

Mental Health and Substance Use Leadership Committee –

December 4, 2025, 3:30 – 5:00 PM.

Private Meeting

Roll Call: *Laura Conboy, Scot Gillam, Ellyn Clost-Lambert, Kristy Luffman, Megan Brunet, Liv Rondeau, Anita Peter, Shawn Quigley, Maggie Farmer, Amanda Posdowski, Rae McDonald, Shawn Lowe*

Regrets: *Melissa West, Cheryl Snider, Wendy Fisher, Val Arsenault, Adam Andrecyk*

Minutes: *Ellyn Clost-Lambert and Rae McDonald*

1. WELCOME

Laura Conboy welcomed committee members and shared regrets. For the remainder of the school year, Anita Peter will be representing the Social Work affinity while Gillian Gunn is on leave. Laura delivered the land acknowledgment and reflected on the upcoming anniversary of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's final report (December 15th). She emphasized the need for an ongoing commitment to the Calls to Action and allyship with Indigenous Peoples. Laura also recognized Rae McDonald for her receipt of the Top Fundraiser Award for the Defeat Depression Run with the Mood Disorders Society of Canada.

2. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

Agenda item missed. Agenda was included in the meeting information package sent out to members last week.

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Agenda item missed. Minutes were included in the meeting information package sent out to members last week.

4. COMMUNITY PARTNER UPDATES

Amanda Posadowski, South East Health Unit (SEHU), reported on the recent frontline mental health youth worker day on November 21, 2025. Youth workers from LDSB and ALCDSB attended. The SEHU team is working on some of the items discussed in that meeting. At last year's event, concerns were raised about unhoused students and uneasiness about referring them to the Youth Shelter. SEHU has worked with Kingston Youth Shelter to create a video and pamphlet to help students know what to expect if they need to use the shelter. Amanda will share the video with committee members when it is finalized.

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Shawn Quigley, Youth Diversion, noted that there are many new administrators within LDSB who may not be as familiar with Youth Diversion services. Shawn will be presenting a service delivery update at an upcoming administrator's meeting. Updates will include information on MEND, including expanding from conversations training to circles training, and making sure schools are aware of the services available to them.

Shawn Quigley also advised that Rotary Club Youth Development Committee grant applications are coming up soon (February) for summer camps. Shawn asked the group about the best way to share that information with schools. The grants are for day or overnight camps (e.g., class or group of students going to RKY, Gould Lake, etc.) and can provide funds for transportation and logistics. Laura suggested we could share the information on "myLDSB" and Superintendent Gillam could speak to it at a future Operation's meeting.

Shawn Lowe, Maltby Centre, introduced himself to the group as this was his first meeting. Shawn advised that the wait list for ongoing mental health services is coming down. In Kingston, the wait list for ongoing therapy is down to 4 months and the rural waitlist is down to 2 months. Walk-in appointments remain readily available.

Processing Nexus applications has taken longer this time due to scheduling and modifications to the process since the spring. An additional set of interviews with the parents and the student now occurs after admission review meetings take place, to ensure everyone understands what is involved in being a part of Nexus. Laura shared that she has seen an increase in applications for spaces this year compared to last, perhaps because of the changes to LDSB's special education model. Shawn concurred with the increase in program applications. Odessa had the highest volume of applications across all programs this fall.

Laura shared information about upcoming Care and Treatment Education Program applications. The callout for applications for Belong usually happens in February. SOAR applications are typically accepted in May, with decisions about placements in early June. Nexus has a rolling admission process, but there will be a call out in May for applications for September 2026.

5. BALANCED DEVICE USE PILOT

Chelsie Boucher, Student Support Counsellor (SSC), provided an update on the recent Balanced Device Use pilot program through School Mental Health Ontario (SMHO). Chelsie delivered the pilot to a 7/8 class at École James R. Henderson Public School.

Student feedback was mixed. Chelsie stated that overall, students found the content boring and repetitive, with too much focus on slide content, and the videos were tailored to a younger audience. During the three 90-minute sessions, students felt as though they were sitting too long. Positive feedback included

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lots of opportunities for students to talk about how much control devices have over their lives. She reported that students also came to understand that balanced device use does not mean never using their devices. Their program took a harm reduction approach. Students liked that they built shared rules in week one and had a say in what they were. Students communicated that managing the stress and anxiety of having to put away their devices was not talked about enough. They also expressed that they would have liked for there to be a research component about how social media impacts their brains. Students noted that schools “push tech” onto them then tell them to put their phones away. Chelsie also reported that a lot of students shared that they use their devices for sports betting. Lastly, students identified that none of them were in control of their device use. All students in the class described their device use as an addiction and felt compelled to use it. Students learned that their peers also felt like they were out of control with their device use and that they felt friendships were at stake if they didn’t answer their phone.

Chelsie has provided feedback to SMHO on how the pilot went. She advised that she would not deliver the program again in the way that it is currently designed, though it may be better suited for a grade 6 class. Laura noted that LDSB is one of a couple of boards participating in the pilot; we will see what SMHO does with the feedback. If we can’t build in movement and maintain the evidence-informed consent, this may not be the right program for LDSB to adopt.

Shawn Quigley asked if students discussed the impact of caregiver limit-setting and their reactions to this. Chelsie stated that students get very frustrated with limits set by caregivers and sometimes get aggressive when they take phones away. However, this content is not included in the pilot curriculum. Shawn suggested that gaming/gambling/technology issues are not child/youth issues, but rather caregiver issues.

6. PREPARE, PREVENT, RESPOND

Laura shared that LDSB is phasing out Safetalk and adopting Prepare, Prevent, Respond (PPR), which is designed with and for educators, making it more relevant to education. Laura thanked all staff who deliver the training, including members of the committee.

PPR has been delivered as a half day session at Summer Institute, the November LPS/LST meeting, and the December IST meeting. Two half-day sessions will be delivered on the January 30th EA PA Day.

Laura reviewed some of the implementation findings, which include the ideal length of the workshop, providing clarification that the training is not about conducting a risk assessment, using LDSB data to support discussions, ensuring enough time for demonstrations, and the emphasis on systemic issues preventing students from seeking support. Overall, PPR has been well-received by participants, though

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some staff have expressed that they remain uncomfortable in crisis scenarios. Some staff are still unfamiliar with LDSB's Suicide Response Protocol and where to find it.

Shawn Quigley asked how often the LDSB Suicide Response Protocol is shared with placement students. Laura was unsure. Liv Rondeau advised that she would make sharing the protocol with placement students a part of her process moving forward. Chelsie felt that sharing depends on the role of the placement student. She has reviewed it with placement students before in her role as SSC. Shawn reported that in his previous experience as a placement coordinator, protocols in general were not shared with students. Shawn also wondered how LDSB's Suicide Response Protocol aligns with ALCDSB's protocol. There has been no consultation or collaboration between the two boards on the development of these protocols.

7. HEALTHY CHOICES – SUBSTANCE USE AND DIGITAL SAFETY MODULES FOR GRADE 6

Laura provided a high-level overview of the new Healthy Choices modules for grade 6 students, released in November. These educator-led modules build on the work of the mental health literacy modules for grades 7 and 8 released in 2023, and the mental health literacy modules for career studies released in 2024. There are two 60-minute lesson plans from the Ministry of Education, supported by SMHO. At present, the modules are not mandatory due to the time of year they were released. The modules focus on knowing the facts and developing strategies to help make healthy and safe decisions about substance use and digital media. In addition to the modules, there are extension activities, educator guides, choice of assessment tools, and optional caregiver information.

8. ACTION PLAN INFOGRAPHICS

Laura presented four infographics summarizing the 2025-2026 Action Plan, covering four of the five areas of focus (excluding pathways to care). The infographics were created to allow for a visual representation of the work we are doing in each area of focus. These will be publicly available on the LDSB website in January. Laura noted that counts are not included in the infographics but can access them if deemed beneficial by the group. Statistics related to the intersectionality of LDSB students can be updated with new census data, as it comes available.

Committee members noted the information is very readable, kind to the eye and delivers the message. Shawn Quigley suggested that the graphic demonstrating student diversity should be front and centre on the LDSB website and perhaps shared with trustees. Chelsie Boucher felt the SSC description of services could be more robust. Ellyn Clost-Lambert will connect with Chelsie about this to gather her input and make changes.

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9. EDUCATIONAL SERVICES CRISIS LINE

Agenda item deferred to next meeting.

10. ADJOURNMENT

Laura adjourned the meeting. Next meeting is scheduled for January 22, 2026 from 3:30 – 5 PM on MS Teams.

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