



# ARC Education Project: Rapid Response Report

Report prepared for Wales



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With just over half of the world's students out of school due to the COVID-19 pandemic (Education International, 2020), it is time to collaborate more than ever. Working together we can express our needs, identify what is working, and apply what is proving successful for our counterparts now to address the needs of students particularly those with existing equity issues. This rapid report aims to provide hope amid the chaos in bringing together data on programs geared to issues of school meals, wellbeing and mental health, viable learning formats, and access to necessary tools and materials to continue learning through the coming days and weeks.

#### **Overview of findings:**

**Food:** school meals are being provided by existing, yet modified, programs with many extending their services to all children under the age of 18. Most programs are pick-up with some providing drive thru.

**Mental Health:** Most school boards are offering advice and links to resources and supports that can be accessed either online or by phone.

**Distance/Alternative Learning:** Most educational needs have a distance learning format. While the majority of these are online (podcast, Youtube, website, application), there are some that are televised with others by radio program and yet others are hard copy homework packets.

**Access to Technology:** is found as a key issue on fewer sites than other issues but is addressed by the US and Australian authorities as important considerations. These are generally addressed by sharing or lending programs involving an application. Internet service is also an important issue with many US districts/boards offering mobile hotspots either free or at a reduced cost. Many online platforms and sites are waiving fees and are being made available to teachers, students and families.



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## Broad Lens(es):

### Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) tracking

- [World Health Organization](#) (WHO): provides up-to-date Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) Situation

### School closures tracking

- [Education International](#): has prepared an updated *COVID-19 Tracker for school closures*
- [UNESCO](#): provides a global monitoring of *Education Disruption and Response*
- [Education Week](#): provides an up-to-date (twice daily) map of school closures in the United States of America
- [ARC Education Project](#): provides a map of school closures related to COVID-19 in Canada (created by Mohsen Haghighatpasand, ARC Research Assistant)

## ARC member responses to COVID-19

The UK: [Guidance for schools, childcare providers, colleges and local authorities](#)

- [Ireland](#): Recent press release re: Statement from the Department of Education and Skills for students in the English language education sector found [here](#)
- [Scotland](#): Press release on the cancellation of Leaving Certificate & Cycle Oral and Practical Performance tests found [here](#)
- [Wales](#): Welsh government advisory for sending students to school found [here](#)
- [Iceland](#): Q&A about school restrictions due to the COVID-19 pandemic

The following contribution was made by Arnór Guðmundsson, Director, Directorate for Education, Iceland

- Pre-primary and compulsory (grade 1-10) schools are open, with restrictions limiting the number of students in the same space. There has been a surge in distance education and teachers have been active in adapting various means of communicating with students, Special access has been opened the National Broadcasting Corporation provides educational programs.
- There has been a close cooperation between authorities and stakeholders in reorganizing schooling. Health authorities are urging that schools be kept open as long as possible stating: “[Teachers and school staff are front-line workers in the current situation. Schools are an important link in our community and the contribution of the school community in this context is extremely valuable.](#)”
- [Finland](#): Finland closes schools and recommends distance learning for all (March 16), but March 23 introduces voluntary policy about students in grade 1-3 may return to school; school meals not mandatory. Article found [here](#)
- [Uruguay](#): [Plan Ceibal](#) technology support during school closures
- [Nova Scotia](#): Schools closures & government responses found [here](#)
- [Saskatchewan](#): School closures announced [here](#)

## Education Support: students, schools & communities

1. [World Health Organization \(WHO\)](#): data for schools, students, and families regarding learning during COVID-19
2. [UNICEF](#): provides excellent resources for [practitioners](#), [parents](#), [teenager mental health](#), [talking to students](#), etc
  - [Technical note](#): Protection of children during the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic
  - A [joint guidance](#) issued by the **International Federation of the Red Cross (IFRC)**, **UNICEF and the World Health Organization (WHO)** on protecting children and schools from transmission of COVID-19 based on lesson learned from Ebola virus disease from 2014-2016
  - A [briefing note](#) on addressing mental health and psychosocial aspects of COVID-19 (considerations for frontline workers)
3. **Educational International (EI) & UNESCO**: have partnered to support teachers and school leaders with an excellent independent report on approaches to distance learning during COVID19
  - School Closures: *Thinking about Pedagogy in an Unfolding Pandemic* found [here](#)
4. [UNESCO](#): emergency education platforms. This site lists numerous distance learning platforms that may be of interest to school boards and districts to provide lessons and lectures. These include online resources (digital learning management systems, MOOC's, video conferencing etc.), applications (for computer and phone), offline resources, and digital reading applications.

[UNESCO](#): upcoming [webinars](#) on Global Network of Learning Cities (GNLC) response to COVID outbreak. In order to exchange solutions, discuss contingency plans and share distance-learning approaches. Non-member cities are also invited to join the online events, share their experiences and learn from other cities. We

- [March 21, 2020 WEBINAR](#): Covid-19: **UNESCO convenes Education on equity in schooling**
5. [OECD](#): Tackling the coronavirus: Contributing to a global effort
    - [Key Impacts](#) (statement and links)
    - Educating kids during the crisis: see “A Helping Hand: Education responding to the coronavirus pandemic” article found [here](#) (Tracey Burns, March 18)

6. \*\*\*[Wikipedia](#): Impact of 2019-2020 Coronavirus pandemic on education \*\*\*(this is included as a supplementary resource and we acknowledge the open nature of Wikipedia)

### Articles & resources

Concerns about school closures related to community impact, food insecurity, students' mental health and wellbeing, safety, achievement gaps are being explored in a number of articles:

- [TES](#): “For the poorest, school closures are devastating” Becky Francis
- [The Centre for Education & Youth \(CFEY\)](#): “Supporting vulnerable young people through Covid: How can we work together to take on the challenge?” Loic Menzies
- Worry about children/abuse: <https://ottawa.ctvnews.ca/concerns-about-child-abuse-during-covid-19-isolation-1.4863060>
- [Education Week](#): “When schools shut down, we all lose” Stephen Sawchuk

**Note:** For most countries at the Federal level, issues are primarily related to COVID, school closures, and issues of civil rights with specific programs managed at the local level. In the US, for example, the [CDC](#) and the US Dept of [Ed](#) have advised individual state departments to consult with local boards on issues of access to meals and technology. “Each district and school have a unique set of circumstances and resources. OSPI is individually assisting districts and schools to determine how to best meet community needs.” (Office of [Superintendent](#) of Public Instruction, 2020).

### Cancellation of Assessments, Exams, Certification (ongoing)

**UK Government:** Official statement that GCSE & A-Level exams cancelled. On obligations and supports during the pandemic. Key Principle #2 “If a child needs specialist support, is vulnerable or has a parent who is a critical worker, then educational provision will be available for them.” See also the [Guardian](#) article

- [Ontario](#) cancels all Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO) assessments
- Quebec Minister of Education (Jean-Francois Legault) cancels Ministry exams: see Western Quebec School Board statement [here](#)
- Alberta: Diploma & provincial exams cancelled. CTV report & official report found [here](#).
- Texas: Cancelling STAAR testing information found [here](#)
- Florida: Assessments, Accountability & Promotion information found [here](#)
- SATs and ACTs (USA) cancelled and postponed. Information [here](#) (Washington post)

### Sites and systems addressing issues of specific interest

Please note that most school board sites address multiple issues/solutions of interest. While the majority of these links are to American sites and solutions, these have been quick to respond and seemingly effective in a time of crisis. This is not to imply that great work is not being done elsewhere simply that further time is needed to dig deeper.

### **Access to food/meals**

In the US, different agencies are working together to make meals happen in exceptional circumstances. The [NCSL](#) addresses the rights of students with disabilities in the provision of alternative learning formats (ex. online). It also acknowledges and reports ongoing efforts to modify existing programs to provide meals to those in need. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) announced flexibilities to ensure that students receive meal service during school closures while minimizing potential exposure to the novel coronavirus.

There are also partnerships in place in many cities and towns that bring in community-based organizations to provide the nutritional needs of students. These make use of existing emergency food/meal programs.

- California: [Oakland](#) student meals. [OUSD](#) website
- [Colorado](#) (Dept of Ed): Emergency Feeding Program
- [Hunger Free Colorado](#)
- Florida: [Lee County](#) – providing meals and access to a mobile food bank
- [New York State](#) – updates on COVID-19 & operation of Federal Nutrition Assistance Program. Also see guidance from the [State Education Department](#)
- [District of Columbia Public Schools](#) (DCPS)– providing meals and computers for students in need

### **Mental Health & Wellbeing**

- This again appears to be efforts in place at the board/district/institution level. School boards are offering advice and links to resources to supports that can be accessed either online or by phone but most appear to be online resources for reference purposes.
- [Colorado](#) Dept of Ed: mental health support links (under additional resources)
- [New York State Center for School Health](#) (NYSCSH): supporting student success
- Upper Canada District School Board: [pdf](#) advice for parents and links to additional resources/supports
- [WHO](#): a pdf Helping children cope with stress during the 2019-nCoV outbreak.
- [Ottawa-Carleton District School Board](#): advice for students and families on managing anxiety related to COVID-19.
- [CAMH](#) on COVID and children
- [Studentminds.org](#) (UK based mental health charity) talks about mental health supports. Also includes topics such as xenophobia and hate crimes.
- Help lines: <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/covid-19-has-kids-help-phone-calling-for-more-volunteers-as-service-swamped-with-calls-1.5499687>

- [Free resource to support pupils' well-being](#)

## **Access to Technology/Materials**

“...17% of U.S. students do not have computers in the home and 18% of students lack access to high-speed internet.” (NCSL, 2020).

- **Seattle:** Public School Board asking teachers to prepare *learning packets*, providing mobile hotspots for those with computers and no internet access. Access to tech during COVID-19 mirrors the larger issue of the ‘homework gap’ and speaks to structural and systemic issues challenging equity.
- **Bellevue School District:** Providing mobile hotspots and [computers](#) to students. Food services available for pick up with a drive thru option (pdf [here](#)). “Base stations for wireless internet access (hotspots) and laptops are available for student use.” With application process in place.
- **Indiana Dept of Ed:** providing online learning with links to free and low-cost internet service providers
- Florida: [Lee County](#) – providing low cost internet access
- [District of Columbia Public Schools](#) (DCPS)– providing meals and computers for students in need

### **Students with Special Needs**

- **California State of Education:** Special Education Guidance found [here](#)

## **Learning Formats (Canadian response outside of ARC membership)**

In **Ontario**, the ministry of education has launched the “[Learn at Home](#)” online platform (March 20, 2021).

- [Global News](#) coverage of the new Ontario online curriculum
- Province of [Ontario](#): news release on new online learning formats
- [The Star](#) (paper): Talks about how Ontario will be using local television stations for educational programming.

In **Alberta**, education has moved online.

- [CTV](#) news reports on the new learning format “The instruction will be provided online, through the *distribution of course packages* or *regular telephone check-ins*. Teachers have been asked to develop a flexible course load based on the portion of the curriculum that has not been previously covered while ensuring that the students can successfully manage the requirements while working from home.”

- [Edmonton Journal](#): “Alberta students will be assigned a minimum of five hours of course work each week as part of new guidelines while classes are cancelled over the COVID-19 outbreak.” For kindergarten through to grade 3.

In **British Columbia**, a variety of measures will be used to support students while schools are closed.

- Letter (March 17) from the Minister of Education found [here](#)

### New Systems in place: [UNESCO](#) site (new countries & systems added daily)

| Country           | System/Platform(s)  | Notes   |
|-------------------|---|---|
| China             | National Cloud- <a href="#">Platform</a> for Educational Resources and Public Service |   |
| France            | Ma <a href="#">classe</a> à la maison   | Provides a virtual classroom system accessible via smartphones and computers. Enables teachers to facilitate the organization of distance learning.   |
| Bahrain           | <a href="#">Edunet.bh</a> (digital)   | EduNet provides various educational services for all school stages and enables communication between faculty members , students and parents.  |
| Italy             | La <a href="#">scuola</a> continua (online)   | Supports education and learning of school students  |
| Iran              | Dedicated <a href="#">TV</a> programming  | The Ministry of Education has arranged for all classes to be provided on television with a schedule based on grade levels. Students watch teachings of their courses nationwide and according to grade. |
| Japan             | <a href="#">MEXT</a>  | Platform to support e-learning by age, level of education and subject.  |
|                   | <a href="#">Learning Innovation</a>   | Points users to third party learning platforms.   |
| Republic of Korea | Educational Broadcasting system ( <a href="#">EBS</a> )<br>Multimodal (radio, online) | Provides advanced educational service by offering various multimedia content.   |
| Kuwait            | <a href="#">MOE</a> video channel   | A dedicated YouTube channel featuring video lessons and conferences from teachers.  |
| Lebanon           | <a href="#">MEHE</a> (Apple application)  | Official learning application of the Ministry of Education and Higher Education with information for teachers and other education personnel.  |



*“Governments should adopt measures to mitigate the disproportionate effects on children who already experience barriers to education, or who are marginalized for various reasons – including girls, those with disabilities, those affected by their location, their family situation, and other inequalities.” (Human Rights Watch, 2020).*

### **Access to Technology: Partnerships appear key**

- [CNN](#) news - Houston, Texas: Covid-19 Computers Program charity. This community partnership provides low income students with computers to continue with studies during the COVID-19 outbreak. This article also offers that the organization has had an overwhelming response from community members wishing to donate devices.
- [Comp-U-Dopt](#): a non-profit organization that provides a similar service. See also [news](#) coverage. They state “Our programs serve to eliminate limited access to computers, facilitate growth in technical and digital literacy skills and support the future of youth in our communities.”
- [Chalkbeat.org](#): Chalkbeat is a nonprofit newsroom covering schools in communities around the U.S. “Schools must consider, for example, whether all students have access to a computer, the internet, parental supervision, and food while they are out of the classroom.”
- This article acknowledges and addresses issues of homelessness (and shelter living) and access to resources. In addition to online learning some educators have made use of *paper-and-pencil packets* but these appear to be short term solutions. In Indianapolis meals will be provided for pick up in school parking lots or by mobile food distribution bus.
- [Lancaster](#), NY: school district offering computer lending program with letter/notice to parents on application details and deadlines. Also offered a limited time free internet access package (60 days).

### **Online articles addressing access and equity:**

- The [Verge](#) (US based)
- [Training.com](#) (Australian based): this article discusses sharing and lending computers/devices as possible solutions.
- [Pew Research Center](#): (US based) students face digital homework gap

### **Teacher & parental tools/resources**

- [Cult of Pedagogy](#) (Jennifer Gonzalez) **wakelet** collection of resources for schools
- [zoom](#): being made free to support teachers and students
- [scholastic](#)
- [audible stories](#)

- 6 Things Educators can do from home to help their students: [Tom Hatch](#)
- [The Journal](#): Transforming Education through technology: Free resources for schools (Dian Schafferhauser)
- [Learning Enrichment](#): website for students, teachers and parents (Australia)
- [Ditchthatclassrom](#): elearning tools for teachers & home