



COMMUNITY

New public school fund aims to 'feed' as many family needs as possible

Trillium Lakelands District School Board's Feed All Four Fund is designed for staff to support student well-being and support families who are currently struggling because of the pandemic

By [Catherine Whitnall](#) Kawartha Lakes This Week
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The COVID-19 pandemic has affected everyone to varying degrees, but the local school board has recently developed a new fund to help address some of the impact.

On Nov. 2, the Trillium Lakelands District School Board launched the Feed All Four Fund, designed for staff to support student well-being and support families who are

currently struggling because of the pandemic.

“The pandemic and the consequential fallout does not appear to be ending any time soon,” explained director of education Wes Hahn. “This fund is TLDSB’s way of helping alleviate some of the burdens that COVID-19 has caused our families by tying it into our Feed All Four philosophy.”

The board has heard many local families are suffering because of job losses and additional stresses that make providing for families a challenge. The Feed All Four Fund is an educational community fund that will help support the needs within local public schools.

Based on Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs and the First Nations medicine wheel, Feed All Four is an initiative that aligns teaching and learning with safe and accepting schools, mental health, healthy active living, and student well-being.

The fund is an extension of efforts by schools to aid families in need since the start of the pandemic, including families at the King Albert Public School in Lindsay, which is largely marginalized; families living in poverty; parents struggling with addiction and mental health challenges; and children living in shelters. Funds used for nutrition programs, no longer needed with schools closed, were reallocated for such things as supplementing grocery bills. Staff volunteered to shop bi-weekly for essential needs. For the remainder of the school year – and into the summer, courtesy of generous donations and support – 13 families were assisted.

“I am immensely proud of the staff in addressing some of those gaps,” said principal Dean Burke, noting it also enabled the school to maintain contacts with some student who likely “would have fallen off the radar” otherwise and helped make returning to school easier with staff regularly sharing information with families.

Since September, the school’s focus has shifted to mental and physical health, especially since many in-school therapies and counselling supports are not taking place.

“All of these things that help a community raise a child stopped abruptly because of the pandemic and many have not resumed to the same extent ... a virtual occupational therapy session (is) better than nothing, but it’s just not enough,” said Burke.

Staff are also working to support important skills necessary for kindergarten students – such as social, communication and behaviour response skills – much of which were impacted by the extended isolation. The school recently applied to the Kawartha Lakes Community Foundation for funding to purchase technology devices and resources to help youngsters adapt and thrive.

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Burke is optimistic the board's fund will continue to assist struggling families.

"The one thing this pandemic has done is given some segments of our population some perspective," said Burke. "We have unwell adults and unwell families, and that's leading to unwell children. These last seven, eight months have caused families that would otherwise have resilient and thriving children to experience lags in development."

For more information about Feed All Four, visit tldsb.ca/feedallfour.

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Catherine Whitnall is a reporter with MyKawartha. She can be reached at cwhitnall@mykawartha.com. Follow her on

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