



Ministry of Education, Youth, Sports & Culture

Frequently Asked Questions #7 **Updated Plans for the Reopening of School** **August 21, 2020**

1. When will schools reopen for the 2020-21 school year?

The Ministry of Education has made the decision to reopen schools **for distance education only** on the following dates:

Preschools and Primary Schools: Monday, September 7, 2020

Secondary Schools: Monday, October 5, 2020

The official start date for those students approved for home schooling is Monday, September 7, 2020. Tertiary institutions have already been given approval to commence online classes. The Ministry will continue to monitor the public health situation. Schools and parents will be informed if and when schools will be allowed to deliver face-to-face instruction.

2. What will distance education look like for teachers and students?

Preschool and Primary Level:

Distance education at the preschool and primary levels will be primarily paper-based. Primary and preschool teachers will develop learning activities and assignments for students based on the school curriculum and available student textbooks and workbooks. Parents will pick up these items from the school or from a designated pick up point identified by the school. Parents will return completed assignments and assessment to the school or to the designated drop off point identified by the school. The month of September will be a learning recovery period where assigned work and assessments will be used to determine where students are and to give them work that will help bring them up to the expected level. Schools will be expected to provide regular feedback and guidance to students and parents on students' work.

Secondary Level:

Distance education at the secondary level will be done primarily online. The Ministry of Education will be distributing digital learning devices and electronic textbooks to all secondary school students who do not have access to those resources. The Ministry is also working with Belize Telemedia Ltd. to identify suitable arrangements for secondary school students who are currently without internet connectivity, so that they can have access to their school's online resources.

During the month of September, secondary school teachers will receive training in online teaching and use of digital platforms. They are also expected to develop online lessons, learning activities and assignments for the subjects that they teach. Once schools officially reopen for distance education in October, students will engage in synchronous or asynchronous lessons and access the digital resources prepared for them by their teachers. Teachers are expected to give regular feedback to students on their performance and to offer any additional support needed to students.

3. Are teachers expected to continue going to school?

All teachers are required to go to school unless ill or placed on quarantine by the Ministry of Health as a result of high-risk exposure to a positive COVID-19 case. Permission to work from home based on any exceptional circumstance must be sought from the Chief Education Officer by the school administrator or manager.

4. What should a parent do if they have concerns regarding their school's distance education arrangements?

For distance education to be successful, school administrators, teachers, parents and students will need to work together to resolve issues in a collaborative and compassionate way. Parents are asked to express concerns to their child's teacher, school principal or school manager as soon as an issue arises. Parent-Teacher Associations or Student Councils may also be able to liaise with school administrators on behalf of their fellow parents and students.

Parents may notify the Ministry of Education of any unresolved issues or concerns by sending a text or WhatsApp message to **615-7402** or **615-7597**.

5. What support is available to schools and students to assist them in the new school year?

In addition to the digital learning devices and resources for secondary school students and training for secondary school teachers mentioned above, all government and grant-aided preschools and primary schools will receive a per-student grant to assist with printing of student resources. Additionally, in partnership with BTL, the Ministry will provide 6,000 tertiary level students with \$100 data credit to assist them in accessing online classes.

Schools country-wide have also benefitted from school readiness grants through the kind donation of our local and international partners such as the following:

- The Belize Bank Ltd.-\$200,000 for 4,425 armchairs
- Belize Electricity Limited-\$50,000 for 125 handwashing stations
- Belize Water Service- \$10,000 for 25 handwashing stations
- Belize Social Security Board-\$99,200 for 248 handwashing stations
- UNICEF-1,200 cleaning and sanitization supplies packages

The Ministry has also provided \$150,000 in grants to school managements for the purchase of cleaning and sanitization supplies. These contributions should go a long way in helping to make schools safer for students and teachers when school eventually reopens for face-to-face instruction.