



Education International
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Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus
Director-General
World Health Organisation (WHO)
Switzerland

Brussels, 26 May 2020

Dear Dr. Adhanom Ghebreyesus,

I hope this finds you in good health.

I am writing on behalf of Education International, the world federation of education unions, representing 32 million teachers and education support personnel across the globe. We have closely followed your work over recent months and have been particularly interested in your advice related to the reopening of schools and education institutions.

In response to Considerations for school-related public health measures in the context of COVID-19, published on 10 May, we would like to raise the following issues for your consideration as you update your guidance.

- As schools start reopening across countries, we stress the importance of monitoring and assessing the effects of policies and measures applied in education and developing further research to understand COVID-19 transmission dynamics among school-aged children and in educational settings. Understanding the intricacies of transmission in educational environments is important for further comprehensive risk/benefit analyses and decisions related to school closures and re-opening in case of successive waves of the epidemic (including considerations related to physical and mental health, well-being, educational impacts, equity, etc.).
- In relation to educational staff, we stress – the need to work with all personnel – from leaders to teaching and support staff - when designing the measures to guarantee health and safety, including social distancing. Given the rapidly changing situation in many countries, and the lack of knowledge about many aspects of the virus, a continuous dialogue between local authorities and the education workforce and their unions is necessary. Only when employers and employees engage in dialogue can

sustainable solutions be found. Related to this, it is crucial to ensure that the entire educational workforce is informed and trained on the new measures.

- We welcome recognition of the need for additional staff and wish to underline that additional teachers should be trained and qualified. Moreover, it would be good to explicitly mention the need for additional education support personnel, such as cleaning staff.
- In addition to school nurses, it would be important to mention the need for psychosocial support for both students and staff, including bereavement counselling. Months of isolation and loneliness will have taken a toll on the mental health of both students and staff, including those for whom home is not a safe place that is free from violence.
- In practical terms, schools must have guaranteed access to the additional hygiene and cleaning products that are deemed necessary in their context.
- In order to ensure that parents are comfortable with sending their children back to school, information about reopening schools and new health and safety measures should be made available in a language that is widely spoken and understood, taking into account the characteristics of local communities (presence of migrant communities, linguistic minorities).

I take this opportunity to share [Education International's Guidance to Reopening Schools and Education Institutions](#). I would be grateful if you could share it with your colleagues and would welcome the opportunity to discuss our guidance further with you.

Your sincerely,



David Edwards
General Secretary

