



Office of the Director

Jim McCuaig Education Centre
2135 Sills Street Thunder Bay ON P7E 5T2
Telephone (807) 625-5131 Fax (807) 622-0961

REGULAR BOARD MEETING
Tuesday, January 28, 2025
Jim McCuaig Education Centre

Sherri-Lynne Pharand
Director of Education

Leah Vanderwey
Chair

AGENDA

PUBLIC SESSION
7:30 p.m. – in the Board Room/Microsoft Teams

	<u>Resource Person</u>	<u>Pages</u>
1. Call to Order	L. Vanderwey	Verbal
2. Disclosure of Conflict of Interest		
3. Approval of the Agenda		
4. Resolve into Committee of the Whole – Closed Session		
5. COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE – Closed Session – 7:00 p.m. (SEE ATTACHED AGENDA)		
6. Report of Committee of the Whole – Closed Session		
7. Land Acknowledgement		Verbal
8. Delegations/ Presentations		
8.1 Trustee Recognition Award – Hammar skjold Sr Girls Basketball Team	D. LeBlanc	Verbal
8.2 Declaration of 2025-2026 Indigenous Student Trustee	E. Genno	Verbal
9. Approval of Minutes		
9.1 Annual Board Meeting - December 3, 2024	L. Vanderwey	1-5
9.2 Regular Board Meeting - December 17, 2024	L. Vanderwey	6-8

Trustees (Chair and Vice-Chair) and presenters of reports will be available
for comment after the Board Meeting.

LAKEHEAD DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

10. Business Arising from the Minutes

MATTERS NOT REQUIRING A DECISION:

11. Information Reports

11.1	Ontario Public School Boards' Association (OPSBA) Report	R. Sitch	Verbal
11.2	Student Trustee – January Report	M. De Franceschi	Handout
11.3	Indigenous Student Trustee – January Report	E. Drake	Handout
11.4	Updates from the Chair/Director	Leah Vanderwey/ S. Pharand	Verbal
11.5	Professional Standards Report (014-25)	S. Pharand	9-13
11.6	Early Learning Report (018-25)	H. Harris	14-21
11.7	Information and Technology Report (011-25)	N. Sacevich/K. Alaksa	22-25

12. First Reports

MATTERS FOR DECISION:

13. Postponed Reports

14.	Recommendations from the Board Advisory Committee (015-25)	D. LeBlanc	26-32
14.1	<u>Input Submission to the Ministry of Finance – Re: Ontario Budget</u>		27-30

It is recommended that Lakehead District School Board authorize administration to submit, on behalf of the Board of Trustees, input to the 2025 Ontario Budget through the Budget consultation submission portal with requested changes.

14.2	<u>Miiniwewinan: Indigenous Education Advisory Committee Terms and Conditions (012-25)</u>		31-32
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It is recommended that Lakehead District School Board approve the Terms and Conditions for Miiniwewinan: Indigenous Education Advisory Committee.

Trustees (Chair and Vice-Chair) and presenters of reports will be available for comment after the Board Meeting.

15. Ad Hoc and Special Committee Reports

- | | | | |
|------|--|----------------|-------|
| 15.1 | <u>Request for Approval of Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) Letter (013-25)</u> | M. Probizanski | 33-35 |
|------|--|----------------|-------|

It is recommended that Lakehead District School Board approve the request from the Special Education Advisory Committee Chair to be permitted to add her signature of endorsement to the letter written by the SEAC Chair of Ottawa Catholic School Board, SEAC to the Ministry of Education regarding inadequate special education funding & educational assistant shortage in Ontario, as outlined in Report No. 013-25.

- | | | | |
|------|--|----------------|-------|
| 15.2 | <u>Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) Request for Approval of Correspondence (017-25)</u> | M. Probizanski | 36-38 |
|------|--|----------------|-------|

It is recommended that Lakehead District School Board approve the request from the Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) to send correspondence of support to the Minister of Education, as outlined in Report No. 017-25.

- 16. New Reports
- 17. New Business
- 18. Notices of Motion
- 19. Information and Inquiries
- 20. Adjournment

Trustees (Chair and Vice-Chair) and presenters of reports will be available for comment after the Board Meeting.

LAKEHEAD DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD



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REGULAR BOARD MEETING
Tuesday, January 28, 2025
Jim McCuaig Education Centre

Sherri-Lynne Pharand
Director of Education

Leah Vanderwey
Chair

AGENDA

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE – Closed Session
7:00 p.m. – Sibley Room/Microsoft Teams

	<u>Resource Person</u>	<u>Pages</u>
5.1 Consideration of Reports		
5.1.1 Legal Matter	K. Alaksa	Verbal
5.1.2 Recommendations from the Board Advisory Committee (016-25)	D. LeBlanc	1
5.3 Information and Inquiries		
5.4 Rise and Report Progress		

Trustees (Chair and Vice-Chair) and presenters of reports will be available
for comment after the Board Meeting.

LAKEHEAD DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

LAKEHEAD DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

MINUTES OF ANNUAL BOARD MEETING

2024 DEC 03
6:00 p.m.

TRUSTEES PRESENT:

Ellen Chambers
Donica LeBlanc
Ron Oikonen
George Saarinen
Leah Vanderwey

Ryan Sitch
Trudy Tuchenhausen
Scottie Wemigwans
Pat Johansen

ABSENT WITH REGRET:

Emily Drake, Indigenous Student Trustee
Morgann De Franceschi, Student Trustee

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION:

Sherri-Lynne Pharand, Director of Education
Kirsti Alaksa, Superintendent of Business
Michelle Probizanski, Superintendent of Education
Jane Lower, Superintendent of Education
Heather Harris, Superintendent of Education
Nick Sacevich, Associate Superintendent and Math/IT Lead

PUBLIC SESSION:

1. **Call to Order**

Sherri-Lynne Pharand, Secretary of the Board, called the meeting to order.

2. **Introduction of Scrutineers**

Heather Harris, Superintendent of Education, and Michelle Probizanski, Superintendent of Education, were introduced as the scrutineer and assistant scrutineer, respectively for the elections.

3. Election of Chair of the Board

Sherri-Lynne Pharand, Secretary of the Board, announced the pre-nomination of Trustee Chambers by Trustee Sitch. Trustee Chambers accepted the nomination. Sherri-Lynne Pharand, Secretary of the Board, announced the pre-nomination of Trustee Vanderwey by Trustee Wemigwans. Trustee Vanderwey accepted the nomination. Each candidate was given the opportunity to speak to the Board as per Lakehead District School Boards' by-laws. Further nominations were called for from the floor.

Moved by Trustee Sitch

Seconded by Trustee Oikonen

"THAT nominations for the Office of Chair of Lakehead District School Board be closed."

CARRIED

The scrutineer and the assistant scrutineer distributed the ballots and conducted the election for the Office of Chair of the Board. Trustee Vanderwey was declared the winner.

Trustee Vanderwey assumed the chair.

Chair Vanderwey thanked the Board for the opportunity to serve as chair of the Board.

4. Election of Vice Chair of the Board

Chair Vanderwey announced the pre-nomination of Trustee LeBlanc by Trustee Sitch. Trustee LeBlanc accepted the nomination. Nominations were called for from the floor. Trustee Johansen nominated Trustee Saarinen. Trustee Saarinen accepted the nomination. Further nominations were called for from the floor. Each candidate was given the opportunity to speak to the Board as per Lakehead District School Boards' by-laws.

Moved by Trustee Tuchenhausen

Seconded by Trustee Oikonen

"THAT nominations for the Office of Vice Chair of Lakehead District School Board be closed."

CARRIED

The scrutineer and the assistant scrutineer distributed ballots and conducted the election for the Office of Vice Chair of the Board. Trustee LeBlanc was declared the winner.

Vice Chair LeBlanc thanked the Board for the opportunity to continue to serve as Vice Chair of the Board.

5. Election of a Member and Alternate to the Coordinating Committee

- 5.1 There were no pre-nominations for Member of the Coordinating Committee. Nominations were called from the floor. Trustee Johansen nominated Trustee Tuchenhausen. Trustee Tuchenhausen accepted the nomination. Trustee LeBlanc nominated Trustee Chambers. Trustee Chambers accepted the nomination. Trustee Tuchenhausen chose to remove her name from the nomination. There were no further nominations.

Moved by Trustee Sitch

Seconded by Trustee Johansen

"THAT nominations for a Member to the Coordinating Committee be closed."

CARRIED

Trustee Chambers was declared the member of the Coordinating Committee by acclamation.

- 5.2 There were no pre-nominations for Alternate Member of the Coordinating Committee. Further nominations were called for from the floor. Trustee Tuchenhausen nominated Trustee Johansen. Trustee Johansen accepted the nomination. There were no further nominations.

Moved by Trustee Saarinen

Seconded by Trustee Tuchenhausen

"THAT nominations for an Alternate Member to the Coordinating Committee be closed."

CARRIED

Trustee Johansen was declared the alternate member of the Coordinating Committee by acclamation.

6. Motion to Destroy Ballots

Moved by Trustee Saarinen

Seconded by Trustee Chambers

"THAT all ballots be destroyed."

CARRIED

7. Director's Annual Report 2024 (001-25)

Sherri-Lynne Pharand, Director of Education, invited the superintendents and Jamie Smith, Communications Supervisor, to present a summary of the report for their respective portfolios. Director Pharand thanked senior administration, and the communications team, Jamie Smith, Communications Officer and Casey Zywin, Graphics and Information Service Technician, for their work on the Annual Report.

Moved by Trustee Saarinen

Seconded by Trustee Johansen

"THAT Lakehead District School Board receive the Director's Annual Report 2024."

CARRIED

8. Parent Involvement Committee Annual Report (002-25)

Michelle Riemer, Vice Chair of the Parent Involvement Committee, presented the report. Director Pharand thanked the Board members and parents who are members of this committee. There were no questions from trustees.

Moved by Trustee LeBlanc

Seconded by Trustee Sitch

"THAT Lakehead District School Board receive the Annual Report of the Parent Involvement Committee."

CARRIED

9. Trustee Appointments to Board Committees – 2024 (003-25)

Sherri-Lynne Pharand, Director of Education, presented the report.

Moved by Trustee Chambers

Seconded by Trustee Tuchenhausen

"THAT Lakehead District School Board approve the Trustee Appointments to Board Committees – 2025 as set out in Appendix A to Report No. 003-25."

CARRIED

10. Special Education Advisory Committee Annual Report (004-25)

Michelle Probizanski, Superintendent of Education, presented the report. There were no questions from trustees.

Moved by Trustee Johansen

Seconded by Trustee Tuchenhausen

"THAT Lakehead District School Board receive the Annual Report of the Special Education Advisory Committee."

CARRIED

11. Miiniwewinan: Indigenous Education Advisory Committee Annual Report (005-25)

Heather Harris, Superintendent of Education, presented the report. All trustees' questions were addressed.

Moved by Trustee Johansen

Seconded by Trustee Wemigwans

"THAT Lakehead District School Board receive the Annual Report of the Miiniwewinan: Indigenous Education Advisory Committee."

CARRIED

12. Adjournment

Moved by Trustee Saarinen

Seconded by Trustee Oikonen

"THAT we do now adjourn at 7:23 p.m."

CARRIED

LAKEHEAD DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

MINUTES OF REGULAR BOARD MEETING

Board Room/Microsoft Teams
Jim McCuaig Education Centre

2024 DEC 17
7:30 p.m.

TRUSTEES PRESENT:

Leah Vanderwey (Chair)
Donica LeBlanc (Vice Chair)
Ellen Chambers (virtual)
Pat Johansen
Ron Oikonen (virtual)
George Saarinen (virtual)
Ryan Sitch (virtual)

Scottie Wemigwans (Indigenous
Trustee)
Morgan De Franceschi (Student
Trustee) (virtual)
Emily Drake (Indigenous Student
Trustee) (virtual)

TRUSTEE ABSENT, WITH REGRET:

Trudy Tuchenhausen

SENIOR ADMINISTRATION:

Sherri-Lynne Pharand, Director of Education
Kirsti Alaksa, Superintendent of Business
Jane Lower, Superintendent of Education (virtual)
Michelle Probizanski, Superintendent of Education (virtual)
Heather Harris, Superintendent of Education (virtual)
Nick Sacevich, Associate Superintendent of Education and Math/ IT Lead (virtual)

PUBLIC SESSION:

1. **Approval of Agenda**

Moved by Trustee Saarinen

Seconded by Trustee Johansen

"THAT the Agenda for Regular Board Meeting, December 17, 2024 be approved."

CARRIED

MATTERS FOR DECISION:

2. RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE AUDIT COMMITTEE (006-25)

Audit Committee Summarized Annual Report – August 31, 2024 (120-23)

Moved by Trustee Wemigwans

Seconded by Trustee Johansen

“THAT Lakehead District School Board:

- 1. Approve the Audit Committee Summarized Annual Report as outlined in Appendix A to Report No. 006-25; and*
- 2. Forward the report to the Ministry of Education.*

CARRIED

3. RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE AUDIT COMMITTEE (006-25)

2023-2024 Audited Financial Statements (123-24)

Moved by Trustee Wemigwans

Seconded by Trustee Oikonen

“THAT Lakehead District School Board approve the August 31, 2024, audited financial statements as outlined in Report No. 123-24, 2023-2024 Audited Financial Statements.

CARRIED

4. Letter Re: Transportation Update – Minister of Education

Moved by Trustee Johansen

Seconded by Trustee Sitch

“That Lakehead District School Board:

- 1. approve Chair Vanderwey to send a letter updating the Minister of Education, Jill Dunlop, of ongoing concerns regarding student transportation funding;*
- 2. copy letter to the following:
Denise Allyson Cole, Deputy Minister of Education
MPP Kevin Holland
MPP Lise Vaugeois
Stephanie Donaldson, OPSBA Executive Director
Craig Murphy, Consortium Manager, Student Transportation Services
Thunder Bay
JP Tennier, Director of Education Thunder Bay Catholic District School Board
Sherri-Lynne Pharand, Director of Education, Lakehead District School Board
Mireille Major-Levesque, Director of Education Conseil scolaire de district catholique des Aurores boréales
Sébastien Fontaine, Director of Education Conseil scolaire du Grand Nord;
and*
- 3. approve that Dr. Bakovic co-sign the letter.*

CARRIED

5. Information and Inquiries

The following events were attended by trustees and senior administration,

- December 5, 2024 - Mayor Boschhoff visited École Gron Morgan PS
- December 10, 2024 - Adams Family Production at Hammarskjold High School.
- December 16, 2024 - École Gron Morgan Choir performance at Thunder Bay City Council Meeting.
- December 17, 2024 - McKenzie Public School Annual Festive dinner
- December 18, 2024 - Gorham and Ware Community School Holiday Feast

6. Adjournment

Moved by Trustee Saarinen

Seconded by Trustee LeBlanc

“THAT we do now adjourn at 7:43 p.m.”

CARRIED

LAKEHEAD DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD
OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION

2025 JAN 28
Report No. 014-25

TO THE CHAIR AND MEMBERS OF
LAKEHEAD DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD – Public Session

RE: PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS REPORT

1. Background

Professional standards help build a shared vision by defining the values, knowledge, and skills that shape Lakehead District School Board (LDSB). They provide a framework for continuous improvement, promote high ethical behavior, and ensure all who work in education contribute to professional and respectful learning and working environments. These standards strengthen public trust in the education system and uphold accountability.

2. Situation

2.1 Board employees and unions met to provide their input into creating expectations. These expectations are founded on our shared mission: Lakehead District School Board is committed to the success of every student. They also reflect LDSB's commitment to equity and reconciliation.

2.2 The Professional Standards (Appendix A) are written as a self-reflection in order to support our staff to set goals for continuous improvement.

3. Next Steps

The Professional Standards document will be shared with all staff at LDSB through staff meetings.

4. Conclusion

Establishing a solid foundation based on Equity and Reconciliation, supported by the pillars of Integrity, Collaborative Communication, Professionalism and Respect will help to define our values, to support professional and respectful learning and working environments and build public trust.

Respectfully submitted,

SHERRI-LYNNE PHARAND
Director of Education

Professional Standards



Committed to the success of *every* student

The Lakehead District School Board expects that all employees actively participate to build, foster, and uphold learning and working environments that are professional and respectful. As an organization, our shared mission centres around our commitments to students and their success.

While some of our employees are members of regulated professions with their own unique sets of professional standards, we expect that all employees adhere to the same rigorous standards of excellence at LDSB. Education is a crucial service which requires public trust in all members of our organization. Outside of work hours, all employees are still public representatives of the LDSB and are expected to conduct themselves in ways that exemplify the standards of our organization.

The foundation of our organization is built on equity and our committed actions towards reconciliation.

Equity

We strive for equity to be at the core of our interactions in the workplace. Asking our staff to be inclusive, understanding, and validating is a good philosophy. To ensure people feel free from judgement and have a sense of belonging, however, it requires significant action.

For example, here are some actions that we expect all staff to take to foster equity and inclusion:

- **Being mindful** of changing demographics (community, students, staff, administrators)
- **Acknowledging** and celebrating differences (i.e., respecting that individuals from different backgrounds may communicate/socialize in different ways)
- **Listening** to voices that are represented and when they are represented (Are women constantly being interrupted? Are Indigenous and racialized staff only asked their opinions on specific topics?)
- **Giving** opportunities for everyone's voice to be heard (Are you soliciting opinions from staff who are getting spoken over? Can you offer different formats for feedback to be delivered?)
- **Creating** a sense of psychological safety with teams (Are you interrupting inequity when it occurs? For Supervisors: Can your team talk to you about issues in the workplace? Do you take these concerns seriously?)

Reconciliation

LDSB recognizes, and is committed to, acknowledging the history of the lands, communities, and people upon which our schools and offices are situated. Our staff are expected to uphold the spirit of reconciliation for the organization and to ensure their departments are as well by:

- **Engaging** in professional and personal learning about First Nations, Métis, and Inuit communities and history. (Are you seeking opportunities to be a lifelong learner? Have you stayed current with Canada's evolving relationship with Indigenous peoples?)
- **Fostering** relationships between community partners and the organization (Are you aware of the numerous and diverse organizations representing people within your school community? Your work environment?)
- **Participating** in, or attending, community events. (Are you accepting invitations? Are you being pro-active in searching for suitable events to attend?)
- **Ensuring** representation at decision making tables. (Asking who is there and if not, why not?)

Pillars of Practice

Once we've established a solid foundation based on Equity and reconciliation, the pillars of Integrity, Collaborative Communication, Professionalism and Respect can help make sure we are upholding the professional standards of Lakehead Public Schools.

Integrity

As an organization, we strive to be united and guided by our purpose to put students first. Integrity is rooted in honesty, and strong moral character. At LDSB, we expect all staff to be:

- **Ethical.** Do you adhere to standards of practice? Are policies, procedures, or legislation applied equitably to all?
- **Honest.** Do your actions match your words?
- **Trustworthy.** Are you able to fulfill the responsibilities of your role fully?
- **Solidarity.** Do you prevent gossip or other forms of toxic workplace communication? Are you communicating in a way to promote respect and collaboration?
- **Transparent.** Do you clearly communicate expectations, processes, and roles to your colleagues and your team?

Collaborative Communication

Workplace communication goes beyond emails and meetings. It is a complex ecosystem encompassing oral, written, digital, and non-verbal means of sending messages to colleagues and other members in an organization.

- **Listen.** When speaking with colleagues, are you listening to truly understand their words, or are you planning your response?
- **Use clear communication.** Are you using technical language or jargon that may not be understood by those outside of your field? Is your communication concise and consistent? Do you follow-up with your communication to ensure it was received correctly?
- **Be timely.** Do you respond to messages or requests within 48 hours? If you are out of the office, do you have an automatic response that can direct the sender to find an answer?
- **Commit and engage.** How do you solicit input from all members of your team? Do you model an openness to receive feedback or alternative ideas?
- **Practice mindfulness.** Do you consider the tone or delivery of your communication? Are you mindful of how biases may impact delivery or reception of communication in the workplace?

Professionalism

Professionalism is not what you do at work, it's how you do your work. LDSB expects that all employees conduct themselves in a way that reflects a respect for the mission of the organization and demonstrates a positive image to the public by:

- **Speaking positively.** Do you refrain from gossiping or speaking negatively about your coworkers or workplace which includes both your worksite and the board? Do you interrupt negative talk in the workplace by encouraging individuals to address their concerns through the correct channels?
- **Being reliable.** Are you accountable for the work you do or are responsible for? Can you be depended upon to show up or complete tasks when needed?
- **Being punctual.** Are you getting tasks done in a timely manner that respects the timelines of your colleagues?
- **Dressing/acting professionally.** Does your attire and demeanor communicate a standard of professionalism?
- **Committing to learning and growth.** Are you up to date with your knowledge of your field? How do you own mistakes and commit to ongoing development? How do you foster this attitude with those around you?
- **Using a collective voice.** Do all members of your team have an opportunity to contribute or express concerns? Do you provide space to address concerns and create a collective voice that represents everyone, to the best of your ability? Once a decision is made, do you support it with a collective voice?

Respect

While we strive to be unified and collaborate, this is not possible without regard for each other at an individual level. We show respect by:

- **Encouraging others.** How do you recognize and highlight the positive accomplishments of your colleagues? How do you provide support to them in challenging situations?
- **Speaking Positively.** How do you ensure that a positive image of your coworkers, staff, and the organization is communicated internally? Outside of the organization, how do you ensure this image continues?
- **Being welcoming and inclusive.** What actions can you take to ensure all members of the organization feel like a part of the team?
- **Owning accountability.** Do you respect others enough to get them what they need when it is your responsibility to do so? Can you meet your deadlines or communicate why you cannot in a timely manner? Are you accountable to your position and recognize its impact on the tasks of others?
- **Considerate.** Do you understand the demands of different departments at varying times of the year? How might that impact timelines or requests? How do you ensure that others understand these challenges to avoid negativity or gossip?
- **Empathizing.** Do you reflect on and recognize what others may be experiencing at work or during times of conflict? Are we able to humanize and empathize with those around us?
- **Caring.** How do you demonstrate commitment and care to the organization and the different individuals who contribute to its success?
- **Confidential.** Are you able to keep information private? Do you understand the limits to confidentiality? (risks supersede confidentiality)

LAKEHEAD PUBLIC SCHOOLS
OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION

2025 JAN 28
Report No. 018-25

TO THE CHAIR AND MEMBERS OF
LAKEHEAD DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD – Public Session

RE: EARLY LEARNING

1. Background

- 1.1 Early years programming at Lakehead Public Schools, in accordance with the Lakehead District School Board's (LDSB) strategic plan, provides programs and supports so that every student can achieve high levels of personal and academic excellence in inclusive environments that reflect the diversity of our community.
- 1.2 *The Kindergarten Program, 2016 (and 2019 Addendum)* is structured around four broad learning areas called frames: belonging and contributing, self-regulation and well-being, demonstrating literacy and mathematics behaviour, and problem solving and innovating. These frames emphasize essential aspects of child development and foster learning through play and inquiry. An updated Kindergarten Program document is currently being developed by the Ministry of Education and is expected to be released prior to the 2025-2026 school year.
- 1.3 *Growing Success, The Kindergarten Addendum, 2016* describes the policy for assessment, evaluation, and reporting for Kindergarten.

2. Situation

- 2.1 In order to support strategic planning, ensure program quality and ongoing monitoring and communication, there continues to be an early years lead position at the superintendent level. The early years lead maintains a seat on the district community partners table, which serves to address children's needs and services for both pre-Kindergarten and school-aged learners across the region.
- 2.2 2019-2024 Kindergarten enrolment data:

Year (at October 31)	Year 1 Kindergarten Enrolment	Year 2 Kindergarten Enrolment	Total Kindergarten Enrolment
2019	619	662	1281
2020	565	612	1177
2021	623	626	1249
2022	625	694	1319
2023	615	656	1271
2024	583	647	1230

- 2.3 Observing, documenting, and assessing each child's development and learning are essential processes for educators to plan, implement, and evaluate the effectiveness of the learning experiences they provide to students. Assessment includes both formal and informal measures and allows educators to monitor student progress and plan next steps in their instruction based on the data collected. Educators can be intentional about helping children to progress when they know where each child is with respect to established milestones and learning goals.

2.3.1 Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ)

Ages and Stages Questionnaire is a developmental screening tool designed for use by educators and is administered to all Year 1 Kindergarten students prior to the start of the school year. Ages and Stages Questionnaire screening relies on parents and guardians as experts on their children, and measures five domains: communication, gross motor, fine motor, problem solving, and personal-social. The purpose of administering the ASQ is two-fold:

- to quickly and efficiently determine whether a child should receive a more thorough, comprehensive evaluation or referral to ensure appropriate supports are in place; and
- to identify areas for whole-and small-group instruction and intervention throughout the school year.

2.3.2 Early Development Instrument (EDI)

Completed in 3-year cycles across the province, the EDI is a teacher-completed tool administered to students in Year 2 Kindergarten that measures children's ability to meet age-appropriate developmental expectations at school entry. Early Development Instrument measures developmental expectations across five domains: physical health and well-being, social competence, emotional maturity, language and cognitive development, and communication skills and general knowledge. Each domain contains several subdomains.

Research has linked EDI findings to later educational data that demonstrate that, on average, Kindergarten vulnerability predicts ongoing vulnerability in the school system. Numerous studies have shown that early vulnerability is associated with a child's lifelong health, learning, and behaviour. Children whose scores fall below the tenth percentile cut-off in any of the domains of the Ontario baseline population are considered vulnerable, while children whose scores fall below the twenty-fifth percentile can be considered at risk.

2.3.3 Early Reading Screening

Early reading screening supports early identification of risks in students' foundational reading skills, which, if not quickly and appropriately addressed, can be linked to future difficulties with fundamental literacy skills. Using the data from early reading screening (in conjunction with classroom-based assessments) can support teachers to provide targeted evidence-based reading instruction to all students to prevent or quickly address reading difficulty.

Beginning in the 2024-2025 school year, the Ministry of Education requires school boards to screen all students in Year 2 of Kindergarten, Grade 1 and Grade 2 for early reading using a ministry-approved, evidence-based screening tool. Students are required to be screened twice in a school year, however, for students who met the benchmark in the first screening, the second screening is optional.

3. Early Learning Screening Data

3.1 Ages and Stages Questionnaire

Kindergarten classrooms across LDSB continue to experience challenges with school readiness. Many incoming students are entering Kindergarten without foundational skills in self-regulation and social-emotional skills, which are essential for a smooth transition into the school environment.

In 2024-2025, ASQs were administered by educator teams to all students prior to entry to Kindergarten as part of a focused effort to support school readiness. Where indicated by the data collected, individual students were referred for further assessment or to outside agencies for support and intervention in areas such as speech and language or occupational therapy.

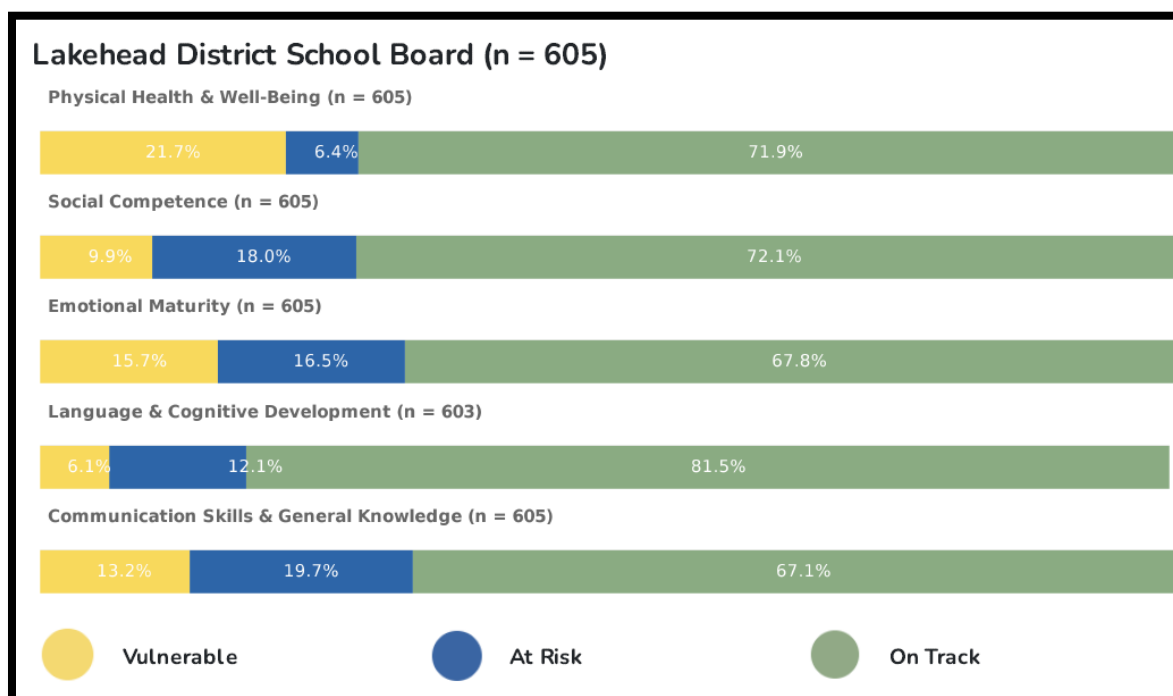
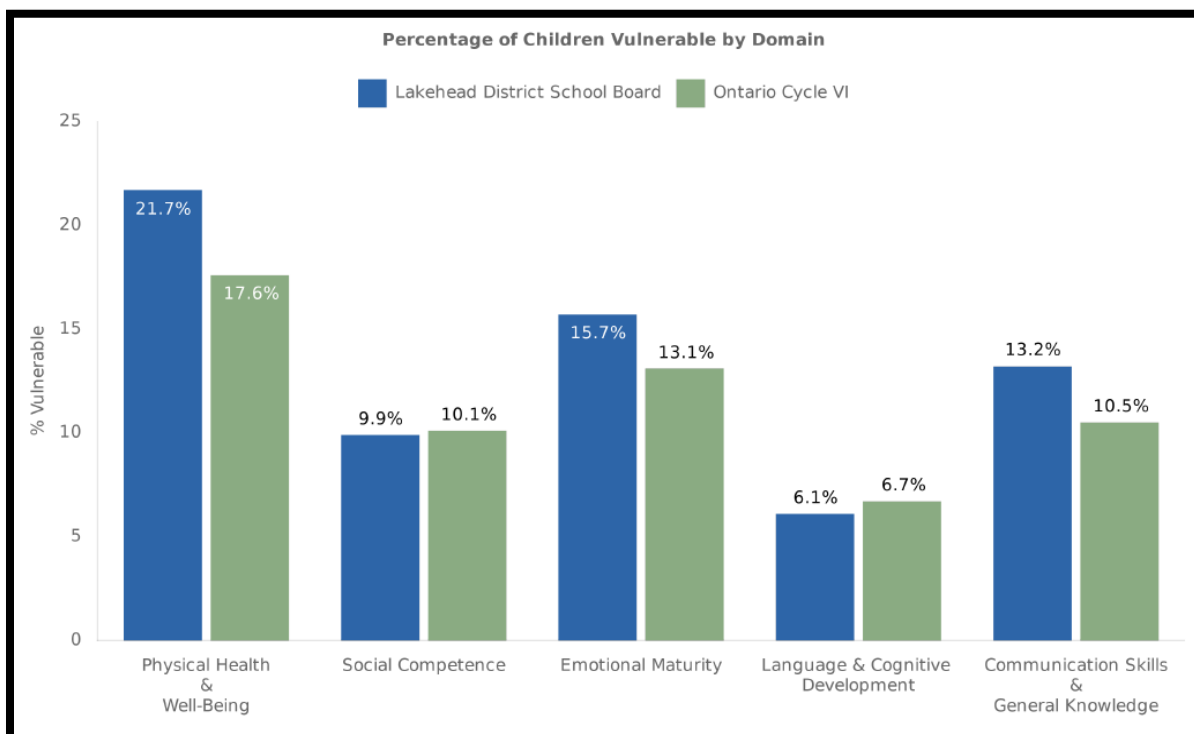
In addition to using data to support individual student needs, educator teams have worked collaboratively throughout the year to develop instructional pathways based on ASQ data. This board-created resource supports whole and small-group instruction and intervention to intentionally and thoughtfully address the needs identified in ASQ screening data collected by schools across the system.

3.2 Early Development Instrument (EDI)

Across the province, the EDI has been completed in 3-year cycles beginning in 2004. The 2004 data created a baseline for Ontario students, with subsequent data cycles measured against the 2004 data. The most recent cycle was completed in 2022-2023, with data released to school boards in 2024.

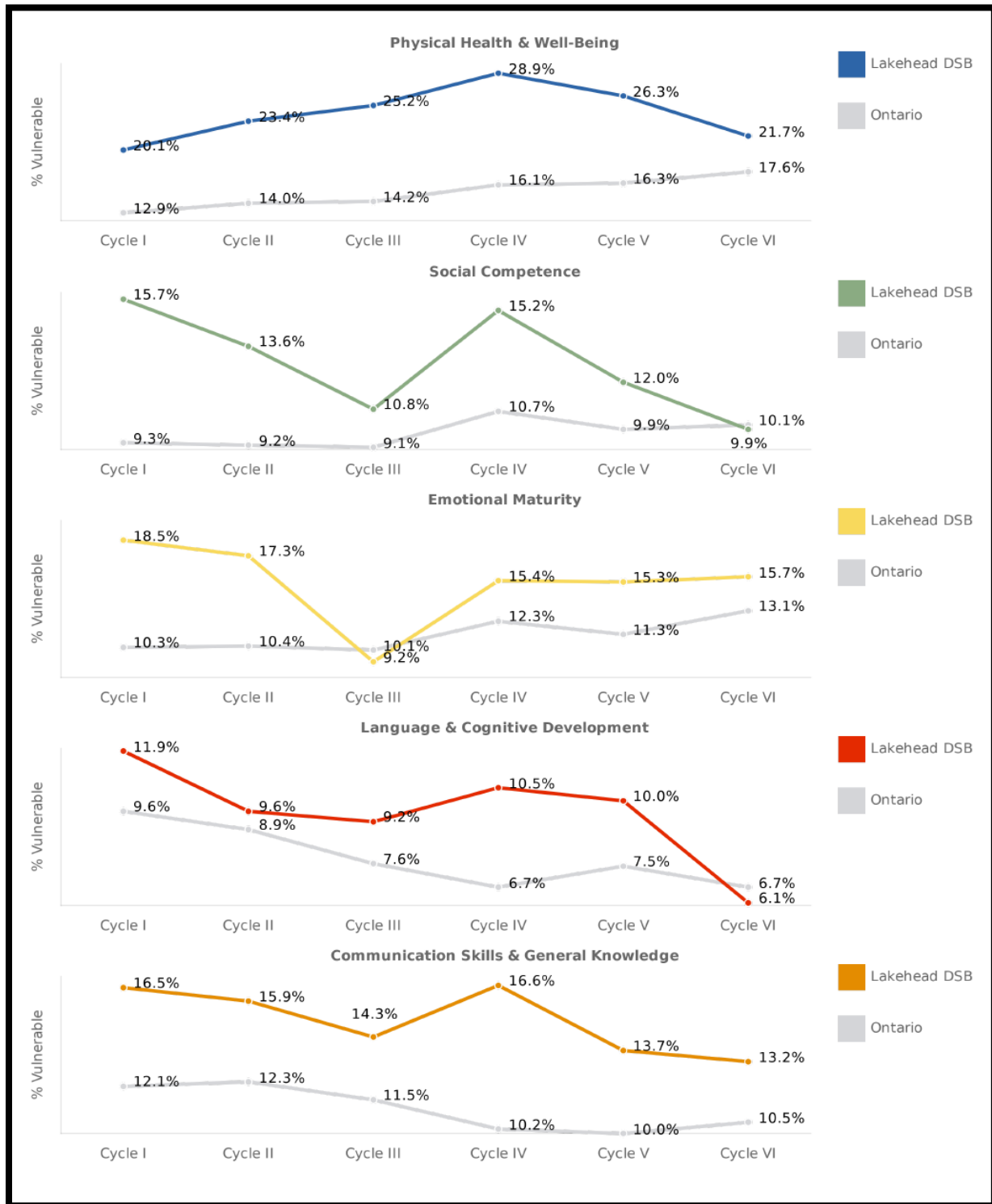
Overall 2022-2023 EDI Data – Lakehead District School Board		
Overall Vulnerable	33.4%	Children with scores below the tenth percentile cut-off on any of the five domains. Being vulnerable means that children are at an increased risk of difficulties and, without additional support, may continue to experience challenges.
Overall in Flux	21.7%	These children are not vulnerable on any of the domains; however, they are not on track in all five domains. This group of children falls above the tenth percentile on all five domains, but below the twenty-fifth percentile in at least one domain. These children may need more support or may catch up with their peers (these children are not all in the at-risk category, they may fall into the at-risk category on some domains, but on track in others).
Overall on Track	45%	Children with scores above the twenty-fifth percentile cut-off on all five domains. These children are considered to be developing well for their age in all areas of developmental health.

3.2.1 Lakehead District School Board EDI Data 2022-2023 by Domain



Central and school teams use EDI data to consider ways to strengthen the areas in which children are vulnerable. Each school in the board receives an EDI report for their students, allowing them to make decisions about instruction, intervention and supports to positively impact their students' early development.

3.2.2 Lakehead District School Board EDI Data Over Time



An examination of how children's developmental health is changing over time allows the early years team, along with our community partners, to engage in strategic planning around how to most effectively support children and their families.

3.3 Early Reading Screening

The Ministry-mandated early reading screener was administered by classroom teachers to students in Year 2 Kindergarten, Grade 1 and Grade 2 in October 2024.

Early Reading Screen Results Composite Score Beginning of year (October 2024)	
Grade	% of students who met benchmark
Year 2 Kindergarten	54%
Grade 1	17%
Grade 2	38%

Teachers and administrators have engaged in extensive training and professional development to learn how to use the data collected in the early reading screening effectively to determine their next steps in language instruction. Once the initial screen has been completed, teachers are able to track student progress and their achievement trajectory using the screening tool. In February 2025, a mid-year screen will be completed for students who did not reach the benchmark on the first screen.

4. Next Steps

Data collection in the early years indicates successes and also identifies areas of need. Under the direction of the early years lead and in collaboration with educator teams, administrators, program department staff, special education department staff and community partners, we will:

- 4.1 Identify growing needs and challenges, based on data, and develop strategies to address them. Ensure that personnel and resources are directed towards areas of greatest need. Monitor programs, interventions and supports to ensure they are having a positive impact.
- 4.2 Continue to support educators and administrators in providing exemplary Kindergarten programming through professional development and training opportunities that reflect the identified needs of the system.
- 4.3 Continue to work collaboratively with community partners to support early years development and positive outcomes for students and families.

5. Conclusion

Lakehead District School Board believes in establishing a strong foundation for learning in the early years. We believe in the potential and possibilities provided for our youngest learners, and value collaboration with our community partners to meet the varied and changing needs of early learners.

Respectfully submitted,

HEATHER HARRIS
Superintendent of Education

SHERRI-LYNNE PHARAND
Director of Education

LAKEHEAD DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD
OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION

2025 JAN 28
Report No. 011-25

TO THE CHAIR AND MEMBERS OF THE
LAKEHEAD DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD – Public Session

RE: INFORMATION AND TECHNOLOGY REPORT

1. Background

- 1.1 Information and communications technologies are changing the world in which students live and changing teaching and learning in schools. Our increased reliance on technology in recent years has significantly expanded its use across our schools. Students, guardians/caregivers, and staff now have heightened expectations for how we integrate and utilize technology.
- 1.2 The expanded use of online tools like Edsby, Seesaw, and Microsoft Teams has increased our ability to communicate with parents and students. These new tools, new online learning requirements, and curriculum changes now demand the increased use of technology by all students. In this environment, providing equity of access to technology for all our students is increasingly important to their success.

2. Situation

- 2.1 In order to continue to develop the use of technology to enhance student learning, the System Information Technology Committee, which consists of representatives of senior administration, school administration, teaching staff, managers, and support staff, provide updates to renew the Information Technology plan.

2.2 Highlights of the implementation of information technology at Lakehead District School Board in the past year include:

- continued training and implementation of strategies, software, and websites for instruction and collaboration with students, as well as communication with parents and the community;
- joining as a member of the Ontario eLearning Consortium (OeLC), providing expanded opportunities for our students in eLearning courses across 56 school boards in the province;
- 750 regular-year students engaged in eLearning in the 24-25 school year (as of January 15, 2025);
- summer school facilitated through OeLC, with similar access to both out-of-board students in our courses, and out-of-board courses for our students. 298 summer-school credits generated in summer 2024;
- providing math supports for new Grade 9 coding expectations and Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO) assessment;
- implementing Lexia in elementary school to assess and monitor student literacy, and targeted Grades 9 and 10 English and pre-work placement;
- implementing Acadience language screener in senior Kindergarten - Grade 6 to screen and monitor reading proficiency;
- deployment of over 300 new iPads in elementary schools;
- creation of eSports extra-curricular programs and eSports computer labs in all three high schools in partnership with Tbaytel;
- piloting Edsby K-8 in four schools with rollout planned for all schools in fall 2025, replacing Seesaw for capturing evidence of learning and as a parent and student communication tool; and
- ongoing development of Artificial Intelligence (AI) guidelines and effective classroom use of emerging AI tools.

2.3 The increased use of technology in school boards has brought on greater threats of disruption through threats like malware, viruses, ransomware, phishing, and social engineering. Many school boards across Ontario have faced these challenges, and we will continue to put new cybersecurity measures in place to help protect our organization. In fact, we are working with the Ministry of Education on the second year of a K-12 Cyber Security Initiative to implement their Cyber Security Wellness Architecture 2.0.

2.3.1 Over the past year we have implemented:

- advanced vulnerability scanning and patch management software;
- identity management and endpoint protection detection and response;
- privileged Identity Management; and
- enhanced data backup and disaster recovery tools

2.3.2 Upcoming additional measures will include the implementation of a Security Information and Event Management platform.

- 2.4 Microsoft has approved grants totaling just over \$1,000,000 for the purchase of Windows computers and Microsoft software at our schools between now and 2028. These grants will be used to cover some of the costs of the one-to-one laptop program for high school students, and to refresh laptop computers for staff and students at our schools. In the 2024-2025 school year approximately 300 laptops have been purchased for staff at three high schools and three elementary schools using about one-third of these funds.

3. Next Steps

The next steps with respect to Information and Communication Technology include the following:

- implement Edsby across Kindergarten to Grade 8 in all elementary schools;
- increasing use of one-to-one laptops across the new Grade 9 curriculum;
- explore opportunities for elementary students to participate in eSports activities;
- improve existing digital resource repositories to highlight available technologies and supports for educators; and
- continue to develop AI guidelines, resources, goals, and values that support the ethical use of AI in the classroom and develop student skills that leverage these powerful tools.

4. Conclusion

Student learning at Lakehead District School Board schools is facilitated by skilled staff incorporating sound instructional practice in safe and caring learning environments. To prepare students for the global world, it is vital to develop and support pedagogy that leverages learning technologies to enhance student learning.

Maintaining a philosophy and practice of ensuring current and powerful technology in classrooms, in the hands of students, allows staff to implement the pedagogies needed to develop the skills our students need. The Information Technology Committee will continue to ensure our focus is on developing teacher practice and student competencies through resources, training, and support.

Respectfully submitted,

WILL FREDRICKSON
Information Technology Committee

JOHN LOOVERE
Supervisor of Computer Services

DAVE COVELLO
Manager, Information Technology and Corporate Planning

NICHOLAS SACEVICH
Associate Superintendent – Math and IT Lead

KIRSTI ALAKSA
Superintendent of Business

SHERRI-LYNNE PHARAND
Director of Education

LAKEHEAD PUBLIC SCHOOLS
OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION

2025 JAN 28
Report No. 015-25

TO THE CHAIR AND MEMBERS OF
LAKEHEAD DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD – Public Session

RE: RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE BOARD ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Background

The following reports were received at the Board Advisory Committee Meeting of January 14, 2025, and have been referred to the Board for approval. The recommendations are as follows:

1. **INPUT SUBMISSION TO THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE – RE: ONTARIO BUDGET**

It is recommended that Lakehead District School Board authorize administration to submit, on behalf of the Board of Trustees, input to the 2025 Ontario Budget through the Budget consultation submission portal with requested changes.

Attached as appendix A is the letter for input on the 2025 Ontario Budget for submission to the Ministry of Finance.

2. **MIINIWEWINAN: INDIGENOUS EDUCATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE
TERMS AND CONDITIONS (012-25)**

It is recommended that Lakehead District School Board approve the Terms and Conditions for Miiniwewinan: Indigenous Education Advisory Committee.

Attached as Appendix B is report No 012-25 outlining the Terms and Conditions for Miiniwewinan: Indigenous Education Advisory Committee.

Respectfully submitted,

Donica LeBlanc
Chair
Board Advisory Committee

January 29, 2025

Ministry of Finance
95 Grosvenor Street
Toronto, Ontario
M7A 1Y8

RE: Ontario Budget Input 2025

On behalf of the trustees of Lakehead District School Board, I am writing to express concerns regarding the current funding levels. The following information highlights two areas of concern for our Board that impact student achievement and well-being, as well as the Board's budget: **Transportation Funding and Special Education Funding.**

These challenges continue to have a tangible impact on our students having equitable access to education. This is a human rights issue.

Transportation Funding:

The current transportation funding formula has room for improvement. It is not adequate to fund the transportation contracts that were awarded effective September 2024.

Our board's concerns are the following:

1. **Universal Distance Standard:** The Ministry's one-size-fits-all approach to student transportation disregards the unique challenges posed by **Northwestern Ontario's climate and limited infrastructure**, making it harder for students to walk or find alternative ways to get to school and impacting the eligibility criteria for transportation services. **For example, the average number of days in Thunder Bay that are below -25 degrees Celsius is 18.3 days per year.**
2. **Contracted Service Costs:** The Ministry has predetermined what boards should be paying for contracted services, despite the fact that school bus services are competitively procured, which distorts real cost requirements.
3. **Outdated Benchmark Costs:** The funding benchmarks are based on 2018 costs, with inflation factored in. However, **since 2018, inflation has risen by approximately 20%, while the cost of a full-size school bus has increased by 50%.**
4. **Misleading Increases in Funding:** The Ministry appears to have increased spending on student transportation, but much of the **additional funding is simply a reallocation of previous programs (e.g., Driver Retention Bonus and Fuel Escalator funds).** These funds are passed directly to operators and do not address the real costs faced by school boards.

5. **Local Priorities Funding:** While local priorities funding is provided to support local operational decisions based on unique circumstances and needs, it is often used instead to cover the gap between what is funded and the actual costs of transportation, leaving little to address other pressing needs.
6. **Transition Funding:** Transition funding is intended to provide stable funding for school boards for a given period of time. However, it does not take into consideration any new services that may be required over time and **the intention to phase out this funding further exacerbates the long-term viability of student transportation budgets.**
7. **Detrimental Impact on Attendance:** With the move to align eligibility to funding, Thunder Bay boards have been concerned that student attendance may be impacted. Lakehead District School Board has tracked the cohort of students that were eligible for transportation last year, that are no longer eligible. At the end of September, 38.0% of students who were eligible for transportation last year, but not this year had lower attendance compared to the same period last year. **By the end of November, this increased to 49.0% of students who were eligible for transportation last year but not this year under the new walk distances, had lower attendance compared to the same period last year.**

Special Education Funding:

The current funding formula for Special Education programs and supports fails to adequately account for the unique needs and challenges faced by students in Northwestern Ontario.

The formula's one-size-fits-all approach overlooks the geographical and logistical complexities of our region, and the specialized support and accommodations required for our students.

The demographics of our community have changed drastically over the past several years, resulting in our schools seeing an increase in children who struggle with emotional self-regulation, complex special needs, and trauma in the early years. This creates disparities in funding allocation and insufficient resources for schools, and as a result, many schools struggle to provide the necessary support and accommodations to meet the diverse needs of their students during their crucial formative years.

In addition, the lack of qualified supports within the community means that, in the Northwest, schools provide services for children that would be provided by external agencies in the southern part of the province.

For example, families with access to pediatricians in the Northwest region are significantly limited compared to families with access to pediatricians in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) (1:25811 in the Northwest region vs 1:5760 in the GTA).

For the 2024-2025 school year, we have approximately fifty Kindergarten classes in our Board. If we were to start all pre-registered children full time, as is expected and best practice, we would need at least seventy Education Assistants overall, to meet the needs of the students we know who are registered for Kindergarten based on the needs of students. Since we only employ approximately two hundred Educational Assistants, using thirty-five percent of our support staff in Kindergarten, which makes up approximately only thirteen percent of our student population, is unreasonable and impossible to implement. **Without support, many of the students registered to start Kindergarten in the fall will not be able to attend school.**

Providing adequate staffing to support student needs is a problem, even though we advertise regularly. We employ two hundred full-time Education assistants yearly and struggle to retain and hire more than that in our region. **Special Education Assistants who are qualified can be paid at least three dollars more an hour working for other organizations.**

In Thunder Bay, we also have substantial wait lists for Autism supports. **Lakehead District School Board's incident rate of Autism in our elementary schools has doubled from 2021 to 2024 (from 1.9% of total elementary enrolment to 3.8% of total elementary enrolment). This is compared to a provincial average of 1.42%.**

In many cases, we are trying to support children with complex needs who are in school while on waiting lists for years. Early interventions change life outcomes for children and reduce the long-term costs. The current funding formula does not provide adequate support for these systematic discrepancies in services. **Lakehead District School Board has started to support some of our families by applying for Jordan's Principle funding to try to alleviate or reduce their wait times for these much-needed services.** To date, over \$1.3 million has been approved in a single year but there are so many more families who need this support.

The funding for transportation for Special Education is insufficient. Many students with special needs require specialized transportation to access educational programs and services, yet insufficient funding often results in this being unattainable. Many students with special education needs are not able to access a school bus in the same way most children do, which becomes an equity issue. **The current funding to address this issue is the use of smaller buses, but for boards with a large geographical area and rural components, such as ours, these small buses are unavailable; we must rely on taxis and vans to transport these students.**

In our Board, in 2023-2024, there were 86 students with special education transportation needs who generate \$43,000 of funding, while actually costing \$425,559 – a gap of \$382,559 per year. Specifically, one student who needs to attend a special needs classroom in the city and lives rurally will cost the Board \$43,000 a year for transport. This is not manageable within the confines of the current funding formula. This can result in families being asked to provide their own transportation for their children, which in some cases, may limit access to education altogether. **This not only deprives these students of their right to education but also places undue burden and stress on their families.**

While the ministry has “modernized” SEA (Special Education Amount) funding last year and is looking to “modernize” SIP (Special Incidence Portion) funding this year, it is the core funding that needs to be updated. **Core funding needs to consider Northern and regional realities, including what is available to families within the community. Addressing these funding issues is imperative to maintaining the quality and accessibility of education for all students.**

We urge the Ministry to **increase the funding for both Transportation and Special Education as well as timely and increased access to autism support services for our services in Northwestern Ontation.**so like their peers across the province, our students have consistent access to quality education.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. We look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

Leah Vanderwey
Chair, Lakehead District School Board.

LAKEHEAD PUBLIC SCHOOLS
OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION

2025 Jan 14
Report No. 012-25

TO THE CHAIR AND MEMBERS OF
THE BOARD ADVISORY COMMITTEE – Public Session

RE: MIINIWEWINAN: INDIGENOUS EDUCATION ADVISORY TERMS AND CONDITIONS

1. Background

- 1.1 Miiniwewinan: Indigenous Education Advisory Committee was established as a committee of the board in 2004.
- 1.2 In 2014, the Ministry of Education released an implementation plan to support the Ontario First Nation, Métis, and Inuit Education Policy Framework. The implementation plan recommended that school boards continue to establish formalized processes such as First Nation, Métis, and Inuit Advisory Councils to support local implementation of the framework by developing relationships with their communities, sharing information, identifying promising practices, and enhancing collaborative work.

2. Situation

- 2.1 Miiniwewinan reviewed the mandate for the committee in November and December 2024 to create the following updated terms of reference:
 - supporting capacity-building, professional development and/or other related activities that value and integrate Indigenous ways of knowing and being;
 - expanding the awareness of effective programs for the educational needs of Indigenous students;
 - promoting and co-facilitating initiatives for all Indigenous students;
 - providing advice and guidance on initiatives including, but not limited to, student programs, First Nation, Métis, and Inuit studies, student retention and alternative education programs;
 - supporting and sustaining partnerships with First Nation, Métis, and Inuit communities and community-based agencies that support Indigenous students and their families;
 - responding to the Boards' requests for advice and recommendations on matters that the Board may direct to the committee;
 - advocating both provincially and locally for specific needs of Indigenous students, families and communities;
 - identifying opportunities and challenges in the community that impact education; and,
 - responding to other initiatives as they arise.

3. RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Board Advisory Committee refer the following to the Board for approval:

“That Lakehead District School Board approve the Terms and Conditions for Miiniwewinan: Indigenous Education Advisory Committee.”

Respectfully submitted,

HEATHER HARRIS

Co-Chair, Miiniwewinan: Indigenous Education Advisory Committee
Superintendent of Education

SHERRI-LYNNE PHARAND

Director of Education

LAKEHEAD PUBLIC SCHOOLS
OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION

2025 JAN 28
Report No. 013-25

TO THE CHAIR AND MEMBERS OF
LAKEHEAD DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD – Public Session

RE: REQUEST FOR APPROVAL OF SPECIAL EDUCATION ADVISORY
COMMITTEE LETTER

1. Background

- 1.1 The Vice Chair of the Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC), Ottawa Catholic School Board, is requesting an endorsement signature of all SEAC chairs in Ontario to accompany a letter to the Ministry of Education regarding inadequate special education funding & educational assistant shortage in Ontario.
- 1.2 This item was put on the agenda for January 15, 2025, SEAC meeting for information purposes.

2. Situation

- 2.1 Attached as Appendix A is the letter to the Ministry of Education from Traci Clarke, SEAC Chair, Ottawa Catholic School Board to be endorsed by SEAC chairs across Ontario.

3. Conclusion

The Special Education Advisory Committee Chair, Lakehead District School Board, respectfully requests that the Board approve the signature request on the letter to the Ministry of Education regarding inadequate special education funding & educational assistant shortage in Ontario.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Lakehead District School Board approve the request from the Special Education Advisory Committee Chair to be permitted to add her signature of endorsement to the letter written by the SEAC Chair of Ottawa Catholic School Board, SEAC to the Ministry of Education regarding inadequate special education funding & educational assistant shortage in Ontario, as outlined in Report No. 013-25.

Respectfully submitted,

MICHELLE PROBIZANSKI
Superintendent of Education

SHERRI-LYNNE PHARAND
Director of Education

DATE

Via Email

Hon. Jill Dunlop Ministry of Education

Re: Inadequate Special Education Funding & Educational Assistant Shortage

Dear Minister Dunlop,

We are writing on behalf of the special education students in Ontario's schools to express our serious concerns regarding the significant challenges facing these students. Specifically, the insufficient funding for special education programs and services in combination with the critical shortage of Educational Assistants (EAs) severely impact the quality of education and support provided to exceptional students. These act as barriers to these students' rights, as per the Human Rights Code, to access education. Furthermore, the lack of adequate funding for special education has ramifications negatively impacting the entire student population in Ontario, as further explained below.

Funding Challenges:

- **Special Education Grant Shortfalls:** The current Special Education Grant is insufficient to meet the complex and diverse needs of exceptional students. These chronic underfunding forces school boards to reallocate resources from other areas, therefore compromising the overall educational experience for all students. As an example, the Ottawa Catholic School Board currently spends \$26 million more than it is funded to support students with special education needs. This financial strain limits the board's ability to provide essential services and support to its students. **Inadequate Transportation Funding:** Transportation costs for students with special needs continue to exceed the funding provided by the Ministry. This shortfall places an additional burden on school boards and families of students who require specialized transportation and acts as a barrier to access education, which is a human right.

Educational Assistant Shortages:

- **Critical Staffing Gaps:** The province is facing a severe shortage of qualified Education Assistants. This shortage results in significant challenges in providing consistent and adequate support to students with special education needs. Staff absences due to illness and stress often cannot be filled, leaving vulnerable students without the necessary assistance and supervision. This situation poses a direct risk to the safety and well-being of these students and disrupts the learning environment for all students in our schools across the province. This lack of support denies special needs students their legally protected right to access the same level of education as their peers without disabilities. **Students unable to access educational institutions:** A lack of appropriate staff and support can also result in requests to keep students at home. Results from [People for Education's 2023-2024 Annual Ontario School Survey](#) showed that 72% of elementary schools who had daily EA shortages recommended that students receiving EA support stay home and 67% of secondary schools did the same. Note that the province does not keep its own statistics of school exclusion.

- **Urgent Need for Action:** The Ministry must take immediate steps to address this crisis. We urge the government to increase the special education grant to an amount that ensures exceptional students have equitable access to education, when compared to their typical peers. This amount must be adjusted for inflation each year. Furthermore, we urge the government to implement strategies to attract and retain staff in the area of special education. These strategies could include:
 - **Free Tuition for EA Programs:** Offering free tuition for students enrolled in Educational Assistant programs at Ontario colleges.
 - **Retention Bonuses:** Providing financial incentives to encourage EAs to remain in the education sector.
 - **Living wage and benefits:** Most EAs salary is not sufficient to cover the basic cost of living, with an average salary of \$49 000 per year, despite the essential work they do in supporting exceptional students.
 - **Enhanced Professional Development:** Investing in ongoing professional development opportunities for EAs to enhance their skills and knowledge.
 - **Improved Working Conditions:** Addressing workload concerns and ensuring that EAs have the necessary resources and support to effectively perform their roles.
 - **Stable Employment:** Many EAs leave the profession due to lack of full-time stable positions and some are forced to take on multiple jobs to make ends meet. Providing stable funding to pay for full-time positions will enable schools to retain the best EAs and result in lower costs over time when compared to the cost of constantly having to re-staff and retrain new EAs.
 - **Increase and improve all special education resources:** Speech and Language Pathologists, Occupational Therapists, Physical Therapists, Behaviour Analysts, Resource Teachers and other specialists are wholly insufficient in number to meet the needs of the current student population in the province - significant effort must be expended to improve children's access to the services these specialists bring to the classrooms of the province

The current situation is unsustainable and demands urgent attention. We are facing a special education crisis in Ontario, with students not having their human right of equitable access to quality education met at this time. As such, as chairs of the Special Education Advisory Committees (SEACs) across Ontario, we are asking that you take immediate action to address these critical funding and staffing challenges to ensure that all students in Ontario, including those with special needs, have access to the equitable and high quality education and support to which they are entitled under the Human Rights Code.

Sincerely,

Traci Clarke SEAC Chair Ottawa Catholic School Board

LAKEHEAD PUBLIC SCHOOLS
OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION

2025 JAN 28
Report No. 017-25

TO THE CHAIR AND MEMBERS OF
LAKEHEAD DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD – Public Session

RE: SPECIAL EDUCATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE (SEAC) REQUEST FOR APPROVAL
OF CORRESPONDENCE

1. Background

1.1 On February 28, 2022, the Ontario Human Rights Commission (OHRC) released its Right to Read Inquiry Report on human rights issues affecting students with reading disabilities, calling for critical changes to Ontario's approach to early reading, in areas such as curriculum and instruction, screening, reading interventions, accommodations and professional assessments. Progress on the implementation of the recommendations in the report was presented at the December 18, 2024, Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) meeting which was followed by a discussion regarding the lack of adequate funding affecting the ability to fully meet all of the recommendations.

1.2 At the January 15, 2025, SEAC meeting, it was decided to send the advocacy letter to the Minister of Education by early February 2025.

2. Situation

Attached as Appendix A is the letter to the Minister of Education.

3. Conclusion

The Special Education Advisory Committee respectfully requests that the Board approve the request to send the letter of advocacy (Appendix A) addressing the lack of adequate funding and to request for further financial support to fully implement the recommendations from the OHRC's Right to Read Report to the Ministry of Education.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Lakehead District School Board approve the request from the Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) to send correspondence of support to the Minister of Education, as outlined in Report No. 017-25.

Respectfully submitted,

MICHELLE PROBIZANSKI
Superintendent of Education

SHERRI-LYNNE PHARAND
Director of Education

Appendix A to Report No. 017-25

February XX, 2025

The Honourable Jill Dunlop,
Minister of Education
5th Floor, 438 University Ave
Toronto, Ontario
M7A 2A5

Dear Minister Dunlop,

I am writing to request further funding to meet the recommendations outlined in the Ontario Human Rights Commission's Right to Read report and to urge the Ministry of Education to specifically examine this report when making budgetary decisions.

The Right to Read report has brought to light the critical gaps in literacy education for students in Ontario, especially for those with disabilities or those from marginalized communities. The report highlights the need for systemic change in our education system to provide all students with equitable access to effective reading instruction. It is clear that these recommendations, if implemented effectively, will make a profound difference in the educational outcomes for students across our province.

However, achieving the goals set forth in the report will require substantial investments in professional development, accessible resources, and evidence-based instructional strategies. The report's recommendations, including the implementation of structured literacy approaches, updated teacher training programs, and the expansion of assessment tools, cannot be realized without more funding. While there was funding provided to all Boards in the budget, there is a need to increase that amount in this upcoming budget.

To ensure that all Ontario students, regardless of their background or learning needs, have the opportunity to succeed in literacy, the government must commit to supporting these recommendations through a dedicated financial investment.

Funding will be necessary to:

1. **Support teacher training and professional development** – Teachers need access to specialized training in evidence-based reading instruction, especially in structured literacy methods, to better support students with learning disabilities or those at risk of falling behind.
2. **Ensure access to appropriate learning resources** – Schools must be provided with the necessary materials, including assistive technologies and structured literacy resources, to meet the needs of all students. Increased funding for learning assessments is necessary.

3. **Expand targeted support programs** – Additional funding is needed for targeted interventions, including tier three interventions such as the Empower Reading Program and proactive support for students struggling with literacy, particularly in the early years.

We respectfully request that you prioritize this funding as part of the Ministry's commitment to advancing equity in education. We require further financial support to fully implement the recommendations.

Thank you for your attention to this urgent matter.

Sincerely,

Suzanne Posthumus
Chair
Special Education Advisory Committee
Lakehead District School Board