

# PRIORITIZING LEARNING DURING COVID-19

## The Most Effective Ways to Keep Children Learning During and Post-Pandemic

This report was written by the Global Education Evidence Advisory Panel. The Panel is made up of experts in education from all over the world. It works to provide lawmakers in low- and middle-income countries with suggestions that can help them make decisions about investing in education. The Panel made a report stating how it is important to ensure learning goes on during Covid-19. They also made suggestions on how to achieve this.

Covid-19 has greatly affected the short and long term education, welfare and future productivity of children. After almost 2 years of school closures and countries around the world, urgent steps need to be taken by governments to limit the damage. It is estimated that if urgent measures are not taken to address the economic cost of lost learning, the Covid crisis will result in the loss of a lot of money. As other sectors recover after lockdown, the harm caused to the education of children will probably reduce the well-being and productivity of children for a long time.

This will make the disruption of education one of the biggest threats to recovery from Covid-19 both in the mid and long term if governments do not act quickly. Besides driving the need for recovery efforts, the pandemic has created a chance to rethink and reset the provision of education for children from all backgrounds and circumstances to learn and thrive.

The children who have been most negatively affected are those from poor countries and families where: schools have been closed for long periods of time; access to technology for education during school closures has been lower; and the ability to adapt to the challenges of the pandemic has been lower. Learning from home is proving not to be very effective. Other than challenges such as the increase in education inequality, different levels of learning in the classroom has made it harder for teachers to help most students catch up, especially those already disadvantaged. This means that Covid-19 has made the crisis that existed before the pandemic worse and increased inequalities.





## **The lessons learnt when the schools were closed include:**

Many innovations were made that can improve education generally as well as help in case schools are ever closed in future or if learning is disrupted when schools reopen.




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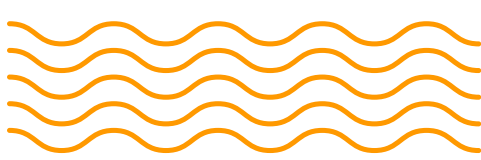
Though learning online from home was not possible for most students in average and poor countries, technology is an important solution for all systems of education. Technology can be used to support teachers and give them access to material and training. Further, technology can be used to make teaching in a classroom more effective. Also, simple steps to keep in touch with students through the phone worked in many countries and their use could continue to be investigated.



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People who make laws often ignore parents despite the fact that parents are always important in education. During the pandemic, parents were forced to become key players in the education of their children. Though this level of involvement for parents is not sustainable, evidence shows that involving parents to some degree can increase a child's learning at low cost to the parent. These include schools speaking directly to parents, more engagement with children in educational activities, reading books to a child (where the parent can read), or sharing simple exercises for the parent to use with their child by text or phone call. Supporting the role of parents must be part of public policy in the medium term.





## Key recommendations

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1. Work to ensure schools and preschools are fully open. At the end of 2021, schools in some places were still closed and others were not fully open. This happened even as a new type of the Covid-19 virus threatened to cause new restrictions. As governments make tough decisions about what activity to restrict in the face of new variants, the evidence suggests education must be made a priority. This is because closing schools can cause long term damage to the education of children and productivity, especially those who are already disadvantaged. In order to prevent these negative costs, it is important to keep schools open.

In addition to this, more evidence is showing that children, especially younger children are very unlikely to get very sick from Covid. It is also hard for teachers to get Covid from their students if certain steps are taken to protect them. Even if new types of Covid start spreading, schools should be the last to close and the first to reopen because it is harder to spread and closing schools will have many disadvantages to young people.

3. Reduce spread in schools. The spread of Covid in schools can be greatly reduced, even in poorer countries, if certain steps are taken. Teachers should be among the first to be vaccinated. Evidence also shows that wearing masks and air circulation also prevents the spread of Covid. Though it is also important to wash hands, Covid spreads mostly through the air and therefore, the above two steps are most important.

3. Change teaching methods according to the current situation and focus on basic skills. Children have lost a lot of school and learning time because of schools being closed and low effectiveness of learning from home. Failure to spot and respond to the loss of learning is one of the reasons why temporary school closures in the past led to permanent damage. Governments need to start by understanding the status of students in terms of learning, admissions and attendance. They must then design a response that allows teachers to teach to the actual learning level of the child, not where we hope they are. This could include catch-up programs that focus on basic skills, use of relevant technologies, more learning time and remedial teachers.

4. Have adequate support to help children learn. Providing teachers with simple teaching guides together with strong review and reaction systems can help them structure their teaching methods and ensure that children learn effectively. Additional tutoring can also help children catch-up.

