PREPARING AND SUPPORTING TEACHERS
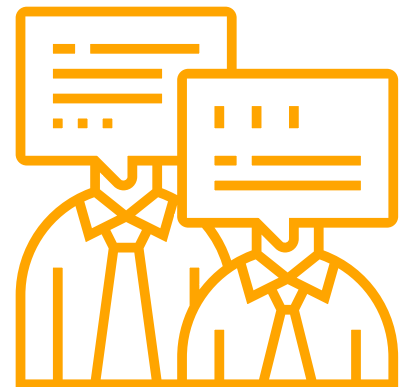
The pandemic has challenged education systems to ensure learning continuity, substantially increasing the demands placed on teachers and increasing the complexity of their job. Countries need to reengage with teachers and help improve their well-being to improve their effectiveness. Countries also need to provide teachers with concrete guidance on identifying children at risk of dropping out and enforcing health protocols. Finally, teachers should benefit from high quality professional development and ongoing support to (1) reengage with students, (2) assess student learning, (3) implement a revised curriculum using appropriate pedagogy, and (4) improve their digital skills.[1]

What Countries Can Do to Prepare and Support Teachers

Reengaging with Teachers

Teachers' working conditions in many countries were not ideal even before the pandemic. Some had to teach in multigrade classrooms, travel long distances, and receive their salaries late. Overnight, teachers' jobs became more difficult as they had to adapt to remote learning with limited guidance or preparation. In some cases, teachers had to teach remote and in-person classes at the same time. In others, reintegration into schools has been characterized by periods of intermittent closures or multiple shifts to maintain social distancing norms. In addition, teachers now fear contracting COVID-19 when schools reopen. Countries need to engage teachers actively to understand teachers' concerns and discuss actions plans to mitigate the impacts of these stressors. For example, in Argentina, after several meetings with teachers, the city of Buenos Aires modified their reopening plans. Now, teachers who are in high-risk groups will not return to in-person instruction until they are vaccinated. In Bangladesh, Uruguay, Moldova, and other countries, this dialogue has led to the prioritization of teachers for vaccination. However, these conversations should not stop upon vaccination. To cope with the additional demands and the complexity of their roles in this context, teacher-management team culture—especially at the

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1. This note draws from *Three Principles to Support Teacher Effectiveness during COVID-19*.

school level—will need to be strengthened so teams can address challenges together (see guidance on Preparing and Supporting School Leaders). In addition, ministries of education should collaborate with health authorities and NGOs to allow early detection of burnout and help adjust teacher workloads and lifestyles to manageable levels. Interventions such as HealthyMinds@Work in Mexico can help teachers cultivate important aspects of well-being using simple exercises that draw upon the latest findings in neuroscience and positive psychology. Providing psycho-social support to teachers not only helps improve their well-being but also provides the foundation for teachers to support their students' social-emotional well-being, too. More information on how to devise a process to reengage with teachers and strengthen dialogue can be found here. See also our guidance on Communication with Stakeholders.
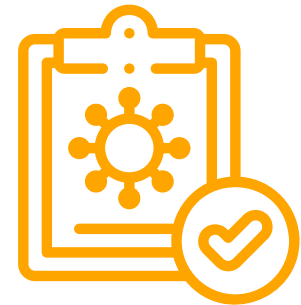
Provide Guidance on Reenrollment of Students, Especially Those at Risk of Dropping Out

Teachers play a key role in identifying and supporting students who are at risk of dropping out, especially students from vulnerable populations, such as girls (see guidance on Reenrollment). School leaders must clarify their expectations for teacher actions to increase reenrollment and provide teachers with clear guidelines on what to do. (See also guidance on Preparing and Supporting School Leaders).
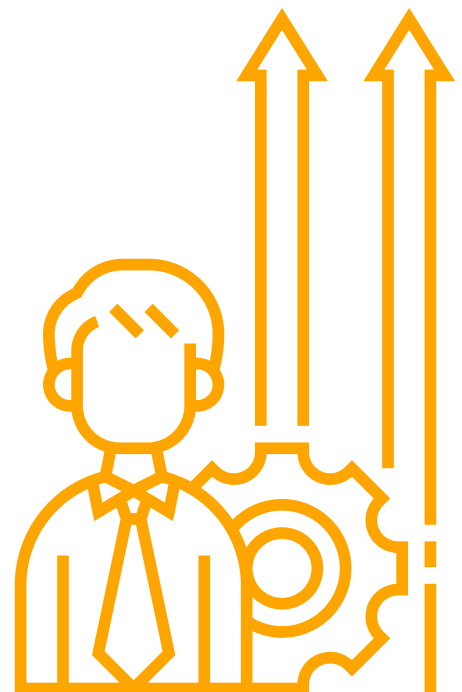
Provide Guidance on Enforcing Health Protocols

Teachers need guidance on how to enforce the health protocols for in-person classrooms, from physical distancing to ensuring classrooms are well ventilated, as well as on how to alert school leaders if protocols are not being followed (see guidance on Minimizing School Transmission). UNICEF has developed a self-paced teacher preparedness training package to help teachers understand and enforce health protocols.

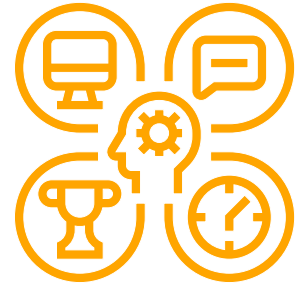## *Provide High-Quality Professional Development*

Before countries can provide concrete guidance to teachers, instructional coherence needs to be strengthened by aligning the revised curriculum (see guidance on Adapting the Curriculum) with student assessments to diagnose and monitor progress (see guidance on Learning Assessment and High-Stakes Exams) and with teacher in-service professional development. At the same time, teacher support needs to follow evidence-based principles of high-quality professional development. First, high-quality in-service professional development must be tailored to teachers' needs. Just as effective teaching should include adjusting to the learning needs of students, effective professional development should be targeted to the areas in which teachers need the most support. For example, Estonia has set up an educational hotline that teachers can access to receive targeted support. Second, it must be practical, not just theoretical. Traditional professional development tends to be lectured-based, with teachers as passive listeners. This approach is at odds with evidence that indicates that active learning strategies which involve hands-on application are more successful in improving learning and retention. In Cambodia and India, rural teachers receive video lessons that exemplify the teaching of culturally relevant, curriculum-aligned content using student-centered pedagogy. These resources provide teachers a model lesson to follow. Similar efforts have been replicated throughout the developing world using interactive radio instruction. Third, it must be focused. Teacher professional development, particularly in-service professional development, needs to be selective and strategic in scope. Trying to cover too wide a range of skills will less likely result in meaningful change in any teaching practice because there insufficient time and resources are devoted to improving

each skill. In Punjab, Pakistan, the government prioritized a list of skills for teachers, and provides teachers with ongoing mentoring and a self-paced application to help them transform their practice. Finally, it must be ongoing. One-off professional development is not effective; teachers need to receive continuous support over a sustained period to ensure that new skills and knowledge are consolidated and internalized. Remote coaching, hotlines, and helpdesks, as well as moderated social media platforms, could provide remote solutions. Additional examples can be found here.

Specific Areas of Guidance and Support for Teachers

Once instructional coherence and evidence-based principles for high-quality professional development are addressed, teachers will need concrete guidance and support in four main areas: (1) reengaging with students; (2) assessment, (3) curriculum and pedagogy, and (4) digital skills.

Reengaging with Students

Teachers need to support students to reengage with learning by creating a supportive learning environment where students can feel safe and learn with joy, rigor, and purpose. The pandemic has intensified the need to address the social-emotional needs of children as they navigate a turbulent reality of unpredictable combinations of remote learning, blended learning, and in-person learning. North Macedonia and Chile, for instance, have incorporated stress-reduction and mindfulness exercises for students on educational television and YouTube (in Spanish).

Assessment

Teachers need to identify what key content and skills—especially foundational skills—students have not covered or not mastered adequately. For this task, teachers need ready-made assessments or question banks to help assess students on the core content and skills they should have mastered by this stage. They need support to assess students accurately and continuously, without generating stress; record testing information; and use it to help students progress. For example, in Indonesia, the national assessment agency provides diagnostic assessment tools (in Bahasa) for core subjects in each grade, along with guidelines for teachers to score and interpret results. For additional examples, see our guidance on Learning Assessment and High-Stakes Exams. Teachers will also need training to interpret assessment results to identify at-risk students and work with caregivers and school leaders to develop specific strategies for individual students. For specific strategies and country examples, see our guidance on Remediating Learning Loss.
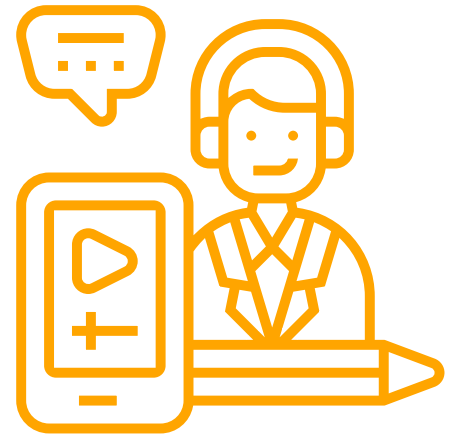
Curriculum and Pedagogy

Teachers need guidance on how to implement the condensed curriculum and strengthen their pedagogical skills not just to teach remotely but also to support students with diverse skill levels. For example, Teaching at the Right Level provides strategies that teachers can use to customize their teaching to the level of their students. These strategies can be employed in person or using computer-assisted learning technology, as was done in Ecuador and the Dominican Republic. Teachers also need support on best practices to conduct asynchronous, synchronous, and hybrid classrooms. For instance, Cambodia is developing an adaptive learning platform to support teachers with remote instruction of grade 7 math. This project involves developing lesson library materials to be hosted on an online platform, developing training for teachers on how to guide students to use and learn from the platform, and deployment of training for students on accessing content and interacting with teachers on the platform.

While implementing the condensed curriculum it is important to clarify to teachers that the priority is on all students' learning, and this priority should be emphasized over completing the curriculum in full (see guidance on Adapting the Curriculum). It is also important to highlight that even before the pandemic many teachers around the world did not master the content of the curriculum and struggled to teach effectively. Countries can help teachers by providing them with structured lesson plans to aid their teaching; Kenya provides a positive example of this practice. (See guidance on how to apply structured lesson plans.) Even when not using structured lesson plans, countries should support teachers to improve their foundational teaching practices. For example, Afghanistan; Guyana; and Punjab, Pakistan have deployed education officers to observe and provide feedback to teachers on foundational teaching practices such as checking for understanding, providing students with high-quality feedback, and promoting deeper thinking. More information on how to structure teacher support can be found here.

Digital Skills

COVID-19 provides an opportunity to support teachers to be technologically skilled as part of their jobs. Countries must first provide teachers with access to technologies, such as radio and television, and digital technologies, such as text, phone, and email. As schools closed in the Kyrgyz Republic, for instance, teachers were provided with free SIM cards to access educational material online and through WhatsApp. In Egypt, the Ministry of Education has set up a platform for student-teacher communication. Once teachers have access to technologies, countries need to support teacher skills to use them. As such skills are built, flexibility will be important. In Lebanon, for instance, the Ministry of Education has been training teachers on the use of Microsoft Teams to record and upload documents and hold virtual classes. Not all teachers will approach or adopt technology in the same way. Furthermore, multiple modes of delivery (offline/online/blended) are more likely to be effective. Teachers will need to be supported with diverse strategies for incorporating different technologies. They may also need to use different channels depending on technology availability. For instance, a suitable multichannel strategy combining lessons broadcasted by TV with SMS or WhatsApp may be more effective in contexts without broad internet access. In Botswana, sending SMS text messages and calling students were found to be cost effective ways to provide learning during the first wave of the pandemic.

Strengthening School Leadership's Support for Teachers

To accomplish all the tasks associated with bringing children back into schools safely and getting them back to learning, teachers will need the support of school principals, pedagogical advisers, and other school leaders. These leaders need to monitor classrooms to detect and address four types of challenges: (1) burnout, stress, and related issues that can affect teachers' well-being; (2) adherence to health and hygiene protocols and guidance on identifying students at risk of dropping out; (3) implementation of revised curriculum, learning assessments, and new pedagogical practices; and (4) accessing and using education technology. A simple checklist, including screening questions for teacher well-being, should be provided by the relevant ministry for school leaders to conduct these regular check-ins. Information from the check-ins can be used by school leaders to generate peer support networks, where teachers who need help are paired with those that have been successful in coping with the same problem. In cases where additional action is needed, the school leader can refer teachers to specialized units for additional support. See our guidance on Preparing and Supporting School Leaders for country examples and additional information.

Useful Resources

Reengaging with Teachers

- Supporting Teachers in Back-to-School Efforts: A Toolkit for School Leaders
- Measuring teachers' well-being
- Interventions to improve well-being

Reenrollment and Enforcing Health Protocols

- Ready to Come Back: Teacher Preparedness Training Package

Teacher Professional Development

- Evidence-based principles of teacher professional development:
  Link 1 - Link 2 - Link 3
- Videos on evidence-based principles of teacher professional development:
  Video 1 - Video 2
- Print resources on implementing remote and blended learning techniques:
  Link 1 - Link 2
- Engaging teachers in remote professional development:
  Link 1 - Link 2
- Classroom observation tool to measure whether teachers are changing their practices
- Guidance on key principles for investing in technology for effective teachers

School Leadership

- Talk by Paul Bambrick on shifting the role of principals from administrators to instructional leaders
- The School Leadership Crisis: Part 1 and Part 2

Cross-Cutting Resources

- World Bank resources for teachers
- Talk on Supporting Teachers in the Age of the Pandemic
- Supporting Teachers during the COVID-19 (Coronavirus) Pandemic
- From Coping to Improving and Accelerating: Supporting Teachers in the Pandemic and Beyond
- Guidance Note: Remote Learning and COVID-19
- Talk by Brahm Fleisch on the impact of technology on coaching for teachers (South Africa)
- Talk by Karthik Muralidharan on improving learning through computer-aided personalization (Rajasthan, India)
- Cost-Effective Approaches to Improve Global Learning