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# EI Guidance to Reopening Schools and Education Institutions

With schools and education institutions closed in a majority of countries, there are critical issues for governments to take into consideration, as countries gradually begin to re-open early childhood institutions, schools and higher education institutions. It is imperative that governments communicate transparently and continuously about the plans for reopening onsite education and the extent to which they are informed by the advice of health experts. Continuous social and policy dialogue with educators and their unions is the cornerstone of any successful education strategy.

## 1. Engage in Social and Policy Dialogue

Public authorities engage in continuous social and policy dialogue with educators and their representative unions and organisations to assess needs and agree on health and safety measures for students and staff as well as the framework and resources for transitioning back to onsite teaching and learning. Consideration is given to the additional workload arising from the parallel requirement of face-to-face and online teaching during the gradual re-opening of schools. The labour rights of teachers and education support personnel are respected and decent working conditions are maintained.

## 2. Ensure the Health and Safety of Education Communities

There is agreement and clarity on the hygiene measures necessary for keeping children, students and staff safe and healthy as well as preventative measures for containing the spread of the virus. All schools and education institutions are equipped to ensure and sustain enhanced hygiene and cleaning practices and all staff is informed and trained to follow new guidelines. Education workers have guaranteed access to Personal Protective Equipment where necessary, and additional funds and staffing are ensured by public



The World Health Organisation (WHO) has highlighted six conditions that should be met before governments start to lift current restrictions on social and physical movement related to the spread of COVID-19:

1. Disease transmission is under control.
2. Health systems are able to “detect, test, isolate and treat every case and trace every contact”.
3. Hot spot risks are minimized in vulnerable places, such as nursing homes.
4. Schools, workplaces and other essential places have established preventive measures.
5. The risk of importing new cases “can be managed”.
6. Communities are fully educated, engaged, and empowered to live under a new normal.

authorities to ensure health and safety requirements. In addition, the situation of at-risk and vulnerable students, staff and their families is taken into consideration.

### 3. Make Equity a Top Priority

Equity is front and centre of all transition plans, recognising that the impact of the pandemic is not equal and that already vulnerable students and education workers have been and may continue to be the most affected. A support structure is put in place for all vulnerable students and staff, for those who are enduring increased hardship and for students who have not been able to participate in online or home-based learning. A strategy is developed for addressing possible increases in drop-out rates, paying particular attention to girls and women, and those at risk of child labour.

### 4. Support Physical and Emotional Wellbeing and Recovery

Systems are in place to support the wellbeing and mental health of children, students and education staff, including through dedicated psychosocial support and counselling. In addition to the pandemic causing ongoing stress and anxiety, many children, students and education staff will also find it difficult to return to school and adapt to new routines as well as restrictions to social interaction. Dedicated support is available to those who may have suffered bereavement, abuse, violence, or other emotional trauma.

### 5. Trust the professionalism of educators

Education authorities engage with educators and their unions to determine and assess the impact of the school closures on teaching, learning and student wellbeing. Any framework for transitioning back to onsite education is built on trust in the professionalism and pedagogical practice of the education workforce. Clarity on any assessment requirements is reached in dialogue with educators and their unions to ensure fair and equal treatment of all students and the continued professional autonomy of educators.

#### El resources regarding the Covid-19 pandemic

##### Info Hub

<https://go.ei-ie.org/Covid19HubEN>

##### El Guiding Principles

<https://go.ei-ie.org/Covid19GuidingPrinciplesEN>

##### El Resolution

<https://go.ei-ie.org/Covid19ElResolutionEN>



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Education International represents organisations of teachers and other education employees across the globe. It is the world's largest federation of unions and associations, representing thirty million education employees in about four hundred organisations in one hundred and seventy countries and territories, across the globe. Education International unites teachers and education employees.

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