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British Columbia News

Extraordinary education initiatives during extraordinary times

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Victoria - Minister of Education

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As we celebrate Education Week 2020, there's never been a better time to shine a bright light on the extraordinary work being done throughout our province right now to ensure B.C. kids keep learning.

It's only been a little over three weeks since our government made the difficult decision to suspend in-class learning to prevent the spread of COVID-19 and one week since most school districts returned from spring break. In this short period of time, we have seen B.C.'s education professionals meeting each new day with tremendous innovation, teamwork and perseverance.

Over spring break, government worked with all our education partners to develop a common set of teaching, and health and safety, guidelines to ensure education continues to be inclusive, while being safely delivered across all 60 of our school districts.

Immediately after spring break, school leaders began connecting with families in their communities to determine the number of essential service workers who need child care so their parents can continue to serve on the front lines of the COVID-19 response. They were also checking in with students who need a meal program, a computer loan, internet access, learning resources mailed or dropped off to their homes, mental health or one-on-one tutoring support.

As educators began personally connecting with students and delivering lesson plans by phone or online, they took their creativity and compassion to a whole new level. There have been so many amazingly innovative ways educators are supporting students to help them stay engaged in the curriculum from home, while ensuring vulnerable students are supported with customized resources. Indigenous teachers are hosting daily K-8 lessons and reading groups online to ensure culturally relevant content is easily accessible for every child in the province. Phys-ed teachers are leading exercise programs to keep kids moving while they're at home.

Support staff are going above and beyond to deliver learning packages or meals to family homes, and bus drivers have stepped up to make sure schools are clean for those who need to be there. Many schools and even some students have started to use their 3D printers to create safety equipment for health workers. Others are organizing the donation of food and supplies, refurbishing laptops or creating local internet hotspots for kids who need the extra support.

These are tremendous efforts, and I'm only highlighting a few of the hundreds of inspiring stories we've heard about.

It also speaks volumes about the dedication of parents and guardians in our province that we're continuing to see great success with the Keep Learning website, which has been updated almost daily with new device-free activities for kids of any age. We are seeing hundreds of thousands of visitors and page views every week to this page: www.openschool.bc.ca/KeepLearning/

British Columbian families are pulling together, being flexible, being patient and making things work to help children learn remotely.

We are navigating this new terrain together and we must do our best to support each other's health and well-being. Every British Columbian has a part to play to flatten the curve.

Know that these actions are temporary, and we will return to regular school life down the road. In the meantime, we are committed to keeping communication open with families through this website: www.gov.bc.ca/safeschools/

This is where families can find constantly updated FAQs, the latest news releases and information bulletins, available in seven languages.

We are so fortunate to have devoted teachers, support staff, principals and vice-principals, trustees and superintendents working collaboratively in our K-12 education system, so our more than 600,000 students can continue learning.

This Education Week, I encourage you to share your appreciation to the education professionals who are making a difference in the lives of B.C. children during these unprecedented times.

By working together and supporting each other, we will get through this.

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