



NEWS

Special needs students take advantage of option to stay in school

Area boards have seen more than 500 students return to in class studies after holiday break while province extends online learning order until at least Jan. 25

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

Wednesday, January 13, 2021

The province's decision to extend distance learning is keeping area elementary school students home, and in front of computer screens, until at least Jan. 25.

However, virtual learning isn't a good fit for everyone.

"Those students with exceptional special needs have had the option to come back to

school if virtual learning was not a viable option,” said Peterborough Victoria Northumberland and Clarington Catholic District School Board director of education Joan Carragher. “We have about students in school right now.”

Carragher added the board also has roughly 90 staff members, including teachers, educational assistants and autism spectrum disorder workers in schools providing lessons and supports.

Kawartha Pine Ridge District School Board communications manager Greg Kidd said there are currently 19 schools running Learning and Life Skills classes.

“Approximately 250 students are learning in person across those schools today, with more expected as the week progresses. This involves 46 teachers and approximately 140 support staff,” said Kidd.

Trillium Lakelands District School Board families were also given the option to have their children return to school on Jan. 11.

The board currently has about 65 students from eight elementary schools in class along with more than 50 staff, as well as remote supports in place.

In-person special education supports are also running in six of the board’s seven secondary schools for Practical Academics and Life Skills programs students; about 55 students and 32 staff, including 20 educational assistants.

Four of the board’s five Education and Community Partnership Programs are also running in-person, with the other continuing in a remote format based on student needs.

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Trillium Lakelands Ontario Secondary School Teachers’ Federation president Colin Matthew said allowing special needs students the chance to access face-to-face

learning is a “good move” by school boards.

“They are part of a group that do not do well with virtually learning, regardless the platform being used,” said Matthew. “And it’s good for parents who may not have the resources they need at home to help their children succeed.”

Parents are either taking their children to school or using appropriate transportation arranged by the boards through their busing contractors.

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