

## Education Systems' Response to COVID-19

### Brief No. 15 : September 25<sup>th</sup>, 2020

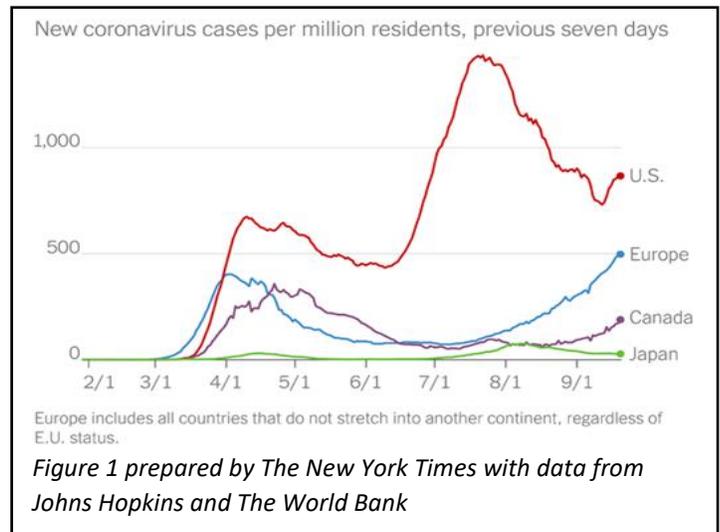
Globally, 812 million children (46% of student population) are still impacted by school closures. By October 1<sup>st</sup>, all school systems in Europe and Central Asia (ECA) will be reopened, which will make ECA the region fully returned to mostly traditional schooling. But several systems that opened before (US, Canada, Israel, some European countries) have had to delay re-openings or reverse policies. This shows the need to assume a mindset of “living with the virus” and adjust policies flexibly with changing circumstances, as well as the need to continue improving quality of remote learning, as part of the toolbox of policy makers to reopen schools gradually.

|                       | Africa | EAP | ECA | LAC and N. America | MENA | SAR | Total |
|-----------------------|--------|-----|-----|--------------------|------|-----|-------|
| Closed                | 26     | 10  | 4   | 39                 | 19   | 6   | 104   |
| Open with limitations | 22     | 15  | 46  | 4                  | 2    | 2   | 91    |

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

#### 1. **SCHOOLS REOPENING STATUS:** *The school year has started for some systems, but the threat of a second wave of the pandemic looms over education systems*

The United States, Canada, and many European countries are facing a surge in cases as fall starts (see Figure 1). For example, the [number of cases in the US has spiked by 15% over the past 10 days](#), and the UK is estimating that they could face [50,000 COVID-19 cases by mid-October](#). This has implied delays in opening decisions or policy reversals. This shows the need to assume a mindset of “living with the virus” and adjust policies flexibly with changing circumstances, as well as the need to continue improving quality of remote learning, as part of the toolbox of policy makers to reopen schools gradually.



#### **Countries are closing again or delaying reopening**

- **Israel** has become the [first country to reimpose a nationwide lockdown](#). Ahead of religious holidays, Prime Minister Netanyahu announced a [three-week lockdown](#) starting on September 18<sup>th</sup>, which includes closing schools for the entire period, limitations for citizens to remain within 1 km of their homes, no more than ten people will be able to meet indoors. While the decision has faced opposition and questioning from both religious and political leaders, Israel is reporting almost 7,000 new cases in its highest daily increase by September 22<sup>nd</sup>.
- **New York City**, the largest school district in the **United States**, had scheduled a massive return to classes, but has again [delayed the return to schools](#) except for students in pre-K. On Monday 21<sup>st</sup>, over [90,000 children](#) in pre-K or with advanced disabilities returned to classes. This is part of a plan to reopen schools

by stages, with elementary schools following on September 29<sup>th</sup>, and middle and high schools reopening by October 1<sup>st</sup>. As a result of the [delays in widespread reopening](#), students lost approximately ten days of virtual learning, and teachers and parents are facing anxiety on whether there are safe conditions, such as adequate ventilation, and securing enough teachers to facilitate smaller classes. [46% of families](#) in NYC have already opted for their children to continue remote learning till November.

### Many continue to reopen under strict measures

- **Ethiopia** is preparing for a gradual school reopening. A [survey on school principals and teachers](#) found that some of the main challenges of reopening according to them are to provide timely information and guidance on COVID-19, develop strategies to help students catch up on lost learning, implement strategies to encourage students to return to schools (especially for the most disadvantaged), and provide infrastructure to prevent the spread of the virus, among others.
- **Pakistan**, has reopened private and public schools for 6-8 standards under strict regulations requiring social distancing and the use of masks. All provinces are following the reopening except for Sindh which will start reopening by September 28. Primary schools nationwide are scheduled to reopen by September 30th.
- **Mexico** the new school year started this August 24<sup>th</sup> [using remote learning](#) (television and radio) until the pandemic allows for students to return to school. The Secretary of Education has made agreements with television corporations so that they schedule the emission of educational content for 24 hours and seven days a week through six channels. For those who can't access televised content, radio content as well as textbook distribution will be put in place.
- Schools in Seoul and nearby areas have started to [reopen](#) in **South Korea** as of September 21<sup>st</sup>. due to the decline in cases. Students are back to classes under a hybrid system, attending in-person classes once or twice a week. The Ministry of Education is focused on [improving the quality of online classes](#) by including measures such as chat options to share feedback between teachers and students, time limits for classes, and live check-in sessions before and after each class day.
- On [September 23<sup>rd</sup>](#), **Hong Kong** resumed classes for over [300, 000 students in grades 1, 5, and 6](#) of primary and secondary, as well as kindergarten (K3). The rest of the students are scheduled to return next week. Some of the measures contemplated in the [guidelines](#) include checking for temperature, using masks, maintaining social distancing, hand-washing, and disinfection. If positives cases were detected, in-person classes will be suspended for 14 days.
- **Estonia** started the new academic year by September 1<sup>st</sup> by implementing a blended system and having flexibility. [Schools have autonomy to implement flexible measures](#), such as one week of face-to-face learning and two weeks at home, or to start with mostly in-person learning and then introduce remote learning once students and teachers have become familiar with each other. Similar [approach](#) is used in **Ukraine**.

#### *Emerging lessons from country experiences in managing the process of reopening schools*

UNICEF, UNESCO, the World Bank, the World Food Programme, and the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) published in June a [Framework for reopening schools](#). Now these organizations have provided a supplemental document focused on condensing the [emerging lessons on what is working](#) across diverse settings to support countries in strengthening their reopening plans and securing a safe return to in-person learning for all children.

Some of these lessons include prioritizing the return of early grades and exam classes, context-appropriate hygiene protocols, simplifying the curriculum, designing protocols for reclosing, among many others.

Access the document [here](#)

## Others are planning for the long-term effects of the pandemic

- **Singapore** is focusing on investing in teachers and key education staff, as well as improving teachers' careers. Part of these reforms include improving the career framework, professional development, and training of [special education teachers](#) to make it more attractive to students. The Ministry of Education has introduced two career tracks for them that will allow them to progress into more senior roles.
- In **Japan**, a special task force of the Central Council for Education has recommended a [plan to introduce subject-based teaching](#) for grades 5 and 6 in elementary schools. This measure would improve quality of education and ease the workload of teachers. They also recommended to facilitate the acquisition of teacher credentials for students so that more teachers can instruct at elementary schools.
- In **Canada**, measures to [support young students' opportunities](#) affected by the pandemic include: funding (\$187.7 million) to create more job opportunities, expanding summer jobs programs, increase funding for the Student Work Placement program to offer 40,000 work opportunities for post-secondary students, and a moratorium on student loans.

## 2. LATEST EVIDENCE ON THE DEBATES CONCERNING SCHOOL REOPENING

- A [study](#) on the impact of school closures in learning achievement in Belgium has found that students of the 2020 cohort experienced significant learning losses in all tested subjects, with a decrease in school averages of mathematics scores of 0.19 standard deviations and Dutch scores of 0.29 standard deviations as compared to the previous cohort. Learning losses are more prevalent among more disadvantaged student population. This is one of the first studies that assess directly (not simulate only) learning losses due to the pandemic.
- Researchers at Brown University working with school administrators are [tracking school COVID-19 cases](#) and have found [low levels of infections among students and teachers](#), with 0.23% of students having a confirmed or suspected case, and 0.49% of teachers in that situation. Additionally, they found that school COVID infection rates are lower than those found in their surrounding communities. Their analysis includes over 550 schools in the United States. This doesn't mean the risk of contracting COVID is nonexistent, schools still need to take measures to place students' and teachers' safety first.
- The **Center for Disease Control and Prevention** released new guidance about [the risk of transmission within a school](#). It includes a color-coded tool with questions about health indicators and school protocols and measures. The tool aims to help administrators and local health officials make decisions about in-person learning.
- The New York Times, reports that [a COVID-19 vaccine for children may take longer than expected](#) as no trials have begun yet to determine if the vaccines being developed are as safe and effective for children. Usually, vaccines are tested on children after they have been declared safe for adults, which may mean that a vaccine for them may not arrive till fall 2021.



### Latest Relevant (mostly WB) Resources

- Reports – Guidance notes
  - [Supplement to Framework for reopening schools: Emerging lessons from country experiences in managing the process of reopening schools by WB/UNESCO/UNICEF/WFP/ UNHCR](#)

- [Global Guidance on Reopening Early Childhood Education Settings](#), prepared by WB/UNICEF/UNESCO outlining key principles and practical measures for decision-makers to consider before, during and after the transition from closure to reopening
- A [compilation of reopening experiences and best practices in 20 countries](#) by prepared by the Brazilian organization [Vozes da Educacao](#) (webpage in Portuguese)
- Latest Blogs
  - Getting children back to school: “We are in a hurry” by **Jaime Saavedra** ([English/Spanish](#))
  - Learning losses due to COVID-19 could add up to \$10 trillion” by Joao Pedro Azevedo, Amer Hasan, Koen Geven, Diana Goldemberg, Syedah Aroob Iqbal ([English/Spanish](#))
  - [Multi-modal TVET delivery during COVID-19: Expanding access to continued learning in Afghanistan](#) by Mabruk Kabir, Kurt Larsen, Shahram Paksima and Abdul Hai Sofizada
  - Universalizing basic literacy: how to get every child reading? By M. Crawford, M. Barron, M. Gutierrez, E. Ding ([English/Spanish](#))
  - [How to invest in remote learning while building the education system of the future?](#) blog by Harry Patrinos
- Resources from past events
  - [Lessons for Education: Education Television during COVID-19](#), part of the joint [Lessons For Education](#) webinar series organized by Harvard University, OECD, HundRED, and World Bank.
  - [Webinars on Reopening of Schools](#): Resources from the series of webinars organized by UNESCO-UNICEF- World Bank from June till August 2020.
- World Bank - UNESCO - UNICEF **survey on education responses** is available on the Oxford Super Tracker as well as at this [link](#). The second wave results are upcoming, please track the link for more information.
- Upcoming event: WB/OECD/Harvard Webinar with Minister of Education of Turkey on October 8, 2020 (details to follow). Background resources: [Responding to Covid-19 and Looking Beyond: Turkey Invests in Safer Schooling and Distance Education with the World Bank Support](#) (press release),

## **ANNEX 1 –KAZAKHSTAN’S GUIDELINES AND MEASURES TO REOPEN SCHOOLS**

### **In Kazakhstan, around 40% of schools have reopened for the new school year**

- While the GoK decided to start the school year with distance learning country-wide, several additional arrangements were announced recently.
- Close to 3,000 secondary schools (out of over 7,000, or around 40%) started the school year in a traditional format – these are remote and multigraded schools with low risk of virus spread that are implementing measures to ensure students’ and teachers’ health and safety.
- In response to parents’ request, primary students (grades 1-4) have an opportunity to attend classes with all health and safety measures in place and not exceeding 15 students per classroom.
- Lesson duration for these classes is 40 minutes and breaks are organized at different time intervals for different grades. Classrooms are cleaned after every second lesson, and halls after every break. Canteens are closed at this time, schools are provided with disinfectants, sanitary mats for boots, and sanitizers.
- Overall, around 2.6 million (or 78%) students started the school year in a distance format, around 530,000 students (or 17%) attend classes with parents’ permission, and 157,000 students (or 4%) in a traditional format in remote rural schools.
- As in Quarter 4 of last school year, TV lessons have been recorded, are broadcasted on 2 TV national channels, and are also available online for all students.
- All Internet and mobile providers made access to national online educational platforms free of charge and limitless. Over the summer break private providers improved the quality of their online educational platforms and added more functions and features based on the Quarter 4 feedback. For instance, streaming videoconferencing and recording, automated system management, analytical and assessment features have been improved and enabled.
- All schoolteachers had an opportunity to receive free asynchronous training to develop their skills in working with online educational platforms, lesson planning, online lessons streaming, working with virtual classrooms, and working with parents and students within the distance learning context.
- Teacher wages are not affected and will be paid on time.
- Pre-school students can attend classes in response to their parents’ request with no more than 15 students and with health and safety measures provided.
- Colleges and universities primarily use distance learning except for remote colleges and internships when traditional format is acceptable.
- The Ministry of Education and Science and the Ministry of Healthcare monitor the epidemiological situation in schools closely and will review the schools status in accordance with the results.

## ANNEX 2 – Latest on COUNTRIES REOPENING SCHOOLS (received from teams)

### AFRICA

- **Angola**, schools reopened by August 3<sup>rd</sup> but only for administrative purposes with 50% of staff and no students.
- **Benin**, as of early July, schools except for nurseries are open. Classrooms have social distancing rules set up – for example, the benches have been set out to observe the one-meter rule. Launched mass testing for teachers as a way to reassure parents that school will be a safe environment – masks were compulsory, but during reopening, a large number of students turned up without masks due to costs. Students will return to classes after the vacation period by September 28<sup>th</sup>.
- **Botswana**. Standard 7, form 3, and form 5 returned by June 17<sup>th</sup>, with additional classes gradually phasing in. Pre-primary schools began by August 4<sup>th</sup>. Private schools have been making their own reopening decisions. Some [preventive measures](#) include checking body temperatures, regular disinfection, and wearing of masks.
- **Burkina Faso**, students of examinations classes returned on June 1<sup>st</sup>, no date has been confirmed for rest of the years. The World Food Program is gradually restarting school [feeding activities](#) to benefit them. Universities have started to gradually reopen.
- **Burundi**, schools continued to operate through the pandemic. President Pierre Nkurunziza is [thought to be](#) the first head of state to die due to side effects of COVID-19. Students returned to school by September 7 after the vacations period.
- **Cameroon**, schools and universities reopened by June 1<sup>st</sup>. Some of the [measures](#) taken include: schools will be disinfected three times a week, schools without access to running water will be provided with it, making hand sanitizers and hand washing buckets available, having no more than 24 students per classroom, and only one student seated per bench instead of the usual four.
- **Cote d'Ivoire**. Primary, secondary, and universities reopened as of May 25<sup>th</sup>. [Measures](#) include washing hands before and after classes. Classes are equipped with hand sanitizer gel. Students returned to classes by September 14, after the vacations period.
- **Ethiopia**. The government is preparing to [reopen](#) preschool and primary schools by the end of September or early October. The [Ministry of Education has issued guidelines](#) to limit number of students per classroom
- **Equatorial Guinea**. The Government decided on June 15<sup>th</sup> to ease emergency measures in force since March. This includes the [reopening of schools](#) for exams as long as they can comply with protective measures such as the use of masks, social distancing, hand washing practices, among others. After a period of vacation, the government authorized the [opening of schools from September 1<sup>st</sup>](#) with a capacity of 50% students per class.
- **Ghana** implemented a phased, selective reopening: June 15<sup>th</sup> – Final year tertiary students returned to classes; June 22<sup>nd</sup> – Final year senior secondary reopened; June 29<sup>th</sup> – Final year junior high school reopened; all other students will be home till further notice. After a period of vacations exam classes are due to return to classes by October 5<sup>th</sup>.
- **Guinea**, schools [reopened](#) on June 29<sup>th</sup>, starting with exam classes. Currently students are on vacation.
- **Kenya**, announced on July 7<sup>th</sup> that schools will remain [closed until January](#) and that final year exams will be cancelled. Students of basic education in private and public schools will have to repeat the school year. The Ministry will continue to explore how to expand access of remote learning to all students. Colleges and universities may be able to reopen if they comply by government guidelines.
- **Liberia**. Schools reopened June 22<sup>nd</sup> for [last year of senior secondary](#) students who are expected to sit exams this year.
- **Madagascar** has reopened schools for [some grades](#) (final year of high school, grade three, and grade seven). Attendance of pupils appears to be low. On July 6<sup>th</sup> a lockdown was reinstated in the central

region and schools had to [close again](#). They are now gradually reopening in some [regions](#). After vacation, schools are partially reopened as of September 1<sup>st</sup> for examinations classes.

- **Mozambique** started to [gradually reopen by the end of August](#), with total of 627 secondary schools and 19 teacher training institutes selected for the first phase of reopening, bringing back to school about [82,000 pupils](#), of which 24,000 girls. However only one in four of these schools had access to the basic services required for adequate hygiene practices.
- **Niger**, public schools reopened by June 1<sup>st</sup>. Currently on vacation.
- **Sierra Leone**. School reopening Task Force established and working on different elements. Schools reopened July 1<sup>st</sup> for those sitting for [standard exams](#). A set of guidelines has been prepared and students returned to classes by September 15<sup>th</sup> for preprimary and by October 15<sup>th</sup> for primary schools, JSS, and SSS. The Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary Education of Sierra Leone also announced that they will support accelerated learning activities using the new basic curriculum and that Radio Teaching program will be expanded.
- **South Africa** delayed planned [reopening of schools](#) after a spike in infections, but then reopened June 8<sup>th</sup> using a phased reopening. Despite the number of COVID-19 cases growing sharply, by July 6, grades 6 and 11 returned to classes as part of the second stage of reopening. Due to the increase in COVID-19 cases, the president of South Africa declared that [schools were closing](#) for four weeks, except for grade 12 which will have a one week break. By late August [children returned to schools](#) after the precautionary break, teachers unions expressed their concern on being underprepared to ensure safety.
- **South Sudan** will start a [phased reopening](#) with candidate classes, Primary 8 and Senior 4, returning by first week of October 2020. Phase 2, including the rest of grades, will coincide with the start of the academic year in February 2021.
- **Tanzania** [reopened schools](#) on June 22<sup>nd</sup>, with kindergartens, primary, and secondary schools resuming activities, with many parents concerned about the safety of learning environment in the context of increased infection cases. Schools reopened after the August break by September 1<sup>st</sup>.
- **Togo**, by June 15<sup>th</sup> final year pupils of primary and junior high schools; second and third-year students of senior high schools [returned to classes](#).
- **Zambia**. Students of examination classes [returned to school](#) by June 1<sup>st</sup>. Ministry of General Education has released guidelines on measures for safe school reopening as well as responsibilities of teachers/staff/administrators: smaller class size to the extent possible, observing physical distancing measures, having staff and students wearing masks, and maintaining a stock of masks to support vulnerable learners, compressing the curriculum, etc.
- **Zimbabwe**. Examination classes (grade7, form 4, upper sixth) will [return to classes on September 28<sup>th</sup>](#), followed in October 26 by next year's examination classes -- Grade 6, Form 3 and Lower Sixth or Form 5. Classes will be smaller (with no more than 30 students per classroom) and social distancing rules.

### Eastern and Central Europe

- **Albania**, schools [reopened by May 18<sup>th</sup>](#) for students in the last year of upper secondary. School reopening is under strict hygiene and social distance measures. Despite an increase in cases students [returned to schools](#) by September 14 for the new school year.
- **Armenia**. Pre- schools are open since May 18<sup>th</sup>, with [measures](#) such as temperature checks, shoes disinfection, and spending most of the school day outdoors. Students [returned to classes](#) by September 15<sup>th</sup>.
- **Austria**. Began returning students May 4<sup>th</sup>, with Grade 12 students who came back to school to prepare for final exam ("Matura") two weeks later; (ii) May 18<sup>th</sup>: School reopened for primary schools, lower secondary, and special needs schools; (iii) June 3<sup>rd</sup>: School opening for upper secondary and TVET schools. Schools reopened for the new school year by September 7 introducing a [traffic light system](#) to properly react if an increase in cases occurs.

- **Belarus**, schools reopened by September 1<sup>st</sup>.
- **Belgium**. From May 18<sup>th</sup>, selected grades of [primary and secondary schools restarted classes](#) under strict social distancing rules. Some [measures](#) taken include students and teachers wearing masks, washing hands when entering schools. All schools will reopen for the [new school year](#) starting on September 1<sup>st</sup>.
- **Bulgaria**. Reopened in the fall – September 14<sup>th</sup>.
- **Croatia**. Classes resumed in May and students are currently on summer holiday. The Ministry conducted a survey of teachers and parents on effectiveness of remote learning, indicating the results will be used to improve on the remote learning to be offered in the start of the school year. Results of the survey have been released and are highlighted [here](#). School reopened by September 7.
- **Cyprus**, high school students started to [return to schools](#) by May 11<sup>th</sup> and the school year finished by late June. The next academic year is started by September 1<sup>st</sup>.
- **Denmark**. Staggered its reopening starting back in April, being one of the first countries to return kids to the classroom, under strict social distancing guidance. The new school year started by August 10.
- **Estonia**, May 15<sup>th</sup>: schools and educational institutions [resumed](#) in-person learning for up to 10 students per contact group. Tallinn public schools will limit contact groups to a maximum of five students. The government's coronavirus scientific council [supports the reopening of schools](#), students returned to school with a blended system by September 1<sup>st</sup>.
- **Finland**, [reopened](#) schools by mid-May. After vacations, students returned to classes by August 13.
- **France**. After the summer break, students returned to classes by September 1<sup>st</sup> with the use of masks being compulsory indoors for staff and students over the age of 11.
- **Germany**. Reopened May 6<sup>th</sup>. The school year starts at different times in the 16 states, yet they all agreed in July that children will return to schools once the summer holidays are over. By 10 August schools reopened. The new package of measures designed by late August due to an increase in infections supports the [safe reopening of schools](#) for the new academic year.
- **Greece**. Students [returned](#) May 4<sup>th</sup>, but are following guidelines, for example, stay at least two meters (6.56 feet) apart. Students and teachers are required to wear masks when [schools reopen for the new school year](#) by September 7. The start of the school year was delayed and students [returned by September 14](#).
- **Hungary**, Schools will keep up digital education methods for the remainder of the term, but are allowed to [organize consultations for individual students or small groups](#) from June 2<sup>nd</sup>. The [new school year](#) started by September 1<sup>st</sup>.
- **Iceland**, by June 15<sup>th</sup> all schools were open, applying social distance and hygiene [measures](#). Schools reopened by late August after the vacations period.
- **Italy**. Children returned to classes by 14 September with students seated 1m apart and class sizes becoming smaller.
- **Kazakhstan**. Schools have started to reopen by September 1<sup>st</sup> (See Annex1)
- **Lithuania**, reopened schools for primary school students by [May 25<sup>th</sup>](#), other grades joined by early June. After summer break, schools reopened by September 1<sup>st</sup>.
- **Luxembourg**. Schools have [gradually been reopening](#) since May 4<sup>th</sup>, with students in their final year of secondary school returning first. After summer break students returned by September 15.
- **Netherlands**. Students returned to schools after the summer break by August 17 but they [may be exempted](#) if they or if someone they live with falls into a high risk category.
- **Norway**. Kindergartens were opened on April 20<sup>th</sup> and its primary schools on April 27<sup>th</sup>, starting with grade 1-4. Universities, colleges and vocational schools reopened from April 27<sup>th</sup> for some students and employees. All students were returned to school before the summer holidays. Students returned to classes by August 17<sup>th</sup>.

- **Poland**, schools [reopened](#) by the end of May, then closed for summer and reopened by September 1<sup>st</sup> with adjusted regulations including allowing principals the [to suspend classes](#) (by groups of for the whole school) if outbreaks of COVID were to occur in schools.
- **Portugal**, schools [reopened](#) by mid-May and are reopened after the break by September 14<sup>th</sup>.
- **Romania**. By June 2<sup>nd</sup> schools [reopened](#) for learners in the last year of lower and upper secondary school to help prepare students for the national exams. The Ministry of Health has prepared sanitary guidelines for the [new school year](#) which started on September 14<sup>th</sup>.
- **Russian Federation**, schools [reopened](#) as of September 1 after summer holidays.
- **Slovak Republic**, schools and kindergartens [opened](#) by June 1<sup>st</sup>. Schools reopened by September 2<sup>nd</sup>.
- **Slovenia**. Children in the first three grades of primary school, final years secondary school, and kindergartens returned to classrooms on [May 18<sup>th</sup>](#). After the summer break, students returned by September 1<sup>st</sup>.
- **Spain**. On May 25<sup>th</sup> a phased reopening restarted and only last year students of secondary and post-secondary in territories under phase 2 and 3 of reopening resumed classes. The Ministry of Education has prepared [guidelines](#) for students to returned to schools by September, measures will be adapted depending on the situation in each of Spain's 17 autonomous regions. By September 8, there has been a partial return to classes.
- **Switzerland**. May 11<sup>th</sup> for younger grades. Older children from their 10<sup>th</sup> year, as well as university students, returned on June 8<sup>th</sup>. Students returned to classes after the summer break on August 17<sup>th</sup>.
- **Ukraine**, kindergartens [reopened](#) by late May. Schools reopened on September 1<sup>st</sup> with the three modalities of operation: green are open with general hygiene and distancing precautions, yellow is when the incidence in the area is high thus some activities in schools are limited (physical training, etc.), red is when cases are in the school and all the school goes on distance learning for 2 weeks.
- **United Kingdom**. In **England**, secondary schools were allowed to reopen for years 10 and 12 since June 10<sup>th</sup>. Some nursery, pre-school, and reception year 1 and 6 started to go back by early June. In preparation for wide school reopening on September, the [British Government has published its safety plans](#) for England's (in-person) return to school - built on the principle of keeping classes or whole year groups apart in separate "bubbles" and the deployment of a [track, trace, and test program](#) being developed to limit the risk of transmission. In **Scotland**, schools have already reopened as well as some schools in **Northern Ireland**. **England** and **Wales** followed in September. There are [separate guidelines](#) for each.
- **Uzbekistan**. A quarter of schools re-open [September 14<sup>th</sup>](#). The remaining schools are set to open doors for students in the next two weeks (by October 1<sup>st</sup>). More than 2300 schools re-opened. There are about 10 thousand general education schools, 6.2 million students, and over 486 thousand teachers in Uzbekistan. Most schools are expected to restore traditional education (offline) by October 1<sup>st</sup>. At the same time, the decision to open the schools will be made on a case by case basis, based on the epidemiological situation in the region, rate of confirmed cases in teachers, readiness of the health care system, and local council's decision. Starting from September 14<sup>th</sup>, TV lessons are broadcasted for schoolchildren in all subjects. Only parents can determine the format of education for their children, i.e. online vs. traditional. The school administration is prohibited from involving students in the traditional format of education or putting pressure on parents.

### East Asia and the Pacific

- **Australia**. States have the authority to follow up different guidelines or protocols given that the education system is administered at state level. Throughout the pandemic, schools in most states have remained open to children of essential workers and vulnerable children. Between May (New South Wales, Queensland, Western Australia) and June (Tasmania, South Australia, Northern Territory, and ACT) most students [across states](#) returned to school. An exception is the [state of Victoria](#) where students returned

to remote and flexible learning by August 5<sup>th</sup>, although schools and early childhood education centers are only open for vulnerable children and children of permitted workers.

- **Brunei Darussalam.** Reopened schools [early June](#) for students who will take national examinations and extended by July 27<sup>th</sup>.
- **China.** Dates of reopening varied based on the date of last reported case of COVID in the province. Practice social distancing whenever possible with examples including (i) allowing students from certain grades, e.g. the graduating classes, to register earlier than others to avoid peak traffic and avoiding large scale gathering by canceling parent days, campus events, and large-scale teacher training (ii) managing the access of vendors, service providers, and visitors to campus. Seats have plastic dividers to ensure students are safely distanced from each other. Re-adjusting school calendar to make up for lost face-to-face instruction time. Routinely carry out simple health screening, monitor instances of high-risk symptoms and health related absence, and provide daily updates to local authorities. China also developed a contingency plan if/when an active case of COVID is found in classroom. Beijing had to [reclose schools](#) due to a new COVID-19 outbreak. Schools are open by September 14<sup>th</sup>, after the vacations period.
- **Fiji,** early childhood centers, primary and secondary schools [reopened](#) by July 6<sup>th</sup>.
- **Indonesia.** On June 16 the Education and Culture Ministry announced plans for [a phased reopening of schools](#) located in low risk areas or “green zones”. By July 20<sup>th</sup> students started to [return to classes](#) in “green zones” of the archipelago in accordance with local protocols.
- **Japan.** Dates of reopening vary but started in mid-April. Classrooms are ventilated and students are not allowed to gather in clusters. Washing of hands regularly throughout the day, especially before lunch. Checking of temperatures regularly. If an infection is confirmed, the infected individual and those who were in close contact are to be suspended, according to the guidelines. Temporary closure of classes or the entire school is also recommended. After vacations, students returned to classes by August 24<sup>th</sup>.
- **Lao PDR.** Schools have [partially opened](#) for Grade 5, Grade 9 and Grade 12 as the government lifted the lockdown during mid-May. Opening the schools for Grade 1-4, 6-8 and 10-11 started on early June. After the break schools opened by September 1<sup>st</sup>.
- **Mongolia.** Schools have reopened by September 1<sup>st</sup>.
- **Papua New Guinea** schools began gradually reopening in late April. The Department of Education provided [specific instructions](#) for schools, teachers, and all education authorities to take in prevention of COVID-19. Parents can keep their children home if they wish to do so, yet they must inform schools so that children can continue their remote learning. Some of the prevention measures include mandatory facemasks for students and teachers and hand sanitizers or hand basins with soaps for hand washing in every recess break. However, [implementation of measures appears challenging](#), with lack of masks in some areas and abundance in others. Some parents have resorted to sew masks themselves.
- **New Zealand,** schools [reopened](#) by mid-May and have not reported closures since. Students returned to classes by late August after the break.
- **South Korea.** After delays, began the school year in April online, then moved to in-person learning, beginning with high school seniors, followed by middle school seniors, juniors, and elementary schools by May 20<sup>th</sup>. Since then, some schools and districts have re-closed or gone on lockdown after increase in confirmed cases. This has helped curb the rise of transmissions. By August 25<sup>th</sup>, schools and kindergartens in Seoul have [closed](#) due to increase in cases and approximately 200 staff and students infected over the past two weeks.
- **Singapore.** Schools fully reopened by [early June](#). Measures include temperature checks, use of masks, strict hygiene, among others,
- **Tonga.** After reopening, schools [closed by end of June](#) to test how students, teachers, and parents cope with at-home learning. The remote learning [school trial](#) included using radio, TV, and internet.
- **Tuvalu** Schools reopened on April 27<sup>th</sup>. The country closed its borders early and implemented tight measures. As of end July, it remains one of the few COVID19-free countries.

- **Vietnam.** By mid-May, Vietnam had fully reopened all schools. The Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) developed a list of 16 priority responses for the basic education sector, and has sought support from development partners on implementation.<sup>1</sup> These priorities relate to, for example, (1) the safe operation of schools to reduce virus transmission, including the availability of hygiene materials and part-time in-person classes for crowded classrooms; (2) bridging the learning gap related to school closures, including stronger distance education provision, curriculum streamlining, teacher training, and promoting awareness for parents, students, and others; and (3) protecting the most vulnerable, including raising caregivers' awareness on child nutrition needs, psychological support, and distance education materials in ethnic minority languages. After vacations, students returned to classes by September 1<sup>st</sup>.

## Latin, Central and North America

- **Anguilla.** By late May the Ministry and Department of Education informed that classes restarted with some limitations.
- **Argentina.** Three provinces have reopened schools in August, San Juan, Formosa and Catamarca, on a voluntary basis and under a strict sanitary protocol.
- **Canada.** As of July 29<sup>th</sup>, all provinces had announced that most or all of their students will return to school in September. By September 8<sup>th</sup> there has been a partial return to classes. In provinces such as British Columbia and Quebec, students will be divided into “learning groups” which will be the group students can interact with, which the government says will reduce the risk of transmission among students, while improving contact tracing in the event of an outbreak. Additional resources have also been allocated at provincial level to help schools prepare for the upcoming school year, which will go towards increased cleaning expenses, hand-washing stations and additional supplies for students and teachers. For a summary of the back-to-school plans by province, click [here](#).
- **Mexico** the new school year started this August 24<sup>th</sup> [using remote learning](#) (television and radio) until the pandemic allows for students to return to school. The Secretary of Education has made agreements with television corporations so that they schedule the emission of educational content for 24 hours and seven days a week through six channels. For those who can't access televised content, radio content as well as textbook distribution will be put in place.
- **Nicaragua.** Schools and public universities started classes by April 20<sup>th</sup> after the regular holidays. The Government has allowed private schools to close. Attendance is low-medium in urban areas and higher in rural areas.
- **Panama** has started the school year this [July 20<sup>th</sup>](#) with an adapted curriculum to focus on essential learning and using distance learning to reach children in all grades, as well as children with disabilities. There is no known date for face to face learning to start.
- **Peru,** by July 1<sup>st</sup> [in-person teaching](#) at primary and secondary schools began for schools located in rural areas with limited means of communication, internet connectivity, and zero COVID-19 infections. In regions where there is limited access to internet, [TV lessons are being prioritized](#) to reach more students.
- **The United States.** On July 23<sup>rd</sup>, the Center for Disease, Control and Prevention issued a statement on school reopening and relevant guidelines. It also released the “[Plan, Prepare, and Respond](#)” guidelines targeting administrators, caregivers, and parents about safety in schooling. States and school districts are opening online, in-person, or in a blended way, a state by state list on the status of reopening can be found [here](#).
- **Uruguay** began the return to classes in some rural areas by late April and moved in phases. By June 29<sup>th</sup>. Uruguay reached a [full reopening](#) of schools with 256 thousand students coming back to classes in Montevideo. Some of the [main characteristics](#) of the gradual reopening so far are mandatory testing of

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

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. After vacations, students returned to classes by September 1<sup>st</sup>.

### Middle East and North Africa

- In **Algeria**, schools remain closed for the summer holidays, with students in grade 12 expected to return to review for exams taking place in October 2020.
- **Lebanon**. [Schools may reopen in late September](#) according to the Ministry of Education and Higher Education. A hybrid model will be adopted though details are not yet known.

### South Asia

- **Pakistan**, has [reopened private and public schools for 6-8 standards](#) under strict regulations requiring social distancing and the use of masks. All provinces are following the reopening except for Sindh which will start reopening by September 28. Primary schools nationwide are scheduled to reopen by September 30<sup>th</sup>.