

SPECIAL EDUCATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

February 12, 2025

Public Meeting

Roll Call:

Trustees:	Members:
T. Lloyd, Regrets K. McGregor, Regrets	Present: A. Martin, Member-at-Large (Queen's University) Z. Rogers, Community Living Kingston C. Lord, Epilepsy South Eastern Ontario H. Simson, Learning Disabilities Association of Kingston E. Clow, Member-at-Large H. Clark, Autism Ontario Regrets: L. Clouthier, Easter Seals Ontario K. Hill, Member-at-Large J. Barker, Lennox & Addington Resources for Children
Invitees:	Staff:
	Present: S. Gillam, Superintendent of Education, Learning for All M. Blackburn, Principal of Educational Services W. Fisher, Educational Services and Safe Schools Coordinator C. Snider, Special Education Program Coordinator M. Aylsworth, Special Education Program Coordinator M. West, Special Education Program Coordinator L. Conboy, Mental Health Lead J. Lalonde, Special Education Program Coordinator N. Dillard, Vice-Principal of Educational Services T. Bonham-Carter, Special Education Program Coordinator
Recorder:	Guests:
J. Senior, Administrative Assistant	Laura Stevens, Clinical Consultant Kevin Hulton, Attendance Counsellor Scott Nichol, Student Support Counsellor Nancy Gourdier-Golle, Student Support Counsellor Ellyn Clost-Lambert, LDSB Research and Data Analyst Laura Gillam, LDSB Research and Data Analyst

Limestone District School Board

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1. WELCOME

Co-Chair Andrea Martin called the meeting to order and welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Co-Chair Andrea Martin 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: 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 Member-at- Large Erin Clow that the January 22, 2025, SEAC Minutes be approved. Carried.

5. BUSINESS ARISING FROM MINUTES

5.1 In response to the motion passed at the January 22, 2025, SEAC Meeting regarding adding LDSB SEAC Chair, Karen McGregor's name to the list of signatures on the Ottawa Catholic District School Board letter to be sent to the Ministry of Education concerning Inadequate Special Education Funding and Education Assistant Shortage, a letter is being sent to Traci Clarke, SEAC Chair, Ottawa Catholic School Board, confirming our approval of adding Karen McGregor's name to this letter.

6. EDUCATION SERVICES UPDATE

6.1 Educational Services Presentation – District Supports

Principal Blackburn started the presentation by sharing that the focus of the presentation will be on the district supports that are available and accessible to schools, students, and families with special education needs across our system.

Changes to District Supports and Services

The Special Education restructuring included the addition of the Intensive Support Teacher (IST) role and increased Student Support Teacher (SST) allocations across the district. The district support structure was adjusted to increase in-school supports, flexibility, and responsiveness. Previously, there were three District Teams: an Autism Team, a School to Community Team, and a Behaviour Action Team, with various roles such as Student Support **Counsellors** (SSC), Speech-Language Pathologists (SLP), Attendance **Counsellors**, Clinical Consultants, and Intervention Assistants (IA). The restructuring reduced the teams to two: an Intensive Support Team and a Safe Schools Team, reallocating support to schools. The Special Education Coordinators' roles were also restructured to focus more on family and school support. The teams continue to include SSCs, SLPs, Attendance **Counsellors**, IAs, and Clinical Consultants, with the addition of Behavior Analysts, and a Secondary Autism Support Teacher.

Referral Pathway

To support the system's understanding of the structure and access to district services, a Referral Pathway was embedded and implemented. This pathway supports tiered intervention at the in-school level and ensures the effective and efficient allocation of district resources. It specifically pertains to accessing coordinator support and the Intensive Support Team, excluding the safe schools team. The pathway guides schools through mobilizing in-school supports before accessing district supports, ensuring flexibility and responsiveness. It starts with educator consultation within the school, involving the intensive support teacher, student support teacher, and administration. If the issue persists, it progresses to the in-school team for further discussion and problem-solving. This may lead to a referral to the multidisciplinary team at the in-school level, and eventually to district supports, including Special Education Coordinators and District Teams. The presentation aims to explain how these teams become involved and the supports and services they provide.

Special Education Coordinators

Each of the five Special Education Coordinator has specific portfolio items, similar to previous years. However, a significant change this year is that each of the Special Education Coordinators now support specific families of schools, rather than being determined by exceptionality (e.g., autism or School to Community). This change removes barriers to accessing supports. Coordinators now support schools and teams regardless of diagnosis, and they are focused on consulting and connecting with one another to support families of schools. All five Special Education Coordinators are involved in collaboration around professional learning, capacity building, planning, and delivery, as well as in-school team consultation.

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An integral part of the Special Education Coordinator role this year is the organization and delivery of professional development, focusing on eight key areas within the Monitoring Plan:

- Universal Design for Learning
- Executive Functions
- Assistive Technology
- Relationship Based Approaches
- Accessibility
- Neuro-affirming Practices
- Multi-tiered Systems of Support
- Modifications/Accommodations

Through feedback and observation, the goal is to remain flexible and responsive, aligning system navigation with research and evidence-based practices. The aim is to equip educators with knowledge and understanding in these key areas, encouraging them to share it with their schools and staff teams. The eight key areas drive the growth and development of professional development efforts.

Supporting School Teams

The coordinators are connected to schools through five main points:

- Coaching In-School Teams to work together to effectively problem solve and support students.
- Problem solving and capacity building with In-School Teams to support students.
- Support School Teams as they work through the Referral Pathway.
- Connecting School Teams with resources and assisting with system navigation.
- Walking alongside teachers and teams as they support all students.

As the Special Education Coordinators work with schools and walk alongside them supporting students, one of the pieces that they might encourage is a referral to our Intensive Support Team.

Intensive Support Team

The Intensive Support Team consists of the following:

- Two Team Leads
- Five Special Education Coordinators
- Three SSCs
- One SLP
- Two Behaviour Analysts
- One Secondary Autism Support Teacher
- Three IAs

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The Intensive Support Team works collaboratively to decide which member is best positioned to initially support a student, with the possibility of changing or adding team members as needed. For example, an SLP may join if communication barriers are identified. The team's primary goal is to bolster skills through consultation, guidance, and capacity building for those directly supporting the student, such as classroom teachers and EAs. They also help schools plan effectively for students, make environmental changes, and develop specific plans like safety or support plans. Additionally, the team supports students and families in navigating community-based supports and maximizing the benefits of existing supports. The process involves multiple team members providing new perspectives and insights to ensure comprehensive support for the student.

Intensive Support Team – Mid-Year Data

- 64 Referrals
 - 26 – Student Support Counsellor
 - 27 – Speech and Language Pathologist
 - 11 – Behaviour Analysts
- Majority of referrals are Grade 2 – 6
- Variety of student profiles

Student Support Counsellor – Intensive Support Team

- Obtain consents and review of the student's referral package.
- Connect with the Special Education Coordinator to gather additional information, understanding of student/school needs, coordinator's areas of focus and recommendations so far.
- Connect and work in collaboration with school based multidisciplinary team members supporting the student (SLP, SSC, Clinical).
- Review of student's OSR.
- Meeting with the school team to gather information on student's strengths, interests, concerns/barriers, identify key goals for the student.
- Multiple observations at different times of day, in various environments to help understand student needs.
- Follow up meeting to discuss recommendations.
- Consult notes detailing recommendations to support student success.
- Coaching and modelling for school staff to support implementation of the recommendations.
- Follow up and monitoring student progress.

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Safe Schools Team

The Safe Schools Team is multidisciplinary and consists of the following:

- One Team Lead
- Two Student Support Counsellors
- One Attendance Counsellor
- One Clinical Consultant

The main focus of the Safe Schools Team is to ensure school safety and provide ongoing support for students involved in safe schools' incidents or concerns. Administrators reach out to the Safe Schools Team, and based on the conversation and information gathered, a team member is assigned to the case. The team's work is grounded in the Community Threat Assessment Protocol, with all members highly trained in this area. The assessment is a collaborative effort between Limestone and community partners such as Maltby, OPP, Kingston Police, Youth Diversion, St. Lawrence Youth Association, and Family and Children's Services. The goal is to be proactive and reduce risk, ultimately lowering a student's level of risk related to their threat-making behavior and developing intervention plans.

KFL&A Community Risk Watch Table

Community partners come together weekly to review referrals and facilitate support for students and families who are deemed to be at an acutely elevated risk. Safe School Team members represent LDSB at the Community Risk Watch Tables in Kingston and Napanee. The group will develop a plan and meet with the individual or family to provide quick service and wrap supports around them.

Student Support Counsellors – Safe Schools Team

In addition to other Safe School Team supports, the Student Support Counsellors will:

- Handle case management of complex students.
- Connect to alternative education, suspension, and expulsion programs.
- Liaise with hospitals for students receiving mental health support.
- Facilitate the violence threat risk assessment process.
- Manage the high-risk registration process at schools.
- Support the RISE program for grade 6-8 students at risk of expulsion.
- Monitor and report on the progress of students in the RISE program, including behavior de-escalation and plans for returning to home schools.

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Attendance Counsellor – Safe Schools Team

In addition to other Safe School Team supports, the Attendance Counsellor will:

- Provide support with attendance and re-engagement strategies.
- Develop alternative education plans inside and outside of the classroom.
- Offer ongoing case management and consultation for students connected to the team's programs.
- Coordinate Behavior Management Systems (BMS) training for all Limestone District School Board staff. BMS training provides leadership, training and support for effectively managing behaviors in school.
- Support the Transitions for Success program for Grade 9 and 10 students. These students are referred by school administration in consultation with our Safe Schools Team. The Transitions for Success program help these students build skills and academic success to transition back to their local secondary school.
- Assist students on long-term suspension or expulsion through the YMCA Student Impact Program (YSIP) in Kingston and the GAP program in Napanee. Both programs provide students with an alternative space to complete academic and non-academic activities designed to support their needs.

Clinical Consultant – Safe Schools Team

Alongside the various supports provided by the Safe School Team, the Clinical Consultant will also:

- Participate in all Violent Threat Risk Assessments.
- Complete comprehensive OSR reviews and review IEPs.
- Clarify identifications through the IPRC process and any diagnoses.
- Review external reports and complete psychoeducational assessments.
- Offer consultation and brief intervention (1-5 sessions) for skill building, mental health support, and helping students understand their diagnosis or learning profiles.
- Provide support for high-risk registrations and students in the RISE, GAP, or Transitions programs.
- Offer district-wide crisis support, trauma response, and suicide intervention.

Co-Chair Martin called upon SEAC Members for questions regarding District Supports.

6.2 Grade 10 Mental Health Literacy Modules Special Education Coordinator, Melissa West, began the presentation discussing the implementation of Mandatory Mental Health Literacy Modules for Grade 10 students, which include two 60-minute sessions designed to be delivered by teachers. These modules aim to support updated and new mental health literacy expectations within the 2024 Career Students course.

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Students were consulted during the development of these modules to understand their existing knowledge, learning preferences, and areas of interest. The modules include videos, slide decks, discussion questions, and follow-up materials, making them ready for immediate use by educators. They also provide action tasks, consolidation activities, and supportive transition and conclusion materials.

The importance of prioritizing mental health learning was emphasized, highlighting that students want to learn about mental health in the classroom (HearNowON 2021). Educators are well-positioned to guide this learning. This helps students to develop skills that support positive mental health, which in turn supports learning in other areas, encourages important conversations, and helps students access support when needed.

The presentation also mentioned the implementation of PPM 169. This policy outlines the requirements for school boards to provide culturally responsive, evidence-informed student mental health promotion, prevention, and early intervention services. It also provides clear pathways to and from more intensive community and hospital-based mental health services when required.

The Grade 10 Mental Health Literacy Modules are aligned with the revised Mental Health Literacy expectations within the Grade 10 Career Studies course, a compulsory course for achieving an Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD). The modules aim to help students manage stress, recognize signs of problematic stress, and access support when needed.

Module 10.1 focuses on strategies for managing stress and maintaining a school-work-life balance. Module 10.1 has particular connections with and builds on the Grade 8 Module, and the focus is on Mental Health Literacy and maintaining focus.

Module 10.2 is a new curriculum designed to help students identify signs of problematic stress and understand when, where, and how to seek mental health support. Schools are encouraged to have their school-based Social Workers and Adolescent Care Workers (ACW) attend this lesson. This way, students can become familiar with the support staff available in their buildings and feel more comfortable seeking help if needed.

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Additional supportive resources created by School Mental Health Ontario:

- Prepared student-facing slide decks.
- Accompanying Educator Guide with bonus content to support planning and understanding.
- Prepared notes to support communication with parents/caregivers.
- Student organizers and information to support learning.
- Teacher notes specific to online learning.
- Tips that keep education well-being in mind.

Both modules contain self-reflection questions and exit cards for students to reflect on their learning and areas for growth. Preliminary data from two schools showed positive feedback from students regarding their understanding of stress management strategies and knowing where to seek mental health support.

The presentation concluded with an update on the Grade 10 Mental Health Modules and the positive preliminary data collected from students.

7. CORRESPONDENCE

7.1 Durham District School Board – Correspondence to the Linda Lacroix, Registrar and CEO, Ontario College of Teachers, regarding Inadequate Special Education Funding and Educational Assistant Shortage in agreement with LDSB SEAC letter sent on November 6, 2024. This letter is dated January 13, 2025. Provided for information.

7.2 Algoma District School Board – Correspondence to the Linda Lacroix, Registrar and CEO, Ontario College of Teachers, regarding Inadequate Special Education Funding and Educational Assistant Shortage in agreement with LDSB SEAC letter sent on November 6, 2024. This letter is dated January 21, 2025. Provided for information.

7.3 Ottawa Catholic District School Board – Correspondence to the Minister of Education, regarding Inadequate Special Education Funding and Educational Assistant Shortage dated January 27, 2025. Provided for information.

7.4 Ottawa Catholic District School Board – Correspondence Chairs of Special Education Advisory Committees across Ontario, regarding Special Education Funding in the Province of Ontario dated January 30, 2025. Provided for information.

8. ASSOCIATION UPDATES

8.1 Autism Ontario – Haley Clark provided information regarding Celebrate the Spectrum, School Giving Challenge – April 1-30, 2025. Posters in French and English were shared with SEAC via email previously.

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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.

9.2 Student Census Consultation – LDSB Research and Data Analysts, Ellyn Clost-Lambert and Laura Gillam, provided a comprehensive review of the 2025 Student Census and sought feedback from SEAC members on the questions related to Special Education.

10. NEXT MEETING DATE

March 19, 2025

11. ADJOURNMENT

MOVED BY: Member-at- Large Erin Clow, that the meeting adjourn. Carried.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:24 pm.