

This press release was written based on the Korean press release distributed on May 4, 2020 at 4 pm. The Korean Ministry of Education announced its decision to postpone the school reopening date by one week (refer to the Korea press release distributed on May 11, 2020 at 5:30 pm).

Summary of Press Release (Distributed on May 11, 2020 at 5:30 pm)

★ MOE postpones the school reopening date in wake of Itaewon cluster infections

- Third graders of high schools will begin schools on May 20, pushed back by one week
- School reopenings for all other grades will be postponed by one week, yet the virus trend will be monitored carefully and MOE will work closely with health authorities

★ MOE strongly insists students/teachers/staff of all schools and/or those with suspected symptoms who visited Itaewon to go to a nearby screening center for a diagnostic test

The Ministry of Education (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Education Yoo Eun-hae) announced its decision to postpone the school reopening for third graders of high schools by one week from May 13 (Wednesday) to May 20 (Wednesday), and the starting date for all other grades will be pushed back by one week accordingly.

MOE's Makes an Announcement on Nationwide School Reopening

-A decision made in collaboration with health authorities and experts, prioritizing the health and safety of all students

-Third graders of high schools will be the first to attend schools on May 13, all schools will reopen in stages from May 20

□ The Ministry of Education (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Education, Yoo Eun-hae) announced its plan to reopen schools nationwide including all kindergartens, elementary, middle, high, special schools and others, in addition to the current school infectious disease prevention and control measures in alignment with the Korean government's decision to transition into “distancing in daily life” policy/campaign.

□ The Ministry of Education has put first the safety and health of all students, and a decision on how and when to reopen schools after a closure was made in close consultations with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and experts.

○ In this process, opinions of teachers (including teacher organizations), parents, and the Metropolitan and Provincial Offices of Education were collected to carefully review ways in which students will safely resume back to schools.

1. Decisions on When and How to Reopen All Schools

□ [When] The Ministry of Education took account of the latest trends in the virus infection, and decided to reopen kindergartens, elementary, middle, and high schools on May 20 (Wednesday), two weeks after Korea transitions into “distancing in daily life” scheme.

- However, considering the urgent academic needs of the third graders of high schools, they will begin schools a week earlier on May 13.

- [How] In order to prevent the spread of coronavirus, preparedness for school infectious disease prevention and control as well as student population were taken into consideration. In this context, upper grades in middle and high schools as well as lower grades in elementary schools (including kindergartens) will begin attending schools first, allowing a week between different grades.

- In particular, issues raised by students in lower grades such as adapting to online classes, bridging the learning gap under the varying level of parental provisions, and parents' burden of childcare were carefully reviewed.

- [Operation] As regional and/or school conditions vary, such as regional virus infection trends and the number of school-aged children population, the Ministry of Education reached a conclusion that the Metropolitan and Provincial Offices of Education and schools will autonomously reorganize the academic calendar, rearranging instructional hours with flexibility and thus minimizing issues with regard to congested schools.

- [Other decisions] Small-size schools have insisted to reopen schools as early as possible, as the need for childcare is comparatively high while schools consist low numbers of students, having the ability to implement “distancing in daily life.”

- Therefore, small-size elementary and middle schools with less than 60 students in total (1,463 schools as of October, 2019), besides schools located in the Metropolitan areas are allowed to reopen schools starting from May 13. Details on when and how to reopen schools will be decided autonomously based on the conditions of each province.

- Special education schools will reopen in alignment with all kindergartens, elementary, middle, and high schools. However, the final decisions will be made autonomously based on a comprehensive review of school and local conditions.

2. Intensifying School Infectious Disease Prevention and Control Efforts

- The Ministry of Education's weekly inspection of school/class infectious disease prevention and control revealed that most schools have completed disinfecting school facilities, rearranged desks, and reserved face masks. All schools will make continuous efforts to comply with the school infectious disease prevention and control measures prior to their reopening.

- Moreover, in line with the eased “distancing in daily life” policy/campaign, the Guidelines on COVID-19 Control and Prevention will be revised in collaboration with health authorities, and will be promptly distributed to all schools.

- The revised guidelines will expect students to receive online education at least one week prior to the school reopening about personal hygiene, virus prevention measures, procedures to follow in case of suspected symptoms, etc.

- More virus-related symptoms will be added to the self-health check list (e.g., nausea, no sense of smell and taste, diarrhea), which are to be thoroughly examined at home before coming to the school.

In case students are at risk for illness from the virus, they will visit health clinics or screening centers for a diagnostic testing.

- If a student's or teacher's family members or people living in the same household are under self-quarantine and/or have had an overseas trip within 14 days, they will be asked to stay home.
- In addition, ventilating classrooms, staggering break times, disinfecting public surfaces and objects such as desks and door knobs will be highly encouraged, and all students and teachers will be required to wear face masks and to check their body temperature occasionally.
- If an individual has a body temperature of over 37.5 Celsius degrees, showing respiratory illnesses such as shortness of breath, and/or displaying suspected symptoms, they will go to health clinics or screening centers for a diagnostic testing for COVID-19.
- If a confirmed case occurs, the school will request all students, teachers, and staff members to go into self-quarantine, transition all classes into online learning, and carry out further measures to identify suspected cases in cooperation with health authorities.
- In order to provide school meals safely, additional provisions will be taken to limit the extent to which student mix with each other, and all school cook and staff in the cafeteria will check their health two times a day.

3. Follow-up Measures on Reopening Schools Safely

- The Ministry of Education will distribute additional guidelines about student attendance, classroom instructions, assessments, and student records prior to the school reopening.
- The guidelines will provide instructions on tracking student attendance, as well as ways to minimize physical contacts and congestion in and out of the classroom, and principles to follow when transitioning regular classes into online classes in case of an emergency.
- Detailed information about student assessment and student records such as how to convene school competitions and/or paper-based assessments will be delineated in the guidelines.
- The Ministry of Education will take comments about the revised guidelines from the Metropolitan and Provincial Offices of Education, and distribute the final guidelines to schools by the end of this week so that educational activities will be carried out in reliable ways once schools reopen.
- The Ministry of Education will also support temporary hiring of school nurses in case of absence. Schools in rural areas having difficulties with finding school nurses will be allowed to hire nursing school graduates or prospective graduates as well as retired school nurses.

4. Pursuing Online Education as a Leap Toward the Future of Education

- All online classes will be offered for two to four weeks prior to the school reopening, yet there has been numerous requests from schools to utilize online classes after schools resume.
- As a result, the Ministry of Education will secure necessary infrastructure for online classes in addition to ensuring the safe operation and resolving systematic issues on copyrights, supporting

various online class content and assisting students of low-income households and special education.

- Furthermore, the Ministry of Education will take a step closer to the future of education by establishing a linked system of schools-communities-universities in line with the high school credit system, and pursue innovation through the use of educational technology in instructions and assessments.

- Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Education Yoo Eun-hae addressed, “I would like to express my deep gratitude to all teachers for their efforts in preparing for the school reopening despite facing numerous obstacles as well as parents for their unwavering support. We are able to reopen schools as a result of the nationwide social distancing practices.”

- And added, “The school reopening does not denote the end of COVID-19, but in order to successfully carry out the difficult decision we made to reopen schools, every individual in the action of and attendance to distancing in daily life and school infectious disease prevention and control are absolutely imperative.”

- She concluded by saying, “The Ministry of Education will not loosen up, and thoroughly prepare the safe operation of all schools in collaboration with the Metropolitan Offices of Education and health authorities.”