



**Northeastern
Catholic District**
SCHOOL BOARD

A place where we all belong.

Special Education Advisory Committee Meeting - Minutes Wednesday, November 19, 2025

PRESENT: Ellen Renaud, North Eastern Ontario Family and Children's Services
Ken Ryan, The Lord's Kitchen Society
Lisa Malette-Lilko, Hands Autism Services
Stan Skalecki, Vice Chair & NCDSB Trustee
Colleen Landers, Chair & NCDSB Trustee
Daphne Brumwell, Superintendent of Education
Derek Mundle, School Principal Sacred Heart Catholic School
Amber Smith-Come, School Principal St. Anne English Catholic School
Catherine Hoven, Special Assignment Teacher
Katie Mundle, Special Assignment Teacher
Kim McEntee, Mental Health Supervisor
Lisa Lamarche, Autism & Behavior & Worker
Brittany Counter, Autism & Behavior Consultant
Jean Ethier, Education Services Officer / Recorder

EXCUSED: Shannon Costello, The Cochrane District Social Services Administration Board
Paula Crotteau, Cochrane Temiskaming Children's Treatment Centre
Ryley Reis, Canadian Mental Health Association
Lyndsay Mollins Koene, Timmins Learning Centre
Kiana Reuben, Kuuwanimano Child & Family Services
Melanie Hannah, Misiway Milopemahtesewin Community Health Centre

Summary:

Colleen welcomed everyone and Ken led the group in prayer and Stan in the land acknowledgement.

Approval of the agenda: Moved by Ken Ryan and **SECONDED** by Ellen Renaud
That the agenda be approved as presented. **CARRIED**

Approval of the minutes of September 17, 2025, meeting
Moved by Lisa Malette-Lilko and **SECONDED** by Stan Skalecki
That the minutes be approved and presented. **CARRIED**

First 20-Days of Kindergarten Presentation

Presented by Brittany Counter & Lisa Lamarche

In June 2025, the Autism and Behavior Support Services (ABSS) team worked with a diverse group of FDK educators including teachers, ECEs, EAs, and principals from various regions. Before meeting, we gathered their input through Google Forms to understand the needs they were seeing in early learners and the kinds of resources they required.

Through virtual meetings with these kindergarten teams, common needs emerged around supporting routines, social skills, and self-regulation. Together, we developed a kit whose core component was a binder, supported by additional materials. The kit integrated applied behavior analysis (ABA) strategies—particularly those effective for students with autism in a way that felt natural and embedded within everyday classroom practice rather than an “extra” set of tasks.

The guide is designed to support a smooth transition into kindergarten, with a strong focus on building independence, core skills, and consistent routines. Strategies included in the guide are meant to be gradually faded as students gain independence, and they are intended not only for learners with exceptionalities but for all children in the classroom. At the front of the kit's book, the team outlined the most common ABA-informed recommendations—such as transitional warnings and priming—explaining what each strategy is, why it matters, and how educators can embed it naturally into everyday instruction. Real classroom examples gathered from FDK teams were included to help new educators visualize implementation.

The manual was organized into color-coded sections.

- **Blue section:** ABA strategies and their descriptions.
- **Yellow section:** Individual skills (e.g., raising a hand, sitting), including the rationale, explicit teaching steps, recommended strategies, and success criteria distinguishing independence from emerging skills. Data sheets were provided to track progress when needed.
- **Red section:** Routines, which combine multiple skills into step-by-step chains. These included longer visuals and more detailed guidance.
- **Green section:** Resources, printable visuals for routines such as lining up or asking for help, as well as both English and French visual schedules. A QR code linked educators to a Google Drive containing editable materials so visuals could be customized to each classroom's routines or include student photos if desired.

The kit also included four read-aloud books—*Clark the Shark*, *The Color Monster*, *My Mouth Is a Volcano*, and *Personal Space Camp* each chosen to support self-regulation, emotional awareness, impulse control, and understanding personal space. Related activities were available through the Google Drive.

Educators were encouraged to use the four selected read-aloud books to support self-regulation, whether during carpet time or through related activities. After presenting the kit to principals in September, principals requested their own copies of the books so they could reinforce consistent language and strategies when working with students, including those visiting the office. CYWs were also identified as potential users of the resources.

In September, the team presented the full kit and materials to every FDK team in the board. The kit included both large and small visual timers to support transitional warnings, noise-cancelling headphones for learners sensitive to sound, and English and French visual schedules with pocket charts and cards. A chime was provided to signal immediate transitions, complementing the countdown timers. Fidget or transitional items were also included to support students who need something to hold during movement. All kits were labeled, assigned to classrooms, and intended to be returned at year's end for review and replenishment. Feedback was collected through in-person check-ins and a Google Form. Educators reported that the kit was especially helpful during the first 20 days of school for assessing student skill levels. Visuals, both printable and editable were highlighted as one of the most valuable components. Teachers requested more training before the start of the next school year, particularly to support itinerant staff and ensure a shared understanding of the strategies. Future considerations include aligning the kit's skills with the four pillars of the kindergarten curriculum and expanding involvement across the school community to strengthen consistent language and practice.

Summary of NCDSB's Mental Health & Addiction Strategy (2025–2028)

Presented by Kim McEntee

This strategy outlines how the Northeastern Catholic District School Board will support student mental health from 2025–2028. It highlights the board's main goals and the actions planned for the 2025–2026 school year.

Foundational Commitments

The strategy is guided by key principles:

- **Accountability:** Following Ministry of Education expectations (PPM 169).
- **Catholic Values:** Creating a safe, caring, and inclusive learning environment.
- **Collaboration:** Working with principals, staff, and mental health partners.
- **Tiered Supports:** Offering different levels of mental health help for all students.
- **Ongoing Engagement:** Involving students, families, staff, and community agencies.

Focus Areas for 2025–2026

1. Leadership Commitment

- A new Student Mental Health Policy is publicly available.
- All elementary schools have Child & Youth Workers (CYWs); mental health workers support older students both in person and virtually.
- PA days will include mental health training (suicide prevention, anti-bullying, human trafficking, etc.).
- Principals and support staff will receive suicide awareness and safety training.
- A Mental Health Advisory Team will meet three times yearly to give feedback.

2. Everyday Mental Health Practices

- New Grade 6 curriculum on healthy choices, substance use, and media literacy.
- Mental health literacy modules will continue in Grades 7, 8, and 10.
- CYWs will use the Everyday Speech program to teach social-emotional skills.

3. Pathways, Community & Support

- Targeted training for Guidance Teachers and Special Education staff.
- "Circle of Support" boards in schools will show where students can get help.
- The board continues to partner with community organizations to connect students with services.

4. Student Engagement

- Grades 5–8 will complete required safety and wellness lessons in Vector.
- Funding will support student-led mental health projects.
- Pilot programs include a Journaling Club and a Virtual Chill Space.

5. Parent & Caregiver Engagement

- A series of parent webinars and shared resources will run throughout the year.
- March Break Wellness Kits will return.
- A new mental health section for the board website is being developed to support families.

NCDSB, in partnership with Pine River Institute, is hosting the following *Positive Parenting Webinar Series*: Positive Parenting Webinar Series (2025–2026)

Topic	Date & Time
Building our "Stretch" Zone	Oct 9, 2025 – 7:00 p.m.
Online Relationships & Crucial Conversations	Nov 13, 2025 – 7:00 p.m.
Sleep and Mental Health	Dec 4, 2025 – 7:00 p.m.
Critical Thinking in an AI World	Feb 12, 2026 – 7:00 p.m.
Adolescence and Experimentation	Apr 16, 2026 – 7:00 p.m.

Agency Reports

The Lord's Kirchen Society

The Costello Community Care Centre received funding to replace the kitchen cabinets at the Lord's Kitchen, with installation beginning on December 3rd. The agency has also begun receiving community donations of winter coats, socks, scarves, mitts, and boots. In addition, the Labelle will be supporting this initiative by providing funding to help purchase new winter items for those in need.

Hands Autism Services

The team is currently focused on the autism program, specifically the Entry to School initiative. Although the exact timing of invitation releases is unclear, they are expected soon, with more information anticipated this month. Preparations are underway for the next Entry to School cohort beginning in March, and intakes are currently open. Children with autism and an OAP # age 6 and under, who have not yet attended school and who receive an invitation are encouraged to reach out to Hands. Cohorts are currently set to take place in Timmins, Kirkland Lake, New Liskeard. We will determine other locations and plan for services as intakes occur.

North Eastern Ontario Family and Children's Services

The northern region is experiencing significant staffing shortages. Kapuskasing is down to one staff member out of six, and Cochrane has no staff. Iroquois Falls is also down to one worker. Virtual support is being offered from other campuses, but challenges remain, including the fact that the sole Kapuskasing worker provides services only in English. Recruitment efforts are ongoing, with frequent interviews but limited success. In Timmins, the team is short one staff member, with two others on sick leave, causing delays in the waitlist. In contrast, the southern areas Kirkland Lake, New Liskeard, and Haileybury are adequately staffed aside from a few maternity leaves, and referrals remain steady.

New management-based mental health programs are being implemented to improve efficiency and demonstrate effectiveness to clients and the ministry. Fall groups are wrapping up, with parenting groups beginning soon. The agency continues to offer Stepping Stones (Triple P) for families of children with autism, with a notable increase in ASD diagnoses across clinicians' caseloads. Additional programming is expected to roll out in January and February, and planning for Children's Mental Health Week is underway.

Date of the Next Meeting – Wednesday December 17, 2025, at 11:45 a.m.

Adjournment - Moved By: Stan Skalecki That the meeting be adjourned at 1:05 p.m. CARRIED