



COVID-19 response – health, safety and resurgence protocols

Ensuring safe school reopening, operation and resurgence planning

Version 1 as of January 2021



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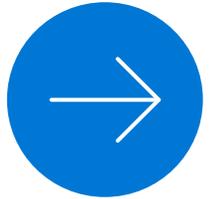
01

Introduction

- Context, objectives, structure of this document
- The focus of this chapter is on safe reopening
- How can this chapter be used?
- Health safety and resurgence protocols key considerations

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Context, objectives, structure of this document



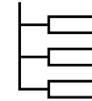
Context

In the context of the **Global Education Coalition**, formed by UNESCO to support governments in their educational response to COVID-19, UNESCO has collaborated with partners to develop a **COVID-19 Response Toolkit in Education**. This toolkit contains 9 chapters, 5 of which were developed in collaboration with McKinsey & Company – see next page for additional detail



Objective

The goal of these chapters is to support countries in their basic educational response to COVID-19 by providing practices and examples, concrete steps for intervention, and tactical action checklists. This particular chapter focuses on the topic of safe reopening.



Structure

This chapter contains the following sections:

- **The problem – why it is important:** *Defining the chapter's topic and providing context on the challenge at stake*
- **The response – framework and practices:** *Providing a framework of response including practices from other country responses in previous crises or during COVID-19*
- **The checklist – summary of actions:** *Synthesizing the framework into a series of tactical actions that a country can take to prepare and implement its response*
- **Case studies – lessons learnt:** *Providing case examples from other countries' response during COVID-19 or other crises, including context, approach, impact and key learnings*

While treated as a standalone topic in this chapter, health, safety, and resurgence protocols is intricately related to other parts of the response. In particular:

- **4. Re-enrolment: Identifying students at risk of dropout. Engaging students, parents and communities to ensure all students are back to school**
- **5. Remediation: Bringing students to learning competency level, and catching up lost learning deriving from school closures and pre-existing learning gaps**
- **6. Hybrid learning: The preparation for reopening will most likely need to integrate the organization of alternative, hybrid learning strategies**
- **8. Organizing for the response: Effective and safe reopening requires well-functioning and agile organization**

How can this chapter be used?

If you are a ... You can use the chapter by ...

Policy-maker or advisor

- Reading the problem statement to validate that the chapter is relevant to your context and to support a case for organizing safe reopening and resurgence planning strategies in your school system
- Reviewing the framework of response to test which areas are currently covered in your response and where the gaps are
- Jumping to the relevant sections to deep dive on the specific gaps that you identified
- Testing your plan against the checklist to understand which actions can be taken to address the gaps and how to organize for safe reopening and resurgence planning

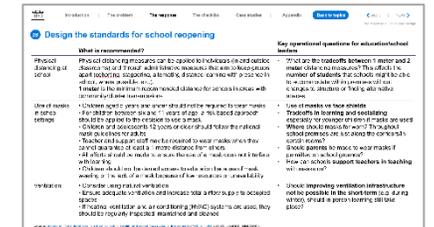
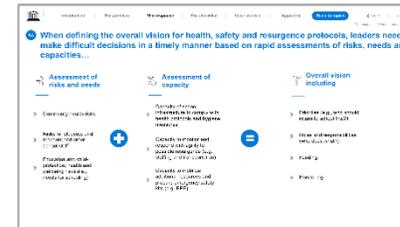
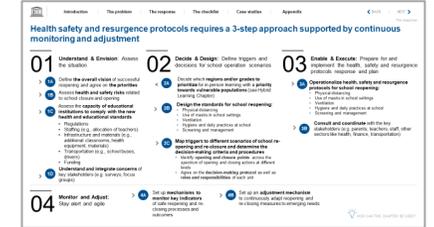
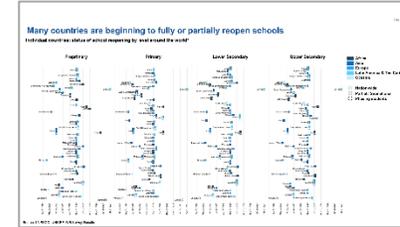
Teacher or school principal

- Reading the problem statement to validate that the chapter is relevant to your school system
- Reviewing the framework of response from the perspective of the local level, focusing on strategies that can be implemented in your context and locally
- Testing your local plan against the checklist or using it for inspiration to draft your own school or class checklist, keeping in mind the guidance issued by the higher administrative levels in your country/area
- Checking additional resources in the appendix for more information

Other

- Reading the problem statement to get an overview of the topic and its importance
- Reviewing the framework of response to inform yourself on the key steps that school systems take for safe reopening and resurgence planning
- Looking through relevant case studies to understand how countries tactically put in place safe reopening and resurgence planning models

In a rush? Check out these selected pages for a quick look



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The focus of this chapter is on health, safety and resurgence protocols

1

Remote learning strategy

Defining and continuously improving remote learning measures

Supporting key stakeholders (students, parents, teachers) for effective use of these solutions

Monitoring and quality assurance

In collaboration with
McKinsey & Company [OPEN](#)

2

Remote learning platforms

Compendium of remote learning solutions, tools, and platforms

Developing an evaluation framework to help identify which solutions, tools, and platforms are most relevant to the local context

In collaboration with
McKinsey & Company [OPEN](#)

3

Health, safety and resurgence protocols

Evaluating the trade-offs to school reopening and reclosing

Defining health and safety measures to put in place before and after reopening

[OPEN](#)

4

Re-enrolment

Identifying students at risk of dropout

Engaging students, parents and communities to ensure all students are back to school

In collaboration with
McKinsey & Company [OPEN](#)

5

Remediation

Bringing students to learning competency level, and catching up lost learning deriving from school closures and pre-existing learning gaps

In collaboration with
McKinsey & Company [OPEN](#)

6

Hybrid learning

Defining a learning approach combining remote and in classroom learning during school reopening and in preparation for potential resurgence

In collaboration with
McKinsey & Company [OPEN](#)

7

Recommitment and reform

Identifying longer-term implications of the crisis

Rethinking the new education system and reforming accordingly

8

Organizing for the response

Defining a new architecture to plan, coordinate, and manage stakeholders and external partnerships

Developing the required capabilities for an effective response

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Health, safety and resurgence protocols key considerations (1/2)

This chapter addresses how education systems can **put in place health, safety and resurgence protocols during all stages of the school reopening lifecycle that ensures health and safety of students and staff and plans for possible resurgence**. It includes an overview of the imperative for health, safety and resurgence protocols as countries start reopening schools while the virus continues to circulate, an approach for systems to put in place adequate health and safety measures, while planning for a possible resurgence necessitating swift action to re-close schools, and a checklist of actions to take.

The key challenges of health, safety and resurgence protocols

While schools across the world reopened and plan to reopen, many remain unclear due to COVID-19. Second and third waves of the pandemic are anticipated and some countries are already experiencing with increased number of cases as they relax the confinement policies.

Effective safe reopening based on robust health safety and resurgence protocols requires good accumulation of past experiences that can be basis of the assumptions for the future. While a lot of lessons have been learned from the past epidemics, much remains unknown about COVID-19 and there will be multiple possible scenarios for a safe reopening. Defining the needed health safety and resurgence protocols will be the major challenge, especially for education systems with limited resources, compounded with a health system that is overstretched. Teachers, staff, and parents, who are the key to implementing the health and safety measures need to be on board throughout the process.

The response framework to address the key challenges

Ensuring health, safety and resurgence protocols requires an iterative approach with four steps: Understand and Envision, Decide and Design, Enable and Execute, and Monitor and Adjust.

1



Understand and Envision

This step involves setting the **overall vision** of health, safety and resurgence protocols. Such vision will be developed based on the assessments of the **risks of the health situation and their implications to education**. It is also based on the assessment of the **readiness of education institutions and related services** (e.g., transportation, school meals) to meet health protocols and hygiene measures. In addition, the **operational capacity** as well as **financial capacity** of education systems to enable a safe reopening, operation and resurgence planning should also be assessed in this step.

Health, safety and resurgence protocols key considerations (2/2)

2



Decide and Design

Once the assessments are done and the overall vision is decided and agreed upon, the next step is to define triggers and decisions for different school opening scenarios coupled with school closing scenarios should the health situation worsen.

- **Decide prioritization and set standards:** Agree on the priorities for in-person learning and safe school operation standards
- **Map triggers to different school operation scenarios:** Assign the identified triggers to potential reopening scenarios such as opening a cohort, opening a grade, opening a whole school, staggering opening/recess times, opening schools in a region, or nation-wide school reopening
- **Determine the decision-making criteria and procedures:** Decide and agree upon on who makes what decisions and how

3



Enable and Execute

Once design of reopening and reclosing responses is decided and agreed upon, the next step is to prepare for implementation

- **Ensure operational capacity:** Plan and develop capacity for effective and agile reopening(s) to be able to swiftly switch to different scenarios of hybrid learning and in-person learning models. This includes regulation, staffing, infrastructure and safety equipment, and modes of transportation
- Once systems have defined their key triggers for reopening, they can **choose the optimal shift system** (staggered hours, days, weeks) for safe in-person learning hybrid learning and allocate staff accordingly. This may require filling capability or resource gaps (e.g., expanding teaching capacity through hiring additional teachers, aides, and coaches) and increasing training on health and safety procedures.
- **Communicate and coordinate with key stakeholders:** It is critically important to communicate and coordinate with key stakeholders to ensure full implementation of reopening plans. The stakeholders include the health authorities, teachers, parents, care personnel and where applicable, development partners.

4



Monitor and Adjust

As the situation continues to evolve rapidly, it is important to stay alert and agile. There needs to be effective mechanisms to constantly monitor and analyze the key indicators (i.e., triggers). The information should be then reported in timely manners for decision-making. The key decisions then need to be communicated to the stakeholders for their contribution and possible adjustment of the decisions.

While this chapter focuses on health, safety and resurgence protocols, referring to other chapters throughout is necessary as they are intricately related, particularly these four chapters



3. Health, safety and resurgence protocols

Evaluating the tradeoffs to school re-opening

Defining health and safety measures to put in place throughout the re-opening lifecycle

Preparing for potential resurgence by setting up the infrastructure to anticipate it and effectively respond to it



4. Re-enrolment

Identifying students at risk of dropout

Engaging students, parents and communities to ensure all students are back to school



5. Remediation

Bringing students to learning competency level, and catching up lost learning deriving from school closures and pre-existing learning gaps



6. Hybrid learning

Defining learning approach combining remote and in classroom learning during school reopening and in preparation for potential resurgence



8. Organizing for the response

Defining a new architecture to plan, coordinate, manage stakeholders and external partnerships

Developing required capabilities for an effective response



02

The problem

Why it is important

- Definition of health, safety and resurgence protocols and why they are important for reopening and re-closing
- Many countries are beginning to fully or partially reopen schools
- Why are health, safety and resurgence protocols important?

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Definition of health, safety and resurgence protocols

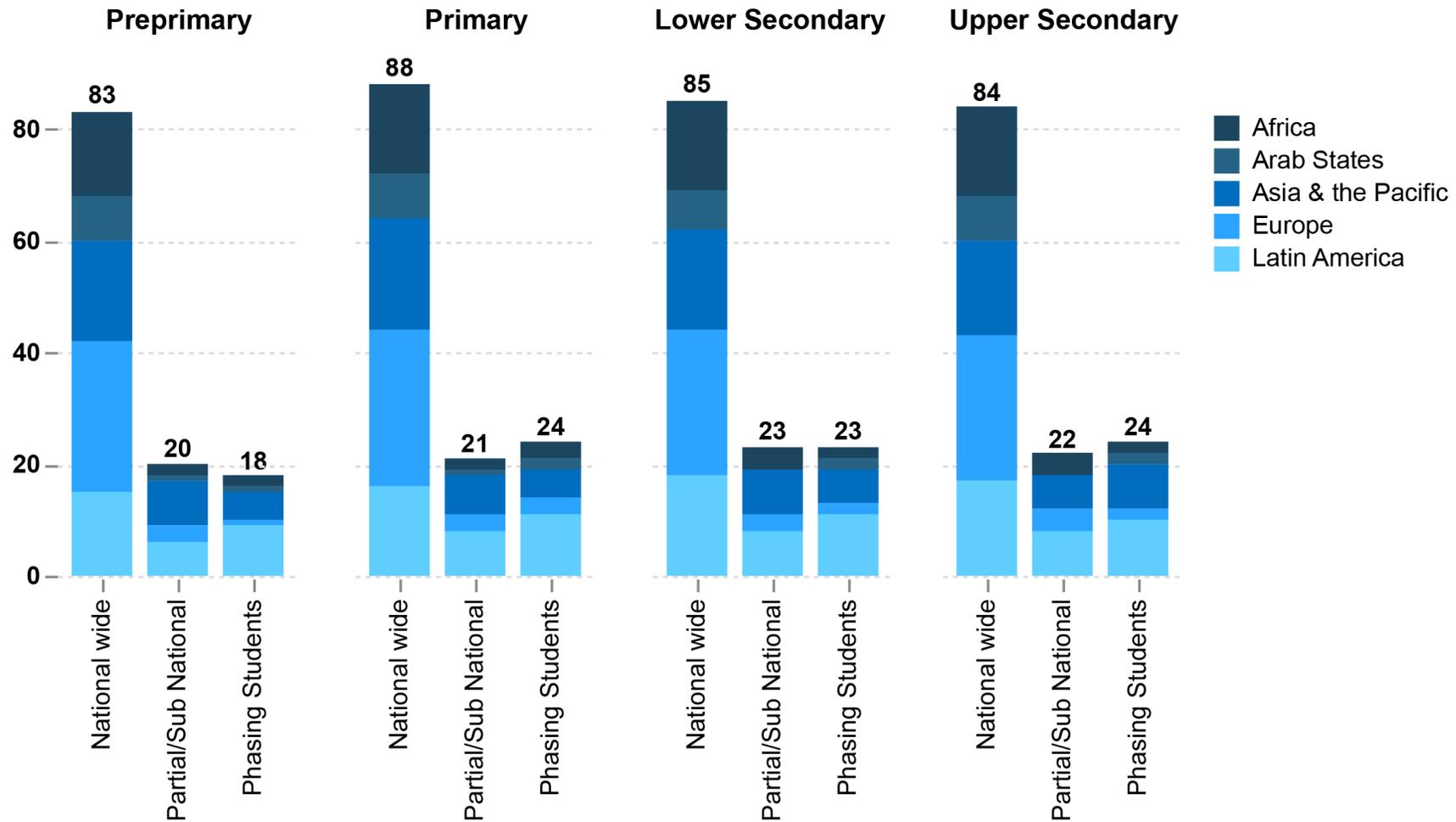
Health safety and resurgence protocols can be defined as the ongoing effort to define measures for a safe and healthy teaching and learning environment for in-person learning while monitoring the situation carefully prior to and during school reopening and preparing for possible resurgence.



Many countries are beginning to fully or partially reopen schools

Summary: status of school reopening by level around the world

AS OF JULY 2020





Many countries are beginning to fully or partially reopen schools

Individual countries: status of school reopening by level around the world¹

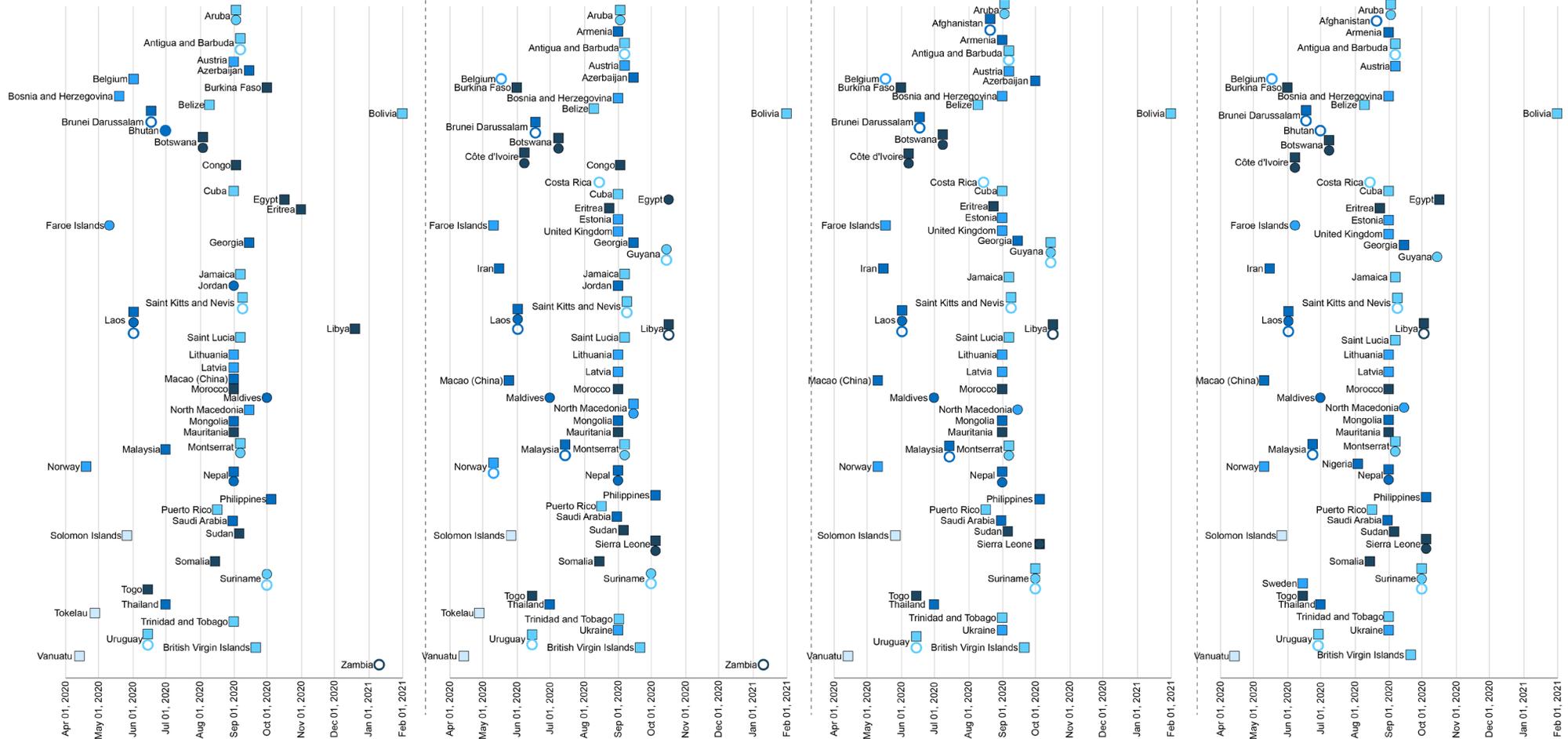
PLANNED AS OF JULY 2020

Preprimary

Primary

Lower Secondary

Upper Secondary



Source: UNESCO, UNICEF, WB Survey Results

Why are health, safety and resurgence protocols important?

At some point, schools have to reopen. How can we make reopening safe?

Vaccine is not likely to become available in time for in-person learning

- There is still great uncertainty about the virus
- Accelerated research is on-going, but it will take time for the vaccines to be made available

As the virus continues to circulate in the community, any school reopening decision needs to first ascertain reasonable protection from the virus

- Protecting the physical and mental health of the school population and preparing for a potential viral resurgence is key

Achieving the balance between learning needs and health and safety needs is complex and difficult

Learning is social. Many school activities are designed to facilitate human interactions, not to limit them

- Socialization is one of the main purposes of education
- It is difficult to ensure physical distancing among students, especially young children

Schools also provide holistic support for children

- Schools offer children physical and mental health support including protecting from domestic/community violence, mental health, physical needs (e.g. food)
- Keeping schools closed means children do not have access to this

2nd and 3rd waves of the Pandemic are anticipated

As the virus remains in the community, there is a risk of resurgence

- Previous pandemics had several waves
- Number of cases have increased in some countries that have reopened schools as well as broader social and economic activity



03

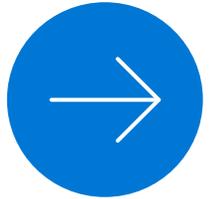
The response

Framework and practices

- The framework for school reopening (UNESCO, UNICEF, World Bank and WFP) puts great emphasis on protecting health and safety as the first step across four dimensions: safe operations, focus on learning, wellbeing & protection, and reaching the most marginalized
 - Understand and envision
 - Decide and design
 - Enable and execute
 - Monitor and adjust

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What does the UNESCO-UNICEF-WB-WFP Framework for School Reopening recommend and how does this chapter address them?

Source: [Framework for School Reopening \(UNESCO, UNICEF, World Bank and WFP\)](#)

Prior to reopening

Prepare with critical policies, procedures and financing plans needed to improve schooling, with a focus on safe operations, including strengthening remote learning practices.

Part of reopening process

Adopt proactive approaches to reintegrate marginalized and out-of-school children. Invest in water, sanitation and hygiene to mitigate risks and focus on remedial education to compensate for lost instructional time.

With schools reopening/reopened

Actively monitor health indicators, expanding focus on wellbeing and protection. Strengthen pedagogy, adapt remote education for blended teaching and learning, including knowledge on infection transmission and prevention.

How does this chapter support the operationalization of the Framework for School Reopening?

Prior to reopening

1. The chapter expands on the practical planning steps that education system leaders can take in different situations/contexts – **Understand & Envision: Assess the situation**

Part of reopening process

2. The chapter supports education system leaders to **Decide & Design: Define triggers and decisions for school operation scenarios**

With schools reopening/reopened

3. The chapter details steps to **Enable & Execute: Prepare for and implement the health, safety and resurgence protocols response and plan**

Monitor and adjust

4. Monitoring, adjusting and communications happen throughout the reopening process

Health safety and resurgence protocols requires a 3-step approach supported by continuous monitoring and adjustment

01 Understand & Envision: Assess the situation

- > **1A** Define **the overall vision** of successful resurgence planning and agree on **the priorities**
- > **1B** Assess **health and safety risks** related to school closure and opening
- > **1C** Assess the **capacity of educational institutions to comply with the new health and educational standards**
 - Regulations
 - Staffing (e.g., allocation of teachers)
 - Infrastructure and materials (e.g., additional classrooms, health equipment, materials)
 - Transportation (e.g., school buses, drivers)
 - Funding
- > **1D** **Understand and integrate concerns** of key stakeholders (e.g. surveys, focus groups)

02 Decide & Design: Define triggers and decisions for school operation scenarios

- > **2A** Decide which **regions and/or grades to prioritize** for in-person learning with a **priority towards vulnerable populations** (see Hybrid Learning Chapter)
- > **2B** **Design the standards for school reopening:**
 - Physical distancing
 - Use of masks in school settings
 - Ventilation
 - Hygiene and daily practices at school
 - Screening and management
- > **2C** **Map triggers to different scenarios of school re-opening and re-closure and determine the decision-making criteria and procedures**
 - Identify opening and closure points: across the spectrum of opening and closing actions at different levels
 - Agree on the decision-making protocol as well as roles and responsibilities of each unit

03 Enable & Execute: Prepare for and implement the health, safety and resurgence protocols response and plan

- > **3A** **Operationalize health, safety and resurgence protocols for school reopening:**
 - Physical distancing
 - Use of masks in school settings
 - Ventilation
 - Hygiene and daily practices at school
 - Screening and management
- > **3B** **Consult, coordinate and communicate** with the key stakeholders (e.g. parents, teachers, staff, other sectors like health, finance, transportation)

04 Monitor and Adjust: Stay alert and agile

- > **4A** Set up **mechanisms to monitor key indicators** of safe reopening and re-closing processes and outcomes
- > **4B** Set up an **adjustment mechanism** to continuously adapt reopening and re-closing measures to emerging needs

Health safety and resurgence protocols requires a 3-step approach supported by continuous monitoring and adjustment

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1A When defining the overall vision for health, safety and resurgence protocols, leaders need to make difficult decisions in a timely manner based on rapid assessments of risks, needs and capacities...



Assessment of risks and needs

- > Community health risks
- > Risks for students and teachers and other school staff
- > Education and child-protection, health and wellbeing risks (i.e., needs for schooling)



Assessment of capacity

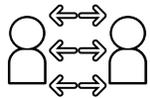
- > Capacity of school infrastructure to comply with health protocols and hygiene measures
- > Capacity to monitor and respond with agility to possible resurgence (e.g., staffing and transportation)
- > Capacity to mobilize additional resources and procure emergency safety kits (e.g. PPE)



Overall vision including

- > Priorities (e.g., who should return to school first?)
- > Roles and responsibilities (who does what?)
- > Funding
- > Monitoring

1A ... while balancing difficult trade-offs



Distancing

Keeping physical distancing of 1-2 meters across all levels



Face masks

Wearing face masks/coverings



Readiness

Not to reopen schools until the infrastructure is put in place (e.g., ventilation, disinfection)



Immediate shut-down

Closing entire class/grade/school with a confirmed case to ensure no further spread



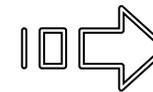
Social learning

Ensuring learning from social interaction, especially among the young learners



Communication

Ensuring face masks/coverings do not interfere with learning (e.g., phonetics)



Incremental

Reopen schools while improvements are made and alternative measures are taken (e.g., using outdoor spaces)



Maintaining learning

Maintain classes/grades/schools open while contact tracing is being done



1B What we know about COVID-19 and risks to and from children

ILLUSTRATIVE AS OF SEPTEMBER 2020

Evidence is still emerging, here is what we know as of September 2020...

Risks to children appear low but many things are still unclear

- Based on the best available data, COVID-19 appears to have a **limited direct burden on children's health**, accounting for about **8.5% of reported cases** globally, and very few deaths. (September 2020, [UNICEF, UNESCO, WHO](#))
- A CDC study found that young people aged below 21 years old represented **0.08%** of all U.S. COVID-19 deaths reported during the study period (September 2020, [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#))
- At the same time, the body of evidence is growing that children of all ages are susceptible to SARS-CoV-2 infection and contrary to early reports, might play a role in transmission (September 2020, [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#))

Risks to community/transmission appear low but dependent on local transmission trends

- Investigations of cases identified in school settings suggest that **child to child transmission in schools is uncommon**... particularly in preschools and primary schools (August 2020, [European Center for Disease Prevention and Control](#))
- A [South Korean](#) contact tracing study found that children ages 10-19 transmitted the virus within their own households at the same rate as adults, but that children 0-9 did not spread the virus nearly as much (October 2020, [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#))
- A Lancet study predicts that school closures alone prevent only 2-4% of deaths, much less than other social distancing interventions (April 2020, [The Lancet](#))

1B Key indicators for making school opening/closing decision should be identified in close collaboration with health authorities (1/2)

Types of risks	Risk triggers/indicators (indicative)
Community health risks (epidemiological risk)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • R_0 (basic reproduction number) • # of cases • Profiles of confirmed cases (e.g., age, clusters etc) • Growth of cases • Positivity rate • Increase of the hospitalization/death • Health system and public health capacities
Risks for students and teachers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attendance rate • # of students, teachers and staff with symptoms • # of school-related confirmed cases • # of staff at risk • # of students with underlying conditions or special needs • Degree of compliance with health and sanitary measures at schools • Health and sanitary situation outside schools
Education and child-protection risks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • # of economically and socially disadvantaged students • # of children/youths who are at risk of exploitation, negligence and violence • # of parents and caretakers who need childcare

Pay specific attention to the vulnerable groups

Examples of vulnerable and/or marginalized students:

- Minorities
- Adolescent girls
- Migrants, children forcibly displaced or refugees
- Children living with disabilities
- Children living in institutions
- Children living in poverty
- Children living in countries affected by conflict and other protracted crises
- Children living in overcrowded housing
- Children living in informal settlements
- Orphans
- Child-headed households
- Children who are separated from their caregivers
- Out of school children

Source: WHO (Forthcoming)

1C Rapid assessment of infrastructure, human, technical and financial resources and capacity can be conducted

Areas of assessment	Aspects to be assessed and key considerations
Education personnel	Availability, health status, motivation, etc. Foresee redeployment in case of loss of mobility as teachers may leave the affected areas, especially if they do not have fixed contracts
School infrastructure	School availability, potential needs for rehabilitation works and resources, including disinfection. Availability of WASH and WASH infrastructure.
School health environment	Availability of sanitation facilities separate for boys and girls, health equipment such as barriers including masks and gloves, clean water, soap, sanitizers, hand washing facilities, thermometers, etc
Support services	Sourcing and distribution of food supplies for school meals, availability and flexibility of transportation services etc
Resources	Overall financial impact of COVID-19 and status of school financing, capacities to mobilize external funding when needed

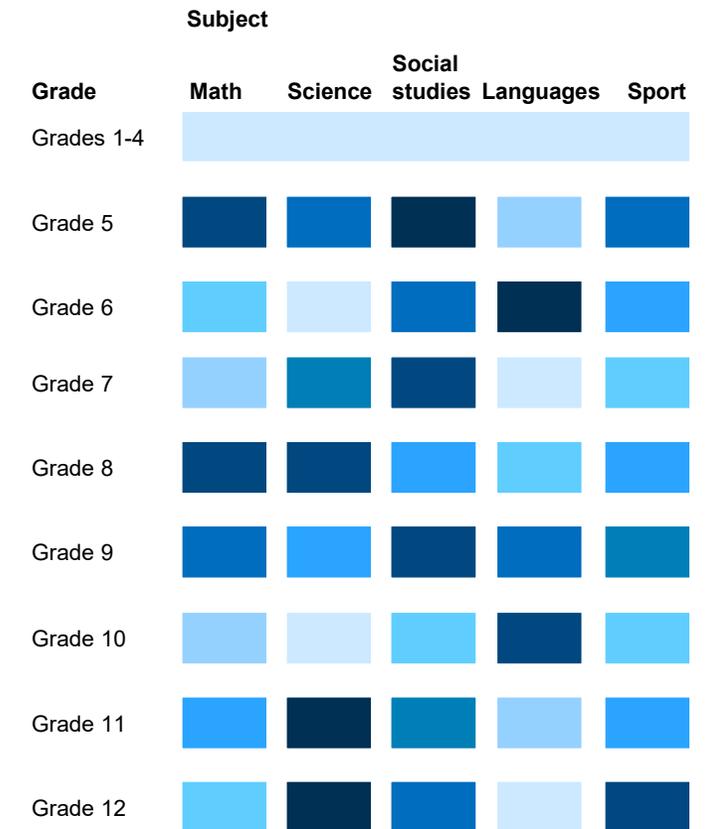
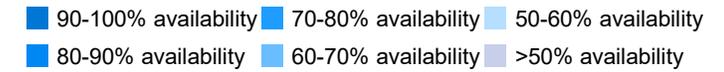
1C Education personnel: availability of current pool of teachers can be affected by different factors and can be segmented between grades and subjects (see [Chapter 6: Hybrid learning](#))

ILLUSTRATIVE

Teacher segmentation						
Factor	Vulnerable teachers	Suspected case	Uncomfortable with return to in-person	Compromised logistically	Available to work in person	
Description	Teachers that are part of the vulnerable group to the virus, due to age, health conditions, or other reasons	Teachers that have had contact with a suspected case and are unable to come to school due to the risk they pose to infecting other staff or the children	Teachers who live with someone who is vulnerable or are simply afraid and unwilling to return to work in person	Teachers might be unable to go to work due to logistical issues (e.g., their children's school is still not open, the transport they use to get to school is unavailable)	Teachers who do not have any factors that constrain their return to in-person classes	
Challenge	Cannot work in person	Cannot work in person	Uncomfortable with returning in-person	Needs support to be able to reach school	n/a	
Action	Assign to remote teaching and further develop capabilities for remote learning		Engage teachers and communicate about health and safety measures and allow them to make decision based on circumstances if they are comfortable	Take constraints into consideration and find ways to support (e.g. enable to bring children to work or create a customized schedule)	Engage to ensure teachers remain available	
Segment	Unavailable for in-person learning		May become available for in-person learning		Available	

- Context**
- Schools need to assess their teacher availability to work in person
 - Schools have several pools of teachers and due to specificities across grade and subject this segmentation needs to be done for each
 - This can help indicate which grades can be held in-person learning, and for students in hybrid learning which subjects to study in person
 - Teachers who are less familiar with teaching remotely can be prioritized to return for in-person learning if they are not in high risk groups and are comfortable with a return

Assessment of teacher capacity by grade and subject



1C School infrastructure and school health environment: safety measures define how many students can share the physical space available (see [Chapter 6: Hybrid learning](#))

Among example safety measures schools need to implement, some are related to classroom layout ...

Health and behavioral norms

- Use masks
- Ensure increase of circulation of outdoor air
- Post signs in highly visible locations that promote everyday protective measures
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces
- Avoid and discourage sharing objects

Physical infrastructure

- Adjust space seating either 1m or 2m apart
- Turn desks to face in the same direction or students sit only one side of tables
- Install physical barriers when difficult for physical distancing



... which can reduce physical space availability ...

Pre-COVID-19 classroom size and class size

Classroom size m ²	Class size No. pupils	Av. space per person (students + 1 teacher)	
52m ²	30	~1.7m ²	Costa Rica
50m ² ¹	24	~2.0m ²	France

Post-COVID-19, as classrooms remain the same, governments are issuing guidelines to limit number of students

Classroom size m ²	Class size No. pupils	Av. space per person (students + 1 teacher)	
52m ²	10	~5m ²	Costa Rica
	-66.0%		
50m ²	15 ²	~3m ²	France
	-37,5%		

-xx% Lost classroom capacity

... but can be mitigated by 3 levers

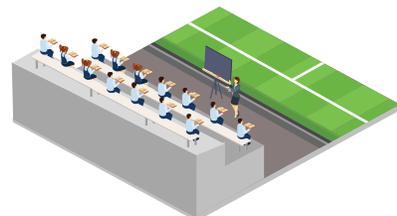
Hiring new spaces or not yet used



Repurposing other functional spaces like a hall



Leveraging outside spaces



It is necessary to consider the availability of basic hygiene services at schools (e.g., WASH standards)

There will be additional steps of preparation for locations that used schools as COVID-19 quarantine facilities during school closure

1 Minimum classroom size; 2 Reference value from the government Note: to be determined with and in accordance with public health authorities

1C Support services: supporting levers will influence schools' capacity to receive students for in-person learning (see [Chapter 6: Hybrid learning](#))

● Level of capacity at school re-opening

NOT EXHAUSTIVE



Transportation



How many students can one support safe transport to school for?

- School buses and public transportation capacity
- Switching to individual transportation (e.g., walking, biking or cars)



Cleaning



With the current cleaning schedule, how many students would it potentially be safe to receive?

- Frequency and rigorousness of cleaning rosters that ensure common areas and objects are frequently cleaned



PPE and other healthcare products



How many students can one safely receive given the expected supply of PPE?

- Volume of masks, hand sanitizer, and other equipment that can be necessary to ensure students and staff safety on premises



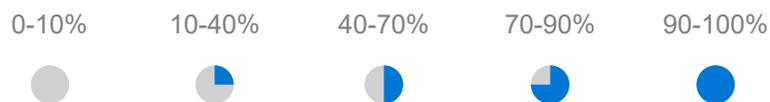
Catering



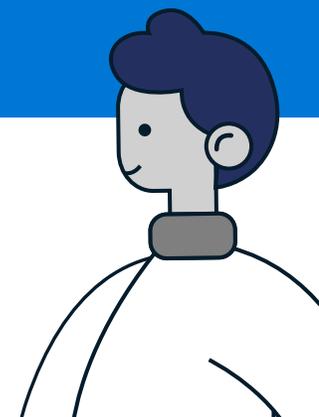
How many students can one offer food to?

- Interventions in the kitchen to abide by food production safety regulations or other external alternatives

School capacity for in-person learning



- The budget is the enabler of all the capacity levers (teacher and space availability and supporting levers) as it sustains increased payroll hours for teachers, admin staff, supervisors, janitors, extended infrastructure use, transportation of students, extra PPE, and healthcare products, etc.
- A school's potential to offer in-person learning will most likely be limited by staff, physical space or transportation, thus most attention could be channeled to expanding capacity in these areas
- Transportation can be limited up to 25% of normal capacity in any given day if the 2 meters distancing is required on buses



1C Support services: supporting levers will influence schools' capacity to receive students for in-person learning

Possible actors	Key PPE levers to maximize collective transport capacity		
	Face covering	Gloves	Hand sanitation
Drivers 	Face shield and/or Drivers barrier	✓	Before boarding
General student population 	Face covering		Before boarding
Critical students 	Case by case		Before boarding
Bus Terminal staff 	Face covering	✓	Wash hands often
Student aids & transportation nurses 	Face shield or Face covering	✓	Before boarding

Other key levers to maximize collective public transport

Maximize physical distance at all times to the greatest extent feasible in conjunction with **strict adherence to health and safety requirements**

Keep **windows open** on transport at all times during operation

Stagger school opening/closing times in close geographies to reduce the number of students using collective transport at a given time

If school bus...

Have a monitor (e.g., volunteer, student leader, staff member) for every bus to ensure strict adherence to these health and safety guidelines.

Assign students to a single bus (to facilitate future contact tracing) and a particular seat and if from the same household seat together

Levers to maximize individual transport

Work with local authorities to improve bicycle lanes and places of storage

Set alternative opening hours to avoid traffic jams to facilitate parent drop-off

1D Understand the concerns of the key stakeholders

NOT EXHAUSTIVE

Stakeholders	Potential key concerns	Approaches to engagement
Health authorities	Increased virus transmission and confirmed cases, pressures to health systems	Regular discussion and communication
Teachers and staff	Health risks, financial stability, employment Child-care needs	Surveys, interviews, online discussion
Parents	Health risks, child-care needs Delay in learning/exam preparation, well-being of children Lack of social interaction	Surveys, interviews, online discussion
Students	Health risks, delay in learning/exam preparation Lack of social interaction	Surveys, interviews, online discussion, counseling

Once the vision is set and agreed upon, possible scenarios and actions will be decided

01 Understand & Envision: Assess the situation

- > **1A** Define the **overall vision** of successful resurgence planning and agree on the **priorities**
- > **1B** Assess **health and safety risks** related to school closure and opening
- > **1C** Assess the **capacity of educational institutions to comply with the new health and educational standards**
 - Regulations
 - Staffing (e.g., allocation of teachers)
 - Infrastructure and materials (e.g., additional classrooms, health equipment, materials)
 - Transportation (e.g., school buses, drivers)
 - Funding
- > **1D** **Understand and integrate concerns** of key stakeholders (e.g. surveys, focus groups)

02 Decide & Design: Define triggers and decisions for school operation scenarios

- > **2A** Decide which **regions and/or grades to prioritize** for in-person learning with a **priority towards vulnerable populations** (see Hybrid Learning Chapter)
- > **2B** **Design the standards for school reopening:**
 - Physical distancing
 - Use of masks in school settings
 - Ventilation
 - Hygiene and daily practices at school
 - Screening and management
- > **2C** **Map triggers to different scenarios of school re-opening and re-closure and determine the decision-making criteria and procedures**
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03 Enable & Execute: Prepare for and implement the health, safety and resurgence protocols response and plan

- > **3A** **Operationalize health, safety and resurgence protocols for school reopening:**
 - Physical distancing
 - Use of masks in school settings
 - Ventilation
 - Hygiene and daily practices at school
 - Screening and management
- > **3B** **Consult, coordinate, and communicate** with the key stakeholders (e.g. parents, teachers, staff, other sectors like health, finance, transportation)

04 Monitor and Adjust: Stay alert and agile

- > **4A** Set up **mechanisms to monitor key indicators** of safe reopening and re-closing processes and outcomes
- > **4B** Set up an **adjustment mechanism** to continuously adapt reopening and re-closing measures to emerging needs

2A Decide which regions and/or grades to prioritize for in-person learning (see also [Chapter 6: Hybrid learning](#))

NOT EXHAUSTIVE

ILLUSTRATIVE

AS OF AUG 25th 2020

■ In-person method
 ■ Hybrid experience
 ■ Remote method

Types of hybrid models

	All students	Youngest students	Targeted crosscutting student population(s)	Mixed approach	Older students in important transition years
Illustrative representation					
Rationale	In contexts where there is limited COVID-19 transmission, full school return offers logistical simplicity, and equal access to the benefits of in-person instruction	Younger students may be harder to engage in a remote environment and their return to campus may enable their parents to return to work	Specific crosscutting student segments may be disproportionately negatively impacted by remote instruction (e.g., special education students, those with limited internet bandwidth)	Taking a nuanced approach allows at least some in-person instruction to be offered to all student groups who are likely to benefit most	Older students may benefit from in-person instruction as they prepare for high-stakes exams and may be more likely than younger students to adhere to health protocols

Example	New Zealand	Denmark	United Kingdom	Israel	South Africa
	Due to the highly limited community spread of COVID-19, New Zealand fully resumed in-person instruction for all students at the same time	Denmark was the first country in Europe to begin to reopen schools and began by resuming instruction for students in grades 5 and below	The U.K. prioritized maintaining in-person instruction for students enrolled in alternative provision (AP) programmes, which educate several categories of at-risk students	Israel first resumed in-person instruction for grades 1-3 and 11-12 as well as for special education and select groups of at-risk students	South Africa resumed in-person instruction for its 7 th and 12 th grade students first to help them prepare for important examinations

2B Design the standards for school reopening

Example guidelines (WHO, UNICEF, UNESCO)

Physical distancing at school

Physical distancing measures can be applied to individuals (in and outside classrooms) and through administrative measures that aim to keep groups apart (cohorting, staggering, alternating distance learning with presence in school, where possible, etc.).

1 meter is the minimum recommended distance for schools in areas with community/cluster transmissions

Use of masks in school settings

- Children aged 5 years and under should not be required to wear masks
- For children between six and 11 years of age, a risk-based approach should be applied to the decision to use a mask
- Children and adolescents 12 years or older should follow the national mask guidelines for adults
- Teacher and support staff may be required to wear masks when they cannot guarantee at least a 1-metre distance from others
- All efforts should be made to ensure the use of a mask does not interfere with learning
- Children should not be denied access to education because of mask wearing or the lack of a mask because of low resources or unavailability

Ventilation

- Consider using natural ventilation
- Ensure adequate ventilation and increase total airflow supply to occupied spaces
- If heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) systems are used, they should be regularly inspected, maintained and cleaned

Key operational questions for education/school leaders

- What are the **tradeoffs between 1 meter and 2 meter** distancing measures? This affects the **number of students** that schools might be able to accommodate within premises without changes to structure or finding alternative spaces
- Use of **masks vs face shields**
- **Tradeoffs in learning and socializing** especially for younger children if masks are used
- **Where** should masks be worn? Throughout school premises or just along the corridors/in certain rooms?
- Should **parents** be made to wear masks if permitted on school grounds?
- How can schools **support teachers in teaching** with masks on?
- Should **improving ventilation infrastructure not be possible in the short-term** (e.g. during winter), should in-person learning still take place?

2B Design the standards for school reopening

Example guidelines (WHO, UNICEF, UNESCO)

Key operational questions for education/school leaders

Hygiene and daily practices at school

- Educate everyone in the school about prevention of COVID-19
- Create a schedule for frequent hand hygiene
- Schedule regular cleaning of the school environment daily
- Assess what can be done to limit risk of exposure, or direct physical contact
- Put in place respiratory and hand hygiene and physical distancing measures in transportation

- How frequent should hand-washing be?
- Should schools also organize education on COVID-19 for parents?

Screening and management of sick students, teachers and other school staff

- Enforce the policy of “staying at home if unwell”
- Create a checklist for parents/students /staff to decide whether they can go to school
- Waive the requirement for a doctor’s note to excuse absences
- Consider daily screening for history of fever or feeling feverish
- Ensure students who have been in contact with a COVID-19 case stay home for 14 days

- What protocols/guidelines to put in place for each COVID-19 known symptoms?
- What protocols/guidelines to put in place for school/teachers if cases are detected in their classrooms?
- Should screening be conducted at school entries or within school premises?

2C School operation scenarios should be decided based on risks and readiness

Intensity of SARS-CoV-2 transmission and general considerations for school operations ([WHO](#), [UNICEF](#), [UNESCO](#))

No cases	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An area with no cases detected locally (no laboratory-confirmed cases locally in an area with comprehensive surveillance). All schools remain open and implement COVID-19 prevention and control measures
Sporadic cases	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An area experiencing one or more cases, imported or locally. In this situation, all schools will be open (or re-opened if good control of previously widespread transmission has been achieved through implementation of public health measures)
Clusters transmission	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An area experiencing cases clustered in time, limited geographic location and/or by common exposures. In this situation, most schools will remain open, implementing COVID-19 prevention and control measures. Authorities may consider closing schools as part of broader public health and social measures (PHSM) in the areas experiencing an expansion in the number of clusters that includes schools.
Community transmission	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An area experiencing larger outbreaks of local transmission defined through an assessment of factors including, but not limited to: large numbers of cases not able to be linked to transmission chains; large numbers of cases from sentinel lab surveillance and multiple unrelated clusters in several areas. Depending on the trends and intensity of the transmission, local authorities may consider a risk-based approach for the operation of school and other community-wide PHSM, including school closure, particularly in areas with increasing trends of COVID-19 cases, hospitalizations for COVID-19 and COVID-19 deaths; any schools remaining open should adhere strictly to COVID-19 guidelines.



2C School operation scenarios should be decided based on risks and readiness

AS OF SEPTEMBER 2020

Risks associated with school activities (1): Example from Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

EXAMPLE

Risk levels	Activities
Lowest risk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students and teachers engage in virtual-only classes, activities, and events
Some risk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hybrid Learning Model: Some students participate in virtual learning and other students participate in in-person learning Small, in-person classes, activities, and events Cohorting, alternating schedules, and staggered schedules are applied rigorously No mixing of groups of students and teachers throughout/across school days Students and teachers do not share objects Students, teachers, and staff follow all steps to protect themselves and others at all times including proper use of face masks, social distancing, hand hygiene Regularly scheduled (i.e., at least daily or between uses) cleaning and disinfection of frequently touched areas implemented with fidelity
Medium risk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hybrid Learning Model: Most students participate in in-person learning, some students participate in virtual learning Larger in-person classes, activities, and events Cohorting, alternating schedules, and staggered schedules are applied with some exceptions Some mixing of groups of students and teachers throughout/across school days Students and teachers minimally share objects Students, teachers, and staff follow all steps to protect themselves and others such as proper use of face masks, social distancing, hand hygiene Regularly scheduled cleaning and disinfection of frequently touched areas largely implemented with fidelity

2C

School operation scenarios should be decided based on risks and readiness

AS OF SEPTEMBER 2020

EXAMPLE

Risks associated with school activities (2): Example from Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Risk levels	Activities
Higher risk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students and teachers engage in in-person only learning, activities, and events Students minimally mix between classes and activities Students and teachers share some objects Students, teachers, and staff follow some steps to protect themselves and others at all times such as proper use of face masks, social distancing, hand hygiene Irregular cleaning and disinfection of frequently touched areas
Highest risk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students and teachers engage in in-person only learning, activities, and events Students mix freely between classes and activities Students and teachers freely share objects Students, teachers, and staff do not/are not required to follow steps to protect themselves and others such as proper use of face masks, social distancing, hand hygiene Irregular cleaning and disinfection of frequently touched areas

 Source: [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#)

Examples



In France, once 3 students in the same class are confirmed to have COVID-19, the whole class is considered "contacts a risque" meaning that they all have to stay home for 7 days. Source: <https://www.education.gouv.fr/suspicion-ou-confirmation-de-cas-covid-19-ce-qu-il-faut-faire-305730>



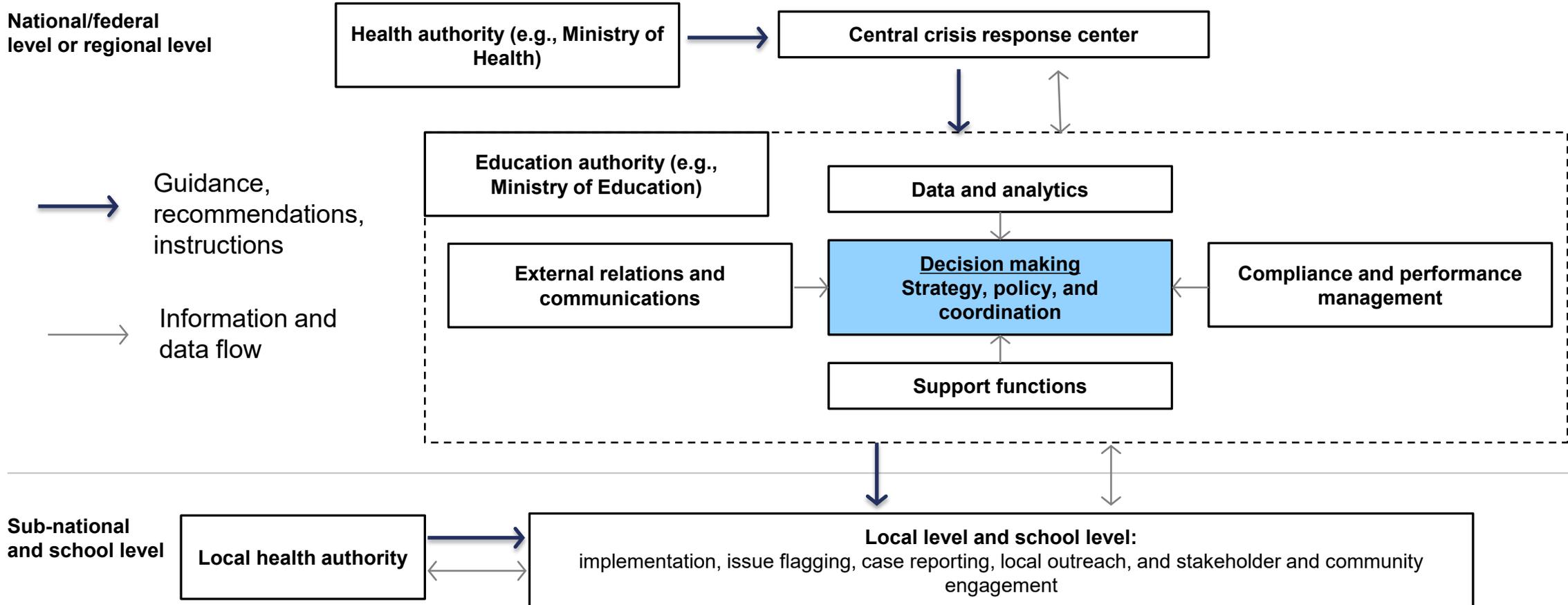
In the Republic of Korea, when there is a confirmed case, schools need to request all students, teachers and staff members to go into self-quarantine, replace all classes with online classes, and carry out measures to identify suspected cases in cooperation with health authorities. Source: Expert interview



In South Africa, following the recognition of a cluster of cases (when over 25% of the class are suspected or confirmed to have COVID-19), it may be considered appropriate to temporarily close a class, a grade, or a section of the schools to facilitate environmental cleaning, quarantine and isolation for no longer than 2 days. Source: Standard Operating Procedures for the Containment and Management of COVID-19 for Schools and School Communities. September 2020

2C There should be a clear decision-making protocol in order to effectively respond (see [Chapter 8: Organizing for the response](#))

Illustrative response decision-making structure



! Important to clearly define mandate at each level to leave schools with appropriate degree of freedom to get organized

Once planned actions are decided and agreed upon, prepare for execution

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3A Ensure operational capacity in key areas



Regulations

- Staffing requirements/qualifications
- Procurement regulations
- Attendance requirements



Japan - Flexibilities introduced to teacher qualification and license renewal requirements, as well as the schedule of curriculum implementation.



Hungary - Developing a central list of volunteer educators that is available at the site of the Educational Authority of Hungary.



Luxembourg - Additional staff (not qualified teachers) are hired to provide additional support.



Burkina Faso - Free distribution of soap to schools; Providing hand-washing facilities to some schools and institutions



Singapore -Providing meals support to students who normally receive meals subsidies for food consumed in schools.



UK- Schools can claim up to a maximum amount that will depend on their size, and will be no more than £75,000 per school.



Ireland - Additional funds will be allocated by the government to schools, to enable them to employ replacement teaching, SNA & administrative staff.



Staffing

- Develop staff allocation plan for each scenario
- Provide additional training where needed
- Hire more teachers



Infrastructure and materials

- Continue investing in remote learning infrastructure and materials (e.g., teaching/learning contents)
- Order and distribute PPE (for teachers at least)
- Upgrade ventilation systems



Transportation and support services

- Analyze transportation route(s) and drivers and develop response plan for each scenario
- Find more buses or drivers



Funding

- Mobilize additional funding (e.g., government funding, private sector, development partners)

3B Clear communication with the key stakeholders is the key to successful operationalization of health, safety and resurgence protocols (see also Chapter 8: Organizing for the response)

Who should be reached out to?

- Customize targeted communications for all key stakeholders, including school administrators, teachers and other school staff, parents, students, private sector players and development partners
- Ensure guidelines are specifically tailored to each level's needs, e.g., daycare, primary, secondary
- Prioritize vulnerable segments, especially those with low access to technology

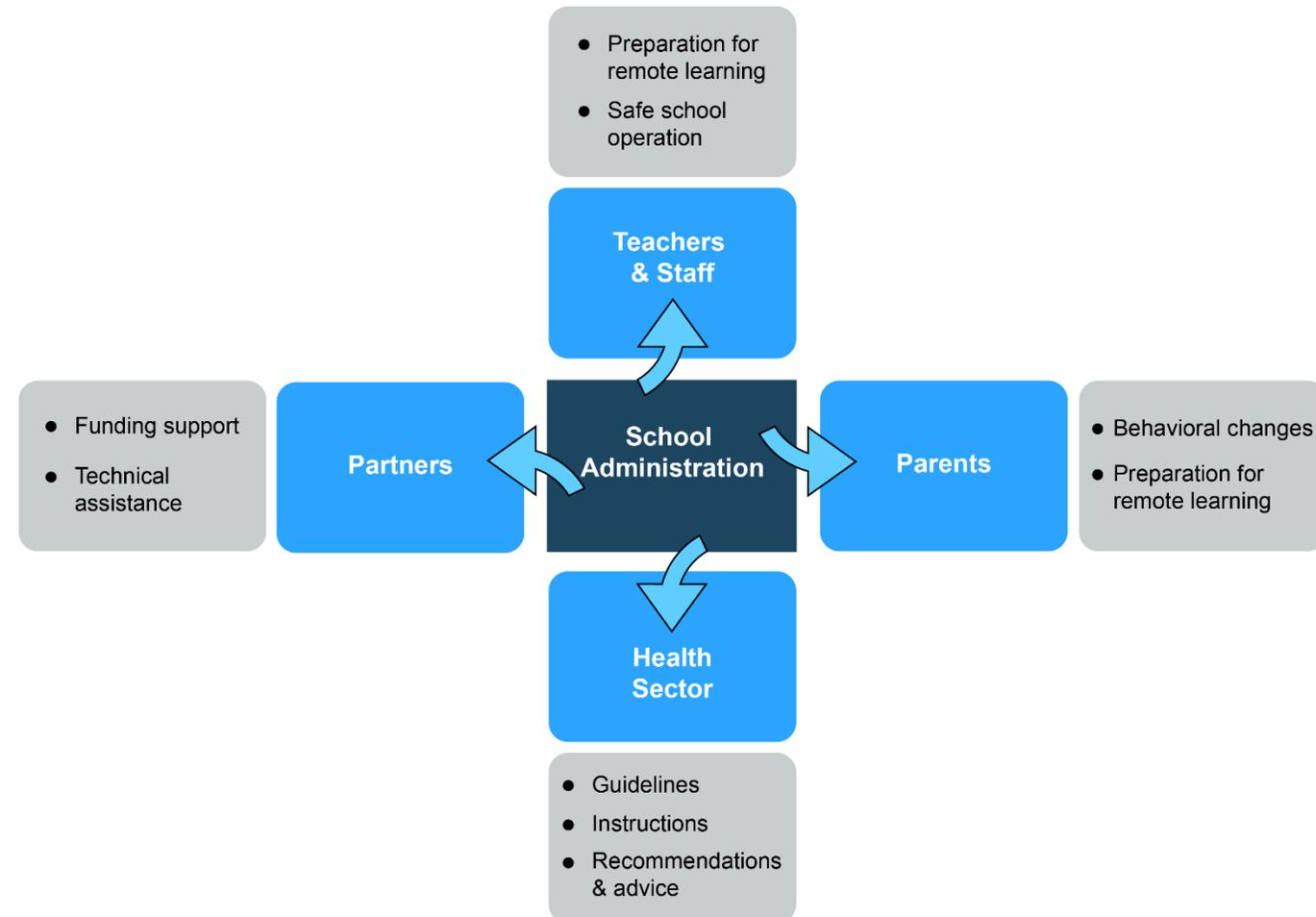
How should information be disseminated?

- Make it two-way – listen as well as inform/guide
- Leverage multiple channels – both digital (e.g., WhatsApp, websites) and physical (e.g., posters, billboards) – to ensure outreach to all
- Ensure regular updates to new developments and maintain a clear, single source of truth for all layers (i.e., federal, regional, school levels)
- Be proactive, engage early and do not hesitate to overcommunicate!

What should be covered?

- Cover information on the following topics
 - Interventions and measures to ensure health and safety
 - Status updates and reports on cases
 - Updates to assessment, curriculums, methods
 - Available tools and resources
 - Myths and misinformation
- Ensure adequate time for preparation between announcement and enforcement
- Provide reassurance to teachers and parents

Indicative roles of key stakeholders:



Constantly monitor the situation and adjust the actions when necessary

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04 Monitor and Adjust: Stay alert and agile

- > **4A** Set up **mechanisms to monitor key indicators** of safe reopening and re-closing processes and outcomes
- > **4B** Set up an **adjustment mechanism** to continuously adapt reopening and re-closing measures to emerging needs

4A Monitoring and adjustment are continuous processes to support health, safety and resurgence protocols



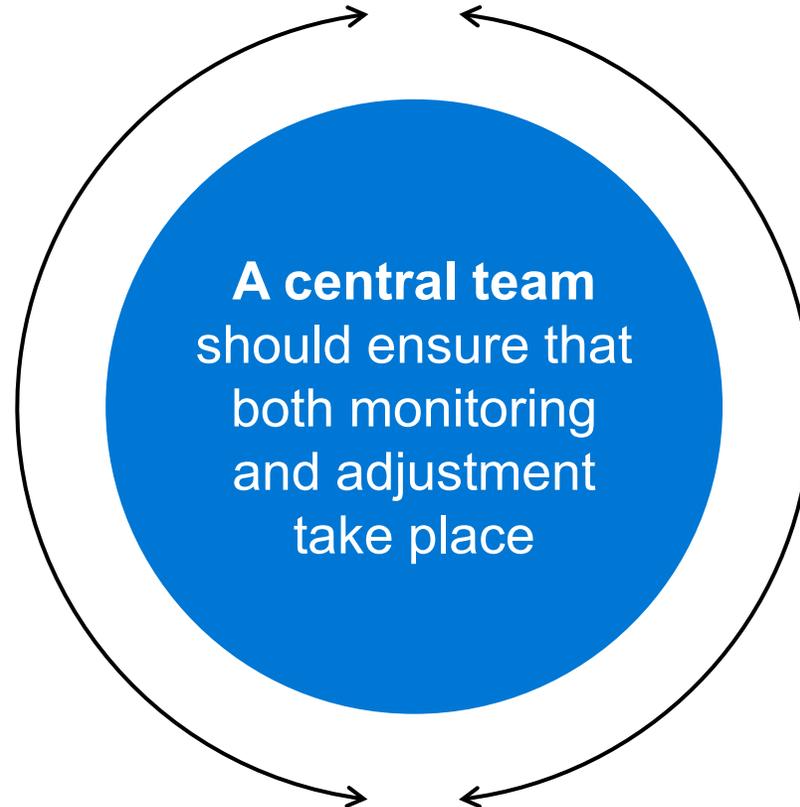
Monitor

Regularly (e.g., daily) monitor the key triggers and inform the decision-making authority in a timely manner.

Information to track includes:

1. Number of cases in schools and across grade levels
2. Compliance to set guidelines

4A



4B



Adjust

Based on the data, make adjustments to resurgence plans and operationalization mechanisms

Analyze what worked or what didn't work within a set timeline (e.g. 6 months)

The central team should agree on the monitoring procedures and protocols (e.g., who collects which information, who shares it) and adjustment processes (e.g., who makes which decisions based on certain information)

See also "[Chapter 8: Organizing for the response](#)" for additional details on the central team



04

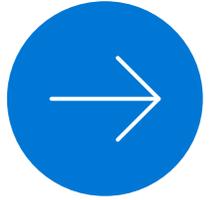
The checklist

Summary of actions

- Based on the framework, countries can tactically implement health, safety and resurgence protocols through four action checklists
 - Define vision of health, safety and resurgence protocols
 - Define school opening and closure scenarios
 - Prepare and implement
 - Monitor and adjust

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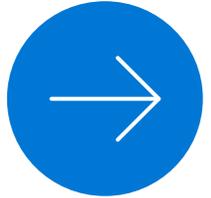
05

Case studies

Lessons learned

- Countries have started implementing safe reopening and resurgence planning
- Brief examples of practices: Sierra Leone, Antigua and Barbuda, South Africa, Austria, Bahrain, United Kingdom
- More detailed case study: Denmark, Kumamoto City, Japan, Republic of Korea and Singapore

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Countries have implemented health, safety and resurgence protocols

01

Brief examples of practices



Sierra Leone



Antigua and Barbuda



South Africa



Austria



Bahrain



United Kingdom

02

More detailed case study



Denmark



Kumamoto City, Japan



Republic of Korea



Singapore

Countries have chosen different approaches according to their context

Approach	Country	Example
Part of re-opening		Sierra Leone - Providing Psychosocial and mental health support to learners through radio discussion, debates on television and the support to counter interrupted school's meal service.
		Antigua and Barbuda - Schools being inspected by the Ministry of Health to ensure that they are up to the guidelines/protocols.
		South Africa - has implemented a risk-adjusted differentiated approach by creating a dashboard with 5 alert levels for the health situation in different regions and corresponding triggers and decisions to take in the school context. Regardless of the alert level, they outline minimum Basic Hygiene and Sanitation standards in the event of school reopening such as social distancing, wearing of facial masks by all, and daily screening
With Schools re-opened		Austria - The Ministry is preparing organizational and safety measures for different scenarios: a) low infection rate b) cluster at school, classes or families c) high infection rate. Teaching formats will be adjusted depending on the epidemiological situation.
		Bahrain - social distancing between students and teachers at all times, monitoring of the temperature upon entry, sterilization of the surfaces on a daily basis, including the availability of all personal hygiene and sterilization equipment to students, and special entrances for parents when necessary.
		United Kingdom - The UK is replacing children's school bags with a "box file" carrying books and stationery. These box files will be kept in the school at the end of each day and wiped down before they are used again the following morning. School books and other equipment would not be brought home.

COVID-19 led to school closures throughout Denmark on March 16 2020, followed by four phased reopenings



AS OF OCTOBER 2020

Emergency regulations



April ...

Reopening of daycare (**children aged 0-5 years old**) and school for **children aged 6-12**

Younger children benefit less from distance learning and were thus prioritized to go back to school

... May ...

Reopening of school for **children aged 13-16**

Including boarding schools with "family bubbles" of 8 students (exempted from distance measures)

... June ...

Reopening of **other schools and teaching institutions**

... August

Back to normal (end of emergency regulations regarding teaching. However, daycare and teaching institutions are still obliged to follow health guidelines)

Even during the lockdown period in March to April, emergency care and schooling continued to be provided to children whose parents have societal functions (i.e. essential workers), and also to those who come from complicated family situations as well as special needs.

Denmark's safe reopening strategy followed the 3-step approach supported by continuous monitoring and adjustment



01 Understand and Envision: Assess the needs and capabilities

- > **1A** Prior to reopening, the Danish authorities identified **key guiding principles** for reopening.
i.e. WHY reopen?
 - **Kids benefit from being in daycare and school** – especially the most marginalized
 - **The society needs to continue running - but not at the expense of lives**
- > **1B** They assess the **overall health situation** in the country/municipalities and decided that **reopening was possible, because:**
 - **Pandemic somewhat under control**
 - **Flexible and collaborative system**

02 Decide and Design: Determine the reopening model

- > **2A** They compared **health and safety scenarios** against the **system's readiness** for different learning options and available budget
- Before deciding on a phased reopening approach
- > **2B** They prioritized lower-grade/younger children to come back to day care and school first.
 - > **2C** **And outlined plans to phase in more students** over time as epidemiological conditions improve

03 Enable and Execute: Prepare for and implement the safe learning continuation plan

- > **3A** Denmark's reopening plans were enabled by **emergency regulations**
- > **3A** As well as **budget support** to municipalities: **2.6 billion DKR** were allocated to municipal welfare areas, amongst them public schools and day-care.
- > **3B** **Consultations, coordination, and communication** with the key stakeholders (e.g. parents, teachers, staff, other sectors like health, finance, transportation) were conducted regularly.

04 Monitor and adjust: evaluate safe reopening experience

- > **4A** Set up **mechanisms to monitor key indicators** of safe reopening processes and outcomes
- > **4B** Set up an **adjustment mechanism** to continuously adapt reopening measures to emerging needs
- > **4B** Effectively and regularly **communicate** at each key step with stakeholders



Denmark's safe reopening strategy followed the 3-step approach supported by continuous monitoring and adjustment

... (iii) flexibility in adjusting plans ...

Denmark's school reopening process has been guided by high flexibility.

Guidelines on school reopening have been produced through an iterative process following consultations with key stakeholders. They are also flexible in their approach – instead of insisting for all schools to reopen, they give the possibility for decisions to be taken at the municipal and school-level on the condition of meeting the safe reopening guidelines

... supported by constant monitoring and evaluation ...

The flexibility in adjusting plans has been supported by constant monitoring and evaluation.

Regulations and guidelines have been reviewed regularly throughout, at times only a few weeks apart.

... leading to robust safe distancing measures

Each time updated guidelines are introduced, they reflect safe distancing measures that are tried and tested and adapted to the current health situation in the country.

At the beginning, the guidelines were focused very much on spatial stipulations (e.g. parents were generally not allowed in premises. Rigid rules of 3m² distancing per child)

Following feedback from school staff, teachers, and parents, the authorities realized that space guidelines were too rigid and turned their focus on hygiene and cleaning in follow-up guidelines.



Denmark integrated resurgence planning into their school reopening strategy

... in close collaboration with health authorities ...

- Health authorities may recommend local school closures or give guidance to schools, from individual student isolation to closure of the entire school

... with clear indication of duration and guidelines for each symptom...

- In cases school closures are decided, either full or partial closures, such closure may last up to 4 weeks, which may be extended for 2 weeks at a time if necessary
- The guidelines provide advice on what to do when symptoms arise
 - Even for symptoms that are not typical for COVID-19 (e.g. runny nose)

... with regulations in place for school closures as well as transition to hybrid learning

- Regulations are in place describing procedures in case of school closures
- Regulations are also put in place describing the procedures for shifting to distance learning in case of full or partial school closures.



AS OF OCTOBER 2020

In Japan, a new style of education is being introduced amid rising COVID-19 cases

By March 2020, almost 100% of schools were closed to curb the pandemic

- The first COVID-19 case was reported in Japan on January 14, 2020
- Following a rise in cases, the government requested **a nation-wide school closure on 27 February** for two weeks, which was then subsequently extended by most of the boards of education and schools
- The **nation-wide closure ended on 2 April**, while localized closure continued in most affected areas
- By 16 March, **almost 100% of the schools were closed**

Schools are making efforts to ensure learning opportunities for all, while the concerns for the 2nd wave are rising

- The **state of emergency was lifted** on 25 May throughout the country
- **Schools started to gradually open from Mid-May and were fully opened across the country from 1 June**
- Schools in Japan usually have approximately 6 weeks of summer holidays in July and August (actual schedule and duration may differ depending on the location)
- In 2020, **most of the schools shortened the summer holidays** to compensate for the lost learning
- The number of daily confirmed cases in July/August exceeded the previous records, **raising concerns for the 2nd wave**

The new guidelines focus on safe school operation and limited school closure in case of resurgence

- Schools are preparing for **“new normal” and “life with Corona”**, anticipating **the needs for long-term adjustments to educational settings**
- **Government approved additional funding for education¹** (April and June 2020) in response to COVID-19 as part of stimulus packages
- **Avoiding 3Cs** (closed spaces, crowded places, close-contact setting) is being enforced throughout schools
- Nation-wide school closure is not foreseen at the time of writing (August 2020) and **school closures during possible resurgence(s) are to be localized and targeted in principle** (e.g., individual students isolation & testing, disinfection and closure of 1-3 days where necessary)

¹ https://www.mext.go.jp/a_menu/yosan/r01/1420672.htm



Kumamoto City – a city with 741,000 population with 60,000 primary and secondary students

Kumamoto was less affected in the early periods of the pandemic, but cases are rising

- Until May, daily confirmed cases in Kumamoto did not exceed 3 per day
- For almost two months, there was no new case found in Kumamoto City
- However, since late July, daily cases started to increase
- As of 10 August 2020, no case has been reported in Kumamoto City schools

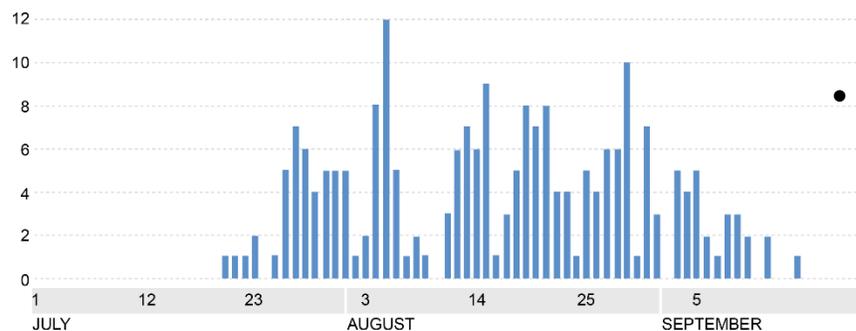
Kumamoto City quickly responded to the school closure in March with online learning

- Kumamoto City Board of Education covers all public primary (92) and lower secondary (42) schools in the city
- Following the government's request to close schools, an emergency board meeting was held to determine issues related to school closure with consideration to: (1) local epidemiological situation; and (2) remote learning readiness

Schools reopened gradually in May/June and the school calendar was adjusted

- Schools started to open gradually from 25 May and returned to full-time, face-to-face schooling over 3 weeks. From 8 June, schools were fully open.
- Summer holiday was shortened by 6 days. The Board reviewed pros and cons of three options (no change, shorten by 6 days, shorten by 12 days) before making the decision.

- All schools immediately shifted to interactive online learning upon school closure (only 5% of schools in Japan were able to do so¹)





Kumamoto City's safe reopening strategy followed the 3-step approach supported by continuous monitoring and adjustment

01 Understand and Envision: Assess the needs and capabilities

- > **1A** Prior to reopening, Kumamoto City leaders identified **key guiding principles** for continuation of learning based on the existing initiatives, with minimizing school closure as the priority
- > **1B** They regularly assessed the health risks in close collaboration with health authorities
Conditions of schools were regularly reported and assessed
- > **1C** **Transparent and participatory decision-making processes** were in place prior to the Pandemic, which was further enhanced in response to COVID-19

02 Decide and Design: Determine the reopening model

- > **2A** Kumamoto City took a **staggered and phased approach to school reopening over 3 weeks**:
25 May 2020: 50% of students come to schools physically (maximum of the number of students in a classroom limited to 20)
1 June 2020: All students come to schools physically for half day (maximum number of students in a classroom increased to 40)
8 June 2020: All students come to schools physically for full-day schooling
- > **2B** Integration of ICT into education was already progressing in Kumamoto City, but the City Education Board decided to accelerate the implementation to ensure continuity of learning
- > **2B** Additional staff needs were defined and recruited at schools to ensure compliance to the new health standards

03 Enable and Execute: Prepare for and implement the safe learning continuation plan

- > **3A** Kumamoto City **accelerated implementation of its ICT integration project**, aiming to ensure every primary and secondary student will have a tablet by January 2021
Additional financial resources were made available both from the national government and from the city budget
- > **3A** **Further capacity development** for teachers on output-oriented learning to ensure effective remote learning
- > **3B** **Consultation, coordination, and communication** with the key stakeholders prior to and during school reopening were held, and the decision-making processes were well-documented and made available to the public on the City website

04 Monitor and adjust: evaluate safe reopening experience

- > **4A** **Key information was collected, shared and analyzed** from schools and community daily (sometimes multiple times per day)
- > **4B** **Key decisions were made based on data and evidence**
- > **4B** Effective and regular communication was ensured as the key decisions were made



Kumamoto City's quick and organized response to COVID-19 and preparation for its resurgence(s) are based on several key factors

1. Understand & Envision

- **Participatory decision-making process led by a visionary leader:** Following the government's request to close all schools, Directors of the Board of Education were requested to review the local context and make the final decisions. While the Director could have made the decision unilaterally, an emergency board meeting was held to decide whether or not to follow the government's request. The discussion covered many topics, including the local epidemiological conditions as well as risks of closing schools.
- **Building upon the existing initiatives:** Even before the pandemic, Kumamoto City had been a front runner in integrating ICT in education and shifting from input-oriented to output-oriented learning.
- **Regular information collection and communication with schools throughout the process:** Kumamoto City Board of Education had been regularly collecting information from schools and teachers as well as has had established communication channels prior to the pandemic. The timely information was useful for assessing the risks and capacities to make decisions.

2. Decide & Design

- The Board of Education **closely monitors the key information and make necessary decisions.** For instance, the decision on shortening summery holiday was based on the pros and cons of the different options and informed by the results of a survey.
- Opting for **ensuring continuity of learning with minimized school closure**, Kumamoto City Board of Education put in place the following measures (non-exhaustive)
 - **Further integration of ICT in education:** Understanding that its readiness for online learning prior to the pandemic was one of the keys to successful and rapid transition to remote learning during the initial school closure, the Board of Education will accelerate its effort to further integrate ICT in education. This includes investment in infrastructure as well as pedagogical shift from input-based to output-oriented learning.
 - **Ensuring safe school operation:** The Board of Education will also recruit additional staff to ensure school operation in compliance with health and sanitary guidelines.



Kumamoto City's quick and organized response to COVID-19 and preparation for its resurgence(s) are based on several key factors

3. Enable & Execute

- **Acceleration of investment in remote learning:** In response to the pandemic and in preparation for future possible shift to remote learning due to resurgence, Kumamoto City Board of Education decided to accelerate its existing investment in enhancing online learning capacity. It is planned that every primary and secondary student will have a tablet by January 2021.
- **Additional support to secondary teachers for output-oriented learning:** Information collected from teachers during the school closure indicated that secondary students could benefit more from online learning if it is more interactive and output-oriented. This is due to the fact that secondary pedagogy remained more input-based rather than output-oriented, compared to primary education. Further pedagogical reform and training are planned as a follow-up.
- **Mobilizing additional funding:** For the 2020-21 FY, Kumamoto City Board of Education allocated additional USD 14 million to education (2.4% of the total budget for education), partly funded by the government stimulus packages but also from the City budget.
- **Effective and transparent communication:** The processes of key decision-making were documented in detail and made available to public via Kumamoto City Website.

4. Monitor & Adjust

- **Regular communication with health authority:** The Board of Education is in daily (sometimes multiple times/day) contact with the local health authority to share the real-time information.
- **Active information collection from schools and parents:** The Board of Education is regularly administering surveys and other means of information collection from schools as well as parents. The results are made available to public and used for decision-making.
- **Evidence-based decision-making:** The Board of Education makes the key decisions based on the data and information. For instance, the decision related to changing the duration of summer holiday required a revision of the existing rules and regulations. The decision was made based on the analysis of pros and cons of three different options as well as the results of the survey conducted.



Lessons learnt – The case of Kumamoto City demonstrates some key elements of successful safe learning continuation planning, enabled by strong leadership with a long-term vision



Continuous innovation

Kumamoto City was already a front runner in online learning prior to the pandemic



Evidence-based decision-making

Every decision is made based on data and information that is collected and analyzed in a timely manner



Updating regulations

As part of the ongoing reform, Kumamoto City had started reviewing and relaxing rules and regulations to enhance agility



Transparent Communication

Decision-making processes by the Board of Education are documented and disseminated



Close and regular collaboration with health sector

The Board of Education and the local health authority constantly share real-time information and the health authority provides prompt health advices

← LEADERSHIP AND LONG-TERM VISION →



COVID-19 led to school closures throughout Korea on April 20, 2020 followed by four phased reopening

Emergency regulations



April ...

98.9% attended online classes as of April 20.

Teachers chose the platform that best suits the class environment and conduct interactive or one-way classes

... May ...

Later, in order to prioritize student safety while following the advice of health experts, school reopening began on May 20, starting with the senior students in high schools (i.e. K12 students).

... June ...

Approximately 98% of schools reopened as of June 1, 2020 which was designated as the “Month of School Reopening,” and school staff was advised to refrain from participating in training programs or events that are not directly related to classes.

Around 90% of universities were conducting distance learning classes in some form or other.

... August

For the second semester, which began in August, all or part of the school education has been run online, depending on the pandemic situation in each region.

In the aftermath of COVID-19, the so-called “no-contact” trend is spreading in the Korean society, and around the world, online education is being introduced in the education sector with school closure orders. In post-COVID-19, providing equitable opportunity of quality education for all students will continue to be important by establishing stable online education systems to brace for the potential outbreak of any new pandemics.



COVID-19 led to school closures throughout Korea on April 20, 2020 followed by four phased reopening

01 Understand and Envision: Assess the needs and capabilities

- **1A** Prior to reopening, Korean authorities conducted continuous learning measures during temporary school closures while identifying **key guiding principles** for reopening
- **1B** Teachers can choose the platform that best suits the class environment and conduct interactive or one-way classes. **Common types of online classes:** Content-oriented classes (40.9%) and the combination of more than two class types (43.3%) are the most common forms of online classes in Korea
- **1C** Attention paid to **deciding on the method and timeline of school reopening**

02 Decide and Design: Determine the reopening model

- **2A** Korea decided on **phased reopening approach (Step-by step approach)**, by creating the Central Response Team for School Reopening for response to emergency situations at schools
- **2B** Recover learning at school by setting special attendance days and/or staggered attendance schedules, redesigning timetables, reviewing the length of long vacations, having school on Saturdays, as well as prioritizing school events and shortening their preparation time, etc
- **2C** **Risk-based and phased approach** Special measures can be taken when it is still difficult to complete the curricula as scheduled, even if the measures above are taken: (1) Moving some learning content from this year to 1 or 2 years into the future (2) Prioritizing learning activities during school lessons

03 Enable and Execute: Prepare for and implement the safe learning continuation plan

- **3A** Korea took a staggered and phased approach to school reopening:
Phase I: Physical school re-opening & online classes. Phase II: Physical school opening & online classes. Phase III: Online classes or school closure
- **3B** As well as **strong resurgence planning** integrated into reopening at the onset through clear and risk-based ring-fencing and quarantine measures
- **3C** **Consultations and coordination** with the key stakeholders prior to and during school reopening (e.g. education offices, schools, parents, teachers, staff, and other Ministries like health, national development etc.) were conducted regularly) to carefully reviewed multiple return-to-school options.

04 Monitor and adjust: evaluate safe reopening experience

- **4A** Set up **mechanisms to monitor key indicators** of safe reopening processes and outcomes
- **4B** Set up an **adjustment mechanism** to continuously adapt reopening measures to emerging needs .
- **4C** **Effectively and regularly communicate** at each key step with stakeholders



The continuity of learning and safe school reopening and operation in Korea can be attributed to: (i) Collaboration and supporting operations and (ii) Integration of online learning

(i) Collaboration and supporting operations

Measures that put the health and safety of students on top priority: The government worked together with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Central Disaster and Safety Countermeasures Headquarters to swiftly create a pandemic response team within the Ministry of Education when the outbreak first began. In response to the wider spread of the disease, the team was expanded and upgraded to a COVID-19 response headquarters led by the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Education on February 21.

A network of cooperation was promptly created among the provincial offices of education, provincial governments and schools to provide support for schools by working closely with the surrounding communities. Also, collaboration with the existing consultation bodies, such as the education administration councils and innovative education communities, was ensured at all times in accordance with relevant ordinances. In order to cope with COVID-19, best practices are shared broadly, including ways to disinfect schools; provide childcare services; raise basic academic skills of students; and provide online community school programs.

The MOE published guidelines to ease the additional workload on school staff caused by increased disinfection and administrative work and to minimize confusion surrounding school reopening. To ensure smooth operation of in-person school classes, the ministry created the **Central Response Team for School Reopening for a swift, around-the-clock response to emergency situations at schools**. Since most schools were scheduled to reopen in June, it was designated as the “Month of School Reopening,” and school staff was advised to refrain from participating in training programs or events that are not directly related to classes.

Government published the **Student Attendance Tracking, Evaluation, and Record-keeping Guidelines for Online Classes** with its introduction of full-scale online classes. **The guidelines divide the types of online classes into three: Real-time interaction classes; content-oriented classes; and task-oriented** classes to present how to track student attendance, manage student learning, and the overall student management. In particular, for students who could not participate in online classes, alternative learning programs for each subject are offered to make up for their classroom education.



(ii) Integration of online learning from the very beginning

During the period of COVID-19, online classes were introduced to ensure a safe educational environment for all students and teachers. The operation of online classes was reinforced with the installation of WiFi and provision of digital devices.

The Ministry of Education worked closely with provincial offices of education to advance the quality of online classes and reduce learning gaps in students by **creating a joint safety-net for all students**. They plan to support the development of learning management programs for young elementary school students by using **AI**; **provision of customized edu-tech mentoring**; **promotion of interactive online classes**; and **the use of excellent online learning content**. In addition, **the free access to educational content on EBS (Educational Broadcasting System) was extended to December 2020**.

Teachers were encouraged to advance their level of ICT skills by participating in training programs that inform them of how to use digital devices, online platforms and blended learning. In addition, teacher communities have been created to share their knowledge on how to use online education tools and develop online learning content, and to solve obstacles they encounter in running online classes. Teachers were encouraged to focus on online teaching and student counseling by reducing inter-disciplinary learning requirements. 30,000 additional teaching staff were hired, including after-school, retired, and part-time teachers to assist school operation.

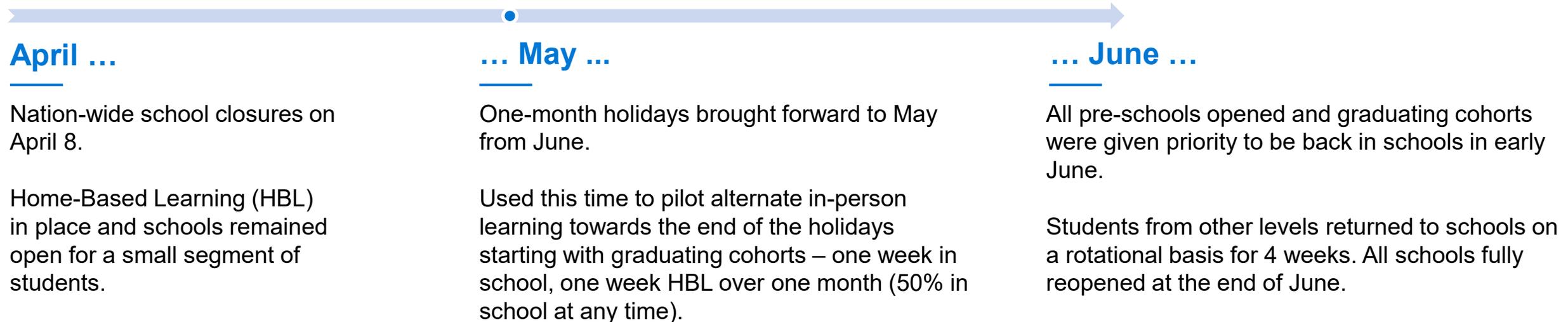
Various measures were put in place to address equity, including:

- 1. Subsidies for devices and Internet subscription fees -** providing smart digital devices and providing free smart device rental services and subsidies for Internet subscription fees in cooperation with the Ministry of Science and ICT; Statistics Korea; local governments; 17 city and provincial education offices; and private sector companies such as Samsung and LG.
- 2. Providing customized support for disadvantaged students -** For students with disabilities, a special online education platform was put in place to provide customized online classes in addition to home-visit classes, learning packets, and educational materials and tools.
- 3. Emergency childcare service -** The government provided support to ensure that the children of working parents and children that need to be put in emergency childcare receive both childcare services and online classes.



Singapore was one of the later countries to close schools due to COVID-19. Nation-wide closures went in effect on April 8 2020. School holidays were also brought forward to May from June

Nation-wide circuit breaker¹



As a result of the SARS experience in 2003, Singapore had experience in implementing response steps in the event of an outbreak. Even before COVID-19 hit, emergency Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) were in place such as biannual temperature taking exercises and piloting of HBL.

1 Singapore's circuit breaker measures were a stay-at-home order implemented as a preventive measure by the Government of Singapore in response to the COVID-19 pandemic in the country.



Singapore's safe reopening strategy followed the 3-step approach supported by continuous monitoring and adjustment

01 Understand and Envision: Assess the needs and capabilities

- > **1A** Prior to reopening, Singapore authorities identified **key guiding principles** for reopening. i.e. WHY reopen?
 - **Schools are essential** and in-person classroom education is critical for socio-emotional development and to support high needs students.
- > **1B** They assess the **overall health situation** in the country and decided that **reopening was possible, because:**
 - **Pandemic somewhat under control. Fewer new cases** of infection in the community.
- > **1C** Attention paid to **general public sentiment**, including **parents and teachers**.

02 Decide and Design: Determine the reopening model

- > **2A** They decided on phased reopening approach, **prioritising graduating cohorts** to come back to school first. And **piloted alternate in-person and HBL prior to full reopening** to test staggered arrival, recess, and departure times as well as other health and sanitary measures.
- > **2B** **Ringfencing strategies** put into place to **limit interactions between groups/classes** and hence **reduce the risk/impact in case of a confirmed case**.
- > **2C** **Risk-based and phased approach** to assess the types and format of student activities that could progressively resume to reintroduce elements of school life.

03 Enable and Execute: Prepare for and implement the safe learning continuation plan

- > **3A** Singapore's reopening plans were guided by **Whole-of-Government approach to COVID-19 response** coordinated centrally, enabled by tight relationships and quick turnaround
- > **3B** As well as **strong resurgence planning** integrated into reopening at the onset through clear and risk-based ring-fencing and quarantine measures
- > **3C** **Consultation, coordination, and communication** with the key stakeholders prior to and during school reopening (e.g. schools, parents, teachers, staff, and other Ministries like health, national development etc.) were conducted regularly.

04 Monitor and adjust: evaluate safe reopening experience

- > **4A** Set up **mechanisms to monitor key indicators** of safe reopening processes and outcomes
- > **4B** Set up an **adjustment mechanism** to continuously adapt reopening measures to emerging needs
- > **4C** **Effectively and regularly communicate** at each key step with stakeholders



The continuity of learning and successful safe reopening in Singapore can be attributed to three key levers: (i) Whole-of-Government approach, (ii) Communication, and (iii) Resurgence Planning

(i) A Whole-of-Government approach...

Singapore's COVID-19 response has been a Whole-of-Government approach led by a Ministerial Task Force at the Ministry of Health and Ministry of National Development. This ensures a **coherent and effective centralized emergency response to education** and other related sectors.

Schools follow the overall nation-wide health and safety protocols such as the **mandatory mask policy**. To support teaching with masks on, **microphones have been provided to teachers** in Singapore.

... (ii) enabled by constant communications with stakeholders and feel of the community pulse...

School response decisions are **coordinated centrally**, with tight relationships and communication between the Ministry of Education (MOE) and schools, **ensuring a quick turnaround** when it comes to emergency response.

For example, MOE was made aware that teachers, students and parents were fatigued by distance learning during school closures in April, which supported their decision to bring forward the school holidays from June to May.

Public confidence is also key to Singapore's COVID-19 education response. MOE keeps **tabs on community sentiments** and polled the general public to understand how they felt about school opening.



(iii) Resurgence Planning is fully integrated in Singapore's COVID-19 Education Response and school reopening plans

(iii) Resurgence planning is embedded in response plans from the beginning...

Singapore's response is guided by SOP, including resurgence planning **with a risk-based approach** that considers the prevalence of COVID-19 and potential impact of a confirmed case in schools, which has been **shared with schools**. If cases arise, the guidelines are activated to disinfect schools. MOE and schools work closely with the Ministry of Health to conduct testing of close contacts of confirmed case – to determine if the confirmed case caught the virus from school or outside school premises.

... carefully defined and operationalized as ring-fencing strategies...

Ring-fencing is a key tenet of Singapore's school reopening strategy. This ensures that **risks are significantly reduced if infection is detected** in schools and offers multiple layers/rings of prevention:

1. **Classroom 'bubbles'** to limit student interaction across groups and limit closures to individual 'bubble' if infection detected – this extends from arrival to recess to departure time.
2. **Leave of Absence** - in case of any direct or indirect contact with potential infections, students and staff are automatically placed on leave of absence. This extends to students with household members on quarantine order, having confirmed contact with cases, and/or having flu-like symptoms.

... leading to high public confidence ...

High confidence for stakeholders and the community in schools being open. They are seen as low risk venues for spread of infection due to limited intermingling among students with classroom 'bubbles', as well as leave of absence implemented as a first-layer of pre-emptive measures.



06

Appendix

→ Useful resources

[CLICK EACH TOPIC TO VIEW CONTENT](#)

READ
MORE



MAIN MENU



Useful resources

Guidance and manuals

- [Framework for reopening schools](#) (UNESCO, UNICEF, World Bank, World Food Programme), April 2020
- [Annex to Considerations in adjusting public health and social measures in the context of COVID-19](#) (WHO, UNICEF, UNESCO), September 2020
- [Safe Back to School: A Practitioner's Guide](#) (Global Education Cluster and the CP AoR), June 2020
- [Interim Guidance for COVID-19 Prevention and Control in Schools](#) (UNICEF, the World Health Organization and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies), March 2020

Technical notes and guidelines

- [Safe to Learn during COVID-19: Recommendations to Prevent and Respond to Violence against Children in All Learning Environments](#) (Safe to Learn), May 2020
- [COVID-19 education response: Preparing the reopening of schools: resource paper](#) (UNESCO), May 2020
- [Guidance for Safe and Healthy Journeys to School: During the COVID-19 Pandemic and Beyond](#) (UNICEF and FIA Foundation), August 2020
- [Plan for school reopening](#) (UNESCO IIEP)

Training

- [Ready to Come Back: A Teacher Preparedness Training Package](#) (UNICEF), August 2020

Examples

- [Protocole sanitaire des écoles et établissements scolaires - Année scolaire 2020-2021](#) (France)
- [Revised Standard Operating Procedure for the Containment of COVID-19 for schools and school communities](#) (South Africa), September 2020

