


A close-up photograph of a person's hands holding a white and blue MediSain infrared thermometer. The thermometer is pointed towards the forehead of a young child with dark hair. The background is slightly blurred, showing the child's face and the person's hands. A semi-transparent grey rectangle is overlaid on the image, containing the title text.

Re-opening Schools

Strategy & Implementation

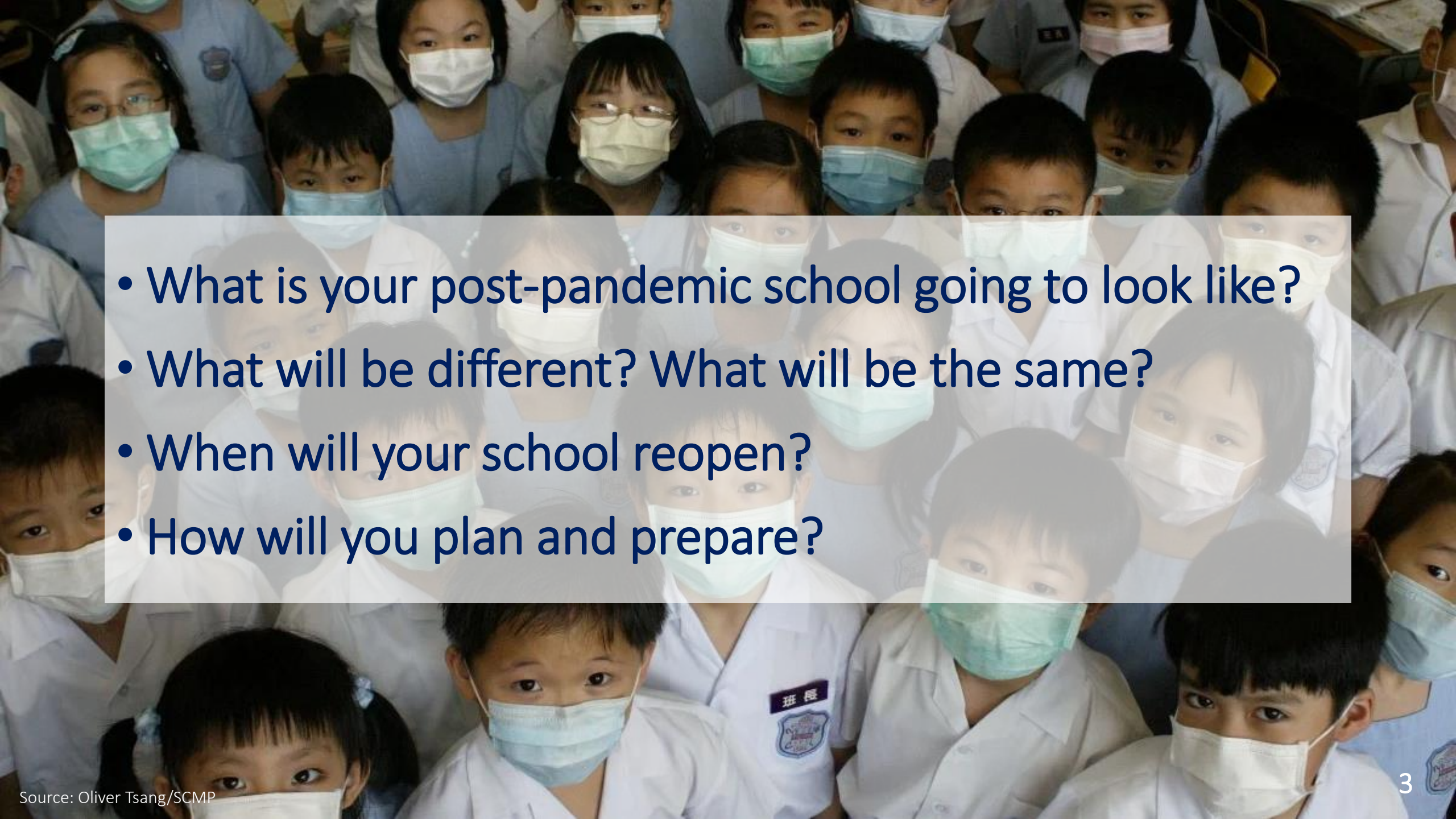
Helen Lockey

06 May 2020 ♦ Hong Kong

A woman with short, wavy blonde hair, wearing a light-colored cardigan over a dark top, is seated and speaking. She has a microphone clipped to her cardigan and is gesturing with her hands. The background is blurred, showing what appears to be a stage or conference setting with blue and white lighting.

“The decision to reopen schools is one of the most sensitive subjects on political agendas today and depends on the evolution of the pandemic and each national context. The priority must be to safeguard the health and well-being of students, and to build trust.”

Stefania Giannini, UNESCO Assistant Director-General for Education
30 April 2020

- 
- What is your post-pandemic school going to look like?
 - What will be different? What will be the same?
 - When will your school reopen?
 - How will you plan and prepare?

Key considerations (and balancing them)



HEALTH AND SAFETY

- How will you ensure continuous and consistent hygiene standards?

SPACE/PHYSICAL DISTANCING

- How will you ensure physical distancing in learning spaces, corridors, toilets, playgrounds?

WHO GOES BACK (FIRST) AND HOW MANY?

- How will you prioritise the classes/groups? On what basis will this be done?

SCHEDULING

- What will the timetable look like? What happens if there aren't enough teachers/staff?

Current situation (as of 30 April 2020)

A light gray world map serves as the background for the infographic. The numbers are placed over different regions: 71 over Europe, 128 over Asia, 12 over North America, 52 over South America, and 7 over Africa.

71

Countries that have announced
when schools will reopen

128

Countries that have not
announced dates yet

12

Countries that
have already
reopened
schools

52

Countries that
will reopen
schools this
academic year

7

Countries that
will reopen
schools next
academic year

A world map is shown in the background, rendered in a light red color. Overlaid on the map is a large, semi-transparent red rectangle. Within this rectangle, the text "Part 1" and "Global case studies" is written in white. The entire background is covered with a grid of small, light red circles.

Part 1

Global case studies

ASIA ♦ HONG KONG

Closed: late-January

Reopen: 27 May

- Phased opening, with senior secondary school students heading back first, followed by younger secondary and older primary school students on 08 June
- Third year kindergarten (K3) pupils and younger primary schoolchildren resume on 15 June; K1 and K2 will not be returning this year
- International schools can resume classes on 20 May
- Half-day classes
- Officials looking to ensure infection-control measures before opening; schools given three weeks to prepare
- Temperature checks; masks
- 1m physical distancing in classrooms and during break times
- High-risk situations to be avoided (e.g. pupils gathering for lunch, hence half-day school)
- 25,000+ cross border primary and secondary school students exempted from the 14-day quarantine





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SPOTLIGHT: Lions College, Kwai Chung HONG KONG



- Preparations have included a thorough disinfection and placing desks about 1.2 meters from each other.
- Thirty students in eight Form Four and Five classes to sit in single rows facing the same direction
- Special backup classroom available in case any pupils showed mild symptoms such as coughing.
- Centralised exam schedules cancelled, with timing and content of tests and assessments left to teachers' discretion and based on students' learning progress

SPOTLIGHT: Fung Kai No 1 Primary School, HONG KONG

The school is in Sheung Shui, near the border with mainland China. It has 1,100 students of which more than half are cross-border students.

Students:

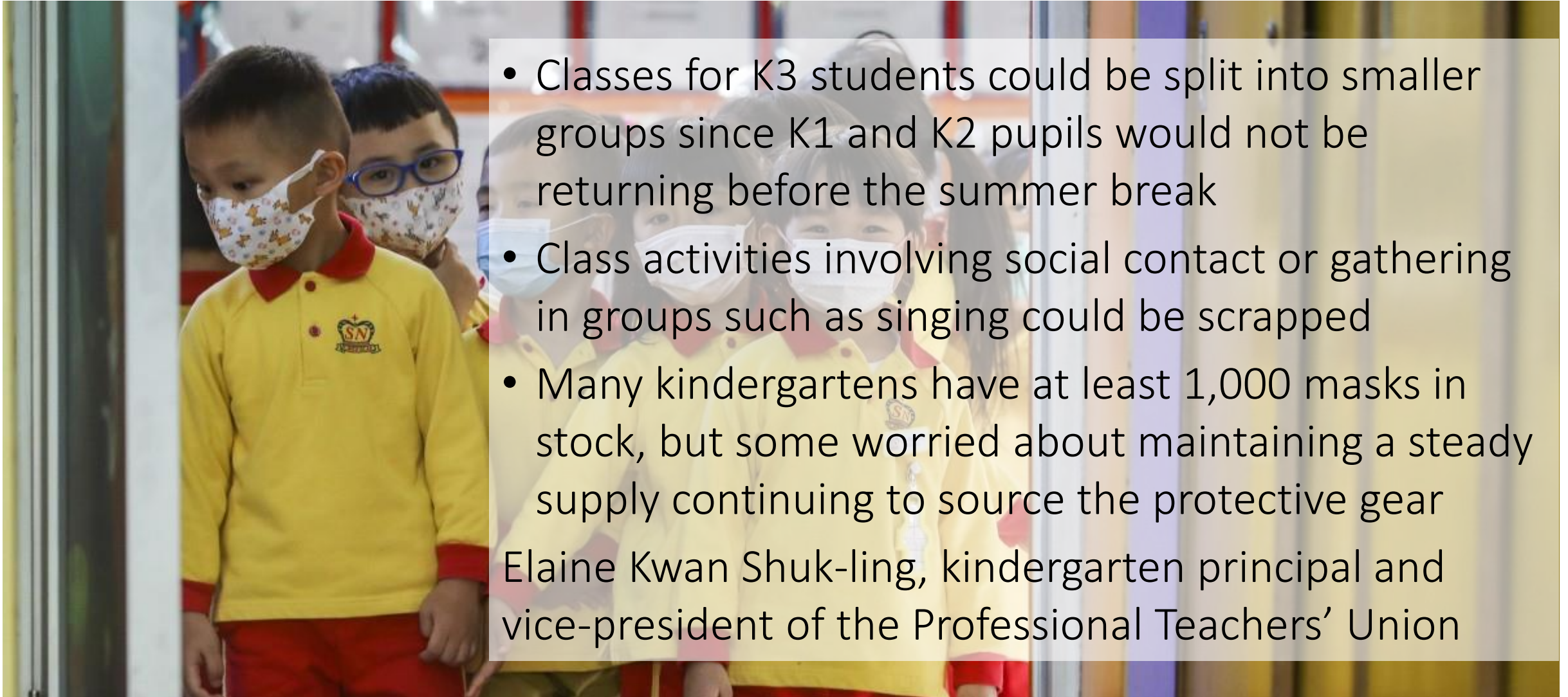
- required to bring two masks;
- have temperature checked;
- have to sanitise hands;
- reminded not to visit wet markets.



“If infected cases in Hong Kong or Shenzhen suddenly surge, the exemption (to undergo the 14-day quarantine) should be considered for cancellation.”

Chu Wai-lam, Principal

SPOTLIGHT: Kindergartens, HONG KONG



- Classes for K3 students could be split into smaller groups since K1 and K2 pupils would not be returning before the summer break
 - Class activities involving social contact or gathering in groups such as singing could be scrapped
 - Many kindergartens have at least 1,000 masks in stock, but some worried about maintaining a steady supply continuing to source the protective gear
- Elaine Kwan Shuk-ling, kindergarten principal and vice-president of the Professional Teachers' Union

ASIA ♦ CHINA

Closed: February

Reopen: from April (differs across provinces)

Schools are inspected and assessed by (a) their education bureau; (b) public health authorities; and (c) the food hygiene agency against a number of stringent measures, systems and procedures for:

- limiting access to their campus;
- taking and checking staff, pupil and visitor temperatures;
- recording everyone's green QR health codes on the colour-coded health system app;
- ensuring heightened cleaning and sanitising regimes;
- managing pupil gatherings such as staggered dining and online assemblies broadcast to classrooms; and
- managing suspected virus cases during the school day.



ASIA ♦ CHINA (Beijing)

Will be hosting the annual gathering of the National People's Congress, possibly resulting in heightened measures

- Seniors preparing for college entrance exams in July returning first

Students:

- wear masks;
- must show a "green" code on the colour-coded health system app;
- have temperatures taken at school gates;
- wash hands before entering school.



ASIA ♦ JAPAN

Closed: 02 March

Reopen: early April (38% managed to open)

- Thorough ventilation of classrooms
- Social distancing at all times; students and staff avoid conversing with others at close quarters
- Check their body temperature frequently
- Wear face masks
- Proper handwashing etiquette
- If an infection is confirmed, infected individual and those in close contact are suspended; temporary closure of classes or the entire school will also be recommended



ASIA ♦ MACAU

Closed: 03 February

Reopen: 04 May (secondary); 11 May (junior high school)

- Secondary schools reopen on 04 May (13,248 students)
- Junior high schools reopen on 11 May (14,341 students)
- Interviews for kindergarten admission start on 07 June
- 3,000 students living across the border in Zhuhai will be exempted from 14-day quarantine
- All non-higher education teachers, non-teaching staff and cross-border students must take a nucleic acid test for Covid-19



SPOTLIGHT: Hangzhou Yangzheng Primary School, CHINA

- Classes at this private elementary school resumed in late April
- Students wear hats with three-foot long cardboard “wings”



Spotlight: International School of Macao, MACAU

Four stages:

1. Develop plan to prepare the school before students and staff arrive
2. Identify important cleaning guidelines
3. Consider health monitoring and management
4. Consider entries, pick-up and drop-off routines



- Building on the online teaching and learning programme from pre-kindergarten to grade 12, there's an additional one-hour after-school to catch up, and tutorial time with teachers
- No change in the daily schedule

18 Safety measures in place:

<https://www.tis.edu.mo/news/measures-for-the-resumption-of-classes/>

ASIA ♦ NORTH KOREA

Closed: Unknown
Reopen: Unknown

- Some information about the university sector



Students clean their room before a class at the Pyongyang University of Foreign Studies



A student wearing a face mask has his temperature checked as a precaution against a new coronavirus as their university reopened following vacation, at Kim Chaek University of Technology in Pyongyang



Students wearing face masks disinfect their hands and undergo a temperature check as they arrive for a lecture on preventative measures against the COVID-19 novel coronavirus at the Pyongyang University of Medicine in Pyongyang



Students wearing face masks attend class as their university reopened following vacation, at Kim Chaek University of Technology in Pyongyang

ASIA ♦ SOUTH KOREA

Closed: February

Reopen: Next academic year

- Reopening has been postponed three times: from early March to 06 April
- New term completely online from 09 April
- Teachers are in classrooms and communicate with their pupils via laptops and video links



ASIA ♦ SINGAPORE

Closed: 03 April

Reopen: 05 May

- All schools moved to full-time home-based learning (HBL) from 08 April
- Private education institutions resume on 05 May
- Thermometers at entrances
- Classroom cameras to trace exposed students
- National exams in June will continue
- Considering “catch-up premium” to make up for lost classes



ASIA ♦ TAIWAN

Closed: **DID NOT CLOSE**

Reopen: 25 February (after extended Chinese New Year break)

Schools:

- installed new sanitary monitors in each classroom and plastic partitions around desks
- kept windows open
- cancelled assemblies
- moved graduation ceremonies online
- discouraged popular games like Jenga that bring students elbow to elbow, and speaking while eating

Students:

- check temperatures and disinfect shoes before entering campus
- wear masks
- wash hands regularly



ASIA ♦ VIETNAM

Closed: February

Reopen: from 02 March (depending on risk assessment)

- Some schools have Monday, Wednesday & Friday, or Tuesday, Thursday & Saturday schedules
- Social distancing: no more than 20 students in each classroom
- Online and face-to-face classes combined to ensure the annual curricula is completed on schedule
- Face masks
- Body temperature checks
- Extra-curricular activities suspended



UK ♦ ENGLAND

Closed: 20 March

Reopen: 01 June (tentative)

- Primary year 6 students (aged 10-11) back first because need to transition to secondary school in September; then other primary years
- Year 10 and 12 next if transmission is within threshold
- Temporary limits on class sizes
- Nursery schools not yet discussed
- Schools given three weeks notice to plan staged return that allows them to maintain social distancing



UK ♦ SCOTLAND

Closed: 20 March

Reopen: 01 June (tentative)

- Phased return
- Limits on class sizes
- Classrooms redesigned to ensure physical distancing (2m)
- Possible changes to the school day to accommodate different groupings of individual pupils
- "Blended" approach to education when schools reopen: year groups or pupils take turns between studying at school and at home
- Some children come one week and others the next; some come in the morning, others in the afternoons
- Pupils take breaks at different times



UK ♦ WALES

Closed: 20 March

Reopen: 01 June (Following same plan as the whole of the UK)

Five principles for returning to school:

- The safety and mental, emotional and physical wellbeing of students and staff
- Continuing contribution to the national effort and strategy to fight the spread of Covid-19
- Having the confidence of parents, staff and students - based on evidence and information - so that they can plan ahead
- Ability to prioritise learners at key points, including those from disadvantaged backgrounds
- Having guidance in place to support measures such as distancing, managing attendance and wider protective actions



EUROPE ♦ AUSTRIA

Closed: mid-March

Reopen: 04 May

- Final year students return 04 May
- Schools reopening “step by step” from 15 May, with most returning on 18 May
- Pupils 15 years or older not in final year returning on 29 May
- Classes split in two groups Monday to Wednesday; Thursday and Friday, then swapping the following week
- Each class attends lessons half the week



EUROPE ♦ BELGIUM

Closed: mid-March

Reopen: 18 May

- Pilot openings starting on 15 May
- No more than ten children in each class
- Children will have to have at least 4 m² (43 ft²) of space



EUROPE ♦ CROATIA

Closed: mid-March

Reopen: 11 May

- Physical distance of at least two metres in closed spaces
- Increased personal hygiene and area hygiene
- Only the teacher and children are allowed in the same area
- Parents discouraged from entering the institution
- Nine children at most and one teacher; after groups are formed, new children not to be admitted for 14 days
- Parents have final say on whether or not to send children to school



EUROPE ♦ DENMARK

Closed: 12 March

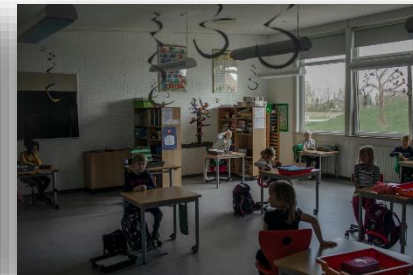
Reopen: 15 April (for children up to age 11)

- Among the first countries to impose lockdown and first in Europe to reopen schools
- Attendance not mandatory; the “illegally absent” statute suspended as a gesture to reluctant parents
- Not compulsory for children or teachers to wear masks
- Teachers do not take exercise books: students do self-marking
- Hygiene rules: no mixing outside teaching group; avoid inter-class contact
- No food/stationery sharing
- Cannot bring toys to school



SPOTLIGHT: Logumkloster District School, DENMARK

- Multiple entry points, depending on classroom location
- Refitted the school: new markings on floors show pupils how far apart to stand
- Cleaners clean each door handle at least twice during school hours
- Division of the school's population into small, independent silos: classes divided into two or three subgroups, with each new grouping given its own room and designated teacher
- Teachers cannot gather in staffroom
- Teachers to do as much teaching as possible outdoors
- Children have own desk
- Children play in small groups
- Handwashing part of school routine – first stop on entry; then on the hour thereafter
- Parents not allowed inside
- Library closed
- School closes at 2:00PM



EUROPE ♦ FRANCE

Closed: 16 March (all nurseries, schools and universities)

Reopen: 11 May

- Primary pupils from 5-11 years return in staggered year groups
- small groups of less than ten pupils; divide up pupils in different spaces
- no more than 15 children will be allowed in each classroom at any one time
- masks compulsory for pupils aged 11-15 in secondary schools, but not junior schools
- Attendance not compulsory
- Most schools operational from 25 May



EUROPE ♦ GERMANY

Closed: mid-March

Reopen: 04 May

- Priority to graduating students (e.g. Berlin, where the oldest (19-year-olds) went back to class to take their final exams
- The 16-year-olds will follow next week, with other age-groups following in stages over the coming months.
- Converted classrooms
- Widely-spaced desks
- Face masks
- Hand sanitisers



EUROPE ♦ ITALY

Closed: 05 March (all schools)

Reopen: September

- Schools will hire 24,000 teachers, encouraging young people to join the teaching profession and starting the school year with a massive initiative of remedial classes
- Online teaching for now



EUROPE ♦ THE NETHERLANDS

Closed: 15 March

Reopen: 11 May

- Primary schools reopened on a part-time basis – one day one half of the pupils, the other day the other half
- Secondary pupils returning from 01 June



EUROPE ♦ NORWAY

Closed: 12 March

Reopen: 20 April

- Reopened kindergartens on 20 April
- Reopened primary schools for children in grades 1 through 4 on 27 April
- Divide classes into groups of no more than 15
- Have children wash their desks daily, among other precautions
- Upper schools and universities remain closed until further notice



EUROPE ♦ SWITZERLAND

Closed: 13 March

Reopen: 11 May

- Primary and lower secondary schools open (or allowed to) from 11 May



REST OF WORLD ♦ AUSTRALIA

Closed: February

Reopen: April (by state)

- Schools reopening in phases, holding classes one day a week for a quarter of the students from each grade and gradually expanding until the end of June
- Optional attendance, but years 11 & 12 “strongly encouraged to attend”
- Public school residential boarding facilities open on 04 May
- PPE for school staff not recommended



REST OF WORLD ♦ CANADA

Closed: mid-March

Reopen: 11 May (Quebec first)

- 15 students per classroom at 2m distance
- Students might not get their original teacher back
- Students have own working space and stay in one classroom throughout the day
- Common areas like libraries, cafeterias, gyms, music and art classrooms will remain closed
- Alternate recess with outdoor play organized to maintain physical distancing
- No gym or music class
- Students bring their own food
- Daycare – 50% capacity; masks worn by daycare workers
- One child per seat on school buses with bus drivers behind Plexiglas
- New graduates/students who have completed three years of university study act as replacement teachers
- Attendance not compulsory; Teachers 60+, parents and children with health problems advised to stay home



REST OF WORLD ♦ ISRAEL

Closed: mid-March (schools and kindergartens)

Reopen: 03 May (60% turnout rate at mainstream schools)

- Return of pupils will vary according to age; ultra-orthodox Jewish sector reopened 7th to 11th grades.
- Children up to the age of six will return in small groups and attend on different days; older pupils will continue learning from home
- Primary school children learn in groups of no more than 15 pupils and desks must be placed two meters apart
- Pupils must wear masks, except when doing PE
- Break times will be staggered to ensure that groups do not meet each other.
- Students may be recruited as back-up teachers
- Education Ministry proposed school year to run into summer holiday to make up for lost time
- Not compelling parents to send children



REST OF WORLD ♦ NEW ZEALAND

Closed: 24 March

Reopen: 11 May

- Partially reopen for children up to Year 10 who cannot study from home, or whose parents need to return to work
- Education for students in Years 11-13 will continue remotely
- Measures for distancing, and cleaning and hygiene





Strategy

Three fundamental questions:

McKinsey (2020)

1. When to reopen
2. For whom
3. With what health and safety precautions in place

Four broad domains:

Physical
infrastructure

Scheduling &
staffing

Health &
safety

Transportation &
food services

Physical infrastructure strategies

- How will you modify the physical infrastructure that will ensure safety while minimising disruption to learning and teaching?
- Space out desks/furniture
- Mark out areas on the floor to remind people where to stand
- Put up clear signage, especially to direct people flows
- Dedicated entrance and exits
- Set up partitions
- Set up dedicated isolation areas
- Prepare outdoor spaces for teaching
- Staff/students restricted to certain buildings

Scheduling & staffing strategies

- Who goes back (first) and how many go back?
- How will you prioritise the classes/groups?
- What will the timetable look like?
- What happens if there aren't enough teachers/staff?

- Phased return
- Smaller class sizes
- Population cap
- Shorter lessons/school week
- Staggered hours; early finish
- Cohort sectioning/rotation (e.g. one week on, one week off)
- Silos, e.g. teachers teach one or two classes only
- Make part-timers, full-timers; enlist final year teacher-students

Health & safety strategy

- How will you ensure continuous and consistent hygiene standards?
- How will you ensure physical distancing in learning spaces, corridors, toilets, playgrounds?
- How many vulnerable staff would need to be shielded?
- What protective equipment might be needed for teachers?

- Regular cleaning and disinfecting of buildings, especially water and sanitation facilities
- Increased ventilation/airflow
- Mask-wearing
- Bins for masks
- Handwashing
- Temperature checks/screening
- Hand sanitiser stations
- One way corridors
- Health declarations

Transportation & food services strategy

- How will you ensure continuous and consistent hygiene standards?
- How many vulnerable staff would need to be shielded?
- What protective equipment might be needed for teachers?

- One child per seat on school buses
- Protection for bus driver (Plexiglas divider; masks; PPE)
- Bring your own food; no food sharing
- Parents drop off children at gate – no parking outside



Part 3

Communications

Communicate. Communicate. Communicate.

- The WHO's mantra is Test. Test. Test. *Yours is the one above.*
- Clear rationale, decision-making and communication with all stakeholders is extremely important.
- Families need to know who is making decisions, what those decisions are and when school-based mitigation efforts are planned to start and end.
- The relationship between state and local education agencies and state and local public health must be strong and communication must be clear and thorough.

Communications strategy

How will you message this to students, teachers and other school staff, and parents so that they feel that reopening the school is as safe as possible?

McKinsey (2020)

Set up a “**Crisis nerve centre**” that generates a coordinated response through strong leadership, and an effective operations system for ongoing data processing and monitoring.

How to structure what to say

Arjen Boin (author of *The Politics of Crisis Management*)

1. Offer a credible explanation of what happened; be open about the evolving nature of the problem and project the uncertainty that exists
2. Offer guidance; be consistent
3. Instil hope, but level with people and don't sugar coat
4. Show empathy
5. Show you're in control
6. Deliver the message swiftly

SPOTLIGHT: AUSTRALIA

Publicity material designed for different audiences

Younger
children

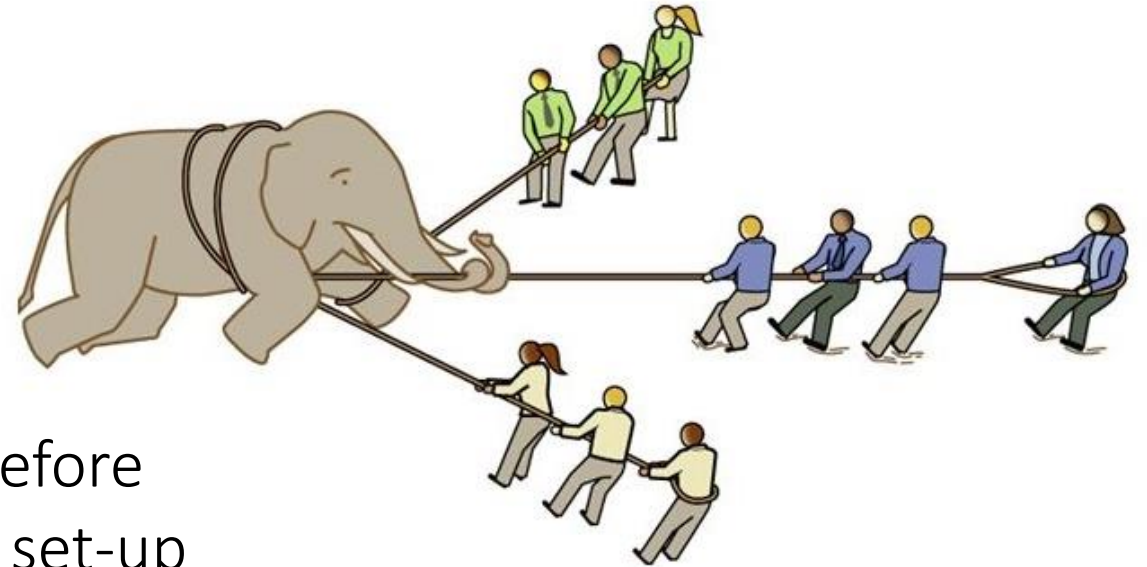


Older
children



Getting people on board – some ideas

- **Work closely with school staff**, especially front-liners, to get their views on the best way forward
- Conduct a **parent survey** to gauge their perceptions and how many would not allow their children to come to school
- **Consult with students**, to get a sense of their concerns and get their suggestions on how they might be addressed
- Do a **walk-through** of the school with staff before reopening to familiarise them with the new set-up (perhaps provide a **live feed** for those who can't attend)



Closing thoughts ...

A portrait of Tarek Al Majzoub, a middle-aged man with grey hair and glasses, wearing a blue jacket over a white shirt and a patterned tie. He is looking directly at the camera with a slight smile. The background is dark and out of focus.

Schools will need to tap new ideas and promote the concept of “resilient educational solidarity”.

Tarek Al Majzoub, Lebanese Minister of Education
30 April 2020

Helen Lockey is a Hong Kong-based education specialise and consultant, with thirty years experience in teaching, curriculum and programme design, education management, administration and research.

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