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8 Trillium Lakelands students suspended during COVID-19 pandemic 'Whether our students are learning in school or remotely at home, we expect them to respect and follow the guidelines'

News 11:00 AM by [Catherine Whitnall \(/kawartha-author/catherine-whitnall/1E0E6AE6-EB40-4A3C-A4A9-CC957BF70779/\)](#) 
(<mailto:cwhitnall@mykawartha.com>) Kawartha Lakes This Week



Normally when a student misbehaves they are sent to the principal's office. But that's not an option with close to 3,000 Trillium Lakelands District School Board students studying at home because of the coronavirus. However, the board will suspend or expel students if necessary, and has already done so. - Torstar file photo

No parent wants to get a call from their child's school saying they've been suspended, or worse, expelled.

However, during the 2019/2020 school year, 1,149 of those calls were made to Trillium Lakelands District School Board parents and caregivers, including eight suspensions during the COVID-19 pandemic last spring while students were engaged in learning from home.

[In comparison to 2019, between March and the end of June, 738 suspensions/expulsions were issued. \(https://www.tldsbc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/090820-pub-cotw-agenda-package.pdf\)](https://www.tldsbc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/090820-pub-cotw-agenda-package.pdf)

2019 saw a slight increase in the number of elementary boys suspended or expelled over the previous year.

The majority of students facing such discipline were Grade 9 boys and the number of suspensions/expulsions for students in kindergarten to Grade 3 dropped from 241 the previous year to 145 last year.

Superintendent of Learning Dave Golden noted the majority of behaviours that lead to a suspension – the majority being one to three days – or expulsion are related to violations of the board's Code of Conduct.

"Whether our students are learning in school or remotely at home, we expect them to respect and follow the guidelines outlined in our Code of Conduct," explained Golden "This procedure includes online behaviour expectations for TLDSB students."

Golden said the pandemic certainly created challenges when it came to creating discipline for actions that warranted a suspension or expulsion – challenges that will continue to exist with roughly 3,000 students enrolled in virtual schooling.

"Even before the pandemic we had cyberbullying that was going on and had to deal with that on a case-by-case basis ... During the closures, it was key for us to co-ordinate and collaborate with parents to develop consequences," said Golden.

"Interestingly, some of the best disciplinary options came from talking to parents. And we don't discount what's being done peer-to-peer. Some kids really speak up and say 'hey, I'm trying to learn here' when a classmate is being disruptive."

Golden said one route to deal with students learning virtually is to navigate to paper assignments. Students are still expected to 'attend' class during lessons, but 'sign off' to do their work.

"Taking them off the network is a pretty powerful thing. That means no more searching Google for answers," said Golden, pointing out students would instead use ebooks via library services or textbooks.

by [Catherine Whitnall \(/kawartha-author/Catherine-Whitnall/1e0e6ae6-eb40-4a3c-a4a9-cc957bf70779/\)](https://www.mykawartha.com/author/catherine-whitnall/)

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