



NEWS

Catholic board well positioned should online learning be extended

Peterborough Victoria Northumberland and Clarington Catholic District School Board has created a guide to help parents adjust to synchronous learning

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

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Pivoting to total virtual learning wasn't perfect the second time around, but the situation is "night and day" compared to back in March when COVID-19 shut down local Catholic schools.

On Dec. 22, the province announced that it would be re-entering a lockdown situation as of Dec. 26 that would see area elementary students participate in

synchronous on-line learning until at least Jan. 11 with high school students returning to in-class studies on Jan. 25. Schools had already closed for the holiday break and it was a bit of a scramble to distribute information to parents, but Peterborough Victoria Northumberland and Clarington Catholic District School Board communications manager Galen Eagle said the effort was much smoother than back in the spring.

“It’s almost night and day when you compare it to what we had to get in place last March,” said Eagle. “The ability for teachers and students to shift between in-person and virtual learning has gone fairly well because they’ve already had to do it once.”

Eagle said the board also has the benefit of providing virtual learning to roughly 5,500 students over the past four months.

“We can now tap into that expertise,” added Eagle.

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Over the Christmas break, the board surveyed families to determine whether extra supports were needed. Eagle said the board will continue to communicate with families and recently shared a parent guide to assist parents who did not already have children learning virtually and those who have had to transition to working from home as a result of the current lockdown.

Eagle said the “number one lesson learned” so far has been the importance of communication and collaboration. Like the neighbouring Kawartha Pine Ridge and Trillium Lakelands district school boards, the Catholic board has been working with multiple public health units, with schools in differing colour zones. Prior to Dec. 7, the Haliburton, Kawartha, Pine Ridge District Health Unit was in the green zone while Peterborough was yellow and Durham, red. The efforts have been especially beneficial when it comes to sharing consistent information with parents and addressing COVID-19 cases in schools.

“The safety measures that we have put in place have been working well . . . And we’re fortunate that we’ve only had one situation where the contact occurred in school,” said Eagle.

Eagle hopes it won’t be necessary, but should the lockdown continue, he is confident the foundations built to date will hold.

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