

Education Systems' Response to COVID19

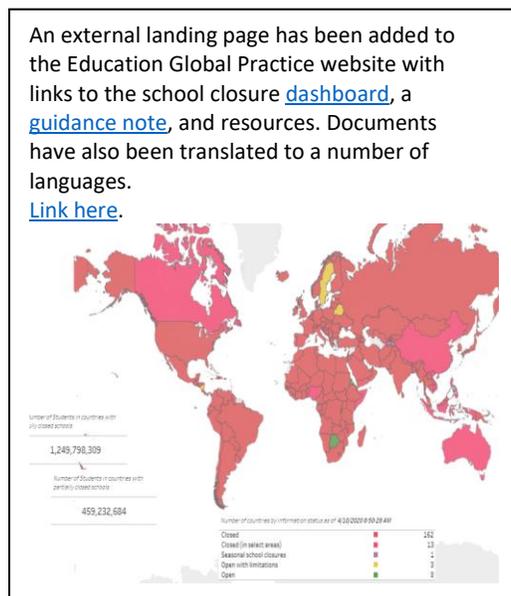
Brief: April 10, 2020

To date, schools remain closed in 175 countries, with about 85% of students out of school.¹

Overview of school closures (source: World Bank teams and newsoutlets)

	Africa	EAP	ECA	LAC and N. America	MENA	SAR	Total
Closed	39	14	45	36	20	8	162
Partly closed	3	8	1	1	0	0	13
SUM	42	22	46	37	20	8	175

** An additional 23 countries are not reporting, open, or open with restrictions. They are noted [here](#).
Changes since last brief: Singapore re-closed schools, and Myanmar information was updated to show closure.*



Reverse back to closures in some countries, while a move towards recovery in others

- **Singapore and South Korea**, two countries that recently reopened schools and returned students to classrooms, have once again closed schools after surges in COVID19 cases.
- **Italy** announced it is beginning to see a decline in cases and thus is moving to Phase II which the Government is calling “living with the virus” to begin in early May. Though this phase will involve progressive reopening the economy and return to normaly, it is not expect to include immediate reopening of schools. The Governemnt indicated schools may not reopen till September, and will commence with online revision to catch up on loss of learning incurred during the closure.²
- **Denmark** has announced this week that it will gradually reopen schools, beginning on April 14th with daycare/kindergartens and classes up to grade 5. Classes for older students (grades 6-10 serving students ages 11-16 will reopen May 10. Additionally, the country has announced the cancellation of exams for lower secondary. Only those in graduating classes in upper secondary school will be allowed to resume on April 15th the rest will remain with distance learning till at least May 10.
- School feeding continues to challenge communities where distriction chains for kids outside of school had not been established prior to the shutdown (Congo, DRC). Partners are working to address this.

An Emerging debate on closure of schools

- This week The University College of London released a review concluding that keeping kids at home has little impact.³ According to the report, modelling studies of COVID-19 predict that school closures alone would

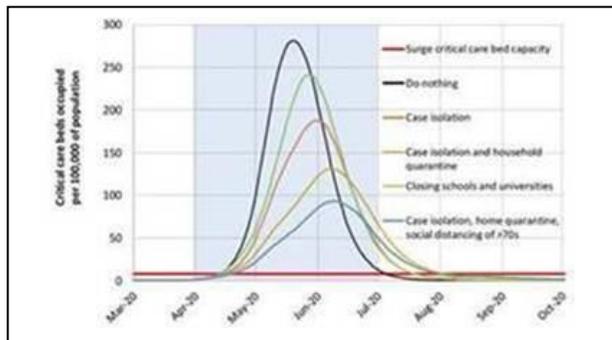
¹ Source: Education GP dashboard is accumulating the information crowdsourced by the Bank Task Team Leaders on the ground and by the best available information online. It might not be accurate but reflects the best knowledge of the situation globally by the Bank.

² <https://www.wantedinrome.com/news/coronavirus-italy-prepares-for-phase-two.html>

³ <https://www.thelancet.com/action/showPdf?pii=S2352-4642%2820%2930095-X>

prevent only 2–4% of deaths. The review does recognize that a review of 31 studies that addressed whether school closure had a quantifiable effect on influenza transmission reported that school closure reduced the peak of the related outbreak by a mean of 29.7% and delayed the peak by a median of 11 days. A key point emphasized was that children’s education is affected and their mental health may suffer, while family finances are affected as key workers may need to stay home to look after children. Prof Neil Ferguson, also of Imperial College and currently advising the UK government, mentioned that this review did not include results for school closure in combination with other lockdown measures. “While school closure as a measure on its own is predicted to have a limited effectiveness in controlling Covid-19 transmission, when combined with intense social distancing it plays an important role in severing remaining contacts between households and thus ensuring transmission declines.”⁴ Another study by the School of Public Health, National University of Singapore⁵, also published by the Lancet in March 23rd, concluded that implementing the combined intervention of quarantining infected individuals and their family members, workplace distancing, and school closure once community transmission has been detected is the most effective strategy to reduce the number of SARS-CoV-2 infections.

- Collectively, **countries seem to weigh a number of factors in determining when to close**, or how long to keep closes their institutions. These factors include: i) ability to keep children at a distance (2m) in schools and for teachers to closely manage social distancing; ii) the likelihood that children carrying symptoms could be a danger to others in their homes (prevalence of multi-generational households); and ii) the ability to capitalize on planned school closures (holidays, breaks, etc.) that if extended by days, would not severely impact learning.



A Spectrum of Decisions regarding Standard Examinations

- As closures are extended, pressure is increasing on ministries to take policy actions on standard or high-stakes examinations. Some countries have announced cancellations (**France, Italy, Norway, India (Uttar Pradesh)**). In the **United States**, the Student Aptitude Tests (SATs) required for most universities have been cancelled for the remainder of the year. Universities have agreed that the test scores (for those who already took it) will be optional for next year’s applicants). In the **United Kingdom**, while the exams are cancelled, the Government announced teachers will determine grades with oversight from administrators to avoid bias.
- Approximately 150,000 students from 156 countries will not sit for the the International Baccalaureate, a cross-country exam focused on a mutli-field curriculum. Instead students will be awarded a Diploma or a Course Certificate "based on the student's coursework and the established assessment expertise, rigor and quality control already built into the programmes."
- In other countries, examinations have been indefinitely postponed (Caribbean Examination Council (CXC), China, Colombia, Czech Republic, Greece, Hong Kong, Ireland, Russia are among the examples).
- Lastly, some countries and institutions have opted to modify the exams to allow for virtual testing. In the United Kingdom, sixth-year medical school students took their exams online for the first time in “open book” format. In the **US**, the Advanced Placement (AP) Board has announced a similar approach, indicating that the exam will be shorter, modified to include material covered before school closures, and expected to be accepted by universities for credit if students pass. In **Germany**, secondary school-leaving exams will take place under strict hygiene and distance regulation

⁴ <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2020/apr/06/school-closures-have-little-impact-on-spread-of-coronavirus-study>

⁵ <http://www.thelancet-press.com/embargo/singapore.pdf?>

