

Education Systems' Response to COVID19

Brief: May 26, 2020

As of May 26th, 31 countries across Africa, East Asia, Europe, and the Middle East have begun to reopen schools. However, 1.19 billion students (68% of the world's learners) are in countries that are still with full school lockdowns.

Table 1. Country school closures and re-openings (data as of May 26th)

	Africa	EAP	ECA	LAC and North America	MENA	SAR	Total
Closed	39	12	31	41	19	8	150
Partly closed	1	1	0	2	1	0	5
Open with limitations	4	7	18	1	1	0	31

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

1. Remote learning is continuing during school closures, and is becoming part of school reopening in many countries; research is emerging on its effectiveness and challenges.

- Despite the reopening of its education system, **Germany** initiated a large-scale program of financing [devices for students](#) worth EUR 550 million. While the students went back to school in Germany in many cases, actual time in school is limited to one day a week or every other day. During the remaining time of the week, students still practice remote learning.
- *More studies are emerging on the effectiveness and challenges of remote learning so far.* The Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS) has completed [a study of remote learning in the United Kingdom](#) that highlights the growing inequalities in access and benefits. Some of the findings of the report are that pupils from better-off families are spending longer on home learning; they have access to more individualized resources such as private tutoring or chats with teachers; they have a better home set-up for distance learning; and their parents report feeling more able to support them. Policymakers should already be thinking about how to address the gaps in education that the crisis is further widening.
- In **Kenya**, Uwezo, a non-profit education service provider also conducted a survey on remote learning, identifying the following common threads: access to learning is low and inequitable, parental awareness is disparate, the most utilized platform of remote learning is not the most accessible, and public schools are the least prepared to support a digital learning approach.¹

2. Countries in most regions have transitioned to reopening schools, but with various differences from the pre-COVID19 era.

A number of countries have opened, or announced reopening of schools. Many among them are also relying on **face-to-face classroom teaching** along with the online **learning** started during closures. As examples, countries like **Germany, Austria, and South Korea** are keeping online learning for most of the week as students are attending just once a week. The following section summarizes actions taken by a subset of countries in moving to reopen schools, including their primary approach.

¹ **Uwezo (2020):** Are Our Children Learning? The Status of Remote-learning among School-going Children in Kenya during the Covid-19 Crisis. Nairobi: Usawa Agenda

AFRICA

- Students and teachers in **Benin** returned to classes by mid-May. The government is aiming to [test](#) as many teachers as possible to prevent outbreaks.
- In **Cote d'Ivoire**, pre-school, primary, secondary, and higher education will start to [open](#) by May 25th. Schools in rural areas started to resume activities by May 18th.
- In **Madagascar**, schools [reopened by late April](#). Some of the measures taken are to sit students in desks that were meant to be used by two (to allow for social distancing) and providing children with an [herbal extract believed to protect from COVID-19](#).
- In **Senegal**, schools are scheduled to reopen by June 2nd and [President Macky Sall is requiring](#) the Ministry of Education to develop adequate preventive measures.
- The President of Tanzania announced on May 21st that [universities will start to reopen](#) by June 1st, secondary and primary school will not reopen yet.

MENA

- Countries in MENA are not returning students to classrooms until the fall, with the exception of two countries:
 - **Cyprus** schools were allowed to reopen on May 21st for all students. Some private schools chose to remain closed and continue with remote learning.
 - **Israel** announced the return of students to classrooms on May 17th.
- In **Lebanon**, the Ministry of Education made preliminary indications that they were planning for an end of May reopening, but after a rise in COVID-19 cases, the Ministry announced on May 17th that classes will not resume till next fall, and online learning will continue till end-May. The Ministry also announced the cancellation of the National Baccalaureate exams.

ECA

- **Denmark** made the decision to reopen schools in April, when many countries were still under severe lockdowns. It did so with [calculated measured risks in its students' and teachers' safety](#).
- On May 6th, **Germany** announced that [schools would start reopening](#) (older children had already started to resume classes by late April), but local authorities would have to close schools - and all but non-essential shops - once again if the number of new cases rose to more than 35 in every 100,000 in their area within a seven-day window period. The decision and guidelines on when and how to reopen will rest with the federal states (Länder). While some states require to wear masks, [others have deemed them illegal and will not require them of students and teachers](#). Teachers unions have called on authorities to not leave schools alone and to [support teachers](#) as they navigate this new environment.
- In **France**, the return to school [began by early May](#), with the priority given to students preparing for exams, followed by primary school students. About 30% of students had returned to classes by May 18th. Some of the characteristics of this reopening are that it is a phased and voluntary return to school. The government provided guidelines to ensure safety, monitoring, and hygiene measures. Seven schools in northern France have recently been [closed](#) due to 70 cases of COVID-19.
- In the **Netherlands** primary school students went back to classes on May 11 following the advice of their infectious disease control institute, secondary schools could follow by June if no more outbreaks take place.
- In **Finland**, students in early childhood, primary, and lower secondary education [resumed classes](#) on May 14. With permission of a family member or a doctor, students who are part of risk groups or who may have family members who are part of risk groups may stay home. The Ministry of Education and Culture and the Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare have drawn up guidelines and instructions on the arrangements for returning to schools in a safe manner, with an emphasis on avoiding unnecessary

physical contact and arranging teaching premises more spaciouly than usual, with hygiene guidelines strictly respected.

- In **England** primary schools could [reopen by early June](#). According to the government's plan, children in nurseries and pre-schools, and primary school children in Reception, Year 1, and Year 6 would resume classes by June 1st; secondary schools and colleges would [reopen later in June](#) prioritizing Year 10 and 12 pupils, who have standardized exams (which had been cancelled this year). Some of the [measures](#) that the government is planning for when schools reopen include that not every class/grade would start at the same time, implementing social distancing measures, staggered lunch and break times, and limiting classrooms to 15 students. At least 9 teachers' unions, the British Medical Association, and the National Association of Head Teachers have expressed their concerns to the government that it might not yet be safe to reopen.
- Schools in **Greece** [have reopened](#) for last year students and students from 7th to 11th grades. [Kindergartens and primary schools might open by June 1st](#) if the conditions allow for it. The National Public Health organization (EODY) developed a protocol involving [actions that teachers, students, and parents should follow](#). The first couple of hours of the first days of classes focused on educating students about hygiene, social distancing, and use of face masks. Only 15 students are allowed per classroom (with students going to school in rotation) and desks should be separated by 1.5 meters. School canteens will remain closed and breaks have been removed from the school day. If a student gets the virus the protocol indicates that the school will not close. Students in the same classroom will not attend school for 10 days and, if they show no symptoms, they will be allowed to return.

EAP

- **Australia.** States have the authority to follow up different guidelines or protocols given that the education system is administered at state level. Throughout the pandemic, schools in most states have remained open to children of essential workers and vulnerable children. The only exception is the Australian Capital Territory, where nine hub schools were set up for these children, and they are not reopening schools until next week and the following week (using a staggered approach). Victoria is the only other state not to reopen schools yet (at least partially), but will begin in a couple of weeks.
- Schools in **Papua New Guinea** are adapting to a new normal. The Department of Education provided [specific instructions](#) for schools, teachers, and all education authorities to take in prevention of COVID-19. Parents can keep their children home if they wish to do so, yet they must inform schools so that children can continue their remote learning. Some of the prevention measures include mandatory facemasks for students and teachers and hand sanitizers or hand basins with soaps for hand washing in every recess break. However, [implementation of measures appears challenging](#), with lack of masks in some areas and abundance in others. Some parents have resorted to sew masks themselves.
- **South Korea** began the school year online, and has delayed reopening schools due to new cases of COVID-19. Schools [won't resume activities](#) yet due to at least 102 confirmed new cases of the virus. Classes here scheduled to start on May 13th with high school seniors, followed by middle school seniors, juniors, and elementary schools by May 20th. The Ministry of Education had postponed the start of the school year four times before it was decided to [begin online classes](#) on April 9th in all elementary, middle, high, and special education schools nationwide.
- **Vietnam's** Upper secondary schools and universities and colleges had reopened in some provinces and then re-closed from April 1st in compliance with the social distancing directive from the Prime Minister. As of mid-May, Vietnam has fully reopened all schools, with lower- and upper-secondary, and post-secondary VET institutions reopening on May 4th, and then pre-primary to primary opening by May 11th. Universities are also opening on a rolling basis. The Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) developed a list of 16 priority responses for the basic education sector, and has sought support from

development partners on implementation.² These priorities relate to, for example, (1) the safe operation of schools to reduce virus transmission, including the availability of hygiene materials and part-time in-person classes for crowded classrooms; (2) bridging the learning gap related to school closures, including stronger distance education provision, curriculum streamlining, teacher training, and promoting awareness for parents, students, and others; and (3) protecting the most vulnerable, including raising caregivers' awareness on child nutrition needs, psychological support, and distance education materials in ethnic minority languages.

LAC and North America

- Becoming the first country in Latin America to start reopening, **Uruguay** [began the return to classes](#) in some rural areas by late April. On May 21st, president Lacalle Pou announced that schools would continue to reopen in [three phases](#). The first would start by June 1st, includes all rural schools nationwide (including primary and secondary levels), schools in vulnerable contexts (except Montevideo and metropolitan area), special education schools, and last year in all secondary schools. By June 15th, the second phase will include ECD and pre-primary centers, all private and public primary, secondary and postsecondary technical schools (except Montevideo and the metropolitan area), and last year students in Montevideo and the metropolitan area. Finally, the third stage aims to open all other schools at primary, ECD, secondary, and technical level nationwide by June 29th. Some of the main characteristics of the gradual reopening so far are mandatory testing of school staff and teachers, blended learning, allowing teachers and staff who are at high risk (over 65 years old or with pre-existing conditions) to remain home. Students' return is optional, and children are split into smaller groups in each class, extended hours for learning are suspended, and everyone must wear face masks.
- **The United States** has issued [guidelines](#) to reopen the country in a phased manner. Schools are included in the phase two, for states and regions with no evidence of a rebound and that satisfy the gating criteria twice: (1) downward trajectory of influenza-like illnesses (ILI) reported within a 14-day window period, and (2) downward trajectory of COVID related syndromic cases reported within a 14-day period. The Center for Disease, Control and Prevention has recently issued [health considerations and tools](#) to help state policymakers and authorities decide when to reopen schools.
- In **Canada**, most elementary schools in Quebec [began reopening by May 11th](#), with the exception of Montreal which has mandated schools to be closed for the rest of the school year. British Columbia announced a voluntary and staggered return to classes by early June. In the rest of the country, schools will remain closed for the rest of the year.

3. *Additional resources*

Education Financing. In addition to notes on the subject shared last week and available on the COVID19 Education website, the team has also put together a media tracking file related to the impact of COVID19 on education financing. Click [here](#) for the link.

Regional collaborations on school closures. In ECA, the Bank and Higher School of Economics launched a joint webinar program on the research and policy responses to COVID-19. Two joint [events](#) were delivered to date.

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

² This information was extracted from the *Mitigating the impact of COVID-19 on learning and skill formation in Vietnam*, prepared by the World Bank's Education Global Practice team for Vietnam. The larger document summarizes the Government's comprehensive Education Response to COVID19 and can be requested from the team (contact Dilip Parajuli (Sr. Education Economist) at dparajuli@worldbank.org).

Annex 2 – Breakdown of Remote Learning Approaches by Country/Territory

(based on information received by May 26th 2020)

Region	Country	No remote learning/ No Info received	Unimodal	Multi modal (# of modes used)	Virtual Interactive classes	Recorded classes online	Other Online Tools	Television	Radio	Paper-based
Summary out of 201 countries		34(17%)	34(17%)	133(66%)	36(18%)	86(43%)	125(62%)	95(47%)	49(24%)	11(5%)
AFRICA	Benin	X								
AFRICA	Botswana		X					1		
AFRICA	Burkina Faso			2				1	1	
AFRICA	Burundi	X								
AFRICA	Cabo Verde		X						1	
AFRICA	Cameroon		X					1		
AFRICA	Central African Republic		X						1	
AFRICA	Chad			2		1	1			
AFRICA	Comoros	X								
AFRICA	Congo, Dem. Rep.			2			1	1		
AFRICA	Congo, Rep.		X					1		
AFRICA	Cote d'Ivoire		X				1			
AFRICA	Equatorial Guinea			2				1	1	
AFRICA	Eritrea	X								
AFRICA	Eswatini			2				1	1	
AFRICA	Ethiopia			3			1	1	1	
AFRICA	Gabon			2			1	1		
AFRICA	Gambia, The			2				1	1	
AFRICA	Ghana			3			1	1	1	
AFRICA	Guinea			3			1	1	1	
AFRICA	Guinea-Bissau	X								
AFRICA	Kenya			4		1	1	1	1	
AFRICA	Lesotho			2				1	1	
AFRICA	Liberia			3			1	1	1	
AFRICA	Madagascar			3			1	1	1	
AFRICA	Malawi			2			1		1	
AFRICA	Mali		X					1		
AFRICA	Mauritania			2				1	1	
AFRICA	Mauritius			4		1	1	1	1	
AFRICA	Mozambique			2				1	1	
AFRICA	Namibia		X				1			
AFRICA	Niger		X						1	
AFRICA	Nigeria			4		1	1	1	1	
AFRICA	Rwanda			2			1		1	
AFRICA	Sao Tome and Principe		X					1		

AFRICA	Senegal		2			1	1	
AFRICA	Seychelles	X			1			
AFRICA	Sierra Leone		2			1		1
AFRICA	Somalia	X						
AFRICA	South Africa		3			1	1	1
AFRICA	South Sudan		2			1		
AFRICA	Sudan	X						
AFRICA	Tanzania		2				1	1
AFRICA	Togo	X						
AFRICA	Uganda		2			1		1
AFRICA	Zambia		2			1	1	
AFRICA	Zimbabwe		2			1		1
EAP	Australia		2		1	1		
EAP	Brunei Darussalam	X						
EAP	Cambodia		5		1	1	1	1
EAP	China		4	1	1	1	1	
EAP	Fiji		2			1		1
EAP	Hong Kong SAR, China		3	1	1	1		
EAP	Indonesia		3	1	1	1		
EAP	Japan		3	1	1	1		
EAP	Kiribati	X				1		
EAP	Korea, Rep.		3	1	1	1		
EAP	Lao PDR	X					1	
EAP	Macao SAR, China	X						
EAP	Malaysia		2			1	1	
EAP	Maldives		3			1	1	1
EAP	Marshall Islands	X						
EAP	Micronesia, Fed. Sts.	X						
EAP	Mongolia		2		1		1	
EAP	Myanmar	X						
EAP	Nauru	X						
EAP	New Zealand		3		1	1	1	
EAP	Palau	X						
EAP	Papua New Guinea	X						
EAP	Philippines		2		1	1		
EAP	Samoa		3			1	1	1
EAP	Singapore		3	1	1	1		
EAP	Solomon Islands	X						1
EAP	Thailand	X				1		
EAP	Timor-Leste		5		1	1	1	1
EAP	Tonga	X						1
EAP	Tuvalu	X						1
EAP	Vanuatu	X				1		

EAP	Vietnam		3		1	1	1	
ECA	Albania		2		1	1	1	
ECA	Armenia		2		1	1		
ECA	Austria		3		1	1	1	
ECA	Azerbaijan		3	1	1		1	
ECA	Belarus	X						
ECA	Belgium		2		1	1		
ECA	Bosnia and Herzegovina		3		1	1	1	
ECA	Bulgaria		4	1	1	1	1	
ECA	Croatia		4	1	1	1	1	
ECA	Cyprus	X			1			
ECA	Czech Republic		2			1	1	
ECA	Denmark		3	1	1	1		
ECA	Estonia		2	1		1		
ECA	Finland		2	1		1		
ECA	France		3	1	1	1		
ECA	Georgia		3	1		1	1	
ECA	Germany		2	1		1		
ECA	Greece		3	1		1	1	
ECA	Hungary	X			1			
ECA	Iceland		2		1	1		
ECA	Ireland		2		1	1		
ECA	Italy		4	1	1	1	1	
ECA	Kazakhstan		4		1	1	1	1
ECA	Kosovo		3	1	1		1	
ECA	Kyrgyz Republic		3		1	1	1	
ECA	Latvia		2	1		1		
ECA	Lithuania		2		1	1		
ECA	Luxembourg		2	1	1			
ECA	Moldova		4	1	1	1	1	
ECA	Montenegro		2			1	1	
ECA	Montserrat	X						
ECA	Netherlands	X				1		
ECA	North Macedonia		4		1	1	1	1
ECA	Norway		2	1	1			
ECA	Poland		2		1	1		
ECA	Portugal		2	1		1		
ECA	Romania		3	1		1	1	
ECA	Russian Federation		4	1	1	1	1	
ECA	San Marino	X						
ECA	Serbia		4		1	1	1	1
ECA	Slovak Republic		2	1		1		
ECA	Slovenia		2	1		1		

ECA	Spain		3		1	1	1	
ECA	Sweden			X	1			
ECA	Switzerland			X	1			
ECA	Tajikistan			X				1
ECA	Turkey		3		1	1	1	
ECA	Turkmenistan	X						
ECA	Ukraine		2		1		1	
ECA	United Kingdom		2		1	1		
ECA	Uzbekistan		3		1	1	1	
LAC/N.A.	Anguilla	X						
LAC/N.A.	Antigua and Barbuda	X						
LAC/N.A.	Argentina		5		1	1	1	1
LAC/N.A.	Aruba			X		1		
LAC/N.A.	Bahamas, The			X		1		
LAC/N.A.	Barbados	X						
LAC/N.A.	Belize		2		1	1		
LAC/N.A.	Bermuda	X						
LAC/N.A.	Bolivia	X						
LAC/N.A.	Brazil		2		1	1		
LAC/N.A.	Canada		3	1	1	1		
LAC/N.A.	Cayman Islands	X						
LAC/N.A.	Chile		3		1	1	1	
LAC/N.A.	Colombia		4		1	1	1	1
LAC/N.A.	Costa Rica		4		1	1	1	1
LAC/N.A.	Curacao	X						
LAC/N.A.	Dominica		2		1	1		
LAC/N.A.	Dominican Republic		4		1	1	1	1
LAC/N.A.	Ecuador		4		1	1	1	1
LAC/N.A.	El Salvador		2			1	1	
LAC/N.A.	Grenada		2	1	1			
LAC/N.A.	Guatemala		2		1	1		
LAC/N.A.	Guyana		3				1	1
LAC/N.A.	Haiti		3		1		1	1
LAC/N.A.	Honduras		3			1	1	1
LAC/N.A.	Jamaica		4		1	1	1	1
LAC/N.A.	Mexico		3		1	1	1	
LAC/N.A.	Nicaragua			X		1		
LAC/N.A.	Panama			X		1		
LAC/N.A.	Paraguay		2			1		1
LAC/N.A.	Peru		3			1	1	1
LAC/N.A.	Puerto Rico	X						
LAC/N.A.	Sint Maarten (Dutch part)	X						
LAC/N.A.	St. Kitts and Nevis	X						

LAC/N.A.	St. Lucia	X										
LAC/N.A.	St. Vincent and the Grenadines	X										
LAC/N.A.	Suriname	X										
LAC/N.A.	Trinidad and Tobago			2		1		1				
LAC/N.A.	Turks and Caicos Islands	X										
LAC/N.A.	United States			6	1	1	1	1	1	1		
LAC/N.A.	Uruguay			3	1	1	1					
LAC/N.A.	Venezuela, RB	X						1				
MENA	Algeria			2				1	1			
MENA	Bahrain			3		1	1	1				
MENA	Djibouti			4		1	1	1	1			
MENA	Egypt, Arab Rep.			4	1	1	1	1				
MENA	Iran, Islamic Rep.			2		1	1					
MENA	Iraq	X						1				
MENA	Israel			2		1	1					
MENA	Jordan			3		1	1	1				
MENA	Kuwait	X						1				
MENA	Lebanon			5	1	1	1	1	1	1		
MENA	Libya			3		1	1	1				
MENA	Malta			2	1		1					
MENA	Morocco			3		1	1	1				
MENA	Oman			2			1	1				
MENA	Qatar			2		1	1					
MENA	Saudi Arabia			3		1	1	1				
MENA	Syria (added)			2		1	1					
MENA	Tunisia			2			1	1				
MENA	United Arab Emirates			2		1	1					
MENA	West Bank and Gaza			4		1	1	1	1			
MENA	Yemen, Rep.	X						1				
SAR	Afghanistan			3		1		1	1			
SAR	Bangladesh			3	1		1	1				
SAR	Bhutan			3			1	1	1			
SAR	India			3		1	1	1				
SAR	Nepal	X								1		
SAR	Pakistan			3	1	1	1					
SAR	Sri Lanka			2			1	1				
Summary out of 201 countries				34(17%)	34(17%)	133(66%)	36(18%)	86(43%)	125(62%)	95(47%)	49(24%)	11(5%)
		No remote learning/ No Info received	Unimodal (only one mode used)	Multi modal (# of modes used)	Virtual Interactive classes	Recorded classes online	Other Online Tools	Television	Radio	Paper-based		