



Academi Genedlaethol ar gyfer
Arweinyddiaeth Addysgol Cymru
National Academy for
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Reflections from Canada



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In Canada, education is a provincial matter, meaning that the response to COVID-19 varies slightly across the country. For example, decisions about school closures are taken provincially and are not uniform. In Ontario, where I work, publicly funded schools have been closed since 14 March 2020 and are currently expected to remain closed until 31 May 2020. The province's programme of standardised tests, which usually take place in the spring, has also been suspended.

Ministries of education across the country have provided a range of digital resources so that children can continue to study, although in many cases, such work is voluntary. In Ontario, the government has set out [guidelines](#) for teacher-led virtual instruction, starting at 5 hours per student per week for kindergarten up to Grade 3, focusing on numeracy and English or French. Students in upper secondary school should study 1.5 hours per subject per week with a view to continuing to accumulate the high school credits they need to graduate. Part of the goal here is to maintain links between teachers and students. The government has also initiated a program to provide tablet computers to students who need them, as well as affordable internet access in low-income neighbourhoods.

The school shutdown has also had an impact on teacher education programmes, with the closures occurring in some cases in the middle of students' final block of teaching practice. Since provincial regulations stipulate a minimum number of days of teaching practice, some creativity has been necessary to ensure students can still complete their programs and be certified. Faculties of education have worked with the Ontario College of Teachers and the Ministry of Education to adjust regulations and innovate. For example, many students in my own Faculty were able to continue their teaching practice by working with their associate teacher to provide online instruction as part of the government framework described above. The government has also agreed to allow our graduates to be conditionally certified before they have completed and passed the newly introduced mathematics proficiency test.

One concern in my Faculty, which has a mandate to serve the minority francophone population of Ontario, is the impact of system closure on Franco-Ontarian education and communities. As in Wales, schools play a crucial role in French language growth, francophone identity construction and maintaining community and culture. We also have concerns about impacts on isolated communities, including Indigenous communities. It is important in these challenging and unpredictable times not to lose sight of core values, such as equal access to education, serving the whole community and human rights.

Further information and resources can be found at
www.nael.cymru