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Director of Education for TLDSB, Wes Hahn.

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School board notes: A \$3 million deficit, students' resilience, and a 100 day report from director

Published on November 25, 2020 — in Education — by Kirk Winter

The Trillium Lakelands District School Board recently met, covering their recent audit, staff reporting on some of the upsides seen during the pandemic, and the director of education's 100-day report.

2019-2020 board financial audit reports \$3 million deficit

Superintendent of Finance Tim Ellis presented the auditors report to trustees.

example, with property taxes deferred until later in 2020 by Kawartha Lakes, the province had to step in with TLDSB and front the board the money that would have normally been transferred by the municipality.

That municipal money, which pays a portion of board costs, has since been received, but it has created a line in the auditor's report recognizing the short-term loan from Queen's Park and the board paying it back in full.

A couple of numbers stood out and caught the attention of trustees. The board has declared a \$3 million operating deficit for the 2019-2020 school year, largely caused by loss of revenues through suspension of daycare and permit fees and sick-leave utilization that exceeded fund amounts.

Fortunately, the board also reported a \$13,990,000 accumulated surplus even after transferring funds in the fall to assist some COVID-19 related programming costs that will be used for paying down this year's unexpected deficit.

Staff report on "Finding the Positives in COVID-19"

Superintendent of Learning Jennifer Johnston, Langton P.S. vice-principal Joanna Gibson, and Huntsville P.S. principal Todd Truax shared a report regarding how through innovation, collaboration and supporting the well-being of all, students and staff were dealing with the pandemic surprisingly well.

Ellis pointed out that some numbers will look different this year because of pandemic affected accounting. For

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“All of our schools are focusing on safety first,” Johnston said, “with school achievement and student well-being also a serious focus.”

“Despite the unique challenges this year has to offer we believe we are feeding the body, mind, spirit and emotional well-being of our students,” Johnston said.

Gibson noted the safe and caring learning environment present at TLDSB schools.

“Kids have proven to be a lot more adaptable than we give them credit for. Masks have not been the issue we thought they might have been. Our kids are very resilient,” Gibson said.

Gibson also praised the prevalence of outdoor learning occurring at multiple school sites which she believes has benefitted the wellness of many students.

Truax believes that this pandemic has taught his students many important skills that include independence, flexibility and adaptability.

“We are seeking student perspectives out and trying to respond to what they are saying to us,” Truax said.

“We are having virtual assemblies every two weeks at our school using Google Classroom and the SmartBoard to bring a sense of normalcy to this school year,” Truax shared, “and we have done Remembrance Day this way and are planning to do our Christmas concert the same way.”

Director shares 100 day update

In a report promised to trustees when Wes Hahn was hired in the summer as the director of education for TLDSB, he told trustees that through communication,

collaboration and compassion the system has weathered the COVID-19 storm so far.

Hahn began his report by telling trustees what an excellent reputation the board has province wide, and that this had been confirmed in meetings with other directors of education and Ministry of Education bureaucrats.

“I give full credit to former director Larry Hope and the trustees for this reputation,” Hahn said. “Your hard work has set us up for success.”

Hahn praised the professionalism of local public health boards and MPPs Norm Miller and Laurie Scott who have been in constant communication with TLDSB through the pandemic.

The director also singled out the media for praise saying its reporting “has helped create confidence in the system amongst parents and students.”

Regarding collaboration, Hahn told trustees that his visits to almost every school in the board, both brick and mortar and *Learn at Home* impressed him significantly.

“The Learn at Home option is getting better every day,” Hahn said.

“We have tried to create positive relationships with our unions and federations,” Hahn said, “and I believe we have done a good job convincing all our employee groups that we are in this situation together.”

Hahn told trustees that their decision to have all students masked at all grades was a crucial decision at “inspiring confidence in the system in the minds of staff and parents.”

Compassion featured prominently in the

last section of the update.

“The board cares deeply about student and staff wellness,” Han began. “We will also work very hard to ensure equity and inclusion in our schools,” he said, “and we will fight against racism and try to create a level playing field for students living in poverty.”

Hahn also touted mental health supports and emergency interventions put in place to support students and staff in crisis.

“We do not want to let our guard down, “ Hahn concluded, “ and we never want to lose track that a lot of work has been done and will continue to be done and we will get better in areas where we need to.

Second octoblock report

Students at the secondary level achieved nearly 98 per cent of the 4304 credits offered at both traditional and *Learning at Home* schools.

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WES HAHN

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Greg Nisbett. Photo: Jamie Morris.

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Greg Nisbett was well into a 150-kilometre training ride on his carbon-fibre bicycle when he was

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Advocate team member to emcee federal government webinar on financial literacy for students

A Dunsford-area resident and Advocate team member has been recruited by The Financial Consumer Agency of

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Worries about octoblocks grow as students, teachers deal with relentless pace

Despite the mostly positive reports coming from senior Trillium Lakelands District School Board staff regarding octoblocks,

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