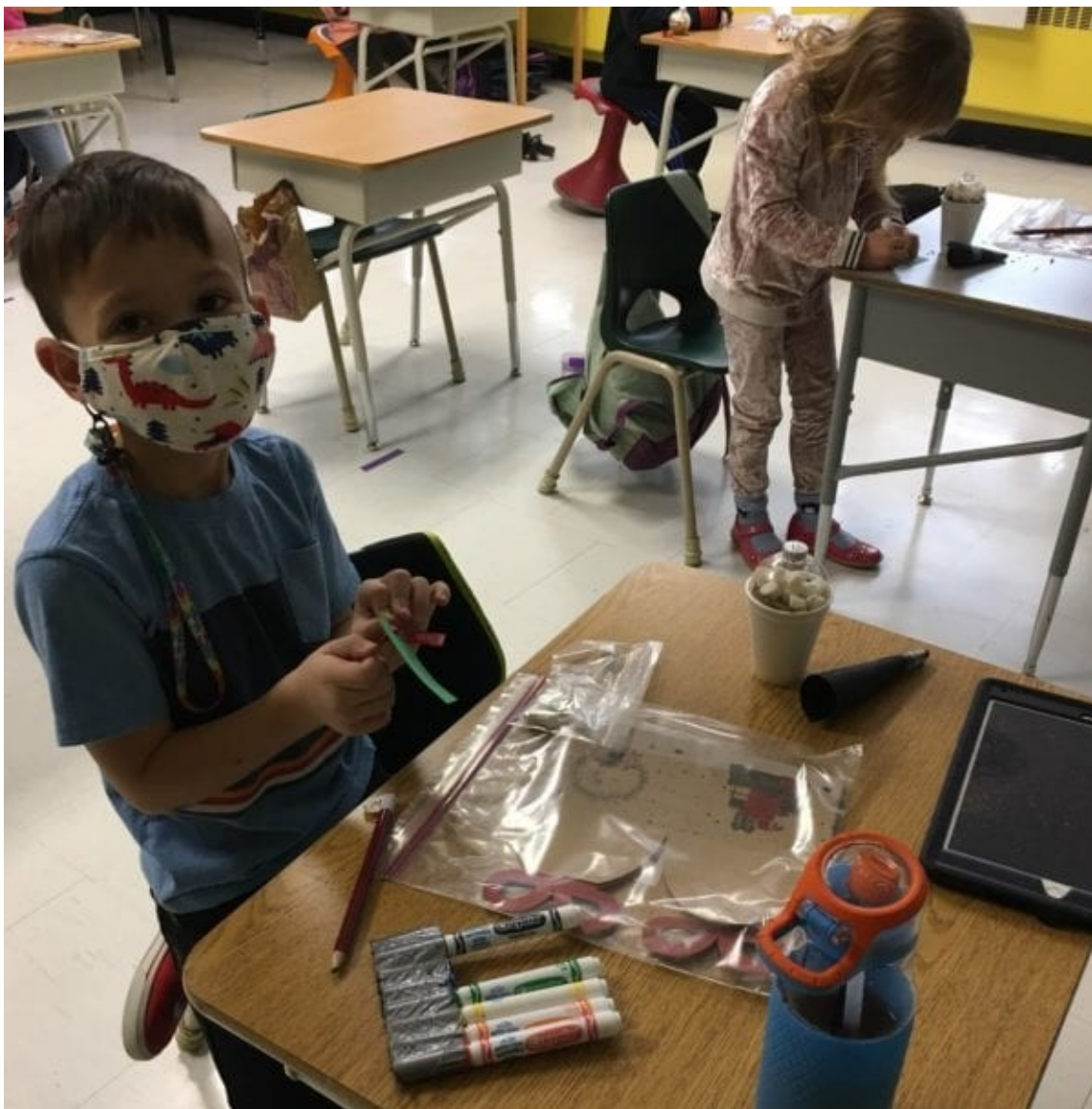


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News

School Board Won't Use Any Of Its \$2.7 Million Surplus This Year To Help Students Catch Up From Pandemic Closures

 By **Pamela Vanmeer** November 30, 2021



Courtesy Trillium Lakelands District School Board

KAWARTHA LAKES-The Trillium Lakelands District School Board

recently announced it has a \$2.7 million dollar surplus this year.

The board says this is a “notable highlight” that was presented at the Trillium Lakelands District School Board (TLDSB) Regular Meeting of the Board, that took place on November 23 when Superintendent of Business Services, Tim Ellis, presented trustees with the Financial Statements for the 2020-2021 school year.

This is the Board’s first surplus in a number of years and it is thanks to additional funding received from the province over the past 18+ months of the COVID-19 pandemic. School boards in Ontario received funding allocations from the Province, which were set aside for COVID-19 initiatives to enhance and support safe, healthy environments for all students and staff. This funding has been one of the reasons TLDSB has steered its way out of a deficit according to the board.

“Surplus in the Board’s finances allow for flexibility in upcoming years,” said Ellis. “Surpluses are typically held and earmarked for priority use in other budget years. The Board has a Surplus Management Plan to support the management and spending of these funds.”

Given that students have had disrupted learning for the past two years with schools being closed for months at a time some think the money might be well spent on helping kids catch up. Teachers have told us the curriculum hasn’t changed and they are expected to get the kids caught up and complete the current year’s curriculum as well.

We asked the board what they were doing to help kids get caught up.

“At Trillium Lakelands District School Board we acknowledge and value that each student is on their own path to success.” Sinead Fegan, Communications Officer TLDSB told Kawartha 411 News. “Our educators understand the importance of quality instruction that is specific and crucial to each student’s needs. In order to achieve

academic and social success, we get to know each student, we plan for intentional interactions, we foster the development of the foundational literacy and math skills and we help them to grow. Although it may seem like there may be a lot of learning gaps, we are confident in the skills and abilities of our educators to recover any learning that may have been missed during the disruptions of the pandemic.”

An analysis released by the Ontario Science table in June found Ontario public school students are likely two to three months behind in their learning because of COVID-19 related school closures, leading to life-long losses in their expected earnings as adults if efforts aren't made to bring them up to speed.

“While there are numerous differences in how studies measure the impact of COVID-19-related disruptions on learning (i.e., standard deviations, months behind, scaled points behind, percentages of students not at grade level), most point to average achievement that was well behind that of earlier cohorts, measured at the same point in preceding school year(s),” the authors said.

The report also found that virtual learning led to increased absenteeism, unexplained declines in overall school enrolment and sustained declines in the amount of time students report devoting to their homework.

“The surplus is an important piece in maintaining good financial standing. The uniqueness of the past two years has brought more understanding of the importance of quality instruction for all learners. Each student's needs are individual to them and in order to achieve academic and social success, TLDSB staff get to know each student, plan for intentional interactions, foster the development of the foundational literacy and math skills, and overall, help them to grow.” Carolynne Bull, Communications TLDSB told Kawartha 411 News after this story was first published. “Although it may seem like there may be learning gaps, we are confident in the skills and abilities of our

educators to recover any learning that may have been missed during the disruptions of the pandemic.”

The Director of Education says he is pleased they were able to balance the budget.

“We are moving in the right direction,” adds Director of Education, Wes Hahn. “TLDSB staff work hard to balance the budget and continually strive for ways to support the future of our learning organization and this is certainly one.”