elliott (virtual) – Excused himself at 6:39 p.m. B. Godkin (Vice-Chair) R. Hutcheon (Chair) (virtual) T. Lloyd J. Maracle K. McGregor J. Morning J. Neill S. Ruttan C. Scott A. Bukhari (Student Trustee) R. Kolosov (Student Trustee) (regrets) S. Kumar (Student Trustee)	K. Burra, Director of Education A. McDonnell, Superintendent of Education S. McWilliams, Superintendent of Human Resources S. Sartor, Associate Superintendent J. Silver, Superintendent of Education (virtual) C. Young, Superintendent of Business Services
Guests:	Recorder:
Geoff Petznick, Expanded Opportunities Consultant Melissa Baker-Cox, Secondary Curriculum Consultant Courtney Soucy, OYAP Recruiter Paul Allison, Intermediate STEM Consultant Logan Williams, Secondary Teacher, NDSS Ashley Conboy, Elementary Teacher, Clarendon Central P.S. Val Arsenault, Principal, Rideau Public School Laura Gillam, Research Analyst	S. Mitton, Executive Assistant to the Director and Trustee Liaison

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Godkin welcomed everyone to the meeting and provided the Land Acknowledgement: “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. On behalf of the School Board, we express our sincere gratitude for sharing this land with us and continue our reconciliation efforts. We honour their cultures and celebrate their commitment to this land.”

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2. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

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

3. DECLARATION OF CONFLICT OF INTEREST

There were no conflicts declared.

4. PRESENTATION

4.1 Skills Ontario Competition Recognition

Superintendent Silver began by welcoming students and families thanking everyone for their support to students. She acknowledged the incredible work and dedication of the expanded opportunities team and highlighted the success of the local regional Skills Competition that takes place in partnership with St. Lawrence College. She invited Courtney Soucy to begin the presentation. Ms. Soucy noted that this was the 25th anniversary of the Skills Competition and gave special recognition to Geoff Petznick who she described as the heart of the program. She invited Logan Williams, teacher at Napanee District Secondary School, to continue the presentation with the Specialist High Skills Major (SHSM) team of Geoff Petznick, Melissa Baker-Cox, Courtney Soucy, and Paul Allison presenting the awards:

Napanee District Secondary School:

Shayla Godfrey – Auto Collision Repair – 3rd Place

Amanda Neddow – Auto Painting – 3rd Place

Jacob O'Reilly – Computer Aided Manufacturing – 6th Place

LCVI – Hairstyling:

Sydney McElwain – 9th Place

Sydenham High School – Prepared Speech:

Aurora Scanlan – 9th Place

Clarendon Central Elementary School – Construction Grades 7 to 8 – 7th Place:

Hudson Lemke

Leuan Brown

Ethan Tooley

Hunter Beeg

SWAC – Floristry:

Cricket Dickson – 9th Place

Module de l'Acadie – LEGO Mechanical Engineering Grades 7 to 8 – 4th Place:

Dawson Dean Savage

Jonah Harnden

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Matthew St. Jean
Liam Carty

Module de l'Acadie – LEGO Robotics Grades 7 to 8 – 6th Place:

Alex St-Jean
Hailey Clifford
Nathan Foster
Ryker Mosey

Post Secondary:

Carter Branson – 2021 Graduate NDSS – 1st Place
Alex Petznick – 2024 Graduate LCVI – 7th Place

Chair Godkin expressed congratulations on behalf of all Trustees and called for a short recess.

5. REPORTS FOR ACTION

5.1 Policy 15 Update

Chair Godkin invited Director Burra to deliver his report, noting that proposed amendments had been previously presented to Trustees at the last meeting of the Education, Policy and Operations Committee (EPOC). Director Burra highlighted some of the edits to ensure alignment with the recent provincial policy changes, specifically changes to Section 2.2.0. He explained that language has been updated to clarify that failure to attend meetings (in person or electronically) without Board-approved authorization could lead to a Trustee vacating their seat, in line with the Education Act.

Director Burra shared that legal input highlighted inconsistencies between legislation and regulation, suggesting the policy be flexible while remaining compliant. Additional changes to section 2.3.0 and 2.4.0 were included to shift responsibility from the Vice-Chair to the absent Trustee to explain their absence and seek approval from the Board. The revised language emphasizes Trustee accountability and clarifies the approval process for absences.

Chair Godkin opened the floor for comments and questions.

Trustee Ruttan raised concerns about Section 2.3.0. as it relates to the need for public declarations of absence and suggested it be removed as it is not required by regulation. Director Burra indicated that the intent was to clarify the approval process and ensure transparency, but agreed that Section 2.4.0 might already cover the necessary procedures. The following motion was put forward:

MOVED BY: Trustee Ruttan to strike 2.3.0 from the policy and to edit 2.4.0 taking out 2.3.0 language. Carried.

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Chair Godkin thanked Director Burra for his report.

6. REPORTS FOR INFORMATION

6.1 LDSB Before and After School Program (BASP) Review

Chair Godkin introduced Superintendent Alison McDonnell to present her report on the Before and After School Program (BASP) review. She began by thanking Chair Godkin and the Trustees, and introduced two colleagues who contributed to the review: Principal Val Arsenault, who is currently completing the Supervisory Officer Qualification Program, and Research Analyst Laura Gillam, who has contributed extensive work supporting the review process.

Trustees were reminded that this review was initiated at their request in response to concerns raised by families regarding access to before and after school programming. Specifically, families reported challenges in securing program spaces within their local communities. The presentation aimed to explore the central question: *Do Limestone families have access to Before and After School Program spaces when and where they need them?* Trustees were provided with a report in advance, with the intent of the presentation to offer a deeper look into the data collected as part of the review.

Data was collected from a range of interest groups including Limestone families, school councils, and third-party BASP providers. This included enrollment data from programs operating within LDSB schools. Trustees were asked to consider the findings through three key lenses: equity, viability, and alignment with LDSB's enrollment strategy.

Superintendent McDonnell reiterated that BASP programs provide childcare and recreational activities for students in Kindergarten through Grade 6, outside of regular school hours. These programs are funded through parent fees. In accordance with the Education Act and Ministry of Education regulations, school boards are mandated to offer BASP where there is sufficient demand or viability. Boards may either operate programs directly or partner with third-party providers. The LDSB currently fulfills this mandate through agreements with 27 third-party providers. Additionally, the Ministry permits authorized recreational and skill-building programs, which are also delivered exclusively by approved third-party organizations.

The review was limited to LDSB families and schools. It did not include data from other school boards, private providers, or community-based programs. The data represents a snapshot in time and is subject to change based on evolving needs and provider capacity.

Both qualitative and quantitative data were collected to inform the review. Core data sources included:

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- A family survey open for two weeks in April 2025, including responses from families with children currently enrolled (JK to Grade 6) and those registered to begin in JK in September 2025.
- Feedback from school councils (April/May 2025).
- A focus group with third-party BASP providers (April 2025).
- Enrollment data from third-party programs operating in LDSB schools.

Superintendent McDonnell invited Principal Arsenault to present findings from the family survey and interest group consultations. The survey, conducted in April 2025, gathered 1,910 responses—a strong return given the short timeframe and resulted in the following participation:

- 75% of respondents were from Kingston, 22% from Lennox and Addington, and 3% from other areas (e.g., Gananoque)
- 11% of families indicated having a student(s) with special education needs
- Families from students in 45 elementary schools
- School councils

Principal Arsenault shared the following results of the survey:

- Nearly 60% of families reported not currently accessing BASP, either due to being on a waitlist or being unable to secure a spot.
- 40% of families that participated in the survey are currently (2024/2025) using BASP.
- School council feedback echoed family concerns, highlighting a lack of available spaces.

A focus group with third-party BASP providers was held on April 13, 2025. Providers were informed that the review was not evaluative but focused on access and availability. They were asked to identify barriers to service and suggest strategies to improve access. Key themes included:

- A significant shortage of available BASP spaces, with an estimated need for 1,600 additional spots to meet current demand.
- Only 26% of survey respondents felt there was adequate access to programs.
- Providers cited staffing shortages as the primary barrier, driven by challenges in recruiting qualified staff, low wages, retention issues, and the nature of split shifts (early morning and late afternoon).
- Rural schools face additional staffing challenges, with many providers preferring to work in urban areas.

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The data presented reflects a snapshot from spring 2025 and includes both qualitative and quantitative insights, including feedback from families with children not yet enrolled but registered to begin in LDSB schools. Principal Arsenault continued by sharing the key findings from the survey and interest group consultations:

- **Special Education Needs Access:** 12% of families reported having children with special needs for whom they would like BASP access. However, spaces are limited due to insufficient funding for enhanced support.
- **Waitlists:** Long waitlists and extended wait times were identified as significant barriers. Families often require flexible arrangements (e.g., only before care, only after care, or care on specific days), which complicates staffing and scheduling for providers.
- **Current Year Demand:** Survey data indicated a need for 1,658 additional BASP spots in the 2024-2025 school year. The highest demand was for Junior Kindergarten (477 spots), followed by Senior Kindergarten (229), with demand decreasing through to Grade 6.
- **Projected Demand for 2025–2026:** Families projected a need for 2,567 BASP spots next year, again with the highest demand in Kindergarten. This included responses from families with children pre-registered for the upcoming school year.
- **Regional Breakdown:** Demand varied by family of schools, with the highest needs reported in the LCVI family (400 spots), followed by Bayridge Secondary School family (368), and Ernestown Secondary School family (305).

Principal Arsenault turned the presentation over to Laura Gillam to share a visual representation of the capacity gaps. This data showed the following:

- 24% of students in Kindergarten to Grade 6 require BASP.
- 13% could be served based on licensed capacity.
- Only 8% can currently be served due to staffing limitations.
- For 2025-2026, current staffing levels would support 887 spots, while licensed capacity allows for 1,400—highlighting a significant service gap.

Superintendent McDonnell shared current initiatives in place to address these challenges:

- **Child Care Advisory Committee:** Established approximately 18 months ago, this committee includes third-party providers, municipal service managers (CMSMs) from Kingston and Lennox

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and Addington, and LDSB staff. The group meets quarterly to identify needs and develop collaborative solutions.

- Recruitment Support: LDSB distributes third-party provider job postings directly to all Educational Assistants (EAs) and Early Childhood Educators (ECEs) via e-mail. Providers have also participated in EA/ECE professional development days to raise awareness about BASP employment opportunities and dispel misconceptions.
- Transportation Coordination: LDSB has worked with Tri-Board Student Transportation Services to provide courtesy transportation for families when BASP is not available at their home school but is accessible nearby.

Superintendent McDonnell concluded the presentation by sharing the next steps to continue addressing this issue:

1. Data Enhancement: LDSB will review additional data sources (e.g., EDI, Statistics Canada, community program availability) to support informed decision-making.
2. Catchment and Busing Review: Consideration will be given to adjusting catchment areas or transportation routes to improve access to BASP.
3. Ongoing Recruitment Support: Continued collaboration with third-party providers to address staffing shortages, particularly in rural areas.
4. Expansion of Authorized Recreation Programs: LDSB will explore partnerships with providers offering authorized recreation programs, which have more flexible staffing ratios and qualification requirements. This may help free up licensed BASP spaces for younger students.
5. Prioritization of JK/SK Extended Day Programs: LDSB will work with providers to prioritize space allocation for Kindergarten-aged students, where demand is highest.
6. Investigation of In-House BASP Pilot: LDSB will explore the feasibility of launching an in-house extended day program (JK/SK only), particularly in underserved communities. Any pilot would need to be licensed and eligible for Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care (CWELCC) funding to ensure affordability for families.

Chair Godkin thanked Superintendent McDonnell, Principal Arsenault, and Laura Gillam for their presentation and called upon Trustees for questions.

6.2 Staff Absence Trends

Superintendent McWilliams introduced her report. She began by stating that the focus of her presentation and study results is on permanent employees and provincial absenteeism trends. Data is collected through an organization called School Boards Cooperative Incorporated (SBCI). The four areas highlighted in the slides are as follows:

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- Trends – Provincial and Local
- Employee Group Results
- Short-Term and Long-Term Sick Leave Utilization
- Opportunities

Superintendent McWilliams shared graphs and charts illustrating the data trends. The following were the key trends that emerged:

- Provincial Absenteeism Study: LDSB participates in a province-wide absenteeism study involving 63 school boards. Data is submitted annually to SBCI, which analyzes sick leave trends and benchmarks individual boards against provincial averages.
- Sick Leave Trends:
 - Sick leave usage increased significantly leading up to the COVID-19 pandemic, dropped during the pandemic due to remote work, and has since risen again.
 - Provincial sick leave costs have grown from under \$400 million in 2010 to approximately \$1.3 billion currently, including both paid leave and replacement staffing costs.
- LDSB Performance:
 - Limestone's sick leave usage has followed the provincial trend but remains consistently below the provincial average.
 - Graphs presented showed Limestone's usage (teal line) compared to the provincial average (light green line), with Limestone trending downward more steadily.
- Employee Group Analysis:
 - Larger groups, such as elementary teachers (approx. 960 members), naturally show higher total sick leave usage.
 - Smaller groups show lower total usage, but ratios are adjusted for group size.
 - Notable increases in sick leave were observed in 2021-2023 across most groups, with some stabilization in 2023-2024.
 - Secondary teachers and non-union groups showed slightly different patterns, with some anomalies noted.

Superintendent McWilliams continued the presentation by sharing updated data and strategies related to staff attendance:

- Recent Trends: Sick leave usage among Educational Assistants and maintenance staff has declined. Overall, LDSB is trending positively, with an average of 13 sick days per employee compared to the provincial average of 15.5 days.

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- **Ongoing Monitoring:** Preliminary projections for the current year indicate a continued slight decline in sick leave usage. Staff in Human Resources (HR) and Finance Departments actively monitor short- and long-term absences, ensuring that time off for medical appointments is used appropriately. Employees are reminded to schedule appointments outside of work hours when possible or limit absences to half-days unless necessary.
- **Messaging and Awareness:** In the fall, LDSB launched a communication campaign emphasizing the importance of regular attendance and the value of each employee's role. The campaign also highlighted the impact of prolonged absences on both staff and student outcomes.
- **Proactive Support:** Employees approaching the 11-day sick leave threshold (after which short-term disability coverage begins) receive notifications. Supervisors are encouraged to meet with staff to offer support, share resources such as the Employee Assistance Program (EAP), and discuss attendance patterns.
- **Attendance Support Program:** Staff exceeding the 11-day threshold may be enrolled in an attendance support program. This includes meetings with HR to review absence history, understand underlying issues, and set achievable goals for reducing absences. The process may involve additional documentation and spans approximately three to four months.

Superintendent McWilliams indicated these efforts aim to balance employee wellness with the need for consistent staffing, ultimately supporting student achievement and well-being. She emphasized the impact on student learning as regular staff attendance is critical to student achievement and well-being. Consistency in classroom staffing is preferred over reliance on occasional teachers.

Director Burra highlighted the Council of Ontario Directors of Education (CODE) report included in the agenda package. He emphasized that the staffing challenges limited program implementation this year, but efforts are underway to fully staff programs for 2025-2026. Strategies such as messaging around appropriate use of sick leave, early intervention, and supervisor check-ins have been implemented. Additionally, fill rate challenges persist, particularly for elementary teachers, despite a large occasional teacher list. Many occasional staff are unavailable or work infrequently, prompting the board to enforce minimum workday requirements and review list participation. LDSB continues to maintain a full complement of full-time staff, unlike some boards in Northern Ontario, though recruitment remains difficult in specialized subjects. Retirees are limited to 50 working days annually, further impacting spring staffing. Director Burra concluded by noting that the board is actively addressing these issues through contingency planning and ongoing recruitment efforts.

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Chair Godkin thanked Superintendent McWilliams for her presentation and called upon Trustees for questions.

7. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

None at this time.

8. NEW BUSINESS

None at this time.

9. CORRESPONDENCE

None at this time.

10. FUTURE BOARD MEETING SCHEDULE

September 3, 2025

11. ADJOURNMENT AND MOVE INTO PRIVATE SESSION

Moved by Trustee McGregor that the meeting adjourns. Carried.

The Meeting Adjourned at 7:34 p.m.

PRIVATE SESSION

Roll Call:

Trustees:	Staff:
G. Elliott (regrets) B. Godkin (Vice-Chair) R. Hutcheon (Chair) (regrets) T. Lloyd J. Maracle K. McGregor J. Morning J. Neill S. Ruttan C. Scott A. Bukhari (Student Trustee) (regrets) R. Kolosov (Student Trustee) (regrets) S. Kumar (Student Trustee) (regrets)	K. Burra, Director of Education

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Guests:	Recorder:
	S. Mitton, Executive Assistant to the Director and Trustee Liaison

12. CALL TO ORDER

Vice-Chair Godkin called the meeting to order.

13. DECLARATION OF CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Vice-Chair Godkin asked Trustees if they had a conflict of interest to declare with any of the agenda items. There were no conflicts declared.

14. ACTION ITEMS

None at this time.

15. FOR INFORMATION

- 15.1. Safe Schools Update
- 15.2. Personnel Update – Director Burra provided a personnel update.
- 15.3. Labour Update
- 15.4. Legal/Property Update
- 15.5. OPSBA Update

16. REPORT TO PUBLIC SESSION

Vice-Chair Godkin called for a motion for the Board to rise and report at the June 18, 2025, Regular Board Meeting.

MOTION: That the Board rise and report.

MOVED by: Trustee McGregor. Carried.