

Pandemic results in bounty of summer learning options

Catherine Whitnall

Students looking to boost grades, take extra courses or simply stay on track with their learning have ample opportunity this summer.

And some of the credit goes to the COVID-19 pandemic.

“There’s a bit of a silver lining,” said Peterborough, Victoria, Northumberland and Clarington Catholic District School Board communications manager Galen Eagle. “Education is normally a slow-moving beast when it comes to change, but COVID-19 has really ramped that up. I do believe the system has showed great resiliency ... that will enhance education, moving forward.”

Tim Moloney, superintendent of learning and student success, agrees.

“We’re going to come out of this so much better than before,” said Moloney, noting 2020 summer programming reflects “learning lost” due to the pandemic.

As a result, summer learning for all grades is extremely diverse said Lisa Cole, principal of continuing adult and experiential learning. Offerings include elementary literacy and numeracy camp, support for those working toward their Confirmation sacrament, and a new Ojibway language program.

The Kawartha Pine Ridge District School Board is reintroducing its two-week credit upgrade program for math and science and expanding online co-operative education and reach ahead options.

“I think we can really build off this. In the past, we’ve had to focus on learning for learning’s sake, but now we can be more creative and we have to be,” said superintendent of student achievement (secondary schools) Greg Ingram.

Trillium Lakelands District School Board director of education Larry Hope agrees, noting between teachers’ strike actions and the pandemic, “it’s been a highly unusual year.”

But summer learning opportunities being offered to all students, aided by roughly \$250,000 in additional provincial funding, focuses primarily on students who may have fallen behind during the school closures.

In addition to Council of Directors of Education (CODE) Summer Learning funding, the organization is also supporting On The Land Learning, a program that focuses on Indigenous students.

Hope said the board plans on doing as much as possible online with programming expected to begin July 2 and run through to Aug. 28. This includes mental health supports for students currently receiving Student Services Attendance Counsellors