



## COMMUNITY

## Kawartha Lakes students rising above gaps created by COVID-19

Trillium Lakelands District School Board continues to work to keep students connected and engaged in order to help keep students from falling behind

By [Catherine Whitnall](#) Kawartha Lakes This Week

Wednesday, December 30, 2020

Technology has had a significant impact in everyone's life but its effectiveness was certainly put to the test courtesy of the COVID-19 pandemic.

For educators around the world, it meant an abrupt shift to online learning and a confirmation that, despite the fact technology is everywhere – from tablets used for ordering in restaurants, video conferencing and even financial transactions – it

wasn't accessible to everyone.

"Access to devices was one of the biggest issues we had to resolve, along with connectivity," said Trillium Lakelands District School Board director of education Wesley Hahn. "In fact, nine months later, we're still seeing it, especially as families continue to struggle financially."

School boards managed to pivot around this gap by transitioning to paper when simply supplying a device wasn't enough.

"We did a lot of learning from March to June. Teachers and students have adapted quite well to reduce any gaps in learning," said Hahn.

Before schools reopened in September, staff made the extra effort to connect with students to ensure a smooth transition back to class, both in buildings and online. Teachers have done their best to give students and families extra support when needed including making contacts after school and on weekends.

"Virtual interaction has not been ideal ... but we've tried to make the best of a bad situation created by the pandemic," said Hahn, noting extra focus was put on special education resources to maintain connections for students, especially those with behavioural challenges. "We were expecting a lot of things to unravel for children during the learn at home phase, but, thankfully, since we've been back at school, there's been very few problems."

In fact, noted Hahn, there has actually been a decrease in behavioural issues at the high schools. He believes this is due to pandemic protocols such as classroom cohorts, that have limited movement in the hallways and reduced interaction. Another benefit in high schools has come via tech classes such as carpentry as students are engaged all day.

Recently, King Albert Public School received \$9,590 from the Community Foundation of Kawartha Lakes to provide students struggling emotionally access to iPads for on the spot learning and emotional support

Maintaining both in-school and online learning systems has presented a number of difficulties – aside from the aforementioned access to technology – including the introduction of the high school octomester where only one subject is studied daily for five weeks. There were some concerns that this might be overwhelming for

students but Hahn is thrilled to report a 98 per cent credit completion rate.

## Related content

---

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

"It is tough to have teachers 'on' for 225 synchronous minutes a day, but we've provided teachers with the flexibility to be creative and adapt to our model and that's been a positive move. . . students are engaged and they're managing and teachers have still been able to build strong relationships," said Hahn.

Unfortunately, one aspect that will not be dealt with any time soon is the loss of extracurricular activities and sports.

"Our saying here is 'don't let your guard down . . . And because of that, we're not even going to be considering these things at this time," said Hahn. "We know it's a big loss for our kids and their families, but health and safety is so much more important."

## Headlines newsletter

---

Top stories delivered to your inbox.

[Sign Up](#)

**Catherine Whitnall** is a reporter with MyKawartha. She can be reached at [cwhitnall@mykawartha.com](mailto:cwhitnall@mykawartha.com). Follow her on [Twitter](#) and MyKawartha on [Facebook](#)

Tags: [Hyper Local](#), [Human Interest](#), [Community](#)

[REPORT AN  
ERROR](#)

[JOURNALISTI  
C STANDARDS](#)

[ABOUT US](#)