



2020-21

Legislative International Education Study Group

NCSL: Singapore's Approach to Distance Learning, September 2020

Timeline

Schools closed on April 8. Distance learning began immediately and continued until summer break, which was [moved up](#) to May 5 through June 1 in response to the coronavirus pandemic. Some schools remained [open](#) for a small number of students needing access to technology or teacher support, and schools conducted outreach to families to address students' learning needs, respond to requests, or based on input from social workers.

Schools [partially](#) reopened on June 2 (i.e., alternating in-person attendance with distance learning, depending on grade level) and reopened [fully](#) on June 29, with all levels of students returning to school. Physical Education and Co-Curricular Activities resumed, with safety precautions in place. [Distance learning](#) will remain part of regular curriculum, even after the pandemic, with schools allotting several days a month for online learning.

Guidance provided to schools and teachers:

Singapore had [developed](#) an emergency distance learning system in response to prior public health threats, including Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) in 2005. As part of Singapore's preparation, teachers receive training in how to organize and facilitate distance learning using the tools and resources developed, and teachers and students [practice](#) distance learning annually. The Ministry of Education provided schools with a guide to distance learning and sample plans but gave schools and teachers [flexibility](#) to design instruction, including details like content sequencing, pacing, and pedagogical approaches. Guidelines [state](#) that each full day of distance learning should be about four to six hours, with up to two hours spent on devices.

Resources provided to schools, teachers, and families:

The Ministry's Student Learning Space ([SLS](#)) is a key resource for distance learning. The SLS [provides](#) a library of curriculum-aligned, Ministry-curated resources (e.g., lesson plans, videos, assessments, etc.) for all grade levels and subjects, largely created by teams of teachers seconded to the Ministry full-time to do this. The resources and the SLS system are continually updated based on feedback from teachers and students.

The Ministry [released](#) a [Parent Kit](#) to support families organizing distance learning at home during the pandemic. The kit explains that distance learning approaches vary by school and can include: e-learning (e.g., online assignments through the SLS or other online learning platform); e-mail messages (e.g., notes or worksheets sent through e-mail); and/or hard copy assignments.

Impact on Assessments

The Primary School Leaving Examination is scheduled for fall, 2020. The General Certificate of Education exams, which are required for entry into postsecondary institutions, were postponed but are still scheduled to take place in fall, 2020. Content that was not taught because of school closures will be removed from both exams.