

Education, Policy and Operations Committee Meeting Minutes –

May 6, 2026

PUBLIC MEETING

Roll Call:

Trustees:	Staff:
G. Elliott B. Godkin R. Hutcheon T. Lloyd (Vice-Chair) J. Maracle K. McGregor (Chair) J. Morning S. Ruttan C. Scott M. Comeau (Student Trustee) R. Kolosov (Student Trustee) (regrets) S. Ismail (Student Trustee)	K. Burra, Director of Education M. Blackburn, Associate Superintendent of Education S. McWilliams, Superintendent of Human Resources C. Young, Superintendent of Business Services A. Grange, Communications Consultant
Guests:	Recorder:
J. DaCosta, CEO, Tri-Board Transportation P. Allison, Elementary STEM Consultant R. Parry, Innovation and Technology-enabled L. Alward, Manager of Innovation and Digital Transformation K. MacQuarrie, Manager of Information and Communications Technology	S. Mitton, Executive Assistant to the Director and Trustee Liaison

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Lloyd welcomed everyone to the meeting and provided the Land Acknowledgement: “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. 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.”

Chair Lloyd stated: “Before we proceed, I would like to take a moment to acknowledge Trustee Jim Neill, who passed away on Sunday, April 26, 2026.

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The Limestone District School Board is deeply saddened by the passing of Trustee Neill, who served as a Trustee since 2022.

During his time on the Board, Trustee Neill demonstrated a strong commitment to public education and to supporting the work of the Board in service to students, families and communities across Limestone. He was a long-time educator in the Upper Canada District School Board and served multiple terms as a City of Kingston Councillor. We are grateful for the contributions he made as a Trustee.

We extend our sincere condolences to Trustee Neill's family, friends, and colleagues during this difficult time.

Personally, I always valued his warmth, his joy, and his sense of humour- but particularly the fact that he was a strong advocate for all local services working collaboratively for the betterment of our community.

As a mark of respect, the LDSB Education Centre (Board Office), as well as Kingston Secondary School and its family of schools, will fly their flags at half-mast until the end of the day, today, Wednesday, May 6, 2026.

Trustee Neill's obituary is available online for those who wish to learn more or pay their respects."

2. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

MOVED BY: Trustee Godkin that the agenda, as presented, be approved. Carried.

3. PRESENTATION

3.1 Tri-Board Annual Update

Chair Lloyd welcomed Jeremy DaCosta, Chief Executive Officer of Tri-Board Student Transportation Services, who provided his annual update. Mr. DaCosta shared background information on the student transportation consortium, noting that it was established in 2006 and is one of 34 consortia across the province. He explained that Tri-Board is responsible for equitable policy administration and route planning, supported by a staff of 15 employees, and that it currently provides transportation for 30,919 riders across 617 routes, covering approximately 62,000 kilometres daily and serving 138 schools.

Mr. DaCosta outlined preparations for the 2026-2027 school year, including a new agreement with bus operators effective September 2026. He reported that a competitive procurement process began in March 2025 and resulted in contracts being awarded to five operators on October 1, 2025. He also highlighted Tri-Board's transportation "opt-in" approach and noted that the opt-in deadline for the upcoming school year is August 5, 2026, which supports the availability of busing on the first day of school. He advised that,

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as a result of this process, more than 90 per cent of students and families received transportation on the first day of school in 2025-2026.

Operational efficiencies were reviewed, including efforts to shift the culture of efficiency from “most of the time,” to “all of the time,” supported by the addition of a Transportation Analyst and strengthened approval processes. Mr. DaCosta also shared data comparing inclement weather events during the 2024-2025 and 2025-2026 school years, noting a significant increase in weather-related disruptions this year. Trustees viewed a Global News video titled, “Inside the 4 a.m. decision to cancel school buses in southeastern Ontario,” which demonstrated the early-morning coordination involved in transportation decisions. The video highlighted the role of 20 to 25 drivers monitoring road conditions and providing photographic evidence, as well as Tri-Board’s consultation with a meteorologist to support forecasting for both morning and afternoon travel. Mr. DaCosta emphasized that decisions to cancel transportation are not taken lightly and are guided by multiple safety-related factors.

In closing, Mr. DaCosta identified emerging issues impacting student transportation, including infrastructure challenges such as bridge load restrictions, the proposed ALTO high-speed rail project, rising fuel and bus part costs, and ongoing bus driver staffing shortages. Chair Lloyd thanked Mr. DaCosta for his presentation and invited questions from Trustees.

4. DECLARATION OF CONFLICT OF INTEREST

There were no conflicts declared.

5. REPORTS FOR ACTION – None at this time.

6. REPORTS FOR INFORMATION

6.1 Artificial Intelligence in Limestone

Associate Superintendent Blackburn introduced his report and provided an overview of Limestone’s ongoing approach to artificial intelligence, grounded in guiding principles that emphasize enhancement and continuous improvement, responsible innovation informed by feedback, and the protection of privacy. Particular attention was given to safeguarding personal and confidential information, ensuring compliance with applicable legislation, implementing robust security measures, and clearly communicating the appropriate use of AI. These guiding principles continue to underpin AI-related work, with an increasing focus on teaching and learning, meeting diverse student needs, and improving system processes.

It was reported that during the 2024-2025 school year, information regarding AI was shared with students and families through the Limestone District School Board website, Director’s messages, and family

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information evenings. Engagement with families has continued into the current year through events held across the district, including a recent session at Kingston Secondary School and Module Vanier, where families were invited to attend an AI-focused presentation to further support awareness and understanding.

In the 2025-2026 school year, the board continued its focus on professional learning through the fall system PA Day. Educators participated in sessions with keynote speakers addressing the current state of AI use locally and globally, as well as considerations for classroom application. This learning emphasized the “three Cs”- curiosity, collaboration, and critical thinking- to support thoughtful and reflective use of AI in educational contexts.

Associate Superintendent Blackburn welcomed Elementary STEM Consultant Paul Allison who outlined the development and ongoing use of the myLDSB AI for Educators intranet site, an evolving resource designed to support responsible and effective AI integration into teaching and learning. The page provides up-to-date information on AI developments, classroom strategies, and resources for both educators and students. In addition, a pilot project involving approximately 40 educators was described, focusing on the exploration of three AI tools: Wayground (formerly Quizizz), Brisk, and Copilot. Participants are testing these tools in classroom settings and will contribute use-case videos and shared learning to support broader system implementation.

Consultant Ryan Parry provided an update on the development of digital media literacy modules available through myLDSB. These modules span Kindergarten to Grade 12 and emphasize being safe, kind, and responsible while online, with consistent focus on digital citizenship, security and privacy, and artificial intelligence. The progression supports developmentally appropriate learning, beginning with foundational habits in Kindergarten and moving toward critical analysis, ethical considerations, and responsible participation in the digital world in senior grades. The modules serve as flexible guiding resources for educators, supported by comprehensive teacher guides.

Trustees were informed of an ongoing AI digital literacy and mental health symposium initiative delivered in collaboration with multiple departments. The program has reached over 1,500 intermediate students and focuses on healthy technology balance, understanding AI, recognizing manipulated or harmful content, and supporting digital well-being. Feedback indicates improved student awareness, strengthened critical thinking skills, and increased understanding of digital risks and benefits. Students were provided with take-home resources and access to school-based and community supports to reinforce learning and promote responsible technology use.

Associate Superintendent Blackburn noted that work related to artificial intelligence continues across the Limestone District School Board, building on foundational efforts from the 2024-2025 school year. In

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2025-2026, the focus shifted toward ethical and responsible exploration and collaboration, with an emphasis on strengthening teaching and learning practices. Looking ahead to 2026-2027, the board plans to refine existing approaches, increase the sharing of best practices, and maintain a strong focus on the impact of AI in classroom settings.

During the 2025–2026 school year, the Board received ongoing guidance from provincial organizations and industry groups, with expert recommendations informing enhancements to system guidelines and resources. A balanced framework for AI use was shared, emphasizing neither restrictive nor unregulated adoption, but rather ethical, secure, and privacy-conscious use. Associate Superintendent Blackburn also underscored the importance of research-informed practice and thoughtful engagement with AI, highlighting the shared responsibility to learn alongside students, families, and staff while supporting students to become informed and responsible shapers of the future.

In closing, Trustees were informed of plans for Limestone’s first Technology Summit, scheduled for August 19, which will provide educators with an opportunity to further explore AI through curiosity, collaboration, and critical thinking.

The presentation concluded with Chair Lloyd expressing appreciation for the work undertaken and an invitation for questions from Trustees.

6.2 2023-2026 Integrated Technology Services (ITS)

Associate Superintendent Blackburn provided a presentation outlining highlights of the Integrated Technology Services (ITS) operations, supported by the final year of the 2023-2026 ITS Operational Plan. The plan was developed to align with the Limestone District School Board’s strategic directions and is organized around three key pillars: customer service excellence; data integrity and learning environment; and infrastructure improvements. Progress and outcomes were reviewed annually to support continuous improvement, with students and staff remaining central to all initiatives.

Associate Superintendent Blackburn invited Manager of Innovation and Digital Transformation, Laura Alward, to present. Manager Alward shared information related to the data integrity pillar, which reported continued efforts to improve data literacy, documentation, accuracy, and compliance across systems. Key actions included enhanced data verification processes for both the board’s Student Information System and the Ontario Student Information System, utilizing a two-stage verification process involving schools and central staff. Additional work focused on strengthening data privacy and security, clarifying access controls, and expanding the Limestone dashboard solution to improve availability and access to data for additional staff groups.

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Updates were also provided on learning environment and infrastructure improvements, with a focus on equity, consistency, and staff readiness provided by Manager of Information and Communications Technology, Kelvin MacQuarrie. Manager MacQuarrie shared Initiatives included standardizing classroom technology across schools, centralizing device purchasing and deployment, and establishing consistent virtual learning environments. Over the duration of the plan, approximately 14,000 devices were deployed for students and staff. Additional outcomes included centralized print management resulting in annual cost savings, standardized video surveillance systems, expanded staff training resources through the myLDSB portal, and the implementation of a public reporting tool related to human rights, safe schools, and bullying concerns.

Manager Alward reported on ongoing efforts to enhance customer service excellence through the provision of technology solutions that improve support and communication for staff, students, and families. Key actions include establishing consistent and secure communication systems across all schools, strengthening the ITS service model, and improving the clarity and timeliness of communications related to system outages, updates, and available resources. An additional priority involves the development of a centralized “one-stop shop” to provide employees with streamlined access to supports and resources across the organization.

Trustees were advised of several outcomes achieved to date. These include progress toward standardizing phone and public address systems, the successful migration of the ITS help desk to an existing board platform, and the launch of the myLDSB intranet as a centralized source of information for staff. Enhancements to myLDSB include a weekly role-based news digest distributed by e-mail, summarizing key updates relevant to staff roles. Collectively, these initiatives have supported improvements in communication, access to information, and overall customer responsiveness within ITS.

Chair Lloyd thanked the ITS team and called upon Trustees for questions.

6.3 Staff Absence Trends

Superintendent McWilliams provided an annual update on staff absence trends, with a focus on benchmarking data, employee group results, and short- and long-term sick leave utilization. As in previous years, the Limestone District School Board participated in the School Boards Co-operative Inc. (SBCI) attendance study, which benchmarks attendance data across 64 Ontario school boards. Staff reported that the average sick leave usage for permanent employees during the 2024-2025 school year was 12.68 days, a decrease from 12.92 days in 2023-2024, and significantly below the provincial average of 15.59 days. This placed the board 13th out of 64 boards provincially.

It was noted that salary continuation costs as a percentage of payroll decreased from 6.0 percent in 2023-2024 to 5.2 percent in 2024-2025, reflecting incremental improvement. Superintendent McWilliams

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emphasized that even small reductions in average sick leave usage have a meaningful financial impact, noting that a reduction of one sick day per employee could result in savings of approximately \$1 million. Overall trends indicate that employee sick leave usage continues to remain below provincial averages.

Further analysis distinguished between short-term and long-term absences. For permanent employees, the average length of long-term absences exceeded 27 days. Short-term caseloads decreased to 462 cases in 2024-2025 from 494 cases the previous year, while long-term caseloads declined to 552 cases from 572 cases. Short-term utilization accounted for 54.44 percent of absences, slightly higher than the provincial average, while long-term utilization remained below the provincial average despite a modest year-over-year increase.

Superintendent McWilliams reviewed multi-year sick leave trends and associated costs, noting that while rates increased during and immediately following the COVID-19 period, they have since begun to trend downward. Although absenteeism levels remain significant, Limestone continues to perform more favourably than the provincial average across employee groups. Further analysis by employee group indicated improving trends among permanent employees, with elementary teachers showing gradual declines following post-pandemic increases and secondary teachers maintaining lower overall usage. Higher sick leave usage continues among early childhood educators, educational assistants, and custodial and maintenance staff, while non-union staff and Principals/Vice-Principals generally report lower averages. The importance of supporting employees to return to work as early and safely as possible was emphasized, as research confirms that timely return-to-work supports employee well-being and organizational stability.

Monthly trend data were also reviewed, demonstrating predictable seasonal patterns. Sick leave usage is typically lower at the start of the school year, increases through the late fall, particularly in November, declines during December, stabilizes in January and February, and rises again in the spring before tapering off in June. Superintendent McWilliams noted that while the spring increase is not fully understood, it is being monitored as part of ongoing trend analysis.

Superintendent McWilliams outlined a range of strategies implemented to support attendance and encourage safe and timely return to work. These include enhanced data tracking, proactive and supportive attendance conversations between Principals or supervisors and employees when established thresholds are met, and increased focus on workplace accommodations where appropriate. Informal meetings are used to acknowledge improvement or identify additional supports, with escalation to the Attendance Support Program only if concerns persist. These measures are intended to be supportive, not disciplinary.

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Additional efforts include encouraging the scheduling of medical appointments outside working hours where possible, or limiting absences to partial days, which has contributed to improved trends. Collaboration with union partners, school administrators, and supervisors remains an essential component of the board's approach. Preliminary projections for 2025-2026 indicate a modest overall increase in sick leave usage, with variation across employee groups. The presentation concluded with reported improved success in filling absences through strengthened recruitment and management of occasional and casual staff, underscoring the need to balance attendance management with workforce availability.

Chair Lloyd thanked Superintendent McWilliams for her presentation and opened the floor for questions.

7. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

None at this time.

8. NEW BUSINESS

None at this time.

9. ANNOUNCEMENTS

Trustee McGregor recognized Trustee Liaison Mitton for her contributions to organizing the May 2, 2026, OPSBA Eastern Regional meeting, noting her coordination of catering and management of all technological components that supported both in-person and remote participants across Eastern Ontario, ensuring a smooth hybrid experience. Director Burra was also acknowledged for delivering a well-received presentation on social media that added significant value to the day's agenda and discussions. Trustee McGregor reported that participant feedback was unanimously positive, with attendees praising the boardroom facilities, the quality and relevance of the presentation, and the overall organization of the event, which was described as well-executed and exceeding expectations.

10. CORRESPONDENCE

None at this time.

11. FUTURE MEETING SCHEDULE

June 3, 2026

12. ADJOURNMENT

Moved by Trustee Godkin that the meeting adjourn. Carried.

The meeting adjourned at 7:34 p.m.

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