

Louis Riel School Division

What will it take to re-open the schools? Learning from the COVID-19 responses of various K-12 systems to inform the planning of school re-openings in the future.

by

Roy Norris, Ed.D.

Itinerant Teacher and Researcher, LRSD.

A report written at the request of and submitted to

Jeff Anderson, Divisional Principal, LRSD

Darcy Cormack, Divisional Principal, LRSD

Date of submission: June 16, 2020.

Louis Riel School Division

Winnipeg, Manitoba

## Table of Contents

<b>Section 1: Context and Purpose of the Report .....</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1 Introduction.....	1
1.2 Background.....	1
1.3 Problem Statement and Statement of Purpose .....	2
1.4 Research Questions.....	3
1.5 Research Parameters: Breadth and Depth.....	3
<b>Section 2: React, Regroup, Re-open.....</b>	<b>3</b>
2.1 React: Education systems and the threat of COVID-19.....	3
2.2 Regroup: Education systems take stock of the situation.....	4
2.3 Re-open: Education systems engage as public health restrictions are lifted.....	6
2.3.1 New Brunswick.....	7
2.3.2 Alberta .....	8
2.3.3 British Columbia.....	9
2.3.4 New Zealand.....	10
2.3.5 Finland .....	12
<b>Section 3: Education Systems and how they plan for better futures.....</b>	<b>14</b>
3.1 All futures can be classed as possible, probable, or preferable.....	14
3.2 UNESCO’s <i>Futures of Education</i> is a new initiative of note .....	15
3.3 NPDL describes some of the most preferred futures .....	16
3.4 The 2019-2023 MYSP describes some of the most preferred futures .....	16
3.5 Final thoughts .....	17
<b>References.....</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>Appendix 1: Responses of Canadian Educational Authorities to the COVID-19 Pandemic</b>	<b>23</b>

**What will it take to re-open the schools? Learning from the COVID-19 responses of various K-12 systems to inform the planning of school re-openings in the future.**

**Section 1: Context and Purpose of this Report**

**1.1 Introduction**

In May of 2020 1.6 billion students from countries across the globe were displaced from school due to COVID-19 (UNESCO). These school closures were necessary, mandated by health authorities, and followed the recommended best practices for limiting the spread of a virus (WHO). While effective for containing COVID-19, school closures are a short-term solution and education systems world-wide are now busy planning for the eventual re-opening of schools. This report explores Canadian and international responses to COVID-19 in the K-12 education systems and some of the school re-opening plans which are beginning to emerge. Furthermore, this report re-examines the importance of the LRSD *Multi-Year Strategic Plan (2019)* (MYSP) as a foundational document for long-term planning, especially during this time of dynamic change. To this end, comparisons are drawn between the MYSP and the long-term planning strategies of the UNESCO Futures of Education initiative (*Futures of Education*).

**1.2 Background**

The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic interrupted education systems locally and globally. On March 13<sup>th</sup>, 2020, the Education Minister of Manitoba announced the suspension of classes, making Friday, March 20<sup>th</sup> the final day that children could attend school. Suspending classes on short notice led to tremendous efforts from the LRSD to find alternative ways for children to learn from home, and a great deal of energy and effort went into short-term plans for educational

continuance and remote learning during the first few weeks and months of the Manitoba suspension of classes (Educational Continuance, 2020).

Everyone assumes that the suspension of classes in Manitoba is temporary. This is because COVID-19 has not yet caused people to consider more alarming and grave scenarios which require school closures that last for years. There is general agreement that children in Manitoba ought to be back in schools as soon as it is safe to return, possibly as early as September 2020 or even late August. If this proves to be accurate, the LRSD has about 12 weeks to prepare for the large-scale re-opening of schools.

While the plans to *close* schools are now widely available (see Appendix 1) Canadian plans for *re-opening* schools are only beginning to be released now, during the second week of June, 2020 (*2020-21 School Re-Entry Plan*)(Return to School: September 2020). How and when to re-open are practical concerns which reflect underlying philosophical and cultural assumptions. Decisions about re-opening are also economic and socio-political concerns. The suspension of classes in March required a strong effort from education systems to react very quickly, but the problem of re-opening is a much slower, more methodical planning task. Planning for the safe and effective re-opening of schools is the task of the present and the near future for the LRSD, a task it shares with thousands of other education systems around the world.

### **1.3 Problem Statement and Statement of Purpose**

Finding a suite of effective strategies and protocols to allow for the safe re-opening of schools is the problem facing the LRSD, one shared with thousands of other education systems world-wide. This is a global problem which will, in each case, require a local response that fits the needs, capacities and cultures of the populations involved. The purpose of this report is to

survey what is currently known about re-opening schools safely even as the pandemic continues, so as to inform the LRSD of strategies and protocols for the eventual re-opening of schools.

#### **1.4 Research Question**

The initial task-stem to begin this report proposed a literature review of current pandemic-related educational plans and protocols from a predominantly Canadian perspective (Personal Communication, Anderson). After some discussion and consultation with Jeff Anderson, the task-stem was further refined into the following three-part research question: *How have education authorities responded to the pandemic, how are they planning for the re-opening of schools, and what might be gained from employing long-term planning processes?*

#### **1.5 Research Parameters: Breadth and Depth**

The research for this report took place between June 5<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup>, 2020. Publicly available online resources were used along with published works from educational researchers of note. The time constraints of the research task and the continually developing nature of pandemic response plans will certainly impact the long-term relevance of this work. Nonetheless, Section 2 of this report provides a survey of educational reactions, regrouping strategies, and re-opening plans that are developing during the current pandemic. Section 3 provides a comparison of the LRSD MYSP to UNESCO's Futures of Education initiative, to show that while the pandemic is a massive and unprecedented short-term interruption, it is unlikely to re-define the carefully crafted longer-term strategic goals of the LRSD.

### **Section 2: React, Regroup, Re-open**

#### **2.1 React: Education systems and the threat of COVID-19**

Canadian Provinces began shuttering education systems in March of 2020 as the threat of COVID-19 grew more alarming. See Appendix 1, *Canadian Educational Authorities and their*

*Responses to the COVID-19 Pandemic* for links to pertinent documents related to Pan-Canadian school closures. Provinces followed the recommendations of their provincial health authorities, closed, cancelled, and/or suspended in-school learning, and convened various committees to create system level response plans. Current information as of June 12 indicates that schools will remain completely closed until at least September in Alberta, Saskatchewan, Ontario, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia, Newfoundland & Labrador, Yukon, Northwest Territories and Nunavut (*Tracking Canada's education*). On May 11, some elementary schools in Quebec partially re-opened, and on June 1<sup>st</sup> some schools partially re-opened for specialized programming with limited numbers of students in British Columbia, and Manitoba (*Tracking Canada's education*).

The reactions to the threat of COVID-19 were swift and decisive. Closing schools was necessary to limit the spread of a new virus about which so little was known; how long to keep schools closed became the question to answer. Following the school closures, a time of regrouping began in Manitoba and elsewhere in Canada. It is during this current time of regrouping that decisions are being made about the duration of school closures, and plans are being developed for the eventual safe re-opening of schools.

## **2.2 Regroup: Education systems take stock of the situation**

Once the children were sent home and the school doors were locked, everyone in the education sector had to consider how to proceed. Planning for on-line learning, remote learning, educational continuance and learning at home (Educational Continuance) became the initial focus, along with the distribution of computers, internet, and food to families in need (A collaborative move) (Food hamper deliveries in LRSD).

Teachers worked diligently to establish or enhance their ability to teach on-line. Administrators and school system leaders enhanced their communications with one another, formed committees, and began the dual process of managing the school closures while also planning for a variety of return to school scenarios. This re-grouping time describes the present moment in Manitoba, in June of 2020.

An important part of the re-grouping time is to watch how other education systems re-open schools. In many parts of the world, including New Zealand, Norway, Sweden, Austria and Belgium, children have already returned to school (Pleasance, May 18, 2020). Learning from their experiences could help to smooth re-opening processes for the LRSD when the time comes.

Education think-tanks are leading the charge with published work for framing large scale re-opening plans. *Education Elements* (Our Philosophy) is an American education consultancy group which has published a clear and helpful guide for systems leaders planning large scale re-openings (Reingold, Goetchius & Hewitt, 2020). *Forging a Path Forward* balances the practicalities of returning to school with the addition of scenario planning, drawn from the fields of education, management, and futures studies. *Forging a Path Forward* may be of particular value for framing the processes and considerations systems leaders should undertake as they go about making relevant local plans for re-opening.

Fullan, Quinn, Drummy, & Gardner (2020) have published an excellent position paper with the New Pedagogies for Deep Learning (NPDL) consultancy group. NPDL is a highly credible, international consultancy with Canadian ties and connections to the Microsoft Corporation as well. In *Education Reimagined: The Future of Learning* (2020) they outline the strategy of re-framing post-pandemic education systems in three phases. 1, Disruption, 2, Transition, and 3, Reimagining. The 3<sup>rd</sup> phase, Reimagining, moves far beyond the logistics and

practicalities of reopening to consider the kinds of hybrid learning models that may benefit students most and need to emerge from post-pandemic education systems. Not surprisingly, the paper is consistent with previous work by the NPD, and aligns well with Fullan's (2012) *Stratosphere*, wherein he calls for a realization that education technology and the internet are integral to the deep learning that he and others (Mehta & Fine, 2019) see as the best way forward for education systems. This paper is highly recommended, and all leaders in the LRSD ought to read it.

This time of regrouping provides opportunities to watch the progress of other education systems, to read the re-opening plans of others, and to analyze the advice of reputable think-tanks and researchers. Some re-opening plans are currently available online, and a few examples are considered in the next section.

### **2.3 Re-open: Education systems engage as public health restrictions are lifted**

The science that would back decisions about when to re-open schools is still in the early stages of development; transmission rates of COVID-19 between children are not currently known (Vogel & Couzin-Frankel, May 4, 2020). It is thought that children are less efficient at transmitting the virus than are adults, and these early results have been interpreted as evidence that re-opening schools early is safe enough.

But even if children are less efficient transmitters of the virus, they may still infect as many people as adults because children have a wider web of human contacts than most adults, especially when they are in schools housing hundreds of people at a time. Studies are being commissioned to learn more about the transmission of COVID-19 among children, but decisions about returning to school will likely have to occur without a clear epidemiological understanding

of how transmissible and virulent COVID-19 may be within populations of children (Vogel & Couzin-Frankel, May 4, 2020).

For over 100 years the Canadian school year has started in September, and this tradition is difficult to overcome. This tradition is possibly why the re-opening plans that are currently available in Canada assume a re-opening date sometime in September of 2020. Those planning for re-opening may have to overcome the societal pressure of traditional opening dates, depending on the COVID-19 science that is published over the next 12 weeks. Even so, plans are in place for September openings; three Canadian examples follow.

### **2.3.1 New Brunswick**

On June 12, the Province of New Brunswick released their plan for a return to school beginning in September of 2020 (Plan Released). As much as anything, the plan serves to state the goal of a return to school, with several caveats attached that address the ongoing pandemic and the need for continual re-assessment of plans as new data emerges about COVID-19 in the New Brunswick context.

The plan generally calls for reduced group sizes in all K-8 classes, and specifically for no more than 15 per group in K-2. From K-8 there are no stated restrictions on interactions within a group, which implies that there will be no imposed physical distancing requirements for K-8 students. Physical distancing requirements of 1m are mentioned explicitly for grades 9-12 students only. However, all school spaces will be reconfigured from K-12 to allow for more physical distancing.

9-12 students will be involved in blended learning environments, and "...Time spent physically in class may vary amongst grades and schools" (Return to School). The notion that high school students will physically attend a school building every second day is mentioned,

suggesting that significant adjustments to student schedules will be necessary. Also, students are expected to continue on-line learning from home on the days away from school. More specifically, the plan requires teachers to continue with direct teaching online even as they also return to work with groups in classrooms. The practicality of this plan will have to be weighed in practice; it may not be possible for teachers to effectively teach at school and online simultaneously to alternating groups of students.

Each school district is responsible for developing an operational plan including relevant procedures and protocols that bring schools into compliance with provincial health care directives. Overall, the New Brunswick plan is a written commitment to try and start everyone back to school in September, while admitting that there will have to be massive operational changes in order to make it work.

### **2.3.2 Alberta**

Finding references to re-opening in September of 2021 in the planning from Alberta Education is more challenging, but “September” is explicitly mentioned in the summary description of the 2020-21 school re-entry plan, stating: “This re-entry plan for Early Childhood Services to Grade 12 (ECS-12) is part of the Alberta government's relaunch strategy that was announced on April 30, 2020. It considers three scenarios that could exist when the 2020-2021 school year begins in September.” (2020-21 school re-entry plan, June 10, 2020).

The plan itself also mentions September 2020; it is a concise 23 page document which relies heavily on scenarios methodology to anticipate three possible futures, outlining the necessary steps that Albertans would have to take for schools to re-open effectively in each of the three scenarios (*2020-21 School Re-Entry Plan*). Thoughtful and detailed, the document discourses on a variety of pertinent educational questions and concerns which are filtered

through each of the three scenarios in order to create three options for moving forward with re-opening.

Scenario 1 envisions a near-normal return to school, with additional health measures.

Scenario 2 envisions a partial return to school, additional health measures, and making Provincial Achievement Tests (PATs) in grades 6-9 optional instead of mandatory. PATs would also be limited to English Language Arts, French Language Arts and Mathematics for students in grades 6-9. The Grade 3 Student Learning Assessments (SLAs) also become optional in scenario 2, which further indicates a general relaxing of large-scale testing and the narrowing of curricula to the essentials of literacy and numeracy.

Scenario 3 envisions that classes are cancelled and/or suspended as September begins, and that remote learning continues. Having the foresight to consider a scenario where the return to classes in September is not possible or safe shows that future methodologies and long-term planning are an integral part of education planning in Alberta. While scenario 3 is not the most preferable future, it is quite possible, and therefore planning time has been given to the possibility that remote learning will continue, and that schools will have to remain closed.

Alberta has indicated that the public will know the re-opening date for schools by August 1<sup>st</sup>, but it can be assumed that the date will be in September, based upon their scenario planning. The Alberta plan is well crafted, well considered, and could serve as a model for other educational systems wanting to draft plans for re-opening.

### **2.3.3 British Columbia**

British Columbia's re-opening plan makes no explicit reference to September of 2020, but instead describes five stages of reopening, with "Stage 3" beginning on June 1, 2020 (*K-12 Education Restart Plan*). The school density targets for Stage 3 are to have 50% of K-5 students

attending and 20% of grade 6-12 students attending. In other words, the government's goal is to have several thousand children from across the province in schools from now until the beginning of the summer break in July. The five stages of BC's approach are not tied to the calendar, but the weight of a traditional September start may mean that it is reasonable to assume a "Stage 2" re-opening in BC come September.

The plan outlines what caregivers and students can expect during stage 3, but provides scant details about what school might look like in stages 2 or 1. This plan does a decent job of addressing the educational situation for the remainder of the 2019-20 school year, without addressing the times to come. To this end, it is an operational document for the present more than a plan for any possible future. At best, the people of BC can hope that September and beyond will see them realize stages 2 and 1 as the threat of COVID-19 recedes into the past.

These three Canadian re-opening plans vary greatly in scope and detail, but they all call for adjustments to class time, limits on numbers of people in groups, and a narrowing of curricula. These measures are similar to those already taken by other nations which have re-opened schools at scale. Two examples of national re-opening experiences follow, highlighting the experiences of New Zealand and Finland.

#### **2.3.4 New Zealand**

New Zealand's experience with COVID-19 and its location in the southern hemisphere make its story more interesting to tell. New Zealand is an isolated island nation with a population of approximately 5 million people. There have been 22 deaths from COVID-19 in total, and the last reported death from the virus was on May 28 (New Zealand: Coronavirus Pandemic) Given that no new deaths have been reported in 18 days (at the time of writing) the country appears to

have passed the initial wave of COVID-19 infections. Consequently, many health-related restrictions have been lifted in New Zealand.

The large-scale re-opening of schools in New Zealand occurred on May 18, (Gerritsen) after the daily number of new deaths from COVID-19 had all but stopped (New Zealand: Coronavirus Pandemic). Initially some schools reported low attendance, but about 80% of students were reported to attending school, which is a total of over 209,000 students K-12 (Gerritsen).

The pandemic response in New Zealand is measured in “Alert Levels”, and the country (and the schools) are at “Level 1”, which is the lowest level (Alert Level 1). This form of leveling the threat is similar to British Columbia’s educational response in “Stages”, wherein “Stage 1” is the lowest level of threat.

The description of Level 1 includes a set of “Golden Rules for everyone” that are a guide for daily life in homes, businesses, and in schools as well:

1. If you’re sick, stay home. Don’t go to work or school. Don’t socialise.
2. If you have cold or flu symptoms call your doctor or Healthline and make sure you get tested.
3. Wash your hands. Wash your hands. Wash your hands.
4. Sneeze and cough into your elbow, and regularly disinfect shared surfaces.
5. If you are told by health authorities to self-isolate, you must do so immediately.
6. If you’re concerned about your wellbeing or have underlying health conditions, work with your GP to understand how best to stay healthy.
7. Keep track of where you’ve been and who you’ve seen to help contact tracing if needed. Use the NZ COVID Tracer app as a handy way of doing this.
8. Businesses should help people keep track of their movements by displaying the Ministry of Health QR Code for contact tracing.
9. Stay vigilant. There is still a global pandemic going on. People and businesses should be prepared to act fast to step up Alert Levels if we have to.
10. People will have had different experiences over the last couple of months. Whatever you’re feeling — it’s okay. Be kind to others. Be kind to yourself. (Alert Level 1)

Employing simple lists to a set of alert levels that segment the threat continuum is an elegant and practical solution to help people understand that the protocols required today are clear, and that they may change tomorrow, depending upon the level of threat.

Finally, the return to school of tens of thousands of students has not resulted in a significant number of new cases of COVID-19, and no new deaths have been reported since May 28. Children have been back in school for almost a month, and since they are in the southern hemisphere, they will not begin their summer break until December 18, 2020 (New Zealand School and Public Holidays). For New Zealand, COVID-19 interrupted terms 1 and 2 of a 4 term school year, so the pressure to return as quickly as possible was likely different from northern hemisphere systems which will be able to buy time for planning since the summer break is in July and August.

Learning more about the day-to-day routines of the teachers and students of New Zealand could provide very rich insight for the development of class-level procedures and protocols for teaching in a pandemic.

### **2.3.5 Finland**

Finland has experienced many more deaths from COVID-19 than New Zealand, even though the two countries are similar in population size. Finland's population is approximately 5.5 million, and as of June 15, deaths from COVID-19 stand at 326 (Finland: What is the daily number of confirmed deaths?). While the reporting of new deaths is slowing, COVID-19 has taken a much greater toll on Finland than it has on New Zealand.

Given the much more significant size of the COVID-19 outbreak in Finland, it would have been understandable to keep schools closed for longer, but they did not. In fact, all students were required to return to school on May 14, in order to finish up two weeks of school prior to

their summer break which began on June 1<sup>st</sup> (Kouros, A, May 6, 2020). This seemingly top-down decision to re-open with only two weeks left in the school year was not well received by families, and was deeply and articulately criticized by the local press as risky and unnecessary (Kouros, A, May 6, 2020).

National school attendance figures for the final two weeks of May are not readily available, so it is difficult to know how many families opted to keep their children home versus sending them to school. The total student count of Finland's K-12 population is approximately 560,000 students, (Kouros, A, May 6, 2020) so even if there was a 50 % absenteeism rate then about 280,000 students would have attended classes in that two week period when the potential for COVID-19 infection was still high.

Under pressure domestically and internationally, Finland's Education Minister and the Director for Health Security of The Finnish Institute of Health and Welfare addressed the media. They justified the decision to re-open schools for two weeks, stating that long durations of remote learning had negative effects on children, that children did not easily transmit COVID-19, and that cases of children transmitting the virus to adults were all but unheard of (Kauranen, April 29, 2020). Finland's international prestige as a beacon of educational theory and practice was under scrutiny. So often praised for their forward-thinking education system and their ability to engage students and teachers in the joy of learning, Finnish education was now seen as autocratic and ill-advised, perhaps even endangering the lives of students in order to gain two more weeks of instruction.

The Finnish school year came to a close, and yet the country has continued to "flatten the curve" having no significant increase in the rate of infections or deaths during the final two weeks of May, even when children were attending school (Finland: What is the daily number of

confirmed deaths?). It is not possible to generalize the Finnish experience and assume that the same fortunate outcomes would occur in other countries with similar infection rates, but the fact that COVID-19 did not get significantly worse when schools re-opened is something to study further and to note as reopening plans are drawn up that will impact the lives of thousands of children and their families.

### **Section 3: Education Systems and how they plan for better futures**

The research question guiding this report is *How have education authorities responded to the pandemic, how are they planning for the re-opening of schools, and what might be gained from employing long-term planning processes?* Sections 1 and 2 of this report address the first two parts of the question, and Section 3 pivots to consider futures thinking and long-term planning as critical to the process of re-opening schools.

Nobody alive has previously experienced a global pandemic of this scale, and nobody in history had the science and technology which are now available to combat COVID-19. This is a unique time of dynamic change that does not allow for status quo operations and decision making, not even from deeply rooted cultural institutions such as education systems, which usually only have to change slowly. Effective response in a time of dynamic change requires a re-examination of the ways that people plan ahead for the times which are yet to come; for educators, it means more deeply considering the possible, probable, and most preferable futures for their students and families.

#### **3.1 All futures can be classed as possible, probable, or preferable**

Times of dynamic change require reactions in the moment which come at the expense of efforts toward achieving preferable long-term goals. Put another way, the urgent takes priority over the eventual. Continually attending to the urgent at the expense of the eventual is a

poisonous downward spiral; the antidote is found in rigorous long-term planning and goal setting. Futures studies is an academic field that has powerful practical applications for long-term planning; it is a multi-disciplinary field of inquiry that draws upon a wide variety of research to consider possible, probable, and preferable futures (Norris, 2017, p. 23).

Futures studies divides versions of possible futures into three types; futures that are possible, or probable, or preferable. Imagined futures which fit all three types are the most satisfying, and generally these futures become the end-goals of long-term plans. For example, it may be possible, probable, and preferable for a child to graduate from high-school, but it will take years of work and support to bring about that possible, probable, and preferable end-goal.

### **3.2 UNESCO's *Futures of Education* is a new initiative of note**

Since the 1990's the OECD and UNESCO have been applying futures thinking to improve education for sustainable development (ESD) in education systems globally (Norris, 2017, p.1 & p.27). UNESCO's *Futures of Education* (2019) is a new initiative which aims to "...reconsider how knowledge and learning can contribute to the common good of humanity." (UNESCO launches). This new work aligns with the UN's possible and preferable end-goals related to education for sustainable development (ESD) called the Global Goals (2020) of the United Nations Development Programme (Background on the goals). The mandate of UNESCO's *Futures of Education* is much broader than ESD alone, so it is likely that it will explore many systems-level issues regarding the future place and purpose of education systems globally. Tracking the developments and publications arising from *Futures of Education* is recommended.

### **3.3 NPDL describes some of the most preferred futures**

Though already mentioned in this report, NPDL's position paper entitled *Education Reimagined: The Future of Learning* (Fullan, Quinn, Drummy, & Gardner, 2020) is a clear example of futures thinking in action. The position paper describes preferable futures (pages 6-10), and then proposes detailed plans for the short and mid-term (pages 23-27) that will enhance the probability of the most preferable futures being realized. The paper also includes relevant anecdotes and very brief case studies that illustrate how NDPL's position on the future of learning works in real schools, with real children and teachers. The hybrid model of learning and teaching proposed is constructivist and posits that learning is enhanced by the relevant use of ICT. Considering that COVID-19 made traditional schooling impossible, an examination of hybrid models of learning that remain flexible and workable during school closures is likely time well spent.

### **3.4 The 2019-2023 MYSP describes some of the most preferred futures**

The LRSD published a thorough *Multi-Year Strategic Plan* (MYSP) in 2019, which clearly states many of the preferred futures for LRSD students, teachers, and community members in the form of strategic goals. The benefit of having such a publication is that no matter what happens in the short-term, the long-term goals are clearly stated and can remain in the forefront when plans are being made.

Those who drafted the MYSP could not have foreseen a global pandemic closing LRSD schools within months of the publication of the MYSP. However, having this plan in place now is essential for guiding the LRSD through this period of dynamic change. Re-opening schools is expected by all; the ways that schools open, the timing, and the tone of education when they re-open should align with the MYSP.

### 3.5 Final thoughts

The lasting effects of the COVID-19 pandemic will likely be measurable within education systems for years to come. At no other time in history have 1.6 billion children simultaneously experienced an interruption in their formal schooling. For many, the lingering effects of their unexpected time away from school will be minimal, while for others the school closures of 2020 may have a cascading effect on their overall education for years.

Fortunately for the LRSD, the MYSP provides a path for picking up the pieces and helping children to recover from their experiences of interrupted schooling. Strategic Goal 2.1 is clear: “All learners will demonstrate evidence of improved achievement, engagement, and well-becoming as critical-thinkers, problem-solvers and communicators.” (MYSP, p. 15).

Achievement, engagement, and well-becoming are important end-goals that are wound up and tightly bound to a host of preferable futures that teachers and parents together imagine for children.

Re-opening schools in the near future is necessary because it seems to be the best way to get to our best shared futures. It is not possible to return to a world free of COVID-19, and the spectre of other global-scale disruptions will also continue. Looking ahead with hope is a matter of realism; yes, there will be problems and setbacks, but hopeful people set goals and work hard to see them accomplished.

## References

- 2020-21 School Re-Entry Plan. (June 10, 2020). Alberta Government. Retrieved from <https://www.alberta.ca/k-to-12-school-re-entry-2020-21-school-year.aspx>
- 2020-21 school re-entry plan. Description. (June 10, 2020). Publications, Alberta Government. Retrieved from <https://open.alberta.ca/publications/2020-21-school-re-entry-plan>
- A collaborative move to an online world. (June 1, 2020). *LRSD News*. Retrieved from <https://www.lrsd.net/news/pages/a-collaborative-move-to-an-online-world.aspx>
- Alert Level 1. (2020). *Unite for the recovery: Kia kotahi mo te whaioranga*. New Zealand Government. Retrieved from <https://uniteforrecovery.govt.nz/covid-19/covid-19-alert-system/alert-level-1/>
- Background on the goals. (2020). United Nations Development Programme. Retrieved from [https://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/sustainable-development-goals/background.html#:~:text=The%20Sustainable%20Development%20Goals%20\(SDGs,economic%20challenges%20facing%20our%20world.](https://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/sustainable-development-goals/background.html#:~:text=The%20Sustainable%20Development%20Goals%20(SDGs,economic%20challenges%20facing%20our%20world.)
- Educational Continuance. (2020). *Teaching and Learning*. LRSD Portal. Retrieved from <https://portal.lrsd.net/departments/teachinglearning/EC/Pages/default.aspx>
- Finland: What is the daily number of confirmed deaths? (June 15, 2020). *Our World in Data*. Retrieved from <https://ourworldindata.org/coronavirus/country/finland?country=~FIN>
- Food hamper deliveries in LRSD are helping those in need. (April 23, 2020). *LRSD News*. Retrieved from <https://www.lrsd.net/News/Pages/Food-hamper-delivery-for-LRSD-families-in-need.aspx>
- Fullan. M. (2012). *Stratosphere: Integrating technology, pedagogy and change knowledge*. Toronto: Pearson Canada.

Fullan, M., Quinn, J., Drummy, M., Gardner, M. (2020), Education Reimagined: The Future of Learning. A collaborative position paper between New Pedagogies for Deep Learning and Microsoft Education. <http://aka.ms/HybridLearningPaper>

*Futures of Education*. (2019). The Initiative. UNESCO. Retrieved from <https://en.unesco.org/futuresofeducation/initiative>

Gerritsen, J. (May 18, 2020). Back to school after lockdown: 80 percent of children return to classes with hygiene rules. *Radio New Zealand*. Retrieved from <https://www.rnz.co.nz/news/national/416934/back-to-school-after-lockdown-80-percent-of-children-return-to-classes-with-hygiene-rules>

Global Goals. (2020). United Nations Development Programme. Retrieved from <https://www.globalgoals.org/>

*K-12 Education Restart Plan*. (no date). Ministry of Education, British Columbia. Retrieved from <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/education/administration/kindergarten-to-grade-12/safe-caring-orderly/k-12-education-restart-plan.pdf>

Kauranen, A. (April 29, 2020). Finland to reopen schools and daycares gradually starting May 14. Reuters. Retrieved from <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-finland-schools/finland-to-reopen-schools-and-daycares-gradually-starting-may-14-idUSKBN22B2RG>

Kouros, A. (May 6, 2020). Sending Finnish children back to school for two weeks is irresponsible, useless and wrongly motivated. *Helsinki Times*. Retrieved from <https://www.helsinkitimes.fi/columns/columns/viewpoint/17632-sending-finnish-children-back-to-school-for-two-weeks-is-irresponsible-useless-and-wrongly-motivated.html>

Mehta, J. & Fine, S. (2019). *In Search of Deeper Learning: The Quest to Remake the American High School*. Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press.

*Multi-Year Strategic Plan 2019-2023*. (2019). LRSD. Retrieved from

[https://www.lrsd.net/Repository/SiteGovernImages/LRSD/News/multi\\_year\\_strategic\\_plan\\_2019\\_d3c8ed8d\\_1b4d\\_4718\\_be6e\\_0cee370de14e\\_cmp/LRSD-MYSP\\_v.2.2\\_web\\_links.pdf](https://www.lrsd.net/Repository/SiteGovernImages/LRSD/News/multi_year_strategic_plan_2019_d3c8ed8d_1b4d_4718_be6e_0cee370de14e_cmp/LRSD-MYSP_v.2.2_web_links.pdf)

New Zealand: Coronavirus Pandemic. (2020) Our World in Data. Retrieved from

<https://ourworldindata.org/coronavirus/country/new-zealand?country=~NZL>

New Zealand School and Public Holidays. (2020). *Auckland for kids*. Retrieved from

<https://www.aucklandforkids.co.nz/new-zealand-school-and-public-holiday-dates/>

Norris, R. (2017). *Promising Futures: An Integral Exploration of the Futures Thinking of High School Teachers in a Technology-Rich Learning Environment*. Doctoral thesis.

University of Calgary, Calgary, AB. Retrieved from

<https://prism.ucalgary.ca/handle/11023/3723>

Our Philosophy. (no date). *Education Elements*. Retrieved from

<https://www.edelements.com/our-philosophy>

Personal Communication, Anderson, J. (email, 11:00 a.m. June 4, 2020).

Plan released for return to schools in September 2020. (June 12, 2020). *Education and Early Childhood Development*. Province of New Brunswick. Retrieved from

[https://www2.gnb.ca/content/gnb/en/departments/education/news/news\\_release.2020.06.0344.html](https://www2.gnb.ca/content/gnb/en/departments/education/news/news_release.2020.06.0344.html)

Pleasance, C. (18 May 2020). Children return to school in New Zealand with parents dropping them off in 'kiss and go' zones as classes begin to reopen around the world. *Daily Mail*.

Retrieved from <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-8329905/Kiss-Back-school-New-Zealand-kids.html>

Reingold, S., Goetchius, A., & Hewitt, G. (2020). *Forging a path forward: How to design a responsive return plan*. Education Elements. Retrieved from <https://www.edelements.com/how-to-design-a-responsive-return-plan-for-schools?hsCtaTracking=0cc604b3-8f82-40a8-9400-90b829e7f0c6%7C9159c1e2-74b3-42a3-b561-ba4fe7fefb28>

Return to School: September 2020. (June 12, 2020). *Education and Early Childhood Development*. Province of New Brunswick. Retrieved from <https://www2.gnb.ca/content/dam/gnb/Departments/ed/pdf/ReturnSchoolExecutiveSummary.pdf>

*Tracking Canada's education systems' response to COVID-19*. (2020). People for Education. Retrieved from <https://peopleforeducation.ca/our-work/tracking-canadas-education-systems-response-to-covid-19/>

UNESCO. (2020). Global monitoring of school closures caused by COVID-19. Retrieved from <https://en.unesco.org/covid19/educationresponse>

UNESCO launches Futures of Education global initiative at United Nations General Assembly. (September 25, 2019). UNESCO. Retrieved from <https://en.unesco.org/futuresofeducation/sites/default/files/2019-12/Futures%20of%20Education%20-%20Press%20release%20-%20Launch%20-%20ENG.pdf>

Vogel, G. & Couzin-Frankel, J. (May 4, 2020). Should schools reopen? Kids' role in pandemic

still a mystery. *Science*. Retrieved from

<https://www.sciencemag.org/news/2020/05/should-schools-reopen-kids-role-pandemic-still-mystery>

WHO. (2020). Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) advice for the public. Retrieved from

<https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/advice-for-public>

**Appendix 1: Responses of Canadian Educational Authorities to the COVID-19 Pandemic.**

A summary of annotated resources prepared for the LRSD by R. Norris, Ed.D,  
June 5, 2020. Revised June 16, 2020.

**A CANADIAN NATIONAL TRACKING CHART OF NOTE:**

Tracking Canada's education systems' response to COVID-19 | People for Education

<https://peopleforeducation.ca/our-work/tracking-canadas-education-systems-response-to-covid-19/>

**BRITISH COLUMBIA**

BC's Restart Plan - Province of British Columbia

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/safety/emergency-preparedness-response-recovery/covid-19-provincial-support/bc-restart-plan#schools>

**ALBERTA**

Student learning during COVID-19 | Alberta.ca

<https://www.alberta.ca/student-learning-during-covid-19.aspx>

ATA - COVID-19 FAQs

<https://www.teachers.ab.ca/News%20Room/Issues/COVID-19/Pages/COVID-19-FAQs.aspx>

**SASKATCHEWAN**

Covid-19 Information & Response | Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation

<https://www.stf.sk.ca/about-stf/news/covid-19-information-response>

**MANITOBA**

Latest COVID-19 Education News | Manitoba Education

<https://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/covid/index.html>

**ONTARIO**

Ontario Minister's Letters to Parents - Ottawa-Carleton District School Board

<https://www.ocdsb.ca/cms/One.aspx?portalId=55478&pageId=32210875>

**QUEBEC**

Questions and answers on education and families during the COVID-19 pandemic | Gouvernement du Québec

<https://www.quebec.ca/en/health/health-issues/a-z/2019-coronavirus/answers-questions-coronavirus-covid19/questions-answers-education-families-covid-19/#c52684>

**NEW BRUNSWICK**

New Brunswick Education and Early Childhood Development

<https://www2.gnb.ca/content/gnb/en/departments/education.html>

## NOVA SCOTIA

COVID-19: education and childcare - Government of Nova Scotia, Canada

<https://novascotia.ca/coronavirus/education/>

Nova Scotia Teacher's Union: Coronavirus

<https://nstu.ca/coronavirus>

## PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND

[https://edu.princeedwardisland.ca/psb/parents\\_students/covid-19-resources/](https://edu.princeedwardisland.ca/psb/parents_students/covid-19-resources/)

## NEWFOUNDLAND & LABRADOR

Newfoundland & Labrador (NLESD) - Students and Families - Covid-19

<https://www.nlesd.ca/families/covid19.jsp>

## NUNAVUT

COVID-19 Department of Education Services update | Government of Nunavut

<https://www.gov.nu.ca/education/news/covid-19-department-education-services-update>

## NORTH WEST TERRITORIES

Child Care, School and Learning | GNWT's Response to COVID-19

<https://www.gov.nt.ca/covid-19/en/services/child-care-school-and-learning>

## YUKON

Summary of Yukon's plan for lifting COVID-19 restrictions | Government of Yukon

<https://yukon.ca/en/health-and-wellness/covid-19/where-were-lifting-covid-19-restrictions>

## NORTH DAKOTA (ADJACENT TO MANITOBA)

COVID-19 School Guidance | North Dakota Department of Public Instruction

<https://www.nd.gov/dpi/covid-19-school-guidance>

## UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL, SCIENTIFIC & CULTURAL ORGANIZATION (UNESCO)

<https://en.unesco.org/covid19/educationresponse/support>