

System Education Leaders' Roles and Responsibilities in Managing Aggressive Student Behaviours

Exploring the Results

March 20, 2026
CASS Annual Conference



CASS

College of
Alberta School
Superintendents



Continuing
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Program

Agenda

- Overview of research study and results
- Self-Assessment
- Café-style input and feedback opportunity
- Whole-group reflection
- Exit slip

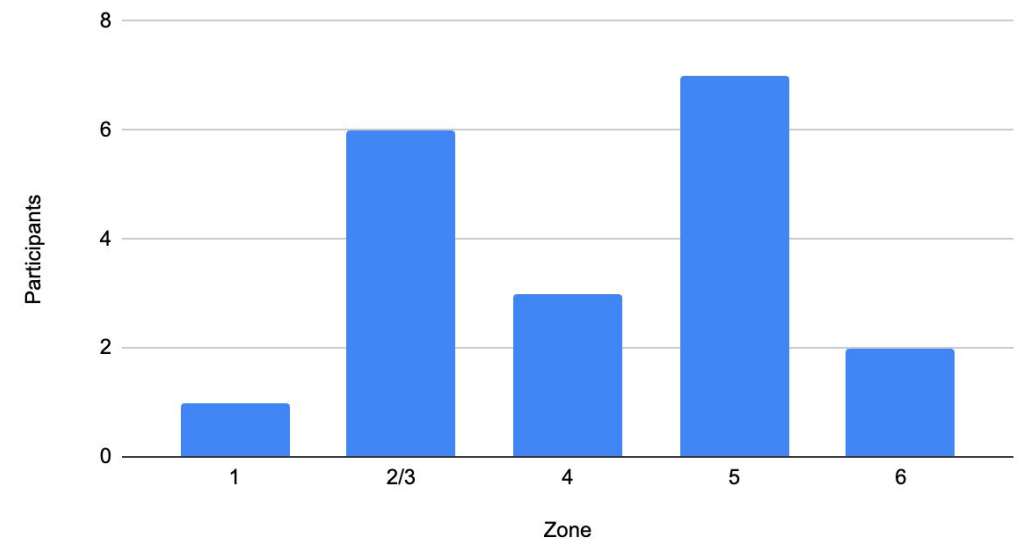
CASS Research Study Overview

- *System Education Leaders' Roles and Responsibilities in Managing Aggressive Student Behaviours*
- This study will explore how **system education leaders** in Alberta perceive and enact their responsibilities in addressing aggressive student behaviours. The research will examine the **proactive strategies** leaders implement to prevent aggression, as well as the **reactive responses** employed when incidents occur.
- The goal is to identify **system-level conditions, policies, and practices that best support safe, inclusive, and responsive school environments.**

CASS Qualitative Research Study

- 19 participants
- 60-90 minute interviews conducted between September and early November, 2025
- Guiding questions provided to participants ahead of time
- Interview transcripts analyzed, coded, and themed
 - Current Context
 - Proactive Strategies
 - Reactive Strategies
 - Recommendations

Participants by Zone



Overarching Findings: Current Context

- **Aggression as complexity**
 - Linked to neurodevelopmental profiles, mental health challenges, trauma histories, regulation disorders
- **Increase in frequency and severity**
 - Post-pandemic effects, rising enrolment, growing student complexity
- **Tension between inclusive education philosophy and lived reality**
 - Difficulty meeting the very complex needs of a small number of students
- **Concerns about staff safety and burnout**
 - Require intentional system-level responses

Overarching Findings: Proactive Strategies

- **Collaborative problem-solving and response**
 - Team meetings, case conferences, shared expertise
- **Front-loaded programming**
 - Start-of-year planning for complex students, modified learning goals, clear progressions and processes
- **System coherence - universal strategies**
 - Social-emotional learning, behaviour frameworks, shared expectations and policies
- **Mobile and responsive support teams**
 - Providing in-class support and coaching, building capacity, responsive supports and strategies
- **Building capacity throughout the system**
 - Professional learning, crisis response training, trauma learning, complex needs learning sessions

Overarching Findings: Reactive Strategies

- **Formal escalation pathways**
 - Incident reporting processes, VTRA, case conferences, police/agency involvement, etc.
- **Changes in programming or placement**
 - Hard resets, transitions to specialized programming, referrals to outside agencies, modified schedule, etc.
- **Post-incident debrief and staff care**
 - Formal and informal process for debriefing with school teams and providing follow-up support
- **Collection and analysis of systemic data**
 - Tracking of incidents, suspensions, referrals to identify patterns and gaps in supports

Overarching Findings: Recommendations

- **Re-define inclusion** as a dynamic continuum of supports
- **Strengthen leadership capacity** for managing complexity
- Formalize **collaborative problem-solving** and response as a core practice
- Establish **mobile capacity-building supports** and clear processes for accessing system-level supports
- Strengthen **inter-agency coordination** and role clarity
- **Increase provincial capacity** for autism and behaviour expertise
- Prioritize **staff safety**, recovery, and sustainability
- Improve system use of **data to inform planning** and responses
- Support ongoing cross-system **learning and innovation**

Self-Assessment: Reflecting on Your Current Practice

- Review each strategy and reflect on your current level of implementation.
- Respond honestly based on your **current practice**, not your intended practice.
- This is a personal reflection tool and will not be collected.
- Use your results to identify three strategies you would like to explore further during the café conversation.

CAFÉ Conversations: Deepening Our Practice

Select

- Review your self-assessment and choose **three strategies** to explore.
- Move to the corresponding table number (next slide)

Engage (15 minutes per round)

- Discuss and record your collective thinking on the placemat:
 - Strengths • Stretches • Barriers • Impact

Rotate

- Move to a new table each round.
- Review, build on others' ideas, and add your insights.

Whole-Group Reflection

- What patterns are you noticing?
- What strategies appear most developed? Most challenging?
- What insights might inform your leadership practice moving forward?

Exit Slip

System Leadership Role

- What is one recommendation to clarify or strengthen the role of system leaders in supporting aggressive student behaviour?

System Conditions

- What is one action system leaders and/or Alberta Education could take to strengthen system supports for this work?

Thank you!

Lori Meyer

Associate Superintendent of Learning
Rocky View Schools

lmeyer@rockyview.ab.ca

Danica Martin

CASS Leadership Consultant

danicamartin@danicadesigns.ca



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