



## NEWS

## Public school board reflects on highs and lows of COVID-19

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

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At a time when students were supposed to return from the March Break, school boards were having to instantly pivot to online learning as the province announced the closure of schools due to the global pandemic.

“I don’t know if we could have done it any better, but we will continue to reflect on it, build on what we did and work on what we can do better,” said Trillium Lakelands District School Board director of education Wesley Hahn of the ‘highs’ and ‘lows’ of COVID-19.

### Top Five Challenges

1. Changing to a virtual environment for teachers, students and parents created significant stress for families and the education system. The board scrambled to ensure access to resources and, in September, had to create a separate virtual school for 2,500 students.
2. Getting technology and information into the hands of families during a lockdown required considerable planning, especially for students with special needs and families with economic challenges.
3. The pandemic blurred work and home life. COVID fatigue and burn out became a concern for educators; some of whom worked 12-hour days and weekends to maintain learning schedules, contact with students and support for families.
4. The pandemic has taken its toll on the mental well-being of staff, students and families. The board has done it's best to provide resources and supports.
5. Public health protocols meant a dramatic change to delivering education. Extensive planning for such matters as lunches, cohorts, daily physical activity and use of libraries/computer labs was undertaken. Changes were especially challenging for students with special needs.

## Top Five Benefits

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1. Educators became ultra-creative to engage students in unique ways such as taking students on virtual world tours and making the most of outdoor education opportunities.
2. Collaboration board-wide has increased as everyone from unions,

administration and teachers to media, the government and community agencies pull together.

3. High schools converted to the 'octoblock' with students focusing on one course daily, for five weeks. Early indicators show an increased success rate (98 per cent) for course completion.

4. Information changed rapidly during the first half of the pandemic. Communication between staff, parents and students was greatly improved and continues to remain strong.

5. Parents are more engaged than ever and joined their children in being even more flexible, resilient and adaptable. The high level of engagement necessary for Learn@Home also brought many families closer together.

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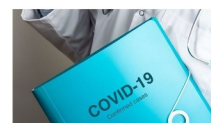
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