



A place where we all belong.

Special Education Advisory Committee Meeting - Minutes Wednesday, April 22, 2026

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

**EXCUSED:** Paula Crotteau, Cochrane Temiskaming Children's Treatment Centre  
Shannon Costello, The Cochrane District Social Services Administration Board  
Derek Mundle, School Principal Sacred Heart Catholic School

**Summary:**

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

Approval of the agenda: Moved by Lisa Malette-Lilko and **SECONDED** by Ryley Reis  
That the agenda be approved as presented. **CARRIED**

Approval of the minutes of March 25, 2026, meeting  
Moved by Ken Ryan and **SECONDED** by Lisa Malette-Lilko  
That the minutes be approved and presented. **CARRIED**

**Student Attendance**

Presented by Amber Levesque

This presentation outlines the Northeastern Catholic District School Board (NCDSB) Attendance and Re-Engagement Services, focusing on legal requirements, attendance data, and strategies to support student engagement.

**Attendance Policies and Framework**

- **Legal Mandate:** In accordance with the Education Act, children ages 6–17 must attend school or receive educational instruction. For those under 6 or over 18, attendance is non-compulsory.
- **Service Initiation:** Re-engagement services are triggered when a principal refers a student who has been absent for 11–15 consecutive days.

## Attendance Categories:

- **Satisfactory:** 9 days or less absent per school year.
- **Warning Signs:** 10–17 days absent per school year.
- **Chronic Absenteeism:** Missing more than 10% of school days (18+ days per year).
- **Prolonged Absence:** 11 or more consecutive absences.

## Attendance Statistics

The presentation compares data from two school years (including 2025-2026 data up to April 2026):

- **Average Absences:** The district average was 31 days in 2024-2025 and is currently 23 days for 2025-2026.
- **Daily Attendance Rate:** Increased from 79.5% in 2024-2025 to 82% in 2025-2026.
- **High Attendance (90%+ Days):** The percentage of students attending 90% or more of school days rose from 26% to 32% year-over-year.

## Addressing Barriers to Attendance

The NCDSB identifies several obstacles to regular attendance, including transportation issues, mental or physical health concerns for students or parents, lack of routine, and limited access to food or clothing. To address these, the board provides:

- **Support Services:** Connections to internal mental health workers and indigenous support, as well as referrals to community agencies like NEOFACS and local food banks.
- **Practical Assistance:** Providing bus tickets, sending wellness kits, and troubleshooting daily routines with families.
- **Re-entry Planning:** Developing individualized re-entry plans and "warm welcomes" for students returning after a prolonged absence.

## Engagement and Support Initiatives

- **Parental Support:** Counsellors work with parents to validate their struggles, help develop consistent routines, and provide resource materials.
- **Student Support:** Strategies include regular check-ins, teaching coping skills, and selecting high school courses that align with student interests to improve motivation.
- **School-wide Initiatives:** Engagement is promoted through "Parent Support Kits," school visits with classroom programming, attendance meters, and newsletters with attendance tips.

## Staff Feedback on the IDA Conference

Presented by Catherine Hoven & Katie Mundle

A group of nine educators from the Northeastern Catholic District School Board (NCDSB) attended the **3rd annual International Dyslexia Association (IDA) Literacy and Learning Educator Conference** in Toronto.

### Conference Overview

- **Focus:** Structured literacy instruction and the "Science of Reading," under the slogan "Until Everyone Can Read."
- **Scope:** Attended by approximately 1,000 educators with over 20 breakout sessions and 50 vendors.
- **Keynote Speakers:** Included representatives from the First Nations School Board in the Yukon and Nathaniel Swain, focusing on cognitive science and indigenous learning frameworks.

### Key Takeaways & Participant Feedback

- **Validation of Current Practices:** A major theme was that the NCDSB is "on the right track." Attendees felt the board's current focus on the Science of Reading aligns with international best practices.

- **UFLI Program:** Educators expressed excitement about new UFLI (University of Florida Literacy Institute) vocabulary resources and the upcoming release of a Grade 3 program this fall.
- **Tier 1 Instruction:** There is a shift toward strengthening "Tier 1" (whole-classroom) instruction through team coaching, co-teaching, and three-week data cycles, rather than relying solely on small-group interventions.
- **Indigenous Integration:** Inspired by the Yukon keynote, educators discussed the potential for "culturally affirming pedagogy," such as collaborating with local bands to rewrite decodable texts to reflect local culture and student lives.
- **Data-Driven Support:** Participants highlighted the importance of using literacy screeners to dive deeper into oral reading fluency and using "collaborative problem-solving models" to reach goals after data talks.
- **Support for New Teachers:** One first-year teacher noted that while the conference was invaluable, it was also an "information overload," suggesting the need for a curated resource list for new educators.
- **French Immersion:** Success was found in connecting with vendors for decodable books specifically for French immersion students.

## **Conclusion**

The delegation returned with "renewed enthusiasm" and a sense of confirmation. That while there is still work to "fine-tune," the board's commitment to the Science of Reading is well-established and likely to yield significant positive results for students if they "stay the course."

## **Agency Reports**

### **The Lord's Kitchen Society**

The Lord's Kitchen's main annual fundraiser, the Smile Cookie Campaign, will run from April 27 to May 3. Cookies (previously \$2 each) are sold through Tim Hortons, with all proceeds supporting the Lord's Kitchen, in partnership with the Castello Community Care Centre.

Funds raised help cover essential costs such as food and rent. In addition, the organization had a successful year distributing winter clothing (boots, coats, mitts, scarves, and hats) during a particularly harsh winter.

Overall, the upcoming fundraiser is crucial for supporting operations and preparing for the year ahead.

### **Timmins Learning Centre**

The Timmins Learning Centre is making significant strides toward its 2025–2028 strategic plan, with a core focus on securing long-term financial sustainability. To reach this goal, the Centre is actively cultivating partnerships with local corporations, school boards, businesses, and community agencies. The organization recently celebrated a \$5,000 donation from Club Richelieu. This financial support coincides with a period of exciting growth: the Centre has officially expanded its services to support students from Grade 1 through Grade 12 in math, literacy, and English. To accommodate the resulting surge in enrollment, the team has also welcomed a new tutor to ensure continued high-quality support for all students.

### **North Eastern Ontario Family and Children's Services**

The organization is preparing for Children's Mental Health Week, and you will start seeing the posters soon. It is a collaborative effort across several agencies, and that teamwork continues right into the summer. We already have some groups running, and parents can simply call in to get on the waitlist and will be contacted as spots open.

Throughout the week, there will be lots of joint activities between the school board and community agencies. We will also be sharing our booklet for kids, which includes a coloring contest. The prize will be a gift card so kids can choose something that supports their own mental health and interests.

### **Hands Autism Services**

The organization has launched a new Entry-to-School cohort with kids from across the region. Right now, they have four clients in Timmins, two in Kirkland Lake, three in Kapuskasing, one in Cochrane, and one registrant in Moose Factory, who will be starting later in August.

Lisa will be heading to Moose Factory in May and plan to meet with local principals to share more about the Entry-to-School program and the services available to families in the area. Our numbers continue to grow every year, which is really encouraging to see.

Daphne will serve as the point of contact for Bishop Belleau School in Moosonee until a new principal is appointed.

**Date of the Next Meeting** – Wednesday May 20, 2026, at 11:45 a.m.

### **Other Business** – N/A

The Committee received the poster promoting the two free virtual sessions on May 6 featuring Dr. Adele Lafrance. A copy has been included in the meeting minutes for reference.

### **Session 1 — 12:00–1:00 PM ET Look Before You Leap: Tuning in to What’s Below the Surface to Support Families**

A session for helping professionals and anyone wanting to strengthen their ability to engage meaningfully with parents and caregivers.

### **Session 2 — 6:30–7:30 PM ET From Roots to Reach: Building Your Village to Support Family Mental Health**

A workshop for parents, caregivers, and co-parents focused on rebuilding supportive connections and strengthening family resilience.

The event is supported by a wide range of regional partners, including multiple school boards, public health, youth wellness hubs, Indigenous health and family services, CMHA Cochrane-Timiskaming, and other community agencies.

**Adjournment** - Moved By: Stan Skalecki that the meeting be adjourned at 12:30 p.m. CARRIED

# MENTAL HEALTH WEEK 2026

The Northeastern Ontario Mental Health Week Committee is pleased to host two **FREE virtual sessions** featuring

## DR. ADELE LAFRANCE

Register here:



<https://www.eventbrite.com/cc/mental-health-series-2026-webinars-sante-mentale-4828330>



**\*\* N.B. La présentation est en anglais seulement \*\***

### SESSION 1:

May 6<sup>th</sup>, 2026 12pm-1pm ET

### ***Look Before you Leap: Tuning in to What's Below the Surface to Support Families***

Helping professionals and anyone seeking to deepen their capacity to engage with parents and caregivers in meaningful ways. All are welcome.

### SESSION 2:

May 6<sup>th</sup>, 2026 6:30pm-7:30pm ET

### ***From Roots to Reach: Building Your Village to Support Family Mental Health***

Parenting was not meant to be a solo act, yet many have lost the village that once supported families. This workshop explores resilience in our roots, our supports, and consider small changes to strengthen connections. All parents, caregivers, co-parents are welcome.



Community Health Centre

