

THE LINDSAY ADVOCATE

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What the first day of school will look like, elementary and secondary

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Wes Hahn, director of education for the Trillium Lakelands District School Board, began to share with trustees last Tuesday at a Special Meeting of the Board what opening day for students is going to look like.

School signage

Signage is current being installed at all schools to indicate what access doors are locked and unlocked and what direction students are to walk in the halls.

Cleaning

“Enhanced cleaning” of facilities is planned for morning, mid-day and evening each school day. Hahn praised the “passion and commitment to making this work” shown by custodial staff right across the board.

Length of in-school day

300 minutes of learning time have been mandated by the province.

School day start and end times

There will be no changes from last year in start and stop times for individual schools as those times are needed to facilitate busing.

Masks

Students from Grade 4-12 “must wear masks” both in school and on the bus. Younger students will be encouraged also to wear masks. Hahn said that “parents will need to encourage kids to wear their masks regularly.”

“We expect that families will respect health and safety protocols. We are aware that some situations (of non-compliance) will need to be looked at,” Hahn adds.

Washroom protocols

Hahn said “we can’t have multiple kids using the facilities at the same time,” and each school was working out protocols for breaks and washroom trips.

Sick during the school day

The child will be isolated and parents will be called to pick the child up. Parents will not be allowed in the school to pick up the child and will be met at a designated door by staff. There is an expectation that the child will be tested along with exposed peers and staff. The director said that the

final outbreak protocol is still not finalized and the board is working closely with public health to finalize this plan.

Siblings of potential COVID carrier

Public health is working on protocol regarding policy on school aged siblings of a potential COVID positive student and what requirements will be put in place for their protection.

Access to the school

There will be a very limited number of people allowed in school building: staff, students and board service people. Outsiders like maintenance people will only be allowed into schools after donning the proper PPEs.

Virtual learning

Hahn was very specific that this experience will be much different from the last school year. The primary focus of virtual learning will be to deliver “rigorous learning.”

Superintendent for School Katherine MacIver shares, “The board will be looking at many different scenarios for learning. They may be phone or internet based. We will look at best practices from the board’s very successful summer school and see what we can use moving forward.”

Secondary school day

Period 1 – 120 minutes with a break

Period 2 – 160 minutes including a staff supervised lunch where students will eat in their classroom

Period 3 – 75 minutes staff supervised study hall/tutorial

Secondary school course lengths

Two subjects will be studied for 44 days and then classes will switch to the next two subjects

High school exams

There is an expectation that in all but the senior grades exams will be replaced by culminating activities.

Students leaving school at lunchtime

Students will need to get in the habit of bringing their own lunches because once in their cohorts and in the school they will not be allowed to leave. Lunches are to be supervised by staff.

Cafeterias

There is a belief that cafeterias will be open, but as a central gathering place mixing will be tightly controlled as per advice from public health.

Snacks and drinks in the classroom

Students will be allowed to eat and drink in the classroom.

Staff teaching assignments and student

timetables

Now that the board has numbers of actual students who will be arriving September 8 schools will be re-timetabling and “there are no guarantees that what was printed in June stays the same for either staff or students.”

Secondary students on spares

A safe space in each school will be designated for those students to congregate. There is also the hope that if those students drive and have Period One off they will simply arrive for Period 2.

Breakfast programs

With no volunteers to be allowed into the school building these programs will be relying on single serve “grab and go” options.

Secondary cohorts

Students’ cohort will be determined by their time table and class choices.

Large classes

With 85% of students returning to in-school learning much discussion was had around the issues of social distancing on buses and in classrooms.

“Money is going to be spent,” Hahn promised trustees on the issue of reducing some class sizes.

“We will be looking for hotspots to act upon,” Hahn added, “But we have to understand that some buses will be full and we won’t be able to physically distance on buses or in some classrooms.”

Safety in JK/SK classes

Hahn told trustees that Early Years educators have been working since last April to rethink how they will deliver programming.

“We are looking at assigning manipulatives (blocks, toys, school supplies) to specific students only and these items will not be shared,” Hahn said.

“Soft surface materials have been removed already from these classrooms,” Hahn added.

Additional student parking

Board officials were reminded by trustees that if more high school students drive in September parking, particularly at Fenelon Falls Secondary School (and Lindsay Collegiate), which is already at a premium, could create problems with local homeowners and businesses.

A suggestion was made that at Fenelon Falls overflow parking could be directed to the shuttered community centre after permission is given by the municipality.

The board had no answer and promised to look into this.

Use of outdoor classrooms

“We are looking to schedule as much outdoor learning time as possible,” Superintendent MacIver shares.

And in other news from the board...

Board meetings for 2020-2021

Board meetings are moving to the Muskoka Education Centre which has a larger meeting room with a better chance for social distancing. Meetings will be limited to the 10 trustees and the director, with senior staff and trustees unable to make the drive given the option of utilizing Google Meet to attend virtually.

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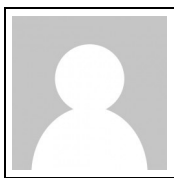
At a Special Meeting of the Trillium Lakelands District School Board, director of education Wes Hahn

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Kirk is a retired high school history teacher and coach who has had a lifelong interest in politics at all levels. Since retiring, Kirk has spent the last three years doing freelance writing of all kinds for various platforms. Kirk can often be found sitting in the press gallery at City Hall observing and reporting on the vagaries of local government.

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