

March 23, 2020 Will my child fall behind with Home Learning?

I would like to address what I expect will be a very natural educational concern for Alberta's parents and students, especially parents of very young children and Grade 12 students thinking about post-secondary.

I think a lot of parents and students are worrying about "falling behind".

This month everything changed. Students need to learn in a new way, and parents will be called upon to assist their kids more often. This is a burden teachers would not place on parents given any other option. Our parents rely on our teachers to teach and they make their incredible contributions to the world in other ways.

Teachers & administrators received reasonable guidelines from AB Education and our Division with respect to learning expectations and Home Learning, given our present circumstances. Covering the curriculum at home is different than at school. We need the Goldilocks approach, not too hot and not too cold...it needs to be just right.

Initially I expect that our teachers throughout our Division will try to accomplish too much. Parents will be hardwired to do the same, at first. Many will be overwhelmed, at first.

It will likely be a rough start for some, because teachers competently analyze a situation and use a variety of approaches to best meet the needs of their kids, but they do that in classrooms with kids in front of them. I am confident they will learn to do the same but it will take time. Teachers will begin to use paper-based materials, Word, Excel, Google Classroom, Google Hangout, hyperlinks, podcasts, YouTube and other technologies almost immediately, but the obvious challenge is how to achieve balance.

Our teachers are brilliant and will listen, adapt, and improve as they learn from both their students and their parents. The quality of education will improve month after month as our teachers use their expertise, passion, and compassion to adjust distance learning to parallel whatever circumstances they encounter. An increasing use of technology will assist as long as the person on the sending end, the teacher, is actively involved in planning, providing feedback, assessing, communicating, and making day-to-day decisions about student learning. Pace will be critical.

We will be afraid, at times overwhelmed, and we will struggle. That's ok. Please limit your child's screen time, establish routines, Encourage quiet reading. Read together. Let kids play. Laugh. Go for a walk. Eat together. Pray together.

We cannot expect Alberta students to accomplish as much as they would have in their regular classrooms. The fear will be "falling behind".

To be behind means someone needs to be in front of you. Who will be in front of the overwhelming majority of the students in the province of Alberta? Will it be other Canadian students? No. "Normal" education is shutting down nationally right now. Will it be students in other nations? No. "Normal" education is shutting down internationally right now.

The entire world will lose four months or more of "normal" education due to this crisis. Teaching approaches, curriculums, and expectations will be naturally adjusted on a local, provincial, national, and international level, and we won't even know it's happening. Everyone involved with K-12 and post secondary education will adjust to the new normal, and normal is not behind.

Reach out to your child's teacher, your principal, and others in our educational community that still are in our schools and home ready and willing to help you. We will be here for you. Peace.

May the Peace of Christ be with You and Your Family as you persevere.

Yours in Catholic Education,



Karl Germann
Superintendent of Schools

References:

<https://www.gpcsd.ca/apps/pages/COVID-19>

A special thanks to Dr. Scott Morrison Superintendent of Christ the Redeemer Catholic Schools. This letter draws from his recent message to his families and staff.