

國立教育廣播電台 英語奇育記

教育新聞中英對照

● 教育新聞中文摘要：

隨著新型冠狀病毒傳播，全球各地的教育單位，無不繃緊神經、全力找出配套措施，希望讓無法實體到校上課的學生，不致失學。本集新聞，將探討加拿大的教育單位，如何借鏡當地多年前的災害應變措施，為當地學生提供良善的遠距教學及補課、升學輔導制度。

● 教育新聞英文摘錄：

Parents, teachers, and students are considering the possibility that class is out for the year. But that doesn't mean the kids have to stop learning. Until Sunday afternoon, Alberta was one of the few parts of coronavirus-stricken Canada where kids were supposed to go back to school this week as normal, without mandated closures or March break on the horizon.

The provincial daily briefing changed that, jarringly. The premier, education minister, and chief medical officer of health didn't merely match others by closing schools for a week or two alongside March break.

In Alberta, a province in Western Canada, classes were dismissed *indefinitely*. Until September, it now seems likely. Provincial assessment tests, which take place in May and June, have been canceled. Grade 12 students will take diploma exams (somehow), and graduate if eligible. "We expect every student to receive a final mark, and that students will progress to their next grade level next year," Education Minister Adriana LaGrange told a news conference, her gaze focused on some point beyond the next few weeks.

Saskatchewan followed suit with similar language about indefinite school closures, then British Columbia on Tuesday. Given how it's going with this pandemic response, where the first jurisdiction's aggressive social-distancing measures set standard other follow, don't be surprised if other provinces shutter schools long-term, despite their tentative, publicly stated plans to return by March 30 (Québec) and April 6 (Ontario).

This means children might face losing nearly one-third of a school year—with all the child-care complications, social disruption and curriculum gaps that may entail. Alberta is working on online learning modules, but much is unknown about how those will come together, if teachers who are currently still coming to work are forced to stay home, too.

“It’s not that they will not acquire a skill. They will miss a very important experience,” says Marina Milner-Bolotin, an associate professor of curriculum and pedagogy at the University of British Columbia. “Imagine for two [additional] months they don’t have routine, they don’t read, they don’t study.” She likens it to skipping the gym for a long spell and getting out of shape.

Dr. Deena Hinshaw, Alberta’s top public-health physician, had earlier said she was reluctant to close schools because she read on pandemic management indicated that effective closures needed to be eight to 12 weeks long—a big pill for politicians and society to swallow.

“This pandemic will not end in a matter of weeks and there won’t be a clear opportunity to reopen schools, likely not until September at the earliest,” she said on Saturday, one day before the province made its call.

Alberta, though, seems to be one of the first jurisdictions worldwide to reckon with an end to the school year. The province has experience on this front, thanks to natural disasters. When floods hit Calgary and nearby towns in late June 2013, Alberta Education exempted high school students from diploma exams. The Fort McMurray wildfire of May 2016 cut off the final two months of that school year; students advanced to the next grades in September, as normal. Though so little else was normal.

Fort Mac’s case is no easy comparison to the pandemic’s potential toll on students: hundreds of families were traumatized by losing homes to fire, the whole city faced a month-long evacuation, many students joined schools elsewhere in Alberta; and when teachers returned in the fall, much of the smoke-damaged technology hadn’t yet been replaced, says

Shannon Noble, the public school district assistant superintendent. Add that to the mental health challenges faced by staff and pupils, and they didn't start making up for lost academic time until after Christmas of that year.

With charity funding, Fort McMurray schools added weekend literacy mornings for younger kids and high-schoolers. But recovery took time, particularly for older students with a more detailed curriculum. "In our high school kids, the gap was a little tougher to close, but two years out from the fire, our results were the same or stronger," Noble says.

While classes may not resume until September in parts of Canada, that doesn't have to mean the remainder of the school year is lost, UBC's Milner-Bolotin says. Students should be learning online, and teachers—who are remaining on the job in indefinitely closed Alberta schools—should embrace the technology as well, she says. There are plenty of language, math and science lessons available all around the Internet. Alberta and Ontario are among jurisdictions working to add online modules; Fort McMurray schools are ensuring there will be services for special needs students, and printed lesson materials to pick up for families without broadband or computer access. (Scholastic has joined in, offering downloadable daily courses for various grade levels.)

Milner-Bolotin, who helps organize science outreach programs from the Vancouver university, sent a list of resources to the 800 families she has on her contact list. "It has to be established as a routine," she says. "The child has to know that I have to study today for two hours, three hours, whatever it is." Of course, not all parents will be able to convert so easily to temporary homeschoolers; those working have inherited child-care challenges from the closure of schools and daycares.