

LESSON PLANS MET WITH MIXED REACTION FROM PARENTS

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ter a sense of community with students. This has come in a variety of forms, with some teachers using weekly video messages, others conducting online prayers or meetings through video chat services.

Responses from parents at the Halton Catholic board have been mixed. A request for feedback resulted in answers saying the work was too much, too little, lacked proper instruction or made use of a confusing platform. Oth-

ers felt it was all quite good.

Michelle Candelaria, a mother with one child in a Halton Catholic elementary school, said her daughter's teacher regularly posts work to do, which helped her create a daily schedule.

"I've been pretty happy with her school when it comes to the distance learning. I don't feel she's missing out. I think it's enough work not to overload and stress her and they really promote the mental health aspect and making sure that we are taking care of ourselves," said Candelaria.

Her daughter's teacher hosts weekly meetings on Microsoft Teams and the school posts regular announcements on YouTube.

Some parents have had a different experience mix-

ing working from home with running a homeschool. Amanda Arnold, who has two elementary-aged children in Halton Catholic schools, said it's been a challenge.

"It's felt like a little too much. We had no problem with the whole platform set-up, but the amount of things assigned seemed overwhelming for one of my kids. With everything going on, my husband and I haven't been able to help out the way we would have liked to, but I do wish there was more teacher instruction to work through some of it," said Arnold.

At the April meeting of the board of trustees, administrators were asked if the level of instruction has been adequate to properly prepare students for the next grade.

Daly has repeatedly

made assurances that whenever normal schooling resumes, schools will be assessing where students are at and working to fill in any gaps.

"What we can guarantee is, whatever the course is next or grade level is next, we will try to do as we always do — meet students where they are at. Assess where they are at, and adjust our instruction as necessary," said Daly.

Regardless of what this time has meant for student learning of the curriculum, there can be other benefits to the new pandemic-required distance learning. Anna Prkacin, superintendent of education, encouraged the community to think of this time as a chance to connect with family.

"It is a special time for family and our faith; this is

"It is a special time for family and our faith."

- Superintendent of Education Anna Prkacin

something that I feel. I know it's frustrating, and you're spending a lot of time together as a family, but really, in many ways in curriculum, we thought this is a wonderful celebration of family life, with all of the aspects of spending time together that are not always joyful. But there are many opportunities to connect as a family and that learning goes well beyond whatever platform the teacher uses," said Prkacin.

Some of the parents say they have found this time

particularly positive.

"It's kind of forced us to connect and do more things together, like board game nights and daily walks, which we never did," said Candelaria. "It's really nice to have that time and opportunity to spend time together as a family."

For more information on the Halton Catholic District School Board's distance learning program visit www.learnathome.hcdsb.org.

STORY BEHIND THE STORY: With the extended closure of schools due to COVID-19, Halton's Catholic board was forced to make an abrupt transition to distance learning — one that's presented significant challenges, and met with a mixed reaction from parents.

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