

Education Systems' Response to COVID-19

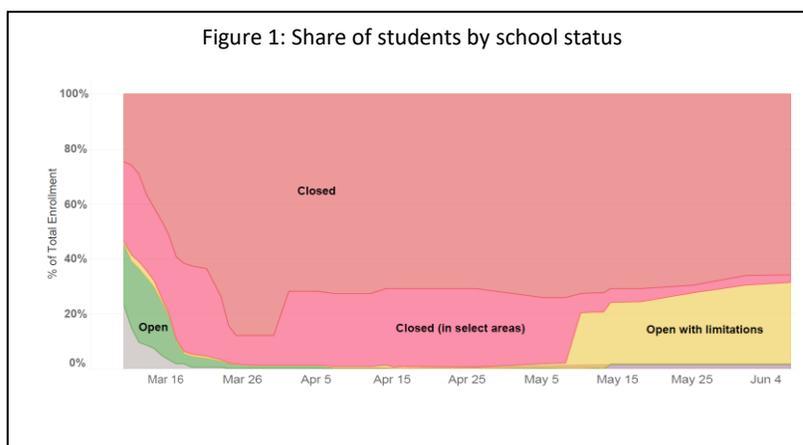
Brief: June 12th, 2020

Country school closures and re-openings (data as of June 12th)

	Africa	EAP	ECA	LAC and N. America	MENA	SAR	Total
Closed	37	9	20	41	18	8	133
Partly closed	1	1	0	1	1	0	4
Open with limitations	6	11	29	2	2	0	50

Source: World Bank Education Team [COVID tracking database](#) and [map](#)

About 35% of students (out of the 1.6 billion who are affected by COVID19 school closures) are now back to school, according to the World Bank's monitoring table (see *Figure 1*). However, the school that students are returning to is different from the environment they left in March. In most cases, learning is blended, comprised of face-to-face as well as remote instruction.



1. *The impact of school closures on education attainment and the economy are becoming more evident.*

- A projection by the American Federation of Teachers estimates that primary and secondary **schools in the US will collectively need \$116 billion (or \$2,300 per pupil) to safely return students to schools** after coronavirus-related closures. The biggest shares include \$36 billion for additional academic support for students coming off a year of ineffective remote learning, \$35 billion for additional instructional staff, and nearly \$10 billion for transportation.
- The “[Impact of School Closures on the Attainment Gap: Rapid Evidence Assessment Report](#)” by the UK’s Education Endowment Foundation analyses data concludes that:
 - a. School closures are likely to reverse progress made to narrow the gap in the last decade; (median estimate indicates that the gap would widen by 36%).
 - b. Supporting effective remote learning will mitigate the extent to which the gap widens.
 - c. Sustained support will be needed to help disadvantaged pupils catch up (catch-up provision, including assessment of lost learning and targeted support, will be essential).
- [School Education Gateway](#), a subsidiary of the European Higher Education Exchange Program (Erasmus), conducted a [survey of mostly teachers and school leaders](#) in early May to assess the state of remote learning. Forty countries were represented among the sample. The findings offer early indications to policymakers and school leaders that the experience of distance/online teaching and learning, although challenging, may have lasting positive effects, opening up interesting possibilities

for innovation and new ways of working, especially if supported by appropriate and timely professional development.

- The World Bank has published the Western Balkans regular economic report “[Estimated Impact of COVID-19 on Education and Country Responses](#)”. The findings suggest that the share of students below basic proficiency in reading in these countries may increase from the current 53 percent to 61 percent due to COVID-19. The report provides reach analysis of impact of COVID-19 crisis on learning outcomes as measured by PISA.

2. *The Pandemic epicenter shifts to Latin America, with visible signs of impact on human capital, and education inequality*

- **South America** has now become the latest epicenter of the pandemic according to the WHO, as cases are mounting rapidly. A [recent World Bank blog](#) suggests that that the COVID-19 spread is likely to exacerbate inequalities in health, income, nutrition, and schooling in a region already highly unequal. This will also likely deepen entrenched racial, gender, and spatial inequalities.
- **Brazil** is registering the second highest number of infections [in the world](#), trailing only the United States. Schools located in heavily populated favelas in Sao Paolo have been turned [into isolation wards](#) by their self-organizing residents, while cities such as Sao Paolo and Rio de Janeiro are relaxing social distancing measures, allowing shopping malls and stores to open.
- **Peru**, the [second hardest hit](#) country in South America, has established a remote learning strategy “[Aprendo en Casa](#)”, complemented with radio and TV lessons. Still, the most disadvantaged are struggling to access distance learning – there are [reports](#) of children in rural areas taking hours to access radio signals and listen to class. To address this, the Ministry of Education announced that [schools can re-open in early July](#) in areas where (1) there is no connectivity, (2) teachers reside nearby, and (3) no cases of COVID-19 have been reported. Additionally, distance [learning materials have been adapted](#) to serve students with disabilities.
- In **Chile**, the third most affected country in South America, the Ministry of Education has reported that only 5% of target students are receiving learning that satisfies the curriculum goals, while 90% are receiving part or most of the curriculum mandated, and the remaining [5% are not accessing any learning mode](#).

3. *Though students are returning to the classroom across Europe and parts of Asia, in middle-income countries where infections are still prevalent or rising, policies on school reopening are increasingly varied, with many reversing or delaying decisions.*

Edurio’s Study on Managing Learning during School Closures in Latvia

A survey carried out in early April highlights opportunities and challenges facing **pupils, teachers, and parents**. The report identifies three cross-cutting issues that have led to some of Latvia’s remote learning success, namely:

1 Good communication is the first step to success

At a time of flux and stress, clear communication elicits trust, confidence and calm. Clarity of communication is strongly linked with the overall satisfaction with remote learning arrangements for parents and pupils. However, there are diminishing returns to the frequency of communication. Structure and transparency can help schools venture into the unknown with the community intact.

2 Managing workload is hard work

Over 60% of pupils report that they are spending more time on studies than they were when at school. Parents share the pain and struggle to balance helping their children while being in employment. Maintaining a manageable workload through prioritisation and planning is a core element of well-being in remote classrooms.

3 Collaboration is at the heart of effective remote teaching

Lack of collaboration and coordination between teachers leads to duplicated work for teachers, and confusion for the pupils. Teachers struggle with planning and preparing lessons and providing feedback to the learners. Parents often take a key role in supporting remote learning. Schools that manage to treat teaching as a team activity will have an easier time than those that simply put the old schedule online.

Source:

https://issuu.com/eduricom/docs/report_shutdown_lessons?fr=sZW14ODEzMTewOTc

- In **South Africa**, [about 95 percent of schools have reopened](#). The government had originally intended to reopen schools on June 1, but postponed this to June 8 after finding out that most schools required more time to better prepare facilities and train staff.
- **Israel** [re-closed some schools](#) this week after a spike in infections. The Prime Minister announced a policy of closing any school with the minimum of one confirmed case.
- **Philippines** has announced it will not reopen schools for face-to-face instruction until a vaccine has been identified – likely spring 2021.
- **England** reversed policies and announced the primary schools, originally scheduled to reopen in early June, will not open till the fall. This was after it became clear that social distancing measures were not feasible under the current arrangements.
- The **United Kingdom's** National Education Union (NEU) is now being called upon to [develop a national plan for accommodating more schooling space](#) using libraries and community centers to enable more students a safer, wider, learning environment. There is also a push to bring back retired teachers to address the potential shortages to result from smaller classes.
- In West Africa, **Sierra Leone** announced a return to schools only for those students sitting for standard examinations (national primary school exam, national basic education exam, and the West African Senior Secondary School Exams – a 5-country regional secondary school completion exam). Schools have been instructed to reopen as of July 1st to allow students to review before sitting for exams in August and September.
- **South Korea** [closed schools](#) again in late May after another spike in infections. This came after weeks of delays in reopening.

Relevant Resources

- [From coping to improving and accelerating: Supporting teachers in the pandemic and beyond](#) (Tracy Wilichowsky and Cristobal Cobo)
- [The education \(negative\) twin shocks, and the opportunity they bring](#) (Jaime Saavedra)
- [Reopening Schools: when, where, and how](#) (Jaime Saavedra with Stefania Giannini, UNESCO Head of Education, and Rob Jenkins, UNICEF Head of Education)
- [Supporting Teachers during COVID19 Coronavirus Pandemic](#) (Tara Beteille with a link to the last note on teachers)
- [Learning equity during the Coronavirus: experiences from Africa](#) (Salman Asim, Shelby Carvalho, and Ravinder Gera)

More resources and our latest research can be found at the [Bank education website](#)

ANNEX 1 – Latest on COUNTRIES REOPENING SCHOOLS (received from teams)

AFRICA

- **Benin**, as of mid-May, schools except for nurseries are open. Classrooms have social distancing rules set up for example, the benches have been set out to observe the one-meter rule. Launched mass testing for teachers as a way to reassure parents that school will be a safe environment – masks were compulsory, but during reopening, a large number of students turned up without masks due to costs.
- **Cote d'Ivoire**. May 25th onwards - primary, secondary, and universities. Washing of hands before and after classes. Classes are equipped with hand sanitizer gel.
- **Ghana** is undergoing a phased, selective reopening: June 15, 2020 - Final year tertiary students reopen; June 21, 2020 - Final year senior secondary reopen; June 21, 2020 - Final year junior high school reopen; all other students will be home till further notice.
- **Liberia**. Schools reopen June 22nd for last year of senior secondary students.
- **Sierra Leone**. School reopening Task Force established and working on different elements. Schools to reopen July 1st for those sitting for standard exams. A comprehensive set of guidelines that will aid with the reopening of the school are under development.
- **South Africa** delayed planned reopening of schools after a spike in infections but then reopened June 8th using a phased reopening. Despite the number of COVID-19 cases growing sharply, the government is keen on the phased reopening of public and independent schools, with a cluster of grades returning on July 6 and the last cluster back on August 3.
- **Tanzania** reopened schools on June 1st, 2020 with many parents concerned about the safety of learning environment in the context of increased infection cases.
- **Zambia**. Ministry of General Education has released a guidelines document that outlines the measures for safe school reopening as well as responsibilities of teachers/staff/administrators. Measures include: (i) To the extent possible, limit class size to avoid overcrowding and maintain a minimum of 2 meters between the teacher and learners, and 1-2 meters of space between learners; (ii) Observe physical distancing in shared staff spaces; teachers and other school staff should avoid congregating indoors in groups larger than 5 people where possible. (iii) Learners should only buy food from the school Tuck Shop, while maintaining physical distancing and hygiene practices; (iv) Learners, teachers, other members of staff, and all the people entering the school premises must wear masks; (v) Maintain a stock of masks to support vulnerable learners; (Schools with the capacity to make face masks through Home Economics department should do so and supply to the needy at no cost). (vi) Have hand-washing stations or alcohol-based hand sanitizer dispensers available at school entrances, classrooms, dining rooms/halls, dormitories and ablution blocks. Schools should integrate COVID-19 prevention and control in daily activities and lessons. Schools shall: To the extent possible, schools should measure the temperature of learners, teachers, and other school staff and any visitors upon arrival at the designated school entry point. Teachers, learners, and other school staff arriving at school found to have a fever (Temperature of above 38.0°C) should be isolated from peers and the school should contact the health helpline and arrangements made for the them to receive appropriate care.

Eastern and Central Europe

- **Austria**. Began returning students May 4th with Grade 12 students who came back to school to prepare for final exam (“Matura”) two weeks later; (ii) May 18th: School reopened for primary schools, lower secondary, and special needs schools; (iii) June 3rd: School opening for upper secondary and TVET schools. Classes will be split into two groups, with group 1 being in school Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and group 2 on Thursday and Friday; alternating the next week. Mandatory regular

washing of hands, especially after entering the school and masks work outside the classroom (in corridors).

- **Bulgaria.** Reopening in the fall – September 14th
- In **England** primary schools were to reopen by early June but the Government has changed course and announced they will only return in the fall.
- **Croatia.** May 11th began staggered reopening of schools starting with preschool.
- **Denmark.** April 15th – staggered reopening starting with preschool. The National Board of Health suggests that children are asked to play in small groups. Teachers are asked to be especially vigilant and ensure that only limited number of students play together at the same time. asses are divided into sub groups; children each have their own desks marooned two yards away from their nearest neighbor; teachers work with the same group throughout the day and do not switch; children play only with kids from their class and only in small groups; teachers don't gather in the staff room. Under usual circumstances, extended absence without a doctor's note can result in a family losing their child support benefits, but the Ministry of Children and Education has eased its policy for the time being, so that children who live with high risk patients, or parents who do not feel comfortable sending their children to school, can still do so.
- **Germany.** Reopened May 6th.
- **Greece.** Students returned May 4th but are following guidelines: (i) stay at least two meters (6.56 feet) apart
- **France.** May 11th – staggered reentry starting with younger grades. By May 25th, all primary and secondary students are back in school. Parents have final say about whether they want to send their children or not. No punishment for not attending.
- **Netherlands.** Primary schools reopen on May 11th, and secondary schools on June 1st. Schools for secondary VET will remain closed.
- **Norway.** Kindergartens were opened on April 20th and its primary schools on April 27th, starting with grade 1-4. Universities, colleges and vocational schools reopened from April 27th for some students and employees. The goal is that all pupils and students, including those in upper secondary schools, will return to school before the summer holidays.
- **Romania.** Reopening September 14th
- **Spain.** May 25th phased reopening. When Phase 2 goes into effect, last-year students of secondary and post-secondary education will be allowed to go to school. Most of the regions are in favor of organizing some activities for these students, especially those preparing for their university entrance
- **Switzerland.** May 11th for younger grades. Older children from their 10th year, as well as university students, returned on June 8.

East Asia and the Pacific

- **Australia.** States have the authority to follow up different guidelines or protocols given that the education system is administered at state level. Throughout the pandemic, schools in most states have remained open to children of essential workers and vulnerable children. The only exception is the Australian Capital Territory, where nine hub schools were set up for these children, and they are not reopening schools until next week and the following week (using a staggered approach). Victoria is the only other state not to reopen schools yet (at least partially), but will begin in a couple of weeks.
- **China.** Dates of reopening vary based on the date of last reported case of COVID in the province. Practice social distancing whenever possible with examples including (i) allowing students from certain grades, e.g. the graduating classes, to register earlier than others to avoid peak traffic and avoiding large scale gathering by canceling parent days, campus events, and large-scale teacher training (ii) managing the access of vendors, service providers, and visitors to campus. Seats have plastic dividers

to ensure students are safely distanced from each other. Re-adjusting school calendar to make up for lost face-to-face instruction time. Routinely carry out simple health screening, monitor instances of high-risk symptoms and health related absence, and provide daily updates to local authorities. China also developed a contingency plan if/when an active case of COVID is found in classroom

- **Japan.** Dates of reopening vary but started in mid-April. Classrooms are ventilated and students are not allowed to gather in clusters. Washing of hands regularly throughout the day, especially before lunch. Checking of temperatures regularly. If an infection is confirmed, the infected individual and those who were in close contact are to be suspended, according to the guidelines. Temporary closure of classes or the entire school will also be recommended.
- **Indonesia.** Reopening schools July 20th.
- **Mongolia.** Schools to reopen in the fall (20th of September)
- **Papua New Guinea** schools began gradually reopening in late April. The Department of Education provided [specific instructions](#) for schools, teachers, and all education authorities to take in prevention of COVID-19. Parents can keep their children home if they wish to do so, yet they must inform schools so that children can continue their remote learning. Some of the prevention measures include mandatory facemasks for students and teachers and hand sanitizers or hand basins with soaps for hand washing in every recess break. However, [implementation of measures appears challenging](#), with lack of masks in some areas and abundance in others. Some parents have resorted to sew masks themselves.
- **South Korea** began the school year online, and delayed reopening schools due to new cases of COVID-19 until late May. Schools in areas with increased cases are made to re-close. Classes started with high school seniors, followed by middle school seniors, juniors, and elementary schools by May 20th. The Ministry of Education had postponed the start of the school year four times before it was decided to [begin online classes](#) on April 9th in all elementary, middle, high, and special education schools nationwide.
- **Vietnam's** upper secondary schools and universities and colleges reopened in some provinces and then re-closed from April 1st in compliance with the social distancing directive from the Prime Minister. As of mid-May, Vietnam has fully reopened all schools, with lower- and upper-secondary, and post-secondary VET institutions reopening on May 4th, and then pre-primary to primary opening by May 11th. Universities also reopened on a rolling basis. The Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) developed a list of 16 priority responses for the basic education sector, and has sought support from development partners on implementation.¹ These priorities relate to, for example, (1) the safe operation of schools to reduce virus transmission, including the availability of hygiene materials and part-time in-person classes for crowded classrooms; (2) bridging the learning gap related to school closures, including stronger distance education provision, curriculum streamlining, teacher training, and promoting awareness for parents, students, and others; and (3) protecting the most vulnerable, including raising caregivers' awareness on child nutrition needs, psychological support, and distance education materials in ethnic minority languages.

Latin, Central and North America

- **Canada.** Phased reopening started May 11th - in Quebec. June 1, schools in B.C., Manitoba and P.E.I. reopened in some way. On May 19, the Ontario government announced it was cancelling in-person classes for the rest of the school year.
- **Uruguay** [began the return to classes](#) in some rural areas by late April and moved in phases. The first included all rural schools nation-wide (including primary and secondary levels), schools in vulnerable

¹ This information was extracted from the *Mitigating the impact of COVID-19 on learning and skill formation in Vietnam*, prepared by the World Bank's Education Global Practice team for Vietnam. The larger document summarizes the Government's comprehensive Education Response to COVID19 and can be requested from the team (contact Dilip Parajuli (Sr. Education Economist) at dparajuli@worldbank.org).

contexts (except Montevideo and metropolitan area), special education schools, and last year in all secondary schools. The second phase started June 15th and includes ECD and pre-primary centers, all private and public primary, secondary and postsecondary technical schools (except Montevideo and the metropolitan area), and last year students in Montevideo and the metropolitan area. Third phase opens all other schools at primary, ECD, secondary, and technical level nationwide, to be completed by June 29th. Some of the main characteristics of the gradual reopening so far are mandatory testing of school staff and teachers, blended learning, allowing teachers and staff who are at high risk (over 65 years old or with pre-existing conditions) to remain home. Students' return is optional, and children are split into smaller groups in each class, extended hours for learning are suspended, and everyone must wear face masks.

- **The United States** has issued [guidelines](#) to reopen the country in a phased manner. Schools are included in the phase two, for states and regions with no evidence of a rebound and that satisfy the gating criteria twice: (1) downward trajectory of influenza-like illnesses (ILI) reported within a 14-day window period, and (2) downward trajectory of COVID related syndromic cases reported within a 14-day period. The Center for Disease, Control and Prevention has recently issued [health considerations and tools](#) to help state policymakers and authorities decide when to reopen schools.
- In **Canada**, most elementary schools in Quebec [began reopening by May 11th](#), with the exception of Montreal which has mandated schools to be closed for the rest of the school year. British Columbia announced a voluntary and staggered return to classes by early June. In the rest of the country, schools will remain closed for the rest of the year.

Middle East and North Africa

- **Cyprus.** [Reopened end May amid concerns from parents](#) that health would be an issue. President has campaigned that it's safe to reopen.
- **Israel.** Reopened in early May. Update June 3rd: Government has closed some schools where cases of the Coronavirus have been confirmed and increasing.
- All other countries in MENA (with exception of Cyprus and Israel) [announced that students are not returning to classrooms until the fall](#)

South Asia

No reopening systems so far.