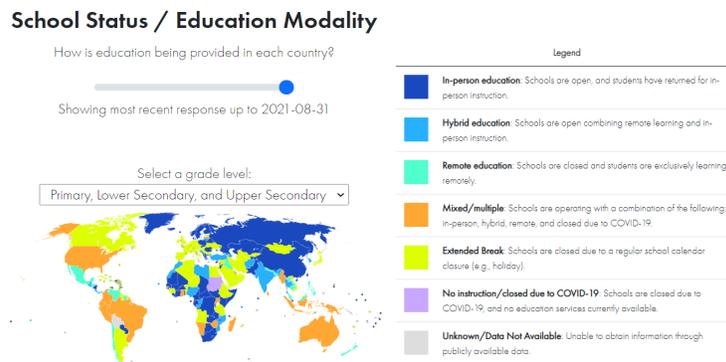


Education Systems' Response to COVID-19

Brief September 9th, 2021

School opening status: Latest data from the [COVID-19 Global Education Recovery Tracker](#)¹ shows that most countries have already opened schools partially (rural areas or parts of the country) and mostly with hybrid (combining remote and in-person) or mixed approaches. In many countries, the return is slow in the midst of debates about costs and benefits of returning to presential education. However, as of late August, very few countries depend solely on remote education. On the other hand, in Africa, a majority of countries have returned to in- person classes. In the northern hemisphere, the 2021-22 school year has begun or is about to begin, but it takes on the shape of a “new normal” as most are expected to return to in-person with additional sanitary protocols and adjusted schedules.

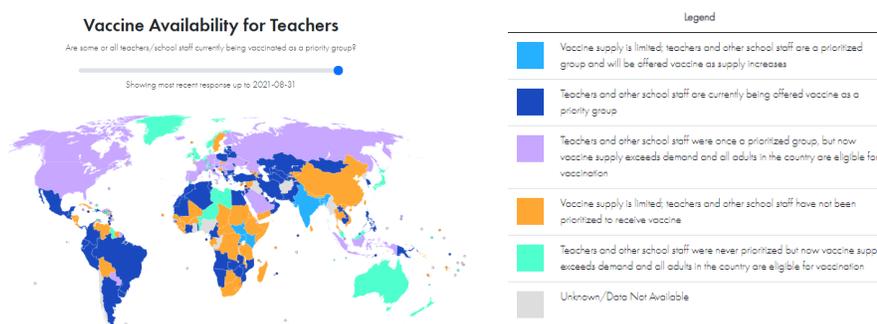
Figure 1: School Status / Education Modality across regions



Source: [COVID-19 Global Education Recovery Tracker](#) - a collaboration of the World Bank, Johns Hopkins University & UNICEF (2021).

Teachers vaccination: While high-income countries are prioritizing or have prioritized [teacher vaccination](#) campaigns (with some moving towards universal access), the context varies more among low- and middle-income countries as many factors, such as vaccine scarcity and other populations being prioritized, reduce access to COVID-19 immunizations for teachers. As of September 1st, only 53% of countries had prioritized teachers’ vaccination.

Figure 2: Vaccine prioritization for teachers across regions



Source: [COVID-19 Global Education Recovery Tracker](#) - a collaboration of the World Bank, Johns Hopkins University & UNICEF (2021).
Washington DC. Baltimore. New York.

¹ This is a joint effort of World Bank, UNICEF, and Johns Hopkins University E-School Initiative. Because of the need to validate information collected, updates to the public site may take up to two weeks to display. <https://www.covideducationrecovery.global/>



LATEST DEVELOPMENTS IN EDUCATION

SAFETY MEASURES AND SHIFTS IN SCHOOL YEAR: Countries are implementing diverse protection measures, as well as changes in schedules and school calendars. For example, **Germany** has allocated **€200 million for air filtering devices** for preschools and primary schools to be installed as children return. In the **USA**, the **American Center for Disease Control (CDC)** has updated the **guidance for fully vaccinated people**. The CDC recommends universal indoor masking for all teachers, staff, students, and visitors to K-12 schools, regardless of vaccination status. Children should return to full-time in-person learning in the fall with layered prevention strategies in place. **New York City is requiring all Department of Education employees** to have received at least one dose of a coronavirus vaccine by Sept. 27th. **Turkey** is to reopen schools on Sept. 6th, and is considering mandating regular negative PCR tests from vaccine-hesitant parents as the country prepares to return to face-to-face education. **Saudi Arabia's** school year will switch to a trimester system this year, instead of two semesters, with each term consisting of 13 weeks (with 12 holidays during the school year).² In-person return will be limited to intermediate and secondary school students **who have received two doses of the vaccine**. Kindergarten and primary school students will continue with distance education until 70% of the population is fully vaccinated or October 30th (whichever comes first). **Italy's government** has urged regions to prioritize COVID-19 vaccinations for those aged between 12 and 18, before schools and sports activities restart across the country. **In Ireland**, schools are “on course” to return to normal in-person teaching. **Peru** is **one of the countries in Latin America** with a slow-paced plan to reopen schools at a large scale – schools are currently only operating in rural areas and in a few areas with a low-level of COVID cases. A debate has emerged on the need to reopen schools as football stadiums, restaurants, and malls are back in operation. The MoE is evaluating **increasing the use of hybrid learning** across the country, through **a pilot** starting mid-September. In **Uganda**, **the minister of education said that schools could reopen** if all children between the ages of 12 and 18 are inoculated, which will take many months given slow vaccination rates.

A careful return to school strategy



After a very long closure, schools reopened in Jordan on the 1st of September to start the school year for around 2.2 million students (1.6 in government schools). Schooling will include two modalities: in-person education and hybrid education. To advance the catch up on content, the first two weeks of school will be a continuation of the remedial education programs that were launched August 15th, then the year's curriculum will be introduced. In preparation, Jordan has prioritized teacher vaccinations and has reported that over 90% of teachers have been fully vaccinated. Those that are not will have a PCR test required every Sunday and Thursday.

TEACHER SHORTAGES: In the **Netherlands**, schools plan to use additional staff to help pupils who missed out on lessons, but 42% say they have no idea where to find them. This teacher shortage is making it difficult to spend the €8.5 billion that the government has set aside to help schools catch up lost teaching time during the coronavirus crisis. These teacher shortages is observed **also in many states in the US.**

² The three trimesters are a means to enable the development of curricula, high school tracks, and educational plans in response to development requirements and Vision 2030 – with an increase in the actual school days, and the number of study hours for primary and intermediate stages.

AS CLOSURES ARE PROLONGED, OUT OF SCHOOL NUMBERS ARE INCREASING: A recent estimate by UNICEF shows that 40% of all school-going aged children across Eastern and Southern Africa are currently not in school, and slow vaccination rates are only making this worse.

NEW WAVES, NEW CLOSURES: In [Australia](#), in less than a week, clusters of [positive cases have emerged in a number of schools](#) in Queensland, Victoria, and the NSW Hunter region – with city-wide lockdowns and school closures following. In Greater Sydney, plans for Year 12 students to return to campus for trial exams have been cancelled.



RESEARCH AND LATEST FINDINGS

On learning losses

New studies estimating learning losses in specific countries have emerged. By the end of 2020 and early 2021, a wave of studies with results from [Belgium](#), [the Netherlands](#), [Switzerland](#), [Chile](#), and the [United Kingdom](#) indicated both learning losses and increases in inequality. A second wave of studies has emerged on learning losses across countries:

- In [Ghana](#), the estimated average learning loss amounts to 66% of previous learning gains in foundational numeracy.
- A study in [Brazil](#) (Sao Paulo), where data was collected at the beginning and the end of 2020, shows that students learned 27.5% of what they would have learned if in-person classes had continued as usual.
- Emerging evidence from [Ethiopia](#) showed that children only learned between 30% to 40% as much in math as during a normal year, and that the learning gap between urban and rural students has increased.
- A randomized control trial in [Botswana](#) focused on using low-tech interventions to minimize learning loss during the pandemic shows that using mobile text messages and phone calls to encourage parents to support their child’s learning while out of school can be effective. A combined strategy of texts and calls cost-effectively improved learning by 0.12 standard deviations.
- In [Canada](#) (Ontario), learning losses are estimated to represent 3.5 and 6.5 months among typically performing and lower-performing students.
- A study in [China](#) that uses administrative data from Chinese middle schools, shows that receiving online education during school closures improved student results by 0.22 standard deviations, compared to students without learning support from their school.
- Research in [Australia](#) (Victoria) shows deterioration of speech development due to lockdowns. UNICEF Australia surveyed 1,000 parents nationally and found that learning loss was the second biggest reason parents backed reopening schools, after mental health concerns. About 27% of parents said they were concerned their child would not be able to catch up.
- At the [global level](#) COVID-19 disruptions are estimated to impact [early childhood students](#) in 19.01 billion person-days of instruction lost, 10.75 million additional children falling “off track” in their early development, and a present discounted value of US\$308.02 billion of earnings lost in adulthood.

On Protective Measures

A large, randomized control trial (RCT) in Bangladesh supports mask wearing. The [study](#), which included 40,000 adults across 600 villages in rural Bangladesh, finds that mask-wearing can have a significant impact on limiting the spread of symptomatic COVID-19. It also showed that relatively low-cost, targeted interventions to promote mask-wearing can significantly increase the use of face coverings in rural, low-income countries.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) released a science brief that explores the transmission of COVID-19 in K-12 schools and Early Care and Education programs. Given the rapid developments of the pandemic response and the time needed to collect, analyze, and report new data, [the studies in this updated science brief](#) primarily describe experiences before widespread availability of COVID-19 vaccines.

On Policy Options

The World Bank POLICY ACTION NOTES summarize key actions to support countries with reopening schools and getting students back to learning. The Bank's Education Global Practice has developed a package of short [Policy Action Notes](#) that have synthesized evidence and examples around crucial policy actions and outline options for activities related to protecting health and safety in schools, modifying pedagogy to prevent learning loss, and improving management to ensure implementation of these policy actions

The World Bank has released a guidance note for the Europe and Central Asia (ECA) region, to provide decision-makers with some recommendations and policy advice on effective ways to respond to the education losses engendered by the COVID-19 crisis. [These recommendations include specific measures](#) for mitigating learning losses and preparing for school reopening.

A Brookings brief outlined the importance of holistic learning, especially in the face of COVID-19, as being imperative when schools set out to help students catch up. As the new academic year begins, schools are encouraged to “[accelerate learning](#)” – rather than practice deficit-oriented [remediation](#) – [a change](#) that will help educators move children forward after a year of tumult by addressing any unfinished content from the previous year within grade-level lessons. As schools and communities work to better education for the next year, it is vital that they also use the best science of learning to teach children in ways that reflect how the human brain learns.

A UNESCO report draws on research-based knowledge generated during the COVID-19 crisis and on previous research on germane topics to [suggest a framework](#) that supports the development of contextually relevant educational strategies to teach during and after the pandemic.

As issues of social justice become more present and urgent in our world, Pearson asked 5,000 people globally, to examine what they learned, and what they need to learn, when it comes to race and gender equality. [Globally, 59% don't believe their education adequately](#) covered topics of race and gender equality, with younger generations reporting better satisfaction with how these topics were covered.

World Bank Blogs

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- How to strengthen disability inclusion in education? ([English](#))
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- How do we know if college students have the skills of the future? - The "DESCAES" skills assessment offers an answer ([English](#))
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