

BACK TO SCHOOL AFTER COVID-19



HOW TO ENSURE THE WELLBEING OF CHILDREN?

A guide for teachers



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INTRODUCTION

In 2020, the COVID-19 became a threat to the health of many citizens in countries around the world. To prevent the virus from spreading, Vietnamese schools were closed in February.

After prevention, mitigation and response measures, now the recovery phase starts.

MOET is providing schools with guidelines on curriculum coverage and establishing hygienic and safe conditions at schools.

To complement the guidance to the schools, this guide looks at the social and emotional aspects of going back to school. The guide supports preschool leaders and teachers to use child observation and support children's wellbeing as they return to preschool.

WHY

Being out of school, children have missed out on basic needs such as interacting with friends, learning through play, safety and security, daily care, healthy school meals, ...

Social distancing, increased isolation and a reduced family income may have affected daily routines and created malnutrition, stress, even violence.

During the period of school closure and social distancing, children living in difficult socio-economic conditions may have experienced more challenges compared to other children. Girls and boys may have been affected differently due to existing gender bias.

This affects children's wellbeing overall and likely will affect their involvement when going back to school. They may not be ready to involve actively in learning and reach the developmental outcomes expected by the end of the school year.

ROLE OF THE TEACHER

As a teacher, you play an essential role to support children in the transition. With your knowledge about wellbeing and involvement, you are well prepared to take up this role.

Re-opening the school can put pressure on your wellbeing as you want to balance all the tasks waiting for you and the wellbeing of the children. Dealing with challenges becomes easier when you apply a structured approach such as the POM and do it together with other colleagues. Together you can find solutions for challenges you experience.

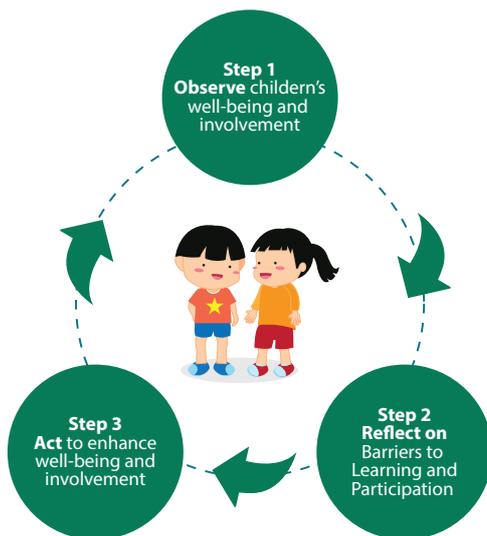
Your school leader and BOET are there to support you!

HOW?

You can apply the 3 steps of process-oriented child observation to ensure children's wellbeing and involvement.

This will help your children adjust again to the school life, settle in and reconnect with the teacher and friends, so that you and your children are ready together to reach high involvement in your activities again.

3 KEY STEPS OF CHILD MONITORING



Step 1: Observing children's wellbeing

1.1. First, you make **all children feel comfortable**.

- ❖ Offer safety and security to each child.
- ❖ Re-establish daily school routines.
- ❖ Create moments for free play: on the playground, during corner play, through free drawing and artwork activities.
- ❖ Help children reconnect with each other in a non-stressful environment.
- ❖ Start from the interests of the children, including their experiences during school closure.

1.2. During these moments of free play, you can **observe** children's behaviours and score each child's **wellbeing** level.

This will help you understand whether the children are still doing well or whether some of the children may have been more impacted by the COVID-19 mitigation measures. You will know where to focus and who to give some extra support.

Step 2: Reflect on children's barriers

If you notice that wellbeing levels among some of the children are lower than usual, you can reflect on the barriers these children are experiencing.



2.1. To better understand each child's barriers in relation to wellbeing, you can reflect about the **home** experiences of the child through these questions:

- ◆ Did the child experience basic security, love and care?
- ◆ Has the child been eating balanced meals to provide energy for the day?
- ◆ Did the child have sufficient opportunities to play around the house, to connect with other children and to feel challenged?
- ◆ Did the parents notice mood changes within the child since the school closure?

2.2. **In the class**, you can also think about the following questions:

- ◆ How is the child feeling towards me?
- ◆ How am I feeling towards the child?
- ◆ How is the child feeling towards classmates?
- ◆ How are they feeling towards the child?
- ◆ How does the child generally feel during play activities in the class environment, in the school environment?

Based on these reflective questions, you then make a list of the key reasons why some children's wellbeing could be low.



Step 3: Act to ensure the wellbeing of children

Integrate specific **action points** to support children's wellbeing in your activities and interactions with the children. Especially Action point 7 and 8 will be helpful.

Action point 7 – Create a positive group climate by developing good relations between you and each of the children and between the children.

- Interact with children in a friendly way and with respect. Listen actively to children, both girls and boys, as they share about their experiences over the past weeks.
- Stimulate communication between children, enjoyment of working and playing together, acceptance of diversity, patience with one another.
- Create opportunities at the group level to enjoy togetherness by making use of all gatherings (breaks, meals, circle time) and by celebrating events. This helps making children feel safe and secure again after the disruptions.
- Play and work with children in small groups and interact individually with children. They will feel safer.
- Participate in children's activities and use this as an opportunity to interact and to offer relevant and meaningful language

Action point 8 – Offer activities which help the children explore the world of behaviour, feelings and values

- Support children, both girls and boys, to recognize and distinguish emotions, to express their feelings, to reflect on relations and to get aware of how behaviour impacts on one another. Ask questions as: "Did you miss class? Why? Was it easy to be at home? How did you feel?"
- Use COVID-19 situations (social distancing, stay home, school closure) to raise children's awareness of key values and reflect on what makes people in general happy, angry or sad and how we can make the world a better place.
- Give children time and space to speak and express themselves.
- Appreciate and value all children and all contributions and ensure that all girls and boys can experience recognition.
- Engage with children about their experiences during COVID-19 school closure, also include the positive side of having more time to play and explore.

*More information on the 3 steps of POM can be found in **'Ensuring Children's Wellbeing and Involvement in Vietnamese Preschools: A practical guide for reflective teachers'***

*For additional tips to support interactions, please use the **'Guideline Creating language rich learning environments'***



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