

Lawfield School – Meeting Minutes

Date: October 30, 2025

Prepared by: Amy Cowling

1. Outdoor Learning Spaces

Development of an outdoor classroom area featuring benches, flexible learning spaces, and a storage shed for materials. The space will serve as a multi-use, nature-based learning environment connected to the garden and future forest area.

Current Status: Costs are higher than expected; additional funding being sought, with \$5,000 potentially allocated toward the shed.

Future Goals: Creation of a mini forest (400 trees), installation of a learning shed, and transformation of the field into an outdoor learning hub.

2. Collaboration and Expansion

Working with school trustees from different wards to share project successes (e.g., garden initiative) for replication at other schools. Focus on collaboration, community, and expanding environmental learning programs.

3. Student Engagement & Club Activities

The Environmental/Nature Club remains highly popular, with strong student interest this year due to the success of last year's projects.

4. Robotics Team Development

Establishing a new Lawfield Robotics Team.

Timeline: Preparatory year in progress; target participation in competitions by October 2026.

Resources: Robotics table obtained through board resources; LEGO kits funded through French department funds. Seeking additional funding.

Team Composition: Grades 6–8 students with coding interest; teachers supervising and troubleshooting; call for parent volunteers with expertise.

Goal: Participate in board-level robotics competitions and foster STEM engagement.

5. Athletics and Sports

The school remains very active in sports, with high student participation and numerous ongoing events.

6. Staff Updates – Ms. Black & Ms. Rider

The school has had a busy start to the year, with many extracurricular activities underway.

- Cross Country season has concluded successfully.
- Volleyball is currently in full swing.
- The Swim Team recently had their first meet (results pending).

Updates and information are being shared regularly with families through community channels.

7. School Assemblies & Enrichment Programs

Recent Assemblies & Events:

- Greenpeace Presentation (October): Ocean conservation awareness.
- Earth Rangers Visit (September): Animal presentation and environmental education.

Upcoming Events:

- Adad Presentation (November): Focus on inclusivity, emotional well-being, and positive self-expression.

- Leadership and hip-hop workshops planned for January and April 2026.

8. French Immersion (FI) and Core French Updates

Mme. Cowling and Mme. Baxter are pursuing French program funding to support cultural experiences beyond classroom learning.

Plans include:

- Bringing in French-speaking guest presenters
- Organizing French cultural field trips
- Including Core French students in select activities where possible.

9. Carnaval de Québec / Maple Syrup Festival Discussion

Proposal to host a Carnaval or “Cabane à Sucre” event at the school to celebrate French-Canadian culture.

Possible activities:

- Maple syrup rolling on snow (“tire sur la neige”)
- Cultural stations and traditional music
- Collaboration with parents for setup and volunteer roles.

Discussion of forming a subcommittee to plan and coordinate event logistics. The goal is to involve all students and celebrate both Canadian and French culture.

10. French Cooking Experiences

Recent Activity:

- Chef É workshop held for three classes featuring traditional French-Canadian pastries (“pets de soeurs”).
- Combined language, music, and cultural learning.
- Limited spots this round; plan to expand for more classes next year.

Past Activities:

- Cook Smart workshops offered last year in English.
- This year, focus will shift toward French-language cultural cooking to enhance immersion.

11. Future Opportunities & Volunteer Engagement

Discussion about continuing Chef É or Cook Smart programs.

Encouragement for parents to join subcommittees for Carnaval or cooking events.

Madame Zimmerman’s contact will be shared for parent outreach and coordination.

Trustee’s Report – Dawn Danko, Ward 7 Trustee

1. Program Strategy Review

The board is conducting a comprehensive review of all specialized programs, including French Immersion, Core French, and other specialty offerings such as the Sports Academy (Riddell), the Hockey Program (Tapleystown), and SAGE/SAGEQuest (Strathcona). The purpose of the review is to evaluate what is working well, what needs improvement, and how to ensure programs are effectively staffed and accessible. Staffing for French Immersion remains a significant challenge across the board, including at Lawfield. The board’s HR department continues active recruitment efforts. Trustees expect to receive an update report between December 2025 and January 2026.

2. Future of School Board Trustees

The provincial government is considering eliminating elected school board trustees, potentially

centralizing decision-making under government-appointed representatives. Trustee Danko emphasized the importance of maintaining local voices in education governance and decision-making, highlighting that trustees provide a vital connection between schools, parents, and the board. Concerns were raised about how community members could advocate for change if trustees were removed. Without trustees, parents would be limited to addressing concerns through school or board staff, who have restricted authority. Trustee Danko encouraged families to contact their local MPP or the Premier's office to express their views on the proposed changes. She also noted that the trustee position is largely voluntary, with a small honorarium that has not increased since 2006. She expressed appreciation for community collaboration and encouraged others to consider running for trustee in future elections.

3. Bill 33 and Speed Camera Legislation

Trustee Danko discussed Bill 33, which may include measures limiting municipalities' ability to use speed cameras. She noted that speed cameras have been effective in reducing speeding near schools and emphasized that they are well-marked and publicly advertised to promote safe driving. A parent-organized "Parents Against Speeding" event was scheduled for the following day at Highview School, to raise awareness and advocate for continued use of speed cameras. Trustee Danko again encouraged community members to share feedback with their local MPP.

4. School Liaison Program and Police in Schools

In response to a parent question from Ellen regarding re-establishing contact with the Hamilton Police Service, Trustee Danko provided an update: The previous Police Liaison Program was cancelled but intended to be replaced with a new model focused on education and positive community relationships. Currently, schools operate under a Police Protocol—a required framework outlining how and when police may attend school sites. HWDSB continues discussions with the Hamilton Police Chief to determine what a future liaison or educational program could look like, ensuring it prioritizes student safety and well-being. The goal is to maintain positive engagement—such as career presentations, safety talks, and community education—while being sensitive to the diverse experiences of students and families regarding police presence. Trustee Danko confirmed that police officers may attend schools for legitimate educational reasons or parent events, and that clear communication with the community is essential when these visits occur.

5. Closing Remarks

Trustee Danko thanked Lawfield staff and families for their continued involvement and advocacy. She encouraged parents to remain informed on upcoming legislative and board updates, and to reach out with any concerns or questions. The Trustee concluded by wishing everyone a happy and safe Halloween.

Principal: Miss Black

Key Updates:

French Immersion Staffing:

Almost all French immersion classes have French teachers assigned.

Grade 1 class temporarily retains current teacher to reduce transitions; both French and English are being taught.

Indigenous Education Learning:

Staff are reading books on Indigenous perspectives and truth & reconciliation, including:

Braiding Sweetgrass

Truth Telling

21 Things You May Not Know About the Indian Act

Goal: Incorporate Indigenous knowledge into curriculum and teaching practices.

Math & Literacy Professional Development:

Continued PD for high-impact strategies in math (Grades 3 & 6) and literacy (French immersion Grades 1 & 2).

Progress Reports & Parent-Teacher Interviews:

Progress reports sent home Nov 18; contact school if missing.

Interviews: Nov 20 (evening) and Nov 21 (daytime).

Translators available upon request.

Grade 3/4 Class Reorganization:

Grade 3 students now join younger primary students; Grade 4 students remain with Grades 4–6.

French classes already grouped appropriately; no changes needed.

Summary of Discussion:

Ellen provided an update on FASL (French as a Second Language Committee) activities.

Key points:

The committee holds three meetings per year; next meeting scheduled for November 11.

A company, Malatas, has been hired to conduct a program review; results will be shared at the upcoming meeting.

A returning parent member from French Canada serves as the committee's chair and official representative.

Potential for Francophone-sponsored events or guest speakers at the school was discussed; coordination with Dana may facilitate future events.

No questions were raised by attendees.

Agenda Item: Home and School Association Update – Alana

Summary of Discussion:

Current Fundraisers:

Big Box of Cards – Sample cards distributed to students; fundraiser runs until November 12.

Profits support school programs and initiatives.

McMillan Foods – Offers soups, chicken products, and other items; fundraiser runs until November 6.

Fund Allocation:

Decisions on fund usage will be finalized at next month's meeting to avoid overlap with other school initiatives.

Upcoming Home & School Meeting:

Scheduled for November 12 at 7 PM.

Open to new members and volunteers to assist with fundraisers and events.

Future Events:

Planning a movie night in February, potentially a double feature based on last year's success.

Agenda Item: Bylaw Subcommittee Update

Summary of Discussion:

The bylaw subcommittee, consisting of Kaylee, Michelle, and [Chairperson], reviewed and updated the school council bylaws.

Updates included:

Spelling and grammar corrections.

Standardizing terminology (e.g., "LSC" for Local School Council).

Reordering sections for clarity (e.g., principal first, students before others).

Adding exact wording from the official bylaw site where necessary.

Draft bylaws will be sent via email for review; members are encouraged to submit suggestions or questions before the next meeting.

Agenda Item: Fundraising & Subcommittee Planning

Summary of Discussion:

Fundraising subcommittee coordinated with Home & School Association to avoid overlap and minimize “fundraising fatigue.”

Planned activities:

October: JK–Grade 3 Halloween Dance (completed).

January: Cacti plant fundraiser.

March: Read-a-thon and used book sale; volunteers needed.

April/May: Mother’s & Father’s Day treats (joint venture with Home & School).

Ongoing: Pizza and food days; additional days may be added based on volunteer availability.

School Council will also support Student Council initiatives (e.g., Valentine’s candy grams, school dances).

Allocation of funds:

\$500 toward commencement to subsidize student participation.

\$500 for replacement of Track & Field T-shirts.

\$500 for decodable books (Grades 1–2).

75% of remaining funds toward subsidizing families for class trips.

25% of remaining funds toward STEM/Robotics initiatives (supporting Madame Zimmerman’s club).

No questions raised.

Agenda Item: Volunteering Opportunities & Subcommittees

Summary of Discussion:

Volunteers sought for the Read-a-thon:

Event scheduled for March, coordinated with reading specialists and library staff.

Focus on reading minutes and engagement rather than fundraising.

Used book sale: Students donate books; community members can purchase books at low cost.

Community Facebook group will help collect donations; drop-off locations will be provided.

Possible participation from local children’s author, Jake Evanoff, for live readings.

Attention to sanitizing used books to prevent bed bug contamination.

Robotics Club:

Volunteers welcome to assist Madame Zimmerman.

Students will teach and guide activities.

Maple syrup/snow-in-the-field event: subcommittee formation pending depending on conditions.

Halloween dance volunteer slots are filled; efforts made to reduce junk food for students.

Volunteers Signed Up:

Read-a-thon: Alana, Heather, Emily, Amy, Michelle, Ellen

Robotics: Jimmy, Michelle

Agenda Item: Accounting Update – Jimmy (Treasurer)

Summary of Discussion:

Jimmy provided an update on recent fundraising:

Halloween Dance (JK–Grade 3):

Investment: \$719

Net return: \$980

Return on investment: ~136%

Positive start to the school year's fundraising efforts.

Agenda Item: Fundraising Update – Ellen

Summary of Discussion:

Christmas Cactus Fundraiser:

Original plan to order in December and pick up in January not feasible due to nursery closure (December–March).

Alternative plan: Spring plant/flower fundraiser to proceed instead.

Primary Choir Launch:

First two meetings held with Katherine, Miss Wolf, and volunteers.

Choir includes JK–Grade 3 students, approximately 50 participants.

Meeting time: Thursday mornings, first break.

Students are learning a song on repeat and will perform at the Remembrance Day assembly.