

## Education Systems' Response to COVID-19

### Brief: July 12<sup>th</sup>, 2020

As of July 12<sup>th</sup>, 56 countries have begun to reopen schools. Still, over 1.13 billion of students are in countries where schools are closed. This represents 65% of the world's learners. Most of the countries where schools are gradually opening are in EAP and ECA, and SubSaharan Africa to a lesser extent. LAC, MENA and SAR are mostly closed. In some countries, interruptions are approaching 6 months of classes.

*Country school closures and re-openings (data as of July 12<sup>th</sup>)*

	Africa	EAP	ECA	LAC & N. America	MENA	SAR	Total
Closed	32	10	20	40	18	8	128
Open with limitations	12	11	29	2	2	0	56
Open	3	2	1	0	0	0	6

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

#### 1. *The practice and debates continue on whether to reopen or not to reopen schools*

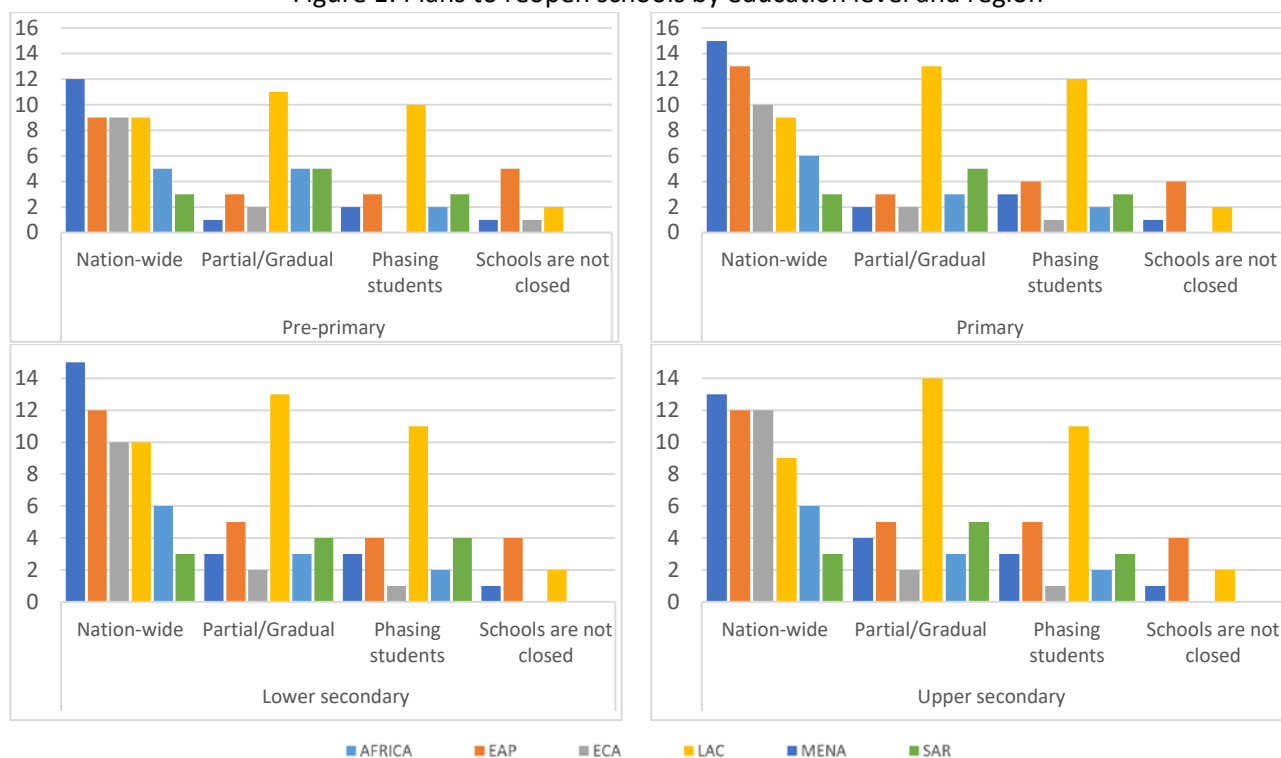
- Education Minister of **Kenya**, George Magoha, announced on July 7<sup>th</sup> that schools would remain [closed till January](#) and that final year exams will be canceled. Students of basic education in private and public schools will have to repeat the school year. The Ministry will continue to explore how to expand access to online learning for all students. Colleges and universities may be able to reopen if they comply with government guidelines.
- **South Africa** started [phase two of reopening schools](#). Students in grades 6 and 11 returned to schools by July 6, joining the first group of students from grades 7 and 12 who had returned to classes in June. However, the government has postponed plans for further grades going back to schools, given the increase of cases in the country. So far, 968 schools have had to close again and 2,400 teachers and 1,260 students have contracted COVID-19. Returning to school is voluntary and parents may decide to register their children for remote learning.
- The **United Kingdom** is expecting schools to [fully reopen by fall](#). By July 2<sup>nd</sup>, a [guidance](#) document was published to support schools and for them to prepare to receive all students. Returning to classes will be based on group separation and minimization of contacts between these groups of children rather than focusing on social distancing.
- **United States**, Vice-President Pence declared that the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) would issue [additional guidelines](#) on schools reopening. They had previously issued guidelines in May recommending social distancing measures and staggered arrival times, desks six apart, among others. The announcement on July 8<sup>th</sup> came after President Trump suggested that children should return to schools and that the current CDC guidelines might be impractical. The main message given was that the costs of keeping schools closed are greater than reopening them this fall. Additionally, Betsy DeVos, Education Secretary, remarked that "it's not a matter of if schools should reopen, it's simply a matter of how".

- States such as New Jersey had already started to issue [guidelines](#) for schools to reopen this fall. These were [informed](#) by the current CDC guidelines and prioritized social distancing, face coverings, limited capacity of classrooms, and sanitization of school buildings. New York City schools have also announced a [blended learning plan](#) to get students in classrooms two days a week and to keep them learning at home for the other three.
- According to a World Bank [working paper](#) a greater percentage of reported COVID cases occur a younger ages in low- and middle-income countries in comparison to high-income countries. Based on data from 26 countries, in HICs, the COVID-19 mortality rate for those aged 70–79 is 12.6 times the rate for those ages 50–59. In LMICs, that ratio is just 3.5. This information might be useful to inform decisions on reopening in LICs and LMICs, taking into account the age distribution of teachers, parents, and school staff.

**2. The first wave of results of the joint World Bank/UNESCO/UNICEF Survey on National Education Responses to COVID-19**

- The survey aims to monitor national education responses to COVID-19 school closures. The [questionnaire](#) was designed to be filled by Ministries of Education's officials in charge of school education. The survey was administered by the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) and collected the data of 118 countries across all regions.

Figure 1: Plans to reopen schools by education level and region



- The first wave of the survey collected information on national education responses to school closures from pre-primary to upper secondary levels (comprising the period between late April-Mid June). *Figure 1* illustrates responses given by countries on their plans to reopen schools at a nation-wide level, partial or gradual manner, or phased approach.

- Eight topics were included in the survey: plans for reopening schools, school calendar, distance education delivery systems, online distance learning strategies, teachers, students, parents/caregivers, learning, assessment, and examinations. A total of 116 countries shared their response. The [dataset](#) and [technical note](#) are available.

### *Relevant Resources*

- The platform "[Lessons for Education during the coronavirus crisis](#)" contains a variety of resources to support quality education, a joint effort by the University of Harvard, HundrED, OECD, and the World Bank's Education Global practice.
- An independent group Resolve to Save Lives produced two relevant [science reviews](#) on schools and universities.
- German pediatric, infectious disease, and public health societies have published the [recommendations for reopening](#) of German schools. It argues that the schools shall reopen without restrictions.
- A Science Magazine [article](#) evaluates reopening strategies across countries and the steps to be taken when outbreaks at school develop.
- Rukmini Banerji's "[An action plan for the way forward when schools reopen](#)" shares some recommendations to not only mitigate losses but to improve going forward.
- Malala's Fund Girls [Education and Covid](#) report estimates that up to 10 million more girls could be out of secondary school by the time the pandemic is over.
- *Latest research, tools, blogs, etc.* can be found at the [Bank Education - COVID 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.
- **Botswana** announced the [reopening of schools](#) for standard 7, form 3, and form 5 by June 17. Pre- primary schools will follow by August 4<sup>th</sup>. Private school make their own reopening decisions. Some [preventive measures](#) include checking body temperatures, regular disinfection, and wearing of masks.
- **Burkina Faso**, students of examinations classes returned by June 1<sup>st</sup>, no date has been confirmed for rest of the years. The World Food Program is gradually restarting school [feeding activities](#) to benefit them. Universities have started to gradually reopen.
- **Burundi**, schools continued to operate through the pandemic. President Pierre Nkurunziza is [thought to be](#) the first head of state to die due to side effects of COVID-19.
- **Cameroon**, schools and universities reopened by June 1<sup>st</sup>. Some of the [measures](#) taken include that schools will be disinfected three times a week, schools without access to running water will be provided with it, making hand sanitizers and hand washing buckets available, having no more than 24 students per classroom, and only one student seated per bench instead of the usual four.
- **Cote d'Ivoire**. May 25<sup>th</sup> onwards – primary, secondary, and universities. [Measures](#) include washing hands before and after classes. Classes are equipped with hand sanitizer gel.
- **Equatorial Guinea**, Government has decided on June 15<sup>th</sup> to ease emergency measures in force since March. This includes the [reopening of schools](#) for exams as long as they can comply with protective measures such as the use of masks, social distancing, hand washing practices, among others.
- **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.
- **Madagascar** has reopened schools for [some grades](#) (final year of high school, grade nine, and grade five). Attendance of pupils appears to be low.
- **Niger**, public schools reopened by June 1<sup>st</sup>
- **Liberia**. Schools reopen June 22<sup>nd</sup> for last year of senior secondary students.
- **Sierra Leone**. School reopening Task Force established and working on different elements. Schools to reopen July 1<sup>st</sup> 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 8<sup>th</sup> 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. By July 6, grades 6 and 11 returned to classes as part of the second stage of reopening. The government has postponed plans for further grades to return to class given the rise of confirmed COVID-19 cases.
- **Tanzania** [reopened schools](#) on June 22, 2020, with kindergartens, primary, and secondary schools resuming activities. with many parents concerned about the safety of learning environment in the context of increased infection cases.
- **Togo**, by June 15 final year pupils of primary and junior high schools; second and third-year students of senior high schools [returned to classes](#).
- **Zambia**. Students of examination classes [returned to school](#) by June 1<sup>st</sup>. 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); and (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. 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

- **Albania**, schools [reopened by May 18<sup>th</sup>](#) for students in the last year of upper secondary. School reopening is under strict hygiene and social distance measures.
- **Armenia**. Mass return of students to school is not planned until late August/early September. Pre- schools are open as of May 18<sup>th</sup>, with [measures](#) such as temperature checks, shoes disinfection, and spending most of the school day outdoors.
- **Austria**. Began returning students May 4<sup>th</sup>, with Grade 12 students who came back to school to prepare for final exam ("Matura") two weeks later; (ii) May 18<sup>th</sup>: School reopened for primary schools, lower secondary, and special needs schools; (iii) June 3<sup>rd</sup>: 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).
- **Belarus**, schools [reopened on a voluntary basis](#) by late April. Parents are scared about sending their kids back to school.
- **Belgium**. From May 18, selected grades of [primary and secondary schools will restart](#) under strict social distancing rules. Some measures taken include students and teachers wearing masks, washing hands when entering schools.
- **Cyprus**, high school students started to [return to schools](#) by May 11.
- **Bulgaria**. Reopening in the fall – September 14<sup>th</sup>
- In **England**, secondary schools were allowed to reopen for years 10 and 12 since June 10. Some nursery, pre-school, and reception year 1 and 6 started to go back by early June. Yet, plans for a full [school reopening](#) before the summer break have been dropped and may not take place till September. By June 11, only 9.1% of children in England were back to classes. The government has announced a one billion pounds fund to help students catch up. Of this, 650 million will be made available for principals to head teachers to provide tutoring sessions for small groups of primary and secondary students. The rest will be allocated to a national tutoring program aimed at the most disadvantages groups.
- **Croatia**. May 11<sup>th</sup> began staggered reopening of schools starting with preschool.
- **Denmark**. April 15<sup>th</sup> – 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. Classes 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.

- **Estonia**, May 15: Schools and educational institutions [resumed](#) in-person learning for up to 10 students per contact group. Tallinn public schools will limit contact groups to a maximum of five students.
- **Germany**. Reopened May 6<sup>th</sup>.
- **Greece**. Students returned May 4<sup>th</sup>, but are following guidelines: (i) stay at least two meters (6.56 feet) apart.
- **Hungary**, Schools will keep up digital education methods for the remainder of the term, but will be allowed to [organize consultations for individual students or small groups](#) from June 2
- **France**. May 11<sup>th</sup> – staggered reentry starting with younger grades. By May 25<sup>th</sup>, 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.
- **Finland**, [reopened](#) schools by mid-May.
- **Netherlands**. Primary schools reopen on May 11<sup>th</sup>, and secondary schools on June 1<sup>st</sup>. Schools for secondary VET will remain closed.
- **Norway**. Kindergartens were opened on April 20<sup>th</sup> and its primary schools on April 27<sup>th</sup>, starting with grade 1-4. Universities, colleges and vocational schools reopened from April 27<sup>th</sup> 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.
- **Iceland**, by June 15 all schools were open, applying social distance and hygiene [measures](#).
- **Lithuania**, reopened schools for primary school students by [May 25](#), other grades joined by early June.
- **Luxembourg**. Schools have [gradually been reopening](#) since May 4, with students in their final year of secondary school returning first
- **Romania**. Reopening September 14<sup>th</sup>.
- **Spain**. May 25<sup>th</sup> 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 11<sup>th</sup> for younger grades. Older children from their 10<sup>th</sup> year, as well as university students, returned on June 8.
- **Poland**, schools [reopened](#) by end of May.
- **Portugal**, schools [reopened](#) by mid-May.
- **Slovak Republic**, schools and kindergartens [opened](#) by June 1<sup>st</sup>.
- **Slovenia**. Children in the first three grades of primary school, final years secondary school, and kindergartens returned to classrooms on [May 18](#).
- **Ukraine**, kindergartens [reopened](#) by late May.

## 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.
- **Brunei Darussalam**. Reopened schools [early June](#) for students who will take national examinations.
- **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. Beijing had to [re close schools](#) due to a new COVID-19 outbreak.

- **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.
- **Lao PDR.** Schools have [partially opened](#) for Grade 5, Grade 9 and Gradeince the government lifted the lockdown during mid-May. Opening the schools for Grade 1-4, 6-8 and 10-11 started on early June.
- **Indonesia.** Reopening schools July 20<sup>th</sup>.
- **Mongolia.** Schools to reopen in the fall (September20<sup>th</sup>).
- **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 sow 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 20<sup>th</sup>. 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 nation-wide.
- **New Zealand,** schools [reopened](#) by mid May.
- **Singapore.** Schools fully reopened by [early June](#). Measures include temperature checks, use of masks, strict hygiene, among others,
- **Vietnam's** upper secondary schools and universities and colleges reopened in some provinces and then re-closed from April 1<sup>st</sup> 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 4<sup>th</sup>, and then pre-primary to primary opening by May 11<sup>th</sup>. 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.<sup>1</sup> 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.
- **Tonga.** After reopening, schools will [close by end of June](#) to test how students, teachers, and parents cope with at-home learning.
- **Tuvalu** Schools reopened on April 27 - there are no reported cases of COVID.

---

<sup>1</sup> 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).



## Latin, Central and North America

- **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 contexts (except Montevideo and metropolitan area), special education schools, and last year in all secondary schools. The second phase started June 15<sup>th</sup> 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 nation-wide, to be completed by June 29<sup>th</sup>. Uruguay completed a [full reopening](#) of schools with 256 thousand students coming back to classes in Montevideo. 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.
- **Nicaragua.** Schools and public universities [reopened](#) by April 20. Yet, [parents are reluctant to send the children back](#) and remote learning is ongoing for children who have not returned to classes. By July 9, only [10% of students](#) were attending classes and the school year is deemed as lost.
- **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. Some states such as New Jersey, New York, and Florida have confirmed return to classes by fall 2020 either in face to face learning or mixing presential classes with online learning on other days.
- In **Canada**, most elementary schools in Quebec [began reopening by May 11<sup>th</sup>](#), 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

- **Israel.** Reopened in early May for some grades, this was quickly followed by the reopening of all grades. Some schools have closed again where cases of the Coronavirus have been confirmed and [increasing](#).
- All other countries in [MENA announced that students are not returning to classrooms until the fall](#)

## South Asia

No reopening systems that we are informed of so far