PATHWAYS TO REOPENING

A planning checklist for school reopening

Business and Financial Management

OPPORTUNITY
EduFinance

HOW TO USE PATHWAYS TO REOPENING.

INTRODUCTION:

School closures have had a significant impact on the schools worldwide. We, at Opportunity EduFinance, with the help of our team of Education Specialists, have created this guide to support school leaders such as yourself as you make plans to reopen your school once restrictions have been reduced.

We hope this will for a useful way for you to plan and see how ready you are to reopen your school.

WHAT IS INCLUDED:

Each guide covers one of five areas that will require consideration and adaption as you look to re-open your school. These are:

- Business and Financial Management
- Parent Engagement
- Clean and Safe Environment Conducive for Learning
- Staff Engagement
- Teaching and Learning

The five areas have been split into three time periods depending on when a school leader should be considering taking action on them. The time periods are:

- Prior to Reopening
- As Part of Reopening
- With Schools Reopened

For every time period and every area, the guide suggests actions that the school leader should consider taking while schools are closed and as they reopen.

Each suggested action in the first two time periods 'Prior to Reopening' and 'As Part of Reopening' is covered in more detail under 'Supporting Materials' to enable you to effectively plan for implementation of these actions. The final category 'With Schools Reopened' is there to provide ideas on what the next steps the school might take after reopening.

SCHOOL REOPENING PLANNNG CHECKLIST:

Once you have explored the content we recommend you complete the School Reopening Planning Checklist. The checklist asks you to consider who will be responsible for carrying out the actions – this could be the proprietor, head teacher, named teachers, administrative staff, premises managers school governors and community volunteers. The second sections asks 'When will it happen' here you can assign a time period for planned activities – a fixed date or recurring days such as every Monday.

BUSINESS AND
FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT.

	Prior to Reopening	As Part of the Reopening	With Schools Reopened
School Cash Reserves	Identify alternative ways to raise revenue apart from school fees.		
	Identify ways in which you can reduce school costs to ensure uninterrupted school operations.		
	Assess your school's cash burn rate to understand how long the school operations can survive on current cash reserves.		
School Fees	Ascertain the proportion of school fees collected.	Connect parents with the local financial institution as school fee loan clients to ensure greater fee collection.	Maintain constant communication with parents regarding school fee payment timeline.
	Develop ways of collecting school fees whilst maintaining social distancing e.g. through mobile money.	Introduce a flexible payment schedule for parents who have lost their jobs/source of income due to the pandemic.	
School Finance	Ensure or source sufficient finance/ working capital to implement hygiene measures in the school.		Introduce a saving and investment group for staff members supported by the school leader.

PRIOR TO REOPENING.

IDENTIFY ALTERNATIVE WAYS TO RAISE REVENUE APART FROM SCHOOL FEES.

Context

The most important revenue for a school is income from school fees. However, during school closures, the ability of parents to pay school fees is affected, which in turn, affects school fees collection and income.

For teachers, salary from teaching is the only source of income. But given the lack of school fees being collected, the ability of school to pay salary is also affected.

Despite the challenges being experienced, the school directors can engage in other activities that can boost revenue for the school.

Implementing in Your School

Before implementing any activity, the school leaders should decide what works best for them in their context. The following activities can enable the school leaders boost their revenue:

- Farming can greatly generate income for the school. School land can be used for farming activities including growing crops and vegetables. Livestock farming and animal husbandry can also be adopted to supplement growing crops and vegetables. This produce can be used to support school feeding program.
- Offer car parking services within the school compound for a fee
- Renting school property and buses during school holidays. During this time, the schools can rent their property and school buses to generate additional income for the school.
- Developing workbooks at the school level to sell to parents. The workbooks can be developed monthly, and parents return them to schools at the end of the week or month for marking. They should contain activities as per learners' level.
- Talking to your bank to avail a working capital loan to finance school operations as you begin planning the process of reopening

ASSESS YOUR CASH BURN RATE TO UNDERSTAND HOW LONG THE SCHOOL OPERATIONS CAN SURVIVE ON CURRENT CASH RESERVES.

Context

Calculating your school's cash burn rate will help you make strategic decisions about how long you can cover expenses while your school is closed. This is also important to determining if you can continue paying staff and for how long.

Implementing in Your School

The following steps need to be taken to calculate a school's cash burn rate

1) School leaders will have to calculate cash reserves first. This includes cash on hand, school bank account and school savings account balances.

2) Calculate monthly cash expected revenue during school closures: Cash inflows could be expected school fees.
3) Calculate monthly expenses during school closures: Cash outflows include salaries and utility bills that you would be required to pay during school closures (please see next action point for a detailed list of expenses)
4) Calculate cash burn rate: This is calculated by subtracting your monthly expenses from monthly expected revenue. The cash burn rate will be negative if monthly expected revenue is zero
5) Calculate cash runway: Cash runway is calculated as Total Cash Reserves (calculated in step 1)/ Cash burn rate (calculated in step 4). This helps schools determine for how many months they can continue school operations before they run out of cash.
6) In the below example, the cash runway if schools continue to pay 100% Salaries is 725/600 = 1.2 months or 36 days.

Cash Reserves			
Cash on Hand	75		
School Bank Account	150		
School Savings Account	500		
Total Cash Reserves	725		
CASH BURN RATE	Monthly - School Open	Monthly - School Closed (100% Salaries)	Monthly - School Closed (80% Salaries)
Cash Inflows			
School Fees expected to be received	1500	100	100
Sale of School Garden Produce	50	200	200
Total Cash Inflows	1550	300	300
Cash Outflows			
Teacher Salaries	600	600	480
Admin Staff Salaries	300	300	240
Utilities	50	0	0
School bus fuel	35	0	0
Groceries	45	0	0
Total Cash Outflows	1030	900	720
Free Cash Flow (or Cash Burn Amount if Negative)	520	(600)	(420)

How does calculating cash burn rate help schools in situations where cash reserves and cash inflows have reduced to zero due to school closures?

Country wide shut down of economic activities, plunging a lot of businesses into losses, including schools. A lot of schools have exhausted their cash reserves, have not collected any revenues in the form of school fees since schools closed in March.

How can schools raise revenues and where does cash burn rate feature in a school's planning in such situations?

- Look at alternative ways to raise revenue: In the previous section, we have identified several ways of raising revenue in detail. Schools should consider these activities (including farming, leasing school property etc) wherever applicable to raise immediate funds needed to plan reopening.
- Liquidate Assets: Schools should consider liquidating or selling off assets in the short term. For example, given social distancing norms that will be put in place, a lot of schools will need to suspend use of school buses temporarily. In such cases, the school heads can consider liquidating these assets to increase their reserves of cash. Any other asset not in use could be liquidated to meet working capital needs of the school

- **Working capital loans:** Local banks are extending top up loans to schools to meet their immediate working capital needs. School leaders should get in touch with their local banks to apply for working capital loans. The schools can also reach out to local government bodies or ministries of education to find out if they are extending immediate short-term loans or grants to meet a school's working capital needs.
- **Reach out to parents:** Maintaining communication with parents is imperative to ensure that they send their children back to school once it reopens. School heads should not hesitate to reach out to parents who they know are capable of paying their children's pending school fees.

Once schools have managed to secure a minimal amount of funding to boost its cash reserves, the schools should look at their cash burn rate to prioritise expenses and ensure that these cash reserves last till the school receives pending fee payments from parents. Additionally, to maintain a regular stream of revenue, the schools should explore different ways in which it can raise revenue from a long-term point of view.

LOOK AT WAYS IN WHICH YOU CAN REDUCE SCHOOL COSTS TO ENSURE SMOOTHER OPERATIONS DURING SCHOOL CLOSURES

Context

There is possibility that schools may be required to remain closed for a significant amount of time. This requires schools to continue teaching and learning remotely as well as pay their teachers wherever possible. This makes it really important for schools to find ways to reduce costs to make sure that schools can sustain during lockdown and reopen once lockdown is lifted.

Implementing in Your School

The aim should be to reserve as much cash as possible. This would require schools to make a list of and calculate all their monthly expenses. Monthly expenses include:
- Staff salaries
- Utility bills including electricity, water and rent
- School Bus Expense
- Food
- School Materials
- Regulatory Fees
- Loan Repayments

After identifying monthly expenses, the schools should identify those expenses which are not mandatory and try to eliminate them during the period of school closures. Some examples include:
- Assessing employment contracts and finding ways to reduce salaries. This can include asking teachers to take a pay cut during school closures or converting some teachers to part time.
- If some roles are easy to replace or are not required, consider eliminating these positions for the duration of school closures. For example, administrative staff
- Talking to your bank about a loan repayment holiday while schools remain closed
- Talking to your landlord about the possibility of a rent reduction or holiday while schools remain closed.

DEVELOP WAYS OF COLLECTING SCHOOL FEES WHILST MAINTAINING SOCIAL DISTANCING E.G. THROUGH MOBILE MONEY

Context

With schools closed it would be important to maintain constant communication with parents regarding school fee payment timeline. Since physical movement is restricted, school leaders should identify ways in which they can reach out to parents and collect fees electronically.

Implementing in Your School

Research various options for collecting school fees remotely and decide which would best for your school. Here are ways of collection school fees while maintaining social distance:

- **SMS Banking including short codes and mobile money -** School's registered mobile money account or short codes linked to the savings account could be made available for school fees payment. Student's name and class could be used as reference when parents pay school fees.
- **School fees paid in kind -** Depending on where the school is, its needs and the condition the school finds itself, school fees could be paid in the form of food materials, local fuel and school services including carpentry, painting and weeding.
- **Payment through the Bank -** School's account could be made available for parents to pay fees directly into them and pay-in-slips could sent to school leaders on WhatsApp. Banks could send weekly statements to the schools for further checks to be done on payments on a weekly basis.
- **School fees payment through older students –** Cash/cheque put in envelopes with details clearly written at the back of envelopes could be delivered by lower and upper secondary students directly to the appropriate authorities who in turn prepare receipts for the students to be taken to parents.
- **Loan for school fees payment -** Loans contracted by parents for school fees payment from local financial institutions such as MFIs, rural banks and other credit facilities could be paid directly into the school's accounts by the financial institutions on behalf of parents.
- **E-Banking Systems -** Depending on the technological knowledge of parents of the school, e-Banking involving the use of credit cards, online transfers and direct debit could be used to pay fees by parents.

AS PART OF REOPENING.

INTRODUCE A FLEXIBLE PAYMENT SCHEDULE FOR PARENTS WHO HAVE LOST THEIR JOBS/SOURCE OF INCOME DUE TO THE PANDEMIC

Context

Many parents will have lost sources of income due to the pandemic. As an institution in the community it is important that you support the community to rebound and be more flexible with fees payments for an initial time period. This will boost your image as a school that cares and will keep your enrolment high and enable you to secure more income in the future.

Implementing in Your School

Steps you can take to support parents with flexible payments include:

- Payment Plans - Introduce daily, weekly or even monthly payment plans for parents based on their preference and ability.
- School Service - Arrange with parents wishing to provide needed services to the school to defer school fees. Aim to do without compromising parent's integrity and also not inconveniencing the school.
- Defer Payments - For extreme cases, arrange for payment by parents to deferred to a later date. Parents with credible track records of paying fees in the past should be strong contenders for being offered this grace period. A formal (written) arrangement/agreement could be created to detail any agreements made.
- Discount Facilities - This may include multiple discount where parents with multiple children could be given a rebate or parents who pay their child's fees early could be given an early bird discount. This encourages parents to strive to pay fees.
- Introduce parents to financial institutions – Parents who are unable to pay fees due to loss of income could be introduced to financial institutions who can help parents with a consumer loan or school fees loan.

SCHOOL REOPENING PLANNING CHECKLIST.

BUSINESS AND FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT			
PRIOR TO REOPENING		Develop ways of collecting school fees whilst maintaining social distancing e.g. through mobile money.	RESPONSIBLE PERSON
Identify alternative ways to raise revenue apart from school fees.	RESPONSIBLE PERSON		
	WHEN IT WILL HAPPEN		WHEN IT WILL HAPPEN
Identify ways in which you can reduce school costs to ensure uninterrupted school operations.	RESPONSIBLE PERSON	Ensure or source sufficient finance/ working capital to implement hygiene measures in the school.	RESPONSIBLE PERSON
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Assess your school's cash burn rate to understand how long the school operations can survive on current cash reserves.	RESPONSIBLE PERSON	Connect parents with the local financial institution as school fee loan clients to ensure greater fee collection.	RESPONSIBLE PERSON
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PATHWAYS TO REOPENING

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Clean and Safe Environment for Learning

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CLEAN AND SAFE ENVIRONMENT FOR LEARNING.

	Prior to Reopening	As Part of the Reopening	With Schools Reopened
Social Distancing	Research measures that the school can take to practice social distancing.	Change the infrastructure/layout of classrooms and dormitories to ensure social distancing. Ensure school transport follows social distancing guidelines; Consider discontinuing bus services. Consider a phased reopening plan for school.	Reintroduce school transport following guidelines on safe travel. Follow government recommendations for easing social distancing.
New Routine and Health checks	Research measures around masks, hygiene checks and sanitation required by government.	Train staff on implementing school hygiene practices: social distancing, hand washing, temperature checks and mask wearing. Maintain clear guidance on procedures if staff or students become unwell; maintain a separate medical room in the school. Schedule regular disinfecting of school premises.	Monitor the implementation of new routines and practices to keep learners safe.
Awareness	Monitor the spread of COVID-19 pandemic in the local region the school is located in, including number of active cases.	Ensure staff are well informed about Covid-19 to prevent false rumours and any stigma being attached to those who have recovered.	Monitor the spread COVID-19 pandemic including guidelines for school reclosures, in case of a resurgence in number of infections.

PRIOR TO REOPENING.

RESEARCH MEASURES THAT THE SCHOOL CAN TAKE TO PRACTICE SOCIAL DISTANCING

Context

In countries where schools have already reopened after closure due to Covid-19, social distancing is being enforced. It is important to be aware of measures that may be necessary to introduce at your school.

Implementing in Your School

The school leader or a delegated member of staff should be tracking the social distancing measures that may need to be introduced. Listening to briefings from government may help to provide clarity. Here are measures that be sensible or required to be introduced:

- Cancelling or postponing after school activities activities that occur during the school day with a high rate of mixing/contact. like Like P.E., field trips, choir, assembly, class performances, sports practices, or games
- Reducing mixing during transport. This may include suspension of school buses, discouraging use of public transportation, encouraging parents to pick their children either on foot or their personal vehicles.
- Introduce a reduced schedule. This may include shorter school week; shorter school day; students come on alternating days, cancelling morning and night preps
- Suspending use of common areas for example lunch in classrooms rather than in dining halls
- Implementing a standard workplace for staff which follows social distancing measures. This may include limiting face to face meetings or cancelling staff meetings, limiting staff room access, discouraging teachers to travel to and from school in groups
- Segregating students within common areas in case suspension of common areas is not possible: The school can require that students only eat with classmates in lunchroom; require that students stay in assigned section of the school yard.
- Sanitization spots and temperature checkup machines should be allocated at the school gate and have every child checked. Ensure that as checkup goes on, children should maintain a distance of 4 metres away from each other.
- Limiting visitors: Do not allow parents or other visitors; restrict vendor access to school.
- Minimize crowding at drop-off and pick-up times. To do this:
    1) Designate times for families to come, consider staggering times if possible.
    2) Whenever possible, participant pick-up and drop-off should occur outside.
    3) Add visual cues or barriers to direct traffic flow and distancing.
    4) Develop signage and processes to minimize interactions of families.

RESEARCH MEASURES AROUND MASKS, HYGIENE CHECKS AND SANITATION REQUIRED BY GOVERNMENT

Context

As schools reopen, you should have clear guidelines in place that guide the different stakeholders on the COVID-19 management. The guidelines should be shared and displayed in school premises to ensure that everyone is reminded on the need to protect themselves and others.

Implementing in Your School

Once the schools re-open, the multi-stakeholder team should have developed simple and translated either in the language of the catchment area or in infographics, the school safety & precaution guidelines /policies borrowed from different government department guidelines on the COVID-19 such as Ministry of Health and Ministry of Education.

These guidelines should be shared with the school community before schools re-open to ensure they:

1. Prepare well in advance for the requirements needed such as the kind of masks recommended, or handwashing needs to meet / provide e.g. soap or water.
2. Staggering of school timings and encourage remote learning where possible
3. Adopt the new habits / practices the school introduces regarding safety guidelines

Ensure that the MST leads in researching and sensitizing the school staff, parents, learners, and visitors to observe the guidelines set at school as recommended by the government. Here are steps to take:

- Share clear and accurate information about COVID-19 - without instilling fear and anxiety but to promote selfcare for all school stakeholders
- A response team within the school such as the prefects and teachers – a team that will ensure that the school community is following the guidelines and acts in time of an emergency
- A clear rule on not allowing anyone without a mask into the school – The MST should ensure that all who get into the school compound have masks on
- Make modifications for provision of Water, Hygiene, and Sanitation services – increase the frequency of cleaning and disinfecting the school, improve on waste management and have handwashing stations with steps on how to wash hands.
- Feeding programs especially for those who go out or are brought food at school – the school should either provide meals to avoid high traffic of caregivers / parents during school hours or come up with a meal program on safety when food is brought to school.

AS PART OF REOPENING.

CHANGE THE INFRASTRUCTURE/LAYOUT OF CLASSROOMS AND DORMITORIES TO ENSURE SOCIAL DISTANCING

Context

One of the first measures that schools should take while planning for reopening is changing the infrastructure of the classroom to make sure that teaching and learning can commence without the risk of learners falling ill. Consider what you would need to do to make these changes and which members of staff you would assign the responsibility to.

Implementing in Your School

Here are changes that may be necessary at your school:

- Decongest/reduce the number of children in classrooms. Turn unused/ empty rooms/redundant rooms to classrooms or common areas.
- Consider sleeping arrangements in dormitories – will double decker beds be acceptable, will learners should learners only be sleeping on a single bunk?
- Regulate washroom use, especially during lunch breaks. While this is difficult to implement, it is important to maintain social distancing in common areas like school washrooms. This may require schools to allocate different break times to different classes to reduce overcrowding in washrooms.
- Maintaining a recommend distance between members of the school (each government is recommending a certain number of meters) introduce marks for where children stand when lining up such as lunch queues.
- Make use of outdoor spaces for learning by creating outdoor classrooms.
- Within classrooms re-arrange desks to increase space, require students to remain seated in classroom and turn desks to face in the same direction (rather than facing each other) to reduce transmission caused from virus-containing droplets (e.g., from talking, coughing, sneezing).

CONSIDER A PHASED REOPENING PLAN FOR THE SCHOOL

Context

Given the severity of the pandemic in your local region, school leaders may not be able to begin classes for all students on reopening. In such cases, schools should look at a phased reopening plan initially, before moving onto complete resumption of school activities

Implementing in Your School

There are multiple options that school leaders can choose while considering a phased reopening plan.

- Odd even rule: Half the classes come to school on odd dates of the month, whereas the other half come to school on even dates of the month

- Morning evening schedule: Split the classes into two streams. One stream comes in the morning and the other stream comes in the evening. This may require school leaders to reduce the hours of teaching that each class undergoes in the school
- Classes which sit for national examinations: Schools can begin operations by only calling classes which sit for national examinations for the time being. Home learning can continue for the remaining classes till the number of cases in the region normalises, after which the school can resume all classes.
- Combination of home and face to face learning: The school can ask students to come in only to each a specific portion of the syllabus, whereas the remaining portion can be taught virtually or remotely to students.

MAINTAIN CLEAR GUIDANCE ON PROCEDURES IF STAFF OR STUDENTS BECOME UNWELL; MAINTAIN A SEPARATE MEDICAL ROOM IN THE SCHOOL

Context

To ensure your school is able to stay open and continue to have the confidence of parents to send their children to school it is important to have clear guidance for what happens should staff or learners become ill.

Implementing in Your School

Communicate with staff and parents that no one should attend school if they have any symptoms of Covid-19. The WHO shares the symptoms. The most common symptoms are:
- Fever
- Dry cough
- Tiredness

Also based on WHO or National Guidelines set the time for how long learners should be kept away from school.

For those who fall ill during the school day there should be a part of the school that is set up as a designated medical room, where learners and staff can be isolated from others.

Further:
- Conduct a risk assessment for all staff and learners – those with pre-existing conditions/ illnesses.
- Review and strengthen relationships with referral agencies and display the emergency contacts – in case of a COVID emergency.

SCHOOL REOPENING PLANNING CHECKLIST

CLEAN AND SAFE ENVIRONEMENT FOR LEARNING			
PRIOR TO REOPENING		Consider a phased reopening plan for school.	RESPONSIBLE PERSON
Research measures that the school can take to practice social distancing.	RESPONSIBLE PERSON		
	WHEN IT WILL HAPPEN		WHEN IT WILL HAPPEN
Research measures around masks, hygiene checks and sanitation required by government.	RESPONSIBLE PERSON	Train staff on implementing school hygiene practices: social distancing, hand washing, temperature checks and mask wearing.	RESPONSIBLE PERSON
	WHEN IT WILL HAPPEN		WHEN IT WILL HAPPEN
Monitor the spread of COVID-19 pandemic in the local region the school is located in, including number of active cases.	RESPONSIBLE PERSON	Maintain clear guidance on procedures if staff or students become unwell; maintain a separate medical room in the school.	RESPONSIBLE PERSON
	WHEN IT WILL HAPPEN		WHEN IT WILL HAPPEN
AS PART OF REOPENING		Schedule regular disinfecting of school premises.	RESPONSIBLE PERSON
Change the infrastructure/ layout of classrooms and dormitories to ensure social distancing.	RESPONSIBLE PERSON		
	WHEN IT WILL HAPPEN		WHEN IT WILL HAPPEN

Ensure school transport follows social distancing guidelines; Consider discontinuing bus services.	RESPONSIBLE PERSON	Ensure staff are well informed about Covid-19 to prevent false rumours and any stigma being attached to those who have recovered.	RESPONSIBLE PERSON
	WHEN IT WILL HAPPEN		WHEN IT WILL HAPPEN

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Teaching and Learning

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TEACHING
AND LEARNING.

	Prior to Reopening	As Part of the Reopening	With Schools Reopened
Curriculum	Monitor and follow guidance from the government regarding any changes to the curriculum and exam schedules. Send parents a list of topics covered during school closures and request them to select the topics completed by their child at home	Make learner welfare a priority. Give them time to readjust to school, provide refresher classes if needed and don't rush into teaching the full curriculum. Allocate time to train learners on new routines that the school has in place to keep them safe. Reduce the curriculum for the remainder of the school year to an achievable level, prioritising topics which are most relevant.	Consider how learners can catch-up on the learning they have missed while schools were closed. Focus particularly on reading, writing and maths levels.
Home Learning	Identify channels for your school to provide home learning such as drop off points, WhatsApp, Facebook, SMS and Zoom. Train staff on how to use home learning channels, ensure learning follows and builds on current learning at school. Send printed worksheets and supporting materials to students whose parents don't have access to smartphones or internet	Plan for a balance of in person teaching and home learning if learners do not return to school full time or school timings are reduced.	Prepare for future school closures by increasing the schools' ability to share learning remotely. This could include developing a school website.

PRIOR TO REOPENING.

MONITOR AND FOLLOW GUIDANCE FROM THE GOVERNMENT REGARDING ANY CHANGES TO THE CURRICULUM AND EXAM SCHEDULES

Context

Most schools have never followed the basic regulations to ensure a more conducive environment for learning. The involvement of teachers in decision making is low. There is pressure for candidate classes to complete the syllabus. Home/distant learning is something that became practice largely on account of the coronavirus pandemic

Implementing in Your School

- There is a need to anticipate what the government is likely to set as conditions for schools to reopen
- Consider looking at guidelines of WHO/UNICEF
- Refer to the already established requirements of minimum standards for a school to have a conducive learning environment.
- Engage schools' stake holders especially teachers and parents for consultations on what may be the best way forward.
- Bring on board teachers to develop a suitable opening of term plan
- Consider providing additional emotional support to students and incorporating more PSHE into the curriculum
- Develop a plan to continue with home schooling, especially for the exam classes
- Set a system where there is smooth and regular feedback from students and parents

SEND PARENTS A LIST OF TOPICS COVERED DURING SCHOOL CLOSURES AND REQUEST THEM TO SELECT THE TOPICS COMPLETED BY THEIR CHILD AT HOME

Context

All learners will not have a conducive learning environment at home. This means that there will be a difference in learning levels when learners come back to school. To support learner welfare, school leaders need to evaluate the learning levels of each learner when they come back to school, so that the school is able to adjust its curriculum and timetable accordingly.

Implementing in Your School

- Create a comprehensive list of topics, worksheets and assignments that have been covered by learners during school closures.
- Send the list to all parents prior to school reopening using whatsapp. The school leader can also print the list and mail it to parents who don't have smartphones
- Ask parents to send check the items which have been covered by their ward and send it back to school well in advance of the reopening date.
- Using the results, map out what topics have been covered by majority, which learners need refresher classes on the topics that have not been covered.

IDENTIFY CHANNELS FOR YOUR SCHOOL TO PROVIDE HOME LEARNING SUCH AS DROP OFF POINTS, SMS, WHATSAPP AND FACEBOOK

Context

While schools are closed it is important to continue to support learners and their parents by providing work for them to do at home. This will have many benefits:

- It shows the schools commitment to the learners
- Learners and parents will remain engaged with school and be more likely to re-enrol when schools reopen
- Teachers will have an activity to do and stay actively engaged with school
- It will create innovative ways for teachers to work remotely with learners even after the end of the pandemic
- Learners will continue to make academic progress

Implementing in Your School

Identify ways to provide home learning that will best be able to reach as many of your parents as possible. Here are ways that you can consider:

Local drop off, pick up points – some school leaders have created pick up points where physical copies of work can be collected in a socially distanced way. This requires printing capabilities to produce work in batches and collaboration with teachers to provide work to be ready.

SMS – for parents who do not have internet access or smart phones, SMS provides a way to contact them. Suggested work or timetables need to be shared in a simple and clear way as the number of characters an SMS can send is limited.

WhatsApp – a teacher can create a WhatsApp group that includes the parents of the class or classes that they teach. Parents can then share these activities with their learners. WhatsApp allows teachers to be much more creative than just sending text messages. Teachers can use the camera feature on their phone to share handwritten tasks or weekly timetables. Teachers can record audio clips such as a mental maths test or spelling test.

Facebook – a school can have a Facebook page or individual class pages where work can be shared. The pages are easy to create and easy for learning to be shared via images of documents.

Websites – a school website is good place to share work for learners for schools who have created one. Additional website pages can be created where work for different grades (year groups) can be shared.

TRAIN STAFF ON HOW TO USE HOME LEARNING CHANNELS, ENSURING LEARNING FOLLOWS AND BUILDS ON CURRENT LEARNING AT SCHOOL

Context

For home learning to be effective the person (usually a teacher) providing the materials to parents needs to know how to use any technology effectively. They should also be following the national curriculum so that learning at home builds on the learning that was happening at school before closures.

Train teachers on how to use any technology to provide home learning. You may have some teachers who are more confident than others at working in this way. You could pair teachers together to provide support or have WhatsApp group calls where up to 8 teachers can be involved in training at the same time.

Once the channel for home learning has been decided, it is important to set guidelines for teachers on home learning. Providing too much or too little learning materials would not be ideal. Decide as a school the amount of content that would be suitable for home learning – this is likely to be less than the amount of learning that can be achieved in the classroom. Further, consider assessment requirements of work. Will parents be sending work back from learners to be assessed or will teachers share answers so that parents and learners can mark work at home?

AS PART OF REOPENING.

MAKE LEARNER WELFARE A PRIORITY AS LEARNERS RETURN TO SCHOOL. GIVE THEM TIME TO READJUST AND DON'T RUSH INTO TEACHING THE FULL CURRICULUM

Context

Given the long break that learners have been subjected to, there may be a lot of behavioural changes when schools reopen. Learners would need time to fully readjust to the school system again. The first few weeks will be critical to the intellectual development of the learner and so it will be important to focus on the welfare and mental wellbeing of learners.

Implementing in Your School

Once school is reopened and students start attending classes, you may want to consider the following:

- Consider adjustments to the timetable – Given the long break, some educational skills may have declined and understanding and comprehension may take some time. Consider reducing lessons to about four lessons per day and add extra time to math lessons to help learners fully understand the concept being taught. For students required to sit for national examinations, you may want to maintain the pre-existing timetable but be sensitive to their situation and ease them back into exam preparation gradually.
- Introduce Personal Social and Health Education (PSHE) - Select a few teachers and have them teach learners about PSHE. This would enable students to share their fears with them and keep an open mind about resumption. The PSHE lesson will help to mentally prepare learners for the full curriculum.
- Use time-outs with learners – Introduce a few time-outs of the classroom sessions for the learners. Let them sit in a circular form with classmates and teacher outside the classroom and share their individual experiences during their time out of school. This would help ease the tension in the class and their anxiety for the new system.
- Engage in a range of activities – In the first few weeks of resumption, add into the curriculum more practical ways of learning. Introduce team building and practical activities such as

reading club or spelling bee. Make sure that all activities follow social distancing guidelines set by the school

- **Start by revising concepts previously taught** – Check understanding of previously taught topics, for maths this would be revising the use of calculation methods to see what learners are able to do now before moving onto new learning.

PLAN FOR A BALANCE OF IN PERSON TEACHING AND HOME LEARNING IF LEARNERS DO NOT RETURN TO SCHOOL FULL TIME

Context

When schools reopen there may be required changes to the school timetable to allow for social distancing. Classes may split with some learners attending in the morning or afternoon. Some classes may attend for only certain days of the week. There may also be a possibility of future school closures. Should this happen home learning will remain important.

Implementing in Your School

Once timetables for each grade (year group) are confirmed, establish new guidelines for teachers on home learning:

- Set requirements for home learning – this should include the amount of work teachers are expected to plan for home learning, subjects that should be prioritized and how work should relate to learning in class.
- Provide home learning timetables – A timetable will help parents and learners to clearly see what is expected for each day.
- Determine the level of support teachers will provide remotely – Will teachers be available for questions from parents? Will there be a class WhatsApp group where teachers can provide advice and feedback? Will teachers call parents every week to discuss expectations?
- Decide how work will be assessed – Will learners be provided with answers and self- assess their work or will teachers assess work when it is returned. Perhaps a mixture of both will be the preferred approach.

SCHOOL REOPENING PLANNING CHECKLIST

TEACHING AND LEARNING			
PRIOR TO REOPENING		**AS PART OF THE REOPENING**	
Monitor and follow guidance from the government regarding any changes to the curriculum and exam schedules	RESPONSIBLE PERSON	Make learner welfare a priority. Give them time to readjust to school and don't rush into teaching the full curriculum	RESPONSIBLE PERSON
	WHEN IT WILL HAPPEN		WHEN IT WILL HAPPEN
Send parents a list of topics covered during school closures and request them to select the topics completed by their child at home	RESPONSIBLE PERSON	Allocate time to train learners on new routines that the school has in place to keep them safe	RESPONSIBLE PERSON
	WHEN IT WILL HAPPEN		WHEN IT WILL HAPPEN
Identify channels for your school to provide home learning such as drop off points, WhatsApp, Facebook, SMS and Zoom	RESPONSIBLE PERSON	Reduce the curriculum for the remainder of the school year to an achievable level, prioritising topics which are most relevant	RESPONSIBLE PERSON
	WHEN IT WILL HAPPEN		WHEN IT WILL HAPPEN
Train staff on how to use home learning channels, ensure learning follows and builds on current learning at school	RESPONSIBLE PERSON	Plan for a balance of in person teaching and home learning if learners do not return to school full time	RESPONSIBLE PERSON
	WHEN IT WILL HAPPEN		WHEN IT WILL HAPPEN

Send printed worksheets and supporting materials to students whose parents don't have access to smartphones or internet	RESPONSIBLE PERSON	
	WHEN IT WILL HAPPEN	

PATHWAYS TO REOPENING

A planning checklist for school reopening

Parent Engagement

OPPORTUNITY
EduFinance

HOW TO USE PATHWAYS TO REOPENING.

INTRODUCTION:

School closures have had a significant impact on the schools worldwide. We, at Opportunity EduFinance, with the help of our team of Education Specialists, have created this guide to support school leaders such as yourself as you make plans to reopen your school once restrictions have been reduced.

We hope this will for a useful way for you to plan and see how ready you are to reopen your school.

WHAT IS INCLUDED:

Each guide covers one of five areas that will require consideration and adaption as you look to re-open your school. These are:

- Business and Financial Management
- Parent Engagement
- Clean and Safe Environment Conducive for Learning
- Staff Engagement
- Teaching and Learning

The five areas have been split into three time periods depending on when a school leader should be considering taking action on them. The time periods are:

- Prior to Reopening
- As Part of Reopening
- With Schools Reopened

For every time period and every area, the guide suggests actions that the school leader should consider taking while schools are closed and as they reopen.

Each suggested action in the first two time periods 'Prior to Reopening' and 'As Part of Reopening' is covered in more detail under 'Supporting Materials' to enable you to effectively plan for implementation of these actions. The final category 'With Schools Reopened' is there to provide ideas on what the next steps the school might take after reopening.

SCHOOL REOPENING PLANNNG CHECKLIST:

Once you have explored the content we recommend you complete the School Reopening Planning Checklist. The checklist asks you to consider who will be responsible for carrying out the actions – this could be the proprietor, head teacher, named teachers, administrative staff, premises managers school governors and community volunteers. The second sections asks 'When will it happen' here you can assign a time period for planned activities – a fixed date or recurring days such as every Monday.

PARENT ENGAGEMENT.

	Prior to Reopening	As Part of the Reopening	With Schools Reopened
Contact Information	Gather all parent contact information centrally so all parents can be communicated with during lockdown.	Collect up to date contact information for any parents that the school has not been able to reach during closures.	Schedule to regularly update contact information for parents.
Communication	Ensure you maintain regular communication with parents; inform them of measures being taken to support learners and make school safe.	Plan for community mobilisation, emphasising the importance of coming back to school. Inform parents of school reopening date and rules regarding who should come to school, including which classes will return (if there is a phased reopening).	Continually inform parents of measures the school is undertaking to prevent spread of COVID-19; This will help maintain enrolment.

AS PART OF REOPENING.

INFORM PARENTS OF SCHOOL REOPENING DATE AND RULES REGARDING WHO SHOULD COME TO SCHOOL, INCLUDING WHICH CLASSES WILL RETURN (IF THERE IS A PHASED REOPENING).

Context

School leaders should inform parents of school reopening dates and measures that the schools will be taking during reopen, to ensure that parents are well prepared and prepare their children on expectations in the school well in advance. This will ensure that the new school schedule does not come as a complete surprise for children and help them adjust to changes better

While creating your school reopening plan, once you have set the date for reopening and rules related to reopening, please ensure that it is communicated to all parents. This will require school leaders to:

- Set a school reopening date based on recommendations from the Ministry of Health/ Ministry of Education in their respective geographies
- Creating a plan for reopening that allows for social distancing measures to be implemented. The reopening plan may allow for complete or phased reopening depending on the severity of the pandemic in the region.
- Schools could consider implementing an odd even rule, creating two batches- where half the classes attend school in the morning and half in the evening) or initially only calling students who have to sit for national examinations and gradually calling other students back to school
- Schools should inform parents not to send their children if they show symptoms of COVID-19 or have been in touch with someone affected by COVID-19.
- Based on recommendations from local authorities, schools may require parents to send their children with masks or gloves.

PLAN FOR COMMUNITY MOBILISATION EMPHASISING THE IMPORTANCE OF COMING BACK TO SCHOOL

Context

With families having struggled financially during school and business closures making sure all learners re-enrol will be priority for the school. Traditionally in these situations learners who are more likely to not be absent from school, particularly girls, can miss out on vital schooling. It is important that the school works to mobilise the community on the importance of coming back to school.

Implementing in Your School

Your community mobilisation should focus on supporting learners to come back to school particularly girls, including pregnant girls who may have been out of school before school closed due to the pandemic.

Plan a Back-to-School campaign with messages for the community to actively encourage and support learners to return to school. Communicate in good time with the community once a date for the school reopening has been set. Include in the messaging:

- Why schooling is so important for learners' futures.
- The measure the school is taking to keep learners safe (there may be a fear of returning having been living under lockdowns). These will include provision of good sanitation and hand washing, that staff have been trained on steps needed to keep learners safe.

With schools reopen, have the senior leadership team and PTA monitor the attendance of learners particularly girls and have steps in place to contact those who have not returned or are not attending regularly.

SCHOOL REOPENING PLANNING CHECKLIST

PARENT ENGAGEMENT			
PRIOR TO REOPENING		AS PART OF THE REOPENING	
Gather all parent contact information centrally so all parents can be communicated with during lockdown.	RESPONSIBLE PERSON	Collect up to date contact information for any parents that the school has not been able to reach during closures	RESPONSIBLE PERSON
	WHEN IT WILL HAPPEN		WHEN IT WILL HAPPEN
Have regular communication with parents; inform them of measures being taken to support learners and make school safe	RESPONSIBLE PERSON	Plan for community mobilisation emphasising the importance of coming back to school	RESPONSIBLE PERSON
	WHEN IT WILL HAPPEN		WHEN IT WILL HAPPEN
		Inform parents of school reopening date and rules regarding who should come to school, including which classes will return	RESPONSIBLE PERSON
			WHEN IT WILL HAPPEN

PATHWAYS TO REOPENING

A planning checklist for school reopening

Staff Engagement

OPPORTUNITY
EduFinance

HOW TO USE
PATHWAYS TO REOPENING.

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We hope this will for a useful way for you to plan and see how ready you are to reopen your school.

WHAT IS INCLUDED:

The guide covers five areas that will require consideration and adaption as you look to re-open your school. These are:

- Business Planning and Financial Management
- Parent Engagement
- Clean and Safe Environment Conducive for Learning
- Staff Engagement
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The five areas have been split into three time periods depending on when a school leader should be considering taking action on them. The time periods are:

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SCHOOL REOPENING PLANNNG CHECKLIST:

Once you have explored the content we recommend you complete the School Reopening Planning Checklist. The checklist asks you to consider who will be responsible for carrying out the actions – this could be the proprietor, head teacher, named teachers, administrative staff, premises managers school governors and community volunteers.

The second sections asks 'When will it happen' here you can assign a time period for planned activities – a fixed date or recurring days such as every Monday.

STAFF
ENGAGEMENT.

	Prior to Reopening	As Part of the Reopening	With Schools Reopened
Support and Communication	Communicate with staff regularly to ensure they are well and are managing. Provide counselling support where possible. Ensure timely communication with teachers about changes in payment schedule.	Ensure continuous and timely payment of teacher salaries, with attention to those on precarious contracts, to support teacher retention and wellbeing.	
Staff Attendance	Revise staff attendance policies to accommodate health related absences.	Plan for possibility of reduced staff due to teachers not returning for health or financial reasons; plan to revise staff timetables and hire new staff.	

PRIOR TO REOPENING.

COMMUNICATE WITH STAFF REGULARLY TO ENSURE THEY ARE WELL AND ARE MANAGING. PROVIDE COUNSELLING SUPPORT WHERE POSSIBLE

Context

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a negative impact on many employees including school staff members all over the world. Employees have been affected mentally, emotionally and even economically. School operations were affected, teachers were working from home using remote teaching methods, which they were not used to, some staff members had their salary reduced or contracts suspended. Some members even have lost their family members, relatives and friends to the pandemic. It is important to note that the impact of this pandemic will still be there when schools reopen.

Therefore, school leaders must take steps to ensure the health and well-being of their staff as they navigate this challenging time period.

Implementing in Your School

The ideas below can help school leaders prevent burnout and ensure staff feel supported during this pandemic. This can help promote staff engagement, trust and security, things which are extremely important considering the ongoing workforce crisis:

Check in with staff frequently during this time, including one on one check in with all employees: It is important for employers to set at least a weekly plan of reaching out to school staff. Take time, listen carefully and share experiences and feelings with employee's one on one. This can be done through phone calls, SMS, WhatsApp and any other available communication channels. School leaders can also meet the school employees face to face in case this is allowed in your country but remember to follow safety measures for your and your staff's protection and security.

Find small ways to show your support and care for staff through different engagement techniques: It is possible that schools are also experiencing financial crisis but try to help the staff identify solutions to problems and find support services where it is possible. Partner together to support each other, and monitor each other's stress, workload, and safety.

- Remember to ask school staff how they are doing and feeling, and how their families are doing, make sure they feel heard and understood.
- Offer to help the staff members with basic needs such as transportation, airtime and internet data if this is possible.
- If it happens that the school is suspending teachers' contracts, reducing the salary or failing to pay them, it is advisable that this is communicated to them with clear reasons during a one on one meeting.
- Avoid making abrupt decisions without consulting the staff especially when they are concerned.
- When schools reopen, it is likely that schools will still be facing some economic crisis however, school will have to make sure that teachers are continuously and timely paid, with attention to those on precarious contracts. This will support teacher retention and promote their wellbeing.
- Find ways to acknowledge those who are performing well and encourage mutual support among your employees. Acknowledge tough situations and recognize accomplishments, even small ones.

Make sure staff are taking care of themselves: Remind the staff to apply all safety measures as it is advised by the World Health Organization and the Ministry of Health in your respective countries. Ask staff who their support network is and how they access it during times of social isolation. Encourage them to do physical exercise. This will help them to stay fit and reduce their stress. The same precautions will still be valid when schools reopen to ensure the staff and students are protected.

Provide counselling service to school staff to cope with stress, anxiety or distress: When many things feel uncertain or out of our control, one of the most effective ways we can manage stress and anxiety is to focus on actions that are in our control. Here are some ways you can advise your staff to take intentional steps to look after their physical and emotional wellbeing. during this challenging time:

- Learn how to protect yourself and others from COVID-19
- Acknowledge your feelings
- Maintain your day-to-day activities and a routine as much as possible
- Stay connected with your family and friends, remember that physical distancing does not need to mean social disconnection
- Seek accurate information
- Set limits around news and social media

PLAN FOR POSSIBILITY OF REDUCED STAFF DUE TO TEACHERS NOT RETURNING FOR HEALTH OR FINANCIAL REASONS. PLAN TO REVISE STAFF TIMETABLES AND HIRE NEW STAFF.

Context

Given that schools have remained closed for more than two months, school leaders have been affected financially unable to pay salaries to teachers in a lot of cases, leaving teachers looking for alternatives to survival. This may lead to some teachers not returning once schools reopen, requiring school leaders to hire new teachers. In some cases, teachers will be laid off where the school cannot afford to pay due to financial constraints. In both these cases, there must be a clear plan of action

The school leaders should help teachers adapt to the new normal as they resume classroom teaching. Teachers and support staff need to be given adequate support and resources to resume life in the classroom, and in many cases to provide remedial teaching. Such support is particularly important where additional strain may be placed on teachers' available time.

Implementing in Your School

Plan for the possibility of reduced staff due to teachers not returning for health or financial reasons. Planning may include revising the timetable and hiring new staff.
- Identify the teachers who will be returning to work when schools reopen.
- Prepare to hire new staff in case of teacher attrition. This may include:
    o Reaching out to local newspaper agencies or school networks to advertise open positions.
    o Planning to conduct interviews virtually in case of movement restrictions due to lockdown
- Allocate more lessons to the teachers who might have remained at school. The school leader would be required to provide more support, including financial support, in these cases.
- Ensure that teachers' voices are heard in policy and planning so the teachers who remain are motivated and understand the reasons behind changes in their workload.
- Promote continuous communication to all stakeholders to be aware of the issues that may affect attendance.
- Look for alternative sources of revenue for the school so that you can pay teachers.
- Hold return-to-work discussions with teachers
- Adjust classroom timetables and curriculum according to the changes in school timings, including possibility of students attending school on alternate days due to social distancing.
- Prepare worksheets that can be sent to students who are unable to attend school due to health reasons.

AS PART OF REOPENING.

REVISE STAFF ATTENDANCE POLICIES TO ACCOMMODATE HEALTH RELATED ABSENCES.

Context

When schools reopen, some staff may need to join late due to health reasons. These include the staff or family members of the staff showing symptoms related to COVID-19. In such cases, due to increased prevention measures being taken by the school, the school leader may have to request the staff member to take time off. The school leader will need to revise attendance policies to accommodate such health-related absences.

Implementing in Your School

In the process of the teaching and learning process at school, follow the Special Operating Procedures as provided by the World Health Organization (WHO) (such as the WHO considerations for school-related public health measures).
There may be required changes in the day to day running of the school programs including:
- Staff to be encouraged to communicate quickly in case of any sickness. This can be done through SMS, phone call or any other means to the school leaders.
- Making reasonable adjustments to employment arrangements or accommodation for employees who come from a distance
- Assigning other responsibilities to staff working from home: Staff working from home can help teaching staff with preparing lessons including creating worksheets, timetables and supporting school leaders in administrative work, wherever possible.
- Train teachers on virtual methods of teaching: This can be helpful in case members of the teaching staff are required to self-quarantine. If trained on remote learning, these members of the staff can still support students who are not coming to school due to COVID-19
- Providing a confidential and professional support and advisory service to assist teachers who are experiencing personal difficulties or need information on the range of services available
- To refer employees to sources of specialist advice including information about available Approved Medical Centres in the area.

SCHOOL REOPENING PLANNING CHECKLIST.

STAFF ENGAGEMENT			
PRIOR TO REOPENING		**AS PART OF THE REOPENING**	
Communicate with staff regularly to ensure they are well and are managing: Provide counselling support where possible	RESPONSIBLE PERSON	Ensure continuous and timely payment of teacher salaries to support teacher retention and wellbeing	RESPONSIBLE PERSON
	WHEN IT WILL HAPPEN		WHEN IT WILL HAPPEN
Ensure timely communication with teachers about changes in payment schedule	RESPONSIBLE PERSON	Revise staff attendance policies to accommodate health related absences	RESPONSIBLE PERSON
	WHEN IT WILL HAPPEN		WHEN IT WILL HAPPEN
Plan for possibility of reduced staff due to teachers not returning for health or financial reasons;	RESPONSIBLE PERSON		
	WHEN IT WILL HAPPEN		