

Education Matters

A few short months ago, the world was at odds about a multitude of issues including climate change, trade agreements and immigration. Then along came a virus called COVID-19. Who knew this illness could affect our human family in such a profound way? Today those global issues that plagued governments don't seem as important. All countries are working together and learning from each other to combat a mutual enemy. Every one of us on the planet can play a part in this fight. The irony is that it is not action we are called to do but rather isolation. Keeping inside and physical distancing is the best way we can slow down the disease. This global togetherness on being apart has put health as our number one priority and put human life as more important than money. That is one positive outcome to this crisis.

Another positive is that our youth seem relatively unaffected by the virus so far. But it is still important to keep our children safe. No one recognizes this more than our provincial governments and local school divisions. While schools are closed for the time being, money is still being spent to keep education happening. School systems are being tasked with finding ways to keep our students learning, and educators are answering the call. In Beautiful Plains, we lean on our core values of Honesty, Respect, and Empathy.

Open, honest and constant communication with our staff and parents is paramount. The government has also launched an information portal called My Learning At Home (https://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/K12/my_learning/index.html). This resource is designed to assist families in supporting the work teachers are doing to educate remotely. We are building on the mutual respect parents and teachers already have for each other by encouraging dialogue and questions. Most importantly, looking through the situation through another's eyes and understanding the impact of our decisions on others are keys to success for our students. Empathy will steer our decision making. With Beautiful Plains core values guiding action, educators are thinking outside the box and reinventing ways to deliver curriculum.

The internet and social media have become positive and innovative tools. Communication platforms such as Zoom, Instagram, Facebook and email are instrumental for teachers to communicate with students. But phone calls, learning packages and letters are also being used to accommodate a student's individual needs and to limit screen time.

Packets of books curated for the avid reader, virtual museum tours for the explorer, Instagram workouts for the active learner, arts and crafts ideas for the artist are interspersed with regular pen and pencil tasks. Struggling families can reach out to the schools for support as simple as extra supplies and snacks. Parents are encouraged to first contact their child's teachers before calling the school or school division.

Education is constantly evolving and adapting and that is never more true than today. In the future, classrooms will be discussing the 2020 pandemic and the world's response. Manitobans can be proud of how we are handling our part in this crisis. We are all in this together and we will come out of it being stronger.