



## SPECIAL EDUCATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

April 20, 2022

### PUBLIC MEETING

#### Roll Call:

Trustees:	Members:
B. Godkin K. McGregor (Chair)	<p>Present:</p> <p>S. Henderson-Todd, Lennox and Addington Resources for Children</p> <p>A. Martin, Member-at-Large (Queen's University)</p> <p>Z. Rogers, Community Living Kingston</p> <p>C. Norwich-Stevenson, Member-at-Large</p> <p>Regrets:</p> <p>C. Roberts, Easter Seals Ontario</p> <p>C. Carriere-Prill, Member-at-Large</p> <p>C. Tooley, Down Syndrome Association Kingston</p> <p>H. Simson, Learning Disabilities Association of Kingston</p>
	Staff:
	<p>M. Blackburn, Principal of Educational Services</p> <p>H. Box, Special Education Program Coordinator</p> <p>L. Conboy, Mental Health Lead</p> <p>W. Fisher, Educational Services and Safe Schools Coordinator</p> <p>S. Gillam, Superintendent, Learning for All</p> <p>J. Grasse, Vice-Principal of Educational Services</p> <p>C. Snider, Special Education Program Coordinator</p> <p>T. Bonham Carter, Special Education Program Coordinator</p>
Guests:	Recorder:
None at this time.	J. Senior, Administrative Assistant

Limestone District School Board

Limestone District School Board is situated on traditional territories of the Anishinaabe & Haudenosaunee.

SEE YOURSELF IN LIMESTONE

## 1. WELCOME

Chair McGregor called the meeting to order and welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Chair McGregor 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.”

## 2. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

*MOVED BY: Trustee Godkin that the agenda be approved.*

## 3. DECLARATION OF CONFLICT OF INTEREST

None at this time.

## 4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

### **4.1** SEAC Minutes – March 23, 2022

*MOVED BY: Trustee Godkin that the March 23, 2022, SEAC Minutes be approved.*

## 5. BUSINESS ARISING FROM MINUTES

None at this time.

## 6. EDUCATION SERVICES UPDATE

### **6.1 Presentation: Supporting Mental Wellness Amongst Students with Special Education Needs**

Laura Conboy, Mental Health Lead began by sharing the work that has been done during the school year to support student mental health and mental wellness, particularly with students with special education needs.

To build intentional connections to the work of our Educational Services staff, Principal Blackburn has provided time once a month at our Leadership Meetings to explore one area of focus and unpack all of the work that Educational Services is currently doing or would like to enhance in that area. This is allowing us to explore and collaboratively connect each

other's work to the strategy in a way that has not happened before. Not only does this create valuable sharing and learning opportunities, but it ensures that the work we are doing aligns with the Mental Health Substance Use (MHSU) Strategy and is applicable to all learners in LDSB.

The information is connected to our MHSU Strategy in a number of ways:

### **Student Focused**

Creating a positive mentally healthy classroom environment that reduces stigma, includes culturally relevant learning, and integrates discussions about mental health is an important role for educators and promotes well-being for all learners. While mental health promotion is good for all students, it is even more essential for students with special education needs, and particularly those with a dual diagnosis. Students with Intellectual Disabilities (ID) often have lagging Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) skills and need extra support in this area. With explicit, intentional lessons and incorporating daily mental health practices into the school day, educators can help bolster skills for resiliency and success amongst all learners.

Taking a student-centered approach and listening to what students told us from the 2021 MHSU Strategy Survey, 50% of respondents ask a friend for mental health support; 13% of respondents feel like they cannot talk to anyone at school about their mental health; and 21% of respondents ask a teacher for mental health support. Some of the work highlighted in this presentation encourages classroom conversations, promotes valuable learning experiences, and included students in the development of some of these resources.

### **Foundational Pillars**

**Equity** - Universal approaches do not yield universal outcomes. Students with developmental disabilities are at increased risk for developing mental health problems throughout their lives. Studies indicate that people with developmental disabilities are three to six times more likely to develop a mental health disorder than other people, and mood and anxiety disorders are particularly prevalent amongst students. Access to MH supports for these students are limited, but early intervention can be pivotal to their mental wellness.

**Evidence** - SMHO and the other professional organizations all deliver content and resources that contain evidence-based information and practices from experts in their respective fields.

### **Areas of Focus**

- Mental Health & Substance Use Knowledge/Support for students and families (lesson plans, classroom programming and supplementary resources for caregivers).
- Equip and Support Staff (professional learning tailored to specific student needs and specific roles).
- Reinforce awareness of and access to LDSB referral processes and pathways, including circle of support.

### **School Mental Health Ontario (SMHO)**

School Mental Health Ontario has made some movement in the area of hosting a series of virtual professional learning sessions for school support staff, including a session on Special Education Considerations in Mental Health Promotion. This opportunity was available for all Student Support Counselors (SSC) and Adolescent Care Workers (ACW) to attend.

SMHO has also produced two new Information Sheets - Mental Health Promotion at School: Classroom Considerations (which came out of the webinar) and Communication Strategies to Support the Mental Health of Students with Special Education Needs. Both resources have been shared with all Educational Services staff in our weekly updates produced by Vice Principal Jen Grasse. The latter of the two resources may be found on the SMHO website and focuses on key communication strategies to help promote inclusion in mentally healthy learning environments:

<https://smho-smso.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/MH-Promotion-at-School-Special-Education-Considerations.pdf>

Almost all SSCs (except for recent hires) have been trained in the delivery of *Kids Have Stress Too!* Curriculum for Grades 1-3 and 4-6, produced by Psychology Canada. This curriculum focuses on stress regulation and stress management skills and strategies. This can also be delivered or co-delivered by classroom teachers. SMHO has supported the training and delivery of this curriculum and developed a tip sheet for those delivering the programming which focuses on Special Education Considerations.

### **Sonderly Training – Foundations of Mental Health in the Classroom**

The Foundations of Mental Health in the Classroom training through Sonderly is a 4-hour online course that offers an introduction to mental health in the classroom and provides practical ways to integrate evidence-based practices, such as social-emotional learning, mindfulness, meditation, and active listening into classrooms to facilitate mental well-being for both students and educators. This course provides a foundation for educators to better position themselves to understand their students' mental health challenges, and to empower themselves to provide compassion and supports using practical resources and techniques in their classroom. Two of our educators are taking advantage of this self-paced, voluntary learning opportunity, which is funded through LDSB.

### **Professional Learning with School to Community Educators**

On April 7, Special Education Coordinator Hugh Box and Mental Health Lead Laura Conboy had the opportunity to bring together 10-15 School to Community teachers and support staff for a day of professional learning.

**safeTalk** – A 3-hour training with content produced by LivingWorks (based out of Calgary), focuses on learning on how to prevent suicide by recognizing signs, engaging someone, and connecting them to an intervention resource for further support. This training was delivered by one of our SSC/ACs and participants received certification.

**MH LIT for Students:** Student Mental Health in Action materials are available on the SMHO website. Students with learning disabilities may be at greater risk for mental health problems including ADHD, anxiety, mood disorders, and interpersonal problems. Good teaching practices and classroom accommodations to support students when they are presenting with feelings, thoughts, and behaviours that are interfering with learning can be an important protective factor and help bolster their skills toward success.

**Student Mental Health in Action** is a series of four 30-45-minute lessons focusing on mental health and mental illness, signs of mental health problems, strategies to support mental health and well-being, and how/where to access help for the student and their friends, when needed. The module provides additional supportive materials and extension activities. Supportive resources include: School Readiness Checklist, School Leaders Implementation Guide, Educator Preparation Suggestions, Parent/Caregiver Handouts. Seven educators expressed their interest in a potentially piloting this in their classrooms next year.

#### **Developmental Disabilities Consulting Program (DDCP)**

Meg McQueen, Clinical Director of Developmental Disabilities Consulting Program (DDCP) provided an overview of services for each of the respective agencies which are now housed under the same roof. Educators also had an opportunity for Q & A. This was an extremely well-received piece of the day.

#### **Sexual Health Resources**

Clinical Consultant Dr Petra McDowell and Special Education Coordinator Hugh Box shared information regarding sexual health education and resources for secondary students with IDs, including the importance of normalizing sexuality, particularly amongst our secondary School to Community Students, and the importance of consent being freely given, reversible, informed, enthusiastic, and specific. Dr McDowell and Hugh Box not only provided information, but they also shared online resources and Public Health teaching tools available for educators to access.

#### **Brief Intervention for School Clinicians (BRISC) Training for Clinical Consultants**

BRISC is a Tier 2 intervention for Grades 7-12 students, developed to fit the school context and align with the scope of School Mental Health Services. BRISC engages students and triages mental health needs through four individually focussed sessions. Most often used with students struggling with anxiety or mood. Five of our Registered Psychologists attended this training at the end of March and five Social Workers have also attended this training.

The BRISC Training includes the following:

- Compliments Brief Intervention model.
- Tier 2 intervention that engages secondary students and triages mental health needs through four individually focused sessions.
- Clinicians and students assess, identify, and address difficulties that cause students distress and impact their academic, behavioural/social, and overall function.
- Students learn how to resolve challenges they have control over and identify ways to cope with challenges outside their control.

Chair McGregor called upon SEAC Members for questions regarding Supporting Mental Wellness Amongst Students with Special Education Needs.

## 7. CORRESPONDENCE

**7.1 York Catholic District School Board** – Letter to Minister of Education and Minister of Health regarding the nursing shortage. Provided for information.

**7.2 York Catholic District School Board** – Letter to Minister of Education regarding the Special Incident Portion Claim Funding, dated April 5, 2022. Provided for information.

## 8. ASSOCIATION UPDATES

### Easter Seals Ontario Scholarship Program for 2022

The Easter Seals Ontario Scholarship Program for 2022 is now open and accepting applications until April 29, 2022. Easter Seals Ontario is a 100-year-old charitable organization that provides life-changing programs and services to children, youth, and young adults with physical disabilities in Ontario.

Each year we offer a number of scholarships to help students with physical disabilities achieve their dreams of post-secondary education. The full list of scholarships offered through our Scholarship Program can be viewed at the website provided below. Please note that, to be considered eligible, applicants must have a physical disability that impacts their mobility. More information can be found in the attached letter and at: <https://services.easterseals.org/other-programs/scholarships/>.

As our goal is to make our scholarships available to as many students as possible, we would greatly appreciate your help in circulating this information to any students or parents in your network who may benefit from this program. Please consider sharing the information in the attached letter.

## 9. OTHER BUSINESS – Administrative Report: Superintendent’s Report

### 9.1 Ministry Updates:

#### Ministry of Education Update

The Ontario government is supporting students with special education needs, along with their parents, through new investments and partnerships that will help them succeed in the classroom. The investments are part of the government’s overall plan to support learning recovery and renewal and address the impacts of learning disruptions during the COVID-19 pandemic.

As part of the government’s Priorities and Partnerships Funding (PPF) COVID-19 Equity Supports, Ontario’s new investments in special education include:

- \$150,000 to [Down Syndrome Association of Ontario](#) (DSAO) to create digital and print content that supports parents, guardians and caregivers as their child with Down syndrome transitions through the school system
- \$100,000 to [Child Development Institute](#) (CDI) to implement the Stop Now And Plan (SNAP) Program and the Early Assessment Risk List (EARL) framework for children with behavioural issues, and in support of their families. SNAP teaches children effective emotion regulation, self-control and problem-solving skills, and techniques
- \$25,000 to [Children at Risk](#) for programs for children with autism to help develop their behavioural, communications and social skills.

### 9.2 Educational Services SEAC Update:

#### World Autism Day

While World Autism Day took place on Saturday, April 2, 2022, many classrooms across Limestone celebrated Autism Day throughout the week following this Saturday. The ABC class at JG Simcoe created tie-dye shirts and had an amazing outdoor performance and students in Rob Kay’s DAC shared how they made their classroom and school inclusive and neurodiverse. Many other classrooms across the district, both in elementary and secondary, also provided examples of celebrating Autism Day in their Twitter feeds.

#### Life Beyond High School

Life Beyond School is a wonderful information sharing meeting that has been held for many years, organized by Donna Abbink, LDSB Transition Coordinator. Life Beyond School is open to our wider Limestone Community, especially for graduating students and families of students who are contemplating graduation from high school or who are about to graduate.

### SST/LPS Course

There were 27 participants who completed this year's SST/LPS course. This included nine participants who were new to the role. We also had four Secondary participants, including one from Secondary Virtual School, as well as the Elementary Virtual School SST. This course is instrumental in providing the knowledge and skills to successfully support special education at both the elementary and secondary level. A huge thanks to Cheryl Snider and the rest of the team at Educational Services for supporting this invaluable professional development.

### Trauma-Informed Training

Trauma-informed training took place with ESL Instructors on March 24 and April 21. There was also a half-day meeting with Student Success Staff and ESL Instructors, focusing on students with a presenting mental health issue. Eleven staff and two teacher candidates were present.

### Transition to Kindergarten (T2K) Update

K-12 Special Education Program Coordinator, Transition to Kindergarten Lead, Cheryl Snider, began the T2K Update stating that the T2K Transition Team is beginning to reach out to families and schools to prepare and welcome all our youngest learners to kindergarten.

The goal of this presentation is to provide a general overview of the Transition to Kindergarten process and timeline, and to communicate specific information regarding the number of transitions for 2022 and highlight the key priorities.

The Transition to Kindergarten process is a partnership between Algonquin and Lakeshore Catholic District School Board, KidsInclusive, Community Living Kingston, Early Expressions, and Maltby Centre.

The Transition to Kindergarten is a year-long process; the timeline is outlined below:

- **October-November:** Committee Members meet to review the T2K process and parent/family feedback.
- **December:** Review the T2K Website and invite feedback and contributions; confirm presentations and parent panel for the Parent & Family Workshop in March.
- **January:** Review and update feedback survey
- **February:** Final preparations for the Parent & Family Workshop.
- **March:** Parent & Family Workshop; begin receiving student information forms; master list is compiled, and general transition information communicated to schools.
- **April:** Specific student information is communicated to schools. LDSB Team begins reaching out to families, community partners, and schools.
- **April-June:** Transition Meetings.



## Transitions 2022

- Board Level Transitions: 43
- School Level Transitions: 27
- Total: 70

A Board Level Transition means that a member of our community partners indicated on the transition form that it might be a more complex need involved with the student and it would be beneficial for a member of our team to be part of the transition meeting. In these cases, our team takes the lead on the transition meeting.

A School Level Transition means that a member of our community partners indicated on the transition form that a school level transition meeting would be sufficient. This meeting would involve members from the school team and any community partners listed on the form.

## Key Priorities

- The importance/value of transitions
- Lead assigned (coordination, facilitation, documentation, communication)
- Student centered – everyone at table
- Parent and family voice (first point of contact)
- Inclusion of community partner voices and advocates
- Using the transition profile form and 6Fs Framework (Function, Family, Fun, Friends, Future) for gathering information
- Formulating a plan that includes the transfer of information back to the school team

Chair McGregor called upon SEAC Members for questions.

## 10. NEXT MEETING DATE

Tuesday, May 17, 2022

Prior to calling for a motion to adjourn, Chair McGregor shared that Nadine Carson from Epilepsy South Eastern Ontario has resigned from her position on SEAC. SEAC would like to thank Nadine for her many years of service and advocacy on behalf of all students with exceptionalities in LDSB. Nadine's expertise will be missed.

## 11. ADJOURNMENT

*MOVED BY: Trustee Godkin that the meeting adjourn.*

*The meeting adjourned at 6:24 pm.*