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EduCOVID Series

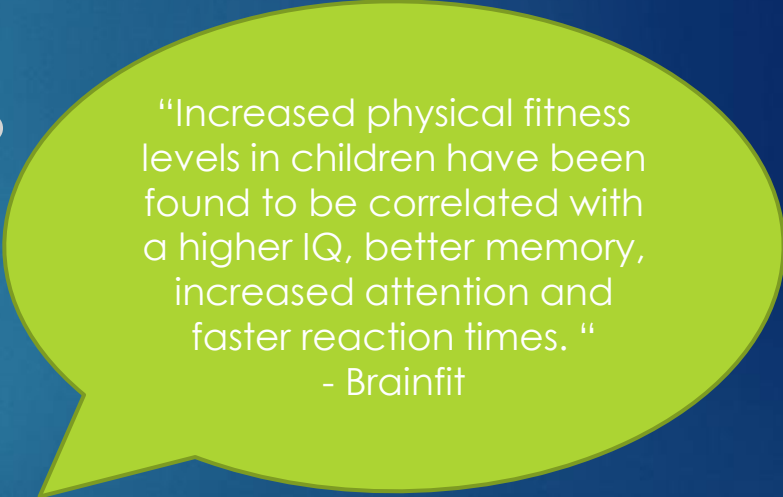
FEBRUARY 2021 EDITION



Starting this new semester in some countries, starting or preparing for a new academic year in others, poses upon us new considerations.

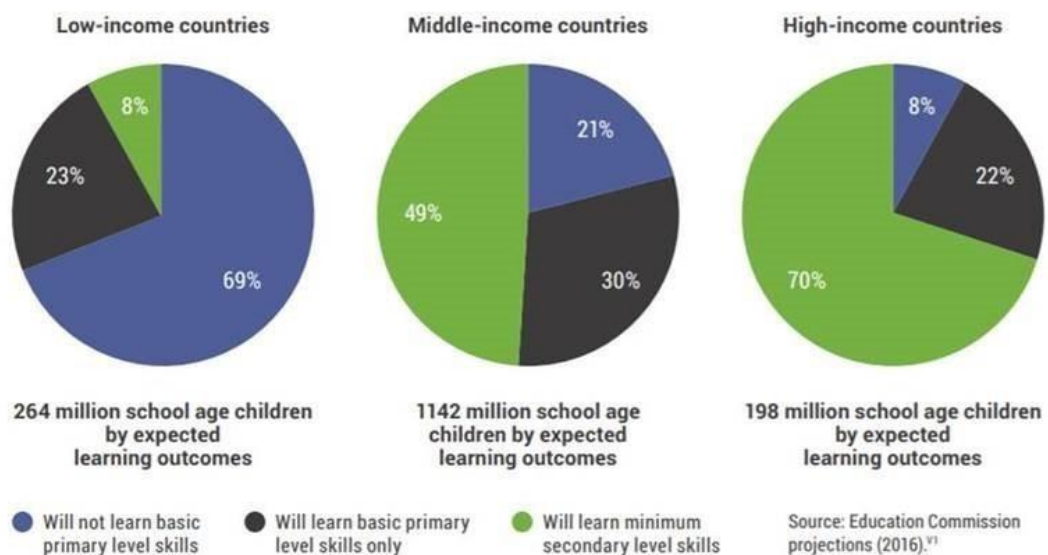
This is a chance for us all to reflect on our monumental success handling learning and teaching during a pandemic. Teachers have excelled in showing that this profession/passion has outweighed the top, highly-valued, highly-paid other professions. In truth, most teachers around the globe have poured their hearts out, not only reaching their learners, but also being very creative as they explored and navigated new modes of learning.

Amid preparation for standardized exams at the end of this year, British, American, German and more, there is an urgent need to focus more on mental health and physical fitness. It is not only about textbooks, lesson planning, zoom meetings, digital platforms, score recording, and model testing. If mental health and physical fitness are not fully addressed, now after a year of learning through screens and “seatridden” settings, then there will be little hope to restore wellbeing of our learners and teachers.



“Increased physical fitness levels in children have been found to be correlated with a higher IQ, better memory, increased attention and faster reaction times.”
- Brainfit

Figure 1. A global learning crisis: The expected learning outcomes of the cohort of children and youth who are of school age in 2030



Source: UNICEF

Some countries have discussed the importance of learning in-person with peers and will resume hybrid learning, taking extra safeguarding measures and applying maximum social distancing and safety standards. Some have been sending rapid COVID tests to schools and reducing school visits, but students tested positive, causing more alarm in school communities.

Moreover, there remains a great anxiety, the new strain of COVID-19 and the emergency plans that may erupt due to that. All this makes the whole scenario uneasy to handle, but possible!

Reminder 1: General Safety Measures/Safeguarding



These were fully explained in Post COVID School (Version 2) from the Edu-COVID Series, published in August 2020.

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Reminder 2: Focus Synergy



SMART UNDERSTANDING
OF SITUATION
(COUNTRY/REGION LEVEL)



STAKEHOLDERS'
COLLABORATION



FEEDBACK LOOPS



HIGHLY-EFFECTIVE
TEACHERS



FLEXIBILITY

These were fully explained in Post COVID School (Version 1)
from the Edu-COVID Series, published in July 2020.

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Reminder 3: Focus Urgency



ACCOUNTABILITY

1



ACADEMIC
ACHIEVEMENTS/LOSSES

2



ALIGNMENT

3



INCLUSION

4



HOME COOPERATION

5

These were fully explained in Post COVID School (Version 2) from the Edu-COVID Series, published in August 2020.

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Focus Urgency

Accountability

Leaders continue to assess their accountability measures to assure that these are not randomly selected and implemented. The following questions serve as signposts in this edition:

- ▶ Have leaders set up better designed plans for this new term/year, including Language Management Systems?
- ▶ Can leaders assure that their teachers are ready for this term/year?
- ▶ Did leaders evaluate the committees formed and redesign them if necessary?
- ▶ Are all decisions or choices evidence-based?
- ▶ Are there safeguarding solutions that can monitor learners surfing the platforms?
- ▶ Are leaders closely and fairly evaluating their grading systems in the light of the COVID conditions enforced upon schools?

Most international accreditation organizations are focusing more on safeguarding and learning losses, rather than just inspecting and pinpointing errors.



Focus Urgency

II

Academic Achievements / Losses



It is the middle of this academic year in most countries around the world and the beginning of a new academic year in others. In both cases there is a beginning and leaders have been continuously and diligently working to set their plans.

Academic achievements and losses have been a critical concern for all education communities and families. At this time of year, schools should have a clear record of their gains and losses that were redeemed. This process must be documented for reference and further discussions and developments.

Special attention should go to vulnerable learners, those with learning difficulties to see their gains and losses redeemed, too.

New remedial plans need to be seriously set and action steps carefully underpinned in this new beginning.

Two factors for well-being and progress remain essential also at this period :



Collecting **Feedback**
and using it to design and
redesign



Integrating **SEL**
Social-emotional learning
components to all subjects

Language Arts*



* This applies to all languages

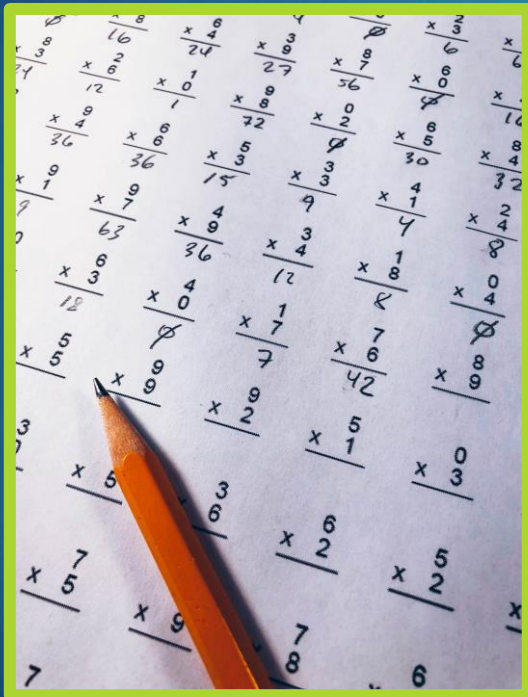
Putting learned language in real practice can be very helpful. Reading genres and texts for the sake of reading and comprehension only does not fulfill its cycle of extended learning- which should be the target.

Using **sentence stems or phrases** is a simple tool that teachers can use to start a speaking exercise or a writing task. These sentence stems can be provided by the teacher or even better, extracted from reading selections and written down in a special notepad to be a specific activity prompt (short-term) or like a word or phrase bank (long-term).

Sentence stems are a powerful cognitive tool because they:

- spur ideas
- help explore themes and plots
- solidify language through writing down the phrases
- reach out to passive learners
- trigger creative beginnings and endings (the unusual and unexpected)
- enhance engagement
- help gain self-confidence as the activity starts as a whole class, to pair work, then to individuals

Mathematics



Giving learners time to experience challenges during math problem-solving is very helpful. Mathematics is mainly thinking. It is exploring children's thinking capacity throughout the process, and through that is real learning.

While developing lesson plans, it is better to ensure there is more **questioning** than instruction or guiding information.

Ensuring that questions revolve around setting the lesson, stirring curiosity and investigation, assessing the process each child conducted to reach answers, and wrapping up the lesson by leaving open-ended questions.

Varying the level of depth and differentiation is also crucial in mathematics. Bloom's Taxonomy and Webb's DoK can be strategic models to help in the process of questioning.

Social Studies



Fun can play an integral part in adding excitement, curiosity, and even humor to social studies, especially that some social studies classes are conducted through lecture-form only, leaving learners dull and lacking sense of discovery.

One way to add fun to social studies classes is by creating riddles. **Riddles** are usually explicit and witty. This provides opportunities to search for information, vocabulary, and funny ways of putting them together.

These riddles can be collected to be presented at a class or school scale event, in-person or virtual, respectively.

Having a stress-free environment influences learning as it makes it easy, equitable, exciting, and above all, long-lasting.

Physical Education



Balancing exercises are a creative way to enhance diversity in PE classes, even online. Balancing, as explained by science, has lots of benefits:

- ❑ increases stability and prevents falls
- ❑ increases body flexibility
- ❑ reduces the risk of ligament problems
- ❑ speeds up recoveries from muscle pains
- ❑ collaborates with cognitive strength and thus increases attention
- ❑ collaborates with mental health and thus increases calmness and mood control

Standing on one leg, standing up from a chair without using the hands, walking on a line of small pillows, etc.. are all balancing exercises. **A quick tip** to make easier for children is spreading the arms and focusing on one point, such as staring at a door handle or a plant. Staring at one point or thing is a very effective exercise for building a balancing capacity.

Balancing is a necessary exercising routine for adults as they age. That's why **building it in children as a habit**, is rewarding to those future dads, moms, and professionals.

Focus Urgency

III

Alignment



Alignment To Statement

Like always mentioned, school's vision and mission maintain priority focus. Few points to consider in this edition:

- ▶ Are leaders always checking home environments through surveys and indirect observations of children's performance? (Home environments may not continue to be as helpful as it started and with online learning, home environment is a major factor.)
- ▶ Are there searches for "Points or People of Strength" that can be utilized to leverage overall areas?
- ▶ Are leaders continuing to create opportunities to grow?
- ▶ Are leaders still communicating value to all stakeholders without adding pressure of engagement?
- ▶ Are there mentorship programs provided?



Focus Urgency

IV

Inclusion

- ▶ Rotating schedules when all learners get to perform tasks for the class, giving each a sense of responsibility, freedom, and ownership.
- ▶ “Fist to Five Check” is a quick method to check understanding. It can be a chart in class or used as reference during online learning. By raising their hands with a certain number of fingers showing, teachers can have a quick notice, that can embrace all learners, and none is left unnoticed.
- ▶ Virtual hugs, or self-hugs when learning in-person, are highly recommended from time to time so that all learners feel that adults, in this case, their teachers have never lost that touch of compassion, understanding, and attention with social distancing procedures. Many children are not often hugged at home due to a variety of reasons.

Fist to Five

	I completely understand (can teach it).
	I mostly understand (can show it).
	I understand pretty well.
	I need more practice and examples.
	I need help.
	I don't understand at all.

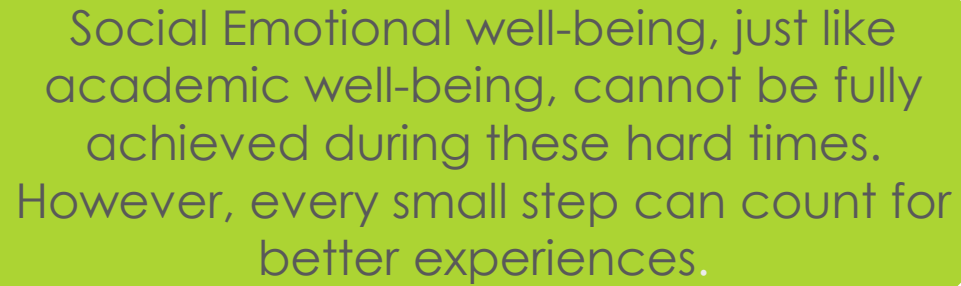
Source: Amazon.com



Focus Urgency



Home Cooperation



Social Emotional well-being, just like academic well-being, cannot be fully achieved during these hard times. However, every small step can count for better experiences.

Social-Emotional Support

LEARNER AND TEACHER

Learners

A very effective tool to enhance social-emotional learning in every subject is to **use journals or interactive notebooks**. These can have any size, style, line design, or color. That does not matter. What matters is the content that learners will fill.

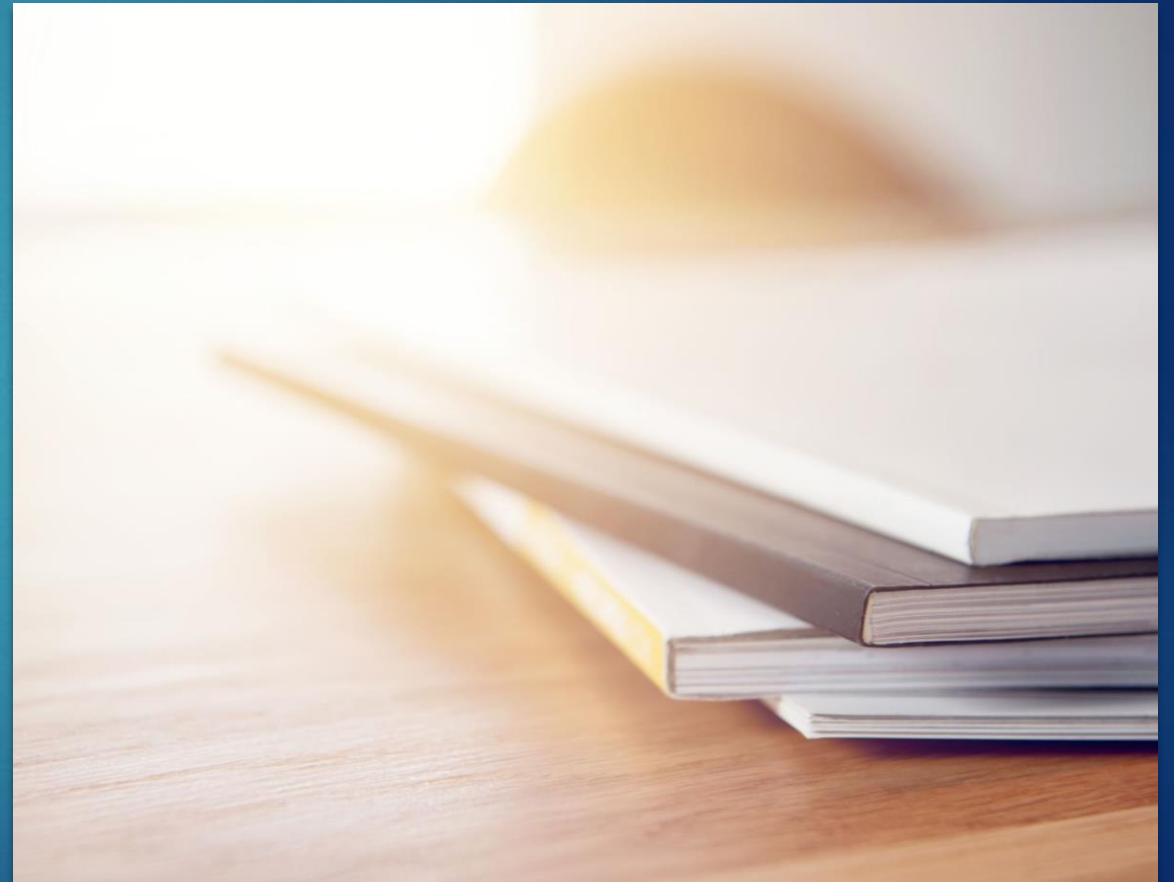
Learners should be allowed to be autonomous as they write down, draw graphs, and sketch the way they want. These journals or interactive notebooks must remain personal since they give learners a chance to express their thoughts and feelings about their learning and life experiences in general.

They allow learners to understand that learning is not separable from life and that their voice is given space.

Teachers can inform learners that they choose to share what they like and keep to themselves what they think is personal.

Learners are going through some hard moments- that's when they cannot tackle a learning concept or even find their teacher rude. Few might need to express that they cannot concentrate online or that they are not happy being away from in-person school.

Learners need to speak out. Once they do, half of the problem is solved. Teachers are wise enough to notice what the children are going through. That's when they decide to intervene and show support.



Teachers



“I started a positive moments jar.”

Each day, I write at least one positive thing that happened on a slip of paper and put it in the jar.

Even on my roughest days, I push myself to think of something positive, and then, when I’m having a rough day, I pour them out and read through them. Helps me to remember why I love my job!

—LAUREN SASSAFRAS, TEACHER

edutopia

- ▶ There are many ways for teachers to lessen the pressure of daily tasks that come with in-person, blended, or online learning. The most effective ways are those that stem from the teachers themselves towards themselves – appreciating their own efforts.
- ▶ A research done in 2015 shows that in times of difficulty or crisis, it is better to distance oneself from people or relationships that might stir more negativity or negative events. As the study explains, being away from negative sources, directs attention away from the crisis or difficult situation, which will eventually seem impermanent. While isolating oneself from work interactions is not always possible, reducing interactions generally is, and that includes family and friends. Staying away from negativity as much as possible can reduce stress and anxiety.

“When we are not satisfied about our current realities, let us all read carefully the poster featuring Sustainable Development Goal 4 (Quality Education).

Starting 2021 with such statistics is a reminder for us to count our blessings, and a warning sign for us and the entire systems around the world to genuinely act and take full responsibility. “

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ENSURE INCLUSIVE AND EQUITABLE QUALITY EDUCATION AND PROMOTE LIFELONG LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALL

BEFORE COVID-19

PROGRESS TOWARDS
INCLUSIVE AND EQUITABLE QUALITY
EDUCATION WAS TOO SLOW



OVER 200 MILLION CHILDREN WILL
STILL BE OUT OF SCHOOL IN 2030

INEQUALITIES IN EDUCATION ARE
EXACERBATED BY COVID-19

IN LOW-INCOME COUNTRIES,
CHILDREN'S SCHOOL COMPLETION RATE IS



79% IN RICHEST
20% OF HOUSEHOLDS



34% IN POOREST
20% OF HOUSEHOLDS

COVID-19 IMPLICATIONS



SCHOOL CLOSURES KEPT
90% OF ALL STUDENTS OUT OF SCHOOL
REVERSING YEARS OF PROGRESS ON EDUCATION

REMOTE LEARNING REMAINS
OUT OF REACH FOR
AT LEAST
500 MILLION STUDENTS



ONLY 65% OF PRIMARY SCHOOLS
HAVE BASIC HANDWASHING FACILITIES
CRITICAL FOR COVID-19 PREVENTION