

Law firm creates in-office ‘classrooms’ enabling employees to bring kids to work

Children do remote learning while their parents work close by

By Elaine MacKenzie/ For The Daily Press

Keenan Mugford and his brother, Zayne, packed their lunches, tablets, books and toys in their school bag every day last week.

But instead of going to school, they went to work with their mother.

Angel Nault-Mugford is a law clerk at Riopelle Group Professional Corporation, a law firm in Timmins.

When the Ontario government announced the temporary closure of schools and move to remote learning, she, like most Ontario parents, were left wondering how they would balance the need to work and their children’s online learning.

Nault-Mugford’s employer eased her concerns by creating what it called “classrooms” – private, sequestered spaces where children could attend class virtually and parent could work and be close by.

“I am beyond grateful to have the opportunity to be able to bring my children to work with me during their online learning,” Nault-Mugford said. “My boys both really enjoyed their time here at Riopelle Group. They felt so welcomed and at home.

“It became challenging at times but, overall, it was a very good experience, not only for myself but for my children as well,” Nault-Mugford said.

Opening the office up to create classrooms at its Timmins and Ottawa offices for employees to who needed it was the idea of Robert Riopelle, senior partner at Riopelle Group.

“We saw that some of our employees were in crisis, and we responded,” Riopelle said. “We are always ready to do what we can to support our people.



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Angel Nault-Mugford and her sons, Keenan, 9 and Zayne, 4, worked together when schools made the move to online learning last week. Keenan and Zayne had class in a boardroom at Riopelle Group Professional Corporation, while mom, a law clerk, worked in an adjacent office.

Creating classrooms was innovative and simple. The entire experience was worthwhile for everyone.”

For parents, it was a lifeline. For children, it was a fun chance to come to work with mom.

Keenan was excited when he heard he would be going to “school” with his mother.

“I was happy to come to see what it looks like here,” the fourth grader said.

“It’s bigger than I thought it would be.”

This was not Keenan’s first remote learning experience, but his biggest

challenge was to be in the same room with his four-year-old brother, Zayne, in junior kindergarten, who was also remote learning.

“There was a little arguing, but it was OK,” Keenan admitted.

Kelly Chopp was another Riopelle Group employee faced with the real problem of finding a solution to online learning while continuing to work. When her office manager pitched the idea of bringing six-year-old son, Jace Walraven, to work, she jumped at the idea.

“These classrooms were extremely

Parents able to balance home, work

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“These classrooms were extremely helpful for me and Jace,” Chopp said. “Given that Jace was always asking me if he could see where I work, you can imagine how excited he was when I told him.”

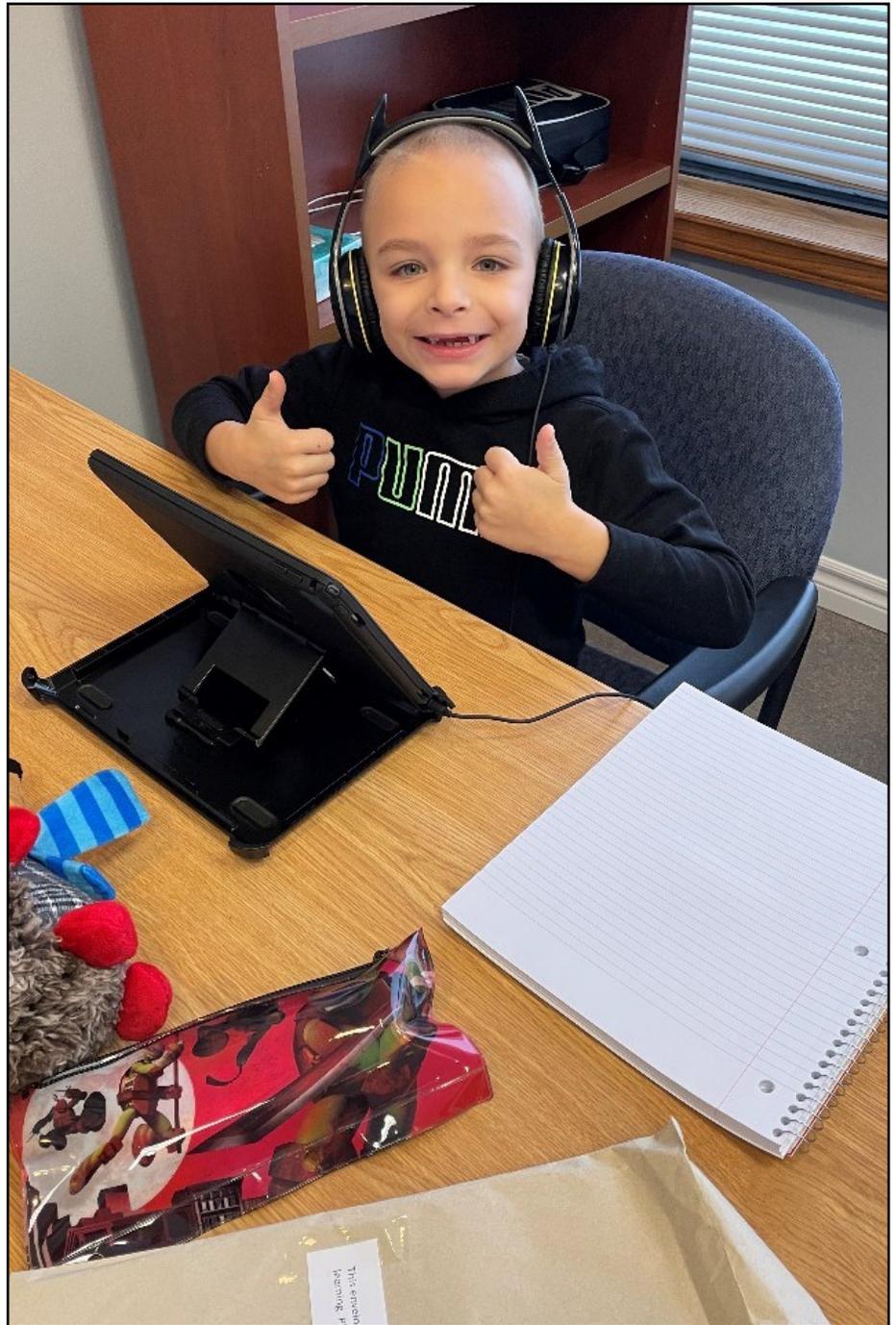
Chopp and her son worked in a private, isolated office he would learn, eat and play while she would work and help him navigate his schoolwork and challenges with the technology.

Balancing work and her son’s needs was made more manageable because he was by her side.

“It was great for him to have me there if he needed the help with anything, while still being able to complete my job and not have to take time off to get through the weeks of online learning,” Chopp said.

“I didn’t find it too challenging to juggle the two. I would take a few minutes every couple hours to help him with what he needed and at the end of the day we were both happy.” Nault-Mugford said the experience was a positive one.

“This was convenient and extremely helpful,” she said. “I could never thank Riopelle Group enough for the opportunity and effort that was put into all of this.”



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Jace Walraven, 6, was happy to come “school” at Riopelle Group Professional Corporation in Timmins, where his mother works as a law clerk.