

# Lindsay school living by its Knight's Code during COVID-19 pandemic

*Catherine Whitnall*

When Dean Burke talks about King Albert Public School being a family, he's not throwing out platitudes.

For two and half years, Burke — a former student and now principal at the Lindsay school — has worked at helping the school build a stronger identity, motivate students and celebrate accomplishments.

It was working.

Then, COVID-19 hit, but it hasn't stopped Burke and his staff.

"As we know, school is much more than teaching and assessing the curriculum," said Burke.

"Our teachers have done a phenomenal job in getting this new reality of school off the ground quite quickly and, with support from our board, we've been able to get technology into the hands of students who need it. Our teachers and staff have been finding innovative ways to meet the needs of our families, needs that we would normally be supporting directly with students within the school when school is in session," said Burke.

Kindergarten to Grade 3 drama, dance and music teacher Meghan Park said the school is taking the first tenet of the Knights' Code seriously; we keep each other safe.

"When they announced the (school) closure was extended, the first thing just about everyone did was survey parents about access to technology. Our first survey was who needs food? Who needs support?" said Park noting there are many systemic barriers that impact students and their families. "Our community is largely marginalized ... We have kids that live in shelters and rooming houses ... families living in poverty; parents struggling with addiction."

For her part, Park recently reached out to local bookstores in search of donations.

"The board is doing its best, but not all of kids are able to access the reading material," said Park. "And there's nothing like cracking open a real book."

Park has received a generous donation of books from the Kent Bookstore to be allocated to those students identified by their teachers as needing these resources.

Another way the school stepped up to help was to reallocate its student nutrition funding to support families in need, supplementing their grocery bills by having staff do a biweekly shop for essential needs to be delivered to families.

Unfortunately, limited available funds means it's only temporary.

“We know that as this closure goes on, more families are going to be seeking out support for nutrition from the school and, at this point, we’re not able to take on any additional families or support those we have taken on past the end of April,” said Burke.

Although physical donations of groceries or books cannot be accepted at this time to respect safety guidelines, anyone wishing to donate gift cards for books or groceries can email [infokap@tldsbc.on.ca](mailto:infokap@tldsbc.on.ca).