Highlights

Council of Commissioner's Meeting
August 25, 2026

Commission scolaire Eastern Townships School Board

Recognition of Excellence

- **Mansonville Hosts Thrilling Mud Run with Many Schools Present**
  - Butler Elementary School
  - Knowlton Academy
  - Mansonville Elementary School
  - Sutton Elementary School
  - Waterloo Elementary School
- **End-of-Year Awards & Graduation Ceremonies**
- **SunnySeed Garden: Hands-On Learning at Sunnyside**
  - Sunnyside Elementary School

Dates to Remember

- August 26th to 28th: Pedagogical Days
- August 31st: First Day of School
- September 7th: Labour Day
- September 20th to 26th: National School Support Staff Week
- **September 22nd: Next Council of Commissioners**

Resolutions

- 2026-2027 Quebec English School Boards Association (QESBA) Membership Fees
- Alexander Galt Regional High School (AGRHS) - Signing Officers
- Asbestos-Danville-Shipton (ADS) Elementary School - Signing Officers
- Drummondville Elementary School - Signing Officers
- 2026-2027 Eastern Townships School Board (ETSB) Budget

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REFLECTION FROM OUR CHAIRMAN



Michael Murray

I hope you all had a wonderful summer. The weather was fantastic, and Mary-Ellen boasted of harvesting her pea crop earlier than anyone else on July 13. I had a wonderful summer too, if you care to ask. There was the conference in July I will mention in more detail, my first experience ziplining, the flourishing garden, a new tractor and our fifth granddaughter. The good times multiplied. I also hope you all had a good break that recharged your energies and that you are eager to begin again.

Welcome to the start of an exciting new school year. I mean that literally. Every new year begins with anticipation and enthusiasm. This year promises to be more so and I believe the excitement will continue throughout the year. We face a range of fresh challenges and need to continue our efforts to improve governance and focus more attention on opportunities for growth. We must be the change agents that our role defines, the leaders and shapers of education not only in our board but as models for others.

This year we will create a new multi-year plan for the School Board. Employees in all categories including commissioners will be invited to contribute ideas and collaborate on priorities to renew our commitment to optimizing achievement for every student. Not everyone has the same needs nor responds to the same strategies for growth and learning. We will continue to individualize the educational experience for each student who attends the Eastern Townships School Board (ETSB).

I attended the Canadian School Boards Association (CSBA)'s annual gathering in early July. It was held in Whistler, British Colombia amid breathtaking scenery. School board trustees and commissioners attended from across Canada to share and compare our current realities and to discover how we can improve. Many messages centered on making local democracy effective, something we have been living in Quebec since the CAQ government chose to abolish school boards in 2020. The fact we are still here six years later and counting is a vivid demonstration of the power of local democracy. We are proud to be one of the nine English school boards that effectively challenged Bill 40 with financial support from throughout our communities.

The conference reminded me of why we do this voluntarily at considerable inconvenience if not disruption to other aspects of our lives. It is primarily out of the desire to improve education and better adapt it to current reality. Among other issues we were reminded by Rick Hanson of the high ratio of physically and intellectually handicapped students. We were asked to take stock of how our buildings rate for accessibility for the physically challenged, and how our programs like physical education adapt to be inclusive of the mobility, vision and hearing challenges of students. We devote enormous resources to all special needs students, but we need to inquire about the effectiveness of what we do and whether there are better alternatives. Our values, the things we care fundamentally about, require us to consider all those individual differences.

REFLECTION FROM OUR CHAIRMAN (CONTINUED)

Several presentations emphasized that artificial intelligence (AI) is not coming, it is here. It is and will continue to be transformative. ETSB has experienced the disruptiveness of cyber-attacks and we know our cybersecurity will be under increasing pressure from powerful AI capacities. At the same time, we need to learn to use that potential to individualize instruction and accelerate learning. One of the challenges we will be undertaking is to define and prepare for the introduction of Artificial Intelligence in our processes. The Ministry of Education has already proposed digital competency requirements for employees that become mandatory next year in elementary schools. Teachers and professionals will need to retrain to benefit from and help students benefit from all the emerging abilities. Many administrators are using AI daily but will need to upgrade their skills to take full advantage. AI is likely to also empower parents with the insights and assessment tools to detect anomalies in their children's progress and provide suggestions for improvement that will also require adaptation by schools. Commissioners are also charged with oversight of administrative processes and many of those may be susceptable to major improvements through the application of AI capabilities.

We are still unclear how AI development will impact daily education in the classroom and how best to prepare for it. Some enthusiasts have predicted that every child will have a completely personalized AI tutor always supporting their learning, while others foresee transformation of curriculum content with the use of Augmented Reality to deliver realistic experiences. The range of possibilities is endless, but we will need to understand the tools far better than we do now.

Among the many exhibits at CSBA was a demonstration of Augmented Reality providing a realistic experience of visiting the space station. Wearing a digital headset I could see and interact with other attendees on the same visit, stroll around among them, hold conversations discussing the view of earth or the sensations of reduced gravity. It was incredibly realistic, so much so that it was easy to imagine it replacing student trips to museums, zoos and other common cultural activities. This was not merely a demonstration of some indefinite future technology since the exhibitor was offering school boards the opportunity to acquire class-sized sets to allow us to experiment at what seemed to be a competitive cost compared to bussing students to an outside destination. I anticipate we will want to explore its possibilities, perhaps within the coming year.

Risk management and governance were also high on the agenda. School Commissioners are essential overseers of local processes with specific responsibility for identifying risks. That is why we must ask penetrating questions and insist on transparency. We are also tasked with mitigating risks and exercising responsible stewardship. Much of the routine of schools supports these objectives, but we still need to seek reassurance that fire and lockdown drills are conducted, and safety standards observed. One violation of our security efforts I have observed is propping open school doors equipped with security locks and voice identification of visitors. It seems harmless but at the wrong moment it could be critical. It is also important to inquire into indirect or unintended consequences of operational decisions, asking for data on such indirect matters as how long some students spend on a bus route and how that can be mitigated.

Conversations with Trustees from other provinces, at breaks and mealtimes were also informative. Many western school boards are grappling with overwhelming challenges related to indigenous education. Others share our challenges over government funding and have interesting ideas about adapting to reduced resources.

We have a lot on our plate, and I look forward with renewed enthusiasm to an exciting year of growth, development and overcoming challenges.



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REPORT FROM OUR DIRECTOR GENERAL



Kandy Mackey

As we begin the 2026–2027 school year, I am pleased to report that there is considerable activity and momentum across the Eastern Townships School Board (ETSB). This is an important year for ETSB as we enter the final year of our current Commitment to Success Plan while simultaneously beginning to look ahead to our next plan.
There is much to be proud of, and there are also areas where we need to be increasingly intentional and proactive as we plan for the future.

A Focus on Impact

The final year of our Commitment to Success Plan provides an important opportunity to step back and ask not simply whether we have implemented our planned actions, but whether those actions are making a measurable difference for students.
Throughout the year, we will be examining our progress, identifying where we need to increase our efforts and, most importantly, looking at the impact of our work on student success.
At the same time, we will begin developing our next Commitment to Success Plan. A Working Committee with representation from across ETSB will contribute to this process, complemented by Staff Focus Groups examining the results of last spring's Our School Survey. This will allow us to build on our strengths while identifying areas where we may need to shift, grow or approach our work differently.

Artificial Intelligence: From Principles to Practice

Artificial Intelligence (AI) will also be an important area of development this year.
Last year, more than 40 ETSB employees participated in an AI Reflection Day to explore the implications of AI for education and our work. This resulted in the development of four ETSB AI Guiding Principles:

1. People First
2. Enhance, Don't Replace
3. Use AI Responsibly
4. Learn and Grow Together

This year, we will move from principles to practice as we develop an ETSB AI Framework. This work will address ethical and legal requirements, an AI assessment scale, approved tools, and clear guidelines for use.
Our goal is not simply to adopt new technology, but to ensure that AI is used thoughtfully and responsibly to enhance learning and support our employees while preserving the human relationships at the heart of education.

REPORT FROM OUR DIRECTOR GENERAL (CONTINUED)

Planning for the ETSB of the Future

Enrolment and eligibility will require increasing attention as we look ahead.
While we continue to be fortunate to have strong schools and centres serving communities across a large territory, demographic changes in some regions are affecting enrolment. At the same time, ensuring that eligible students and families are aware of and able to exercise their right to English-language education will be increasingly important.
This requires us to understand the communities we serve, anticipate emerging needs, and make thoughtful decisions about the ETSB we want to build for the years ahead.

Highlights Across Our Departments

There is significant work underway across our departments to support student learning and success.

Educational Services

Critical thinking remains an important pedagogical priority as we help students navigate an increasingly complex information environment.
A second cohort of Grade 6 and Secondary I mathematics teachers will participate in professional learning focused on strengthening students' mathematical experience and success during the transition from elementary to secondary school.
Our French Second Language teams will continue using the new ***Trousse de lecture***, literacy resources developed collaboratively by teachers and pedagogical consultants.
Pedagogical consultants will also continue working directly with school teams and providing professional learning throughout the year.

Complementary Services

ETSB is launching its first **Community of Practice for Nurturing Support Centres**, providing an opportunity for staff to collaborate, share strategies and strengthen inclusive, relationship-based support for students.
School teams will also participate in professional learning related to *Reclaiming Our Students*. We are pleased to welcome **Hannah Beach** back to ETSB to work with our teams on *Becoming the Leader Our Students Need and The Science of Resiliency*.
Crisis Prevention & Intervention training is also expanding through a new hybrid model, additional instructors and increased access within the adult sector.

Adult Education and Vocational Training

ETSB continues to contribute to provincial workforce development initiatives, including expanded training opportunities in the construction sector.
Carpentry training program offered in Waterloo, led by Lennoxville Vocational Training Centre, and an additional **Industrial Mechanics cohort in Cowansville**, led by Centre Brome-Missisquoi, are among the initiatives supporting workforce needs in our region.
The Adult General Education (ETAGE) will also open a new service in **Magog for adults with special needs**, focused on work-oriented programs and an expanding range of short-term training opportunities.
Our **Community Learning Centre** network is also growing, with additional adult centres joining the network and four new development agents strengthening connections between our schools, centres and their communities.

Finance

We are pleased to report that ETSB begins the 2026–2027 school year with a balanced budget.
We have also implemented the Ministry of Education's restructured operational funding model, which provides schools and centres with greater flexibility and autonomy in managing resources to respond to their local needs.

REPORT FROM OUR DIRECTOR GENERAL (CONTINUED)

Material Resources
Capital activity will be particularly significant this year. Seven schools will receive playground improvements through Ministry funding, while our Buildings and Grounds team will advance projects across the Board, continuing to invest in safe, welcoming and effective learning environments.

Human Resources
Supporting our employees remains a priority for Human Resources (HR).
New tools are being developed to strengthen the welcome and integration of new employees, while additional resources will support greater efficiency and access to information.
Health and safety prevention will also be an important focus, with HR working closely with Health and Safety representatives and employees to strengthen prevention and contribute to a healthier and safer workplace.

Secretary General, Communications and Transportation
The rollout of the **Cobalt transportation system** continues, with exploration underway regarding potential future expansion in the Western sector.
Another long-awaited development will arrive in the coming weeks: the launch of the **new ETSB website**, followed by the progressive launch of individual school and centre websites throughout the fall.
Finally, I am pleased to report that **all ETSB bus runs** are covered for the start of the school year, despite a number of well-earned retirements among our transportation staff. This is an important accomplishment and reflects the work of our Transportation team to ensure that students can travel safely and reliably each day.

Looking Ahead

There is a great deal ahead of us in 2026–2027. As we enter the final year of our current Commitment to Success Plan, we have an opportunity to be intentional about the impact of our work, build on what we have accomplished and prepare thoughtfully for the future.
We know that the year will bring successes, challenges and undoubtedly a few surprises. What gives me confidence is the commitment, expertise and care of the people who make up ETSB.
Together, we will continue to focus on what matters most: creating the conditions for every student to learn, grow, and succeed.

Your Director General,

