

## Case study

### **Safe schools for everyone**

How Rio de Janeiro managed to reopen its schools during the second year of the Covid-19 pandemic

October 2021

With more than 600,000 deaths in mid-October 2021, Brazil has been one of the countries most affected by the Covid-19 pandemic. By then, the municipality of Rio de Janeiro alone, registered more than 32,000 victims of the virus.

Like the rest of the country, Rio closed its schools in mid-March 2020. The Brazilian metropolis has the largest public education network in Latin America, with 1,543 primary and secondary schools managed by the municipality and 640,000 students. Its Mayor Eduardo Paes, who was elected again in late 2020 after two previous terms, declared the safe return to school one of his top priorities. Even before taking office in early 2021, he announced his plan to set up a Covid-19 Response Committee (Comitê Especial de Enfrentamento à Covid-19, CEEC) of independent experts, including UNICEF, and Government representatives. Preparing for a safe reopening of schools became one of their main tasks.

Paes appointed a young education expert, Renan Ferreirinha, as his Secretary of Education. Both of them fully supported UNICEF's guidance that schools should be the last to close and the first to reopen in any humanitarian emergency or crisis.

The first municipal schools opened their doors on 24 February 2021, almost five months after many private establishments in the city. The schools restructured their common areas to adapt them to a rigorous safety protocol elaborated by the Covid-19 Committee. The process started with 38 education units. Over the following weeks, some schools had to close temporarily due to Covid cases. The arrival of the highly contagious Delta variant in June 2021 led to another spike in new cases and some schools had to be closed again for some time.

But in general, by September 2021, all 1,543 municipal schools in Rio provided hybrid education, alternating in-person and remote teaching. Most parents have supported the Mayor's push for a safe reopening of schools. According to a survey commissioned by the Municipal Secretariat of Education in July 2021, 82% of parents or guardians in Rio wanted to send their kids back to school. By early September, some 500,000 students had gone back to school and around 120,000 used remote learning options, based on their own decision or following their parents' advice. The remaining boys and girls had to continue learning at home due to co-morbidities.

This paper analyses how the City of Rio de Janeiro managed to safely reopen its public schools against a background of often high Covid infection rates and considerable resistance from teachers' unions.

### ***The impact of school closures in Brazil***

- Schools in Latin America and the Caribbean remained closed longer than in any other region: an average of 153 days between March 2020 and February 2021<sup>1</sup>.
- Brazil is the country with the highest number of students excluded from in-person education: 44.3 million children and adolescents had to stay home (from March 2020 to February 2021).<sup>1</sup>
- According to a UNICEF study, in November 2020, 5.1 million girls and boys aged 6 to 17 had no access to education.<sup>3</sup>

### **UNICEF engagement for a safe reopening of schools**

UNICEF Brazil started calling for a safe reopening of schools in mid-2020. At the beginning of 2021, UNICEF issued an open letter to the newly elected mayors of all 5,568 Brazilian municipalities asking them to give “absolute priority to education and the reopening of schools.” UNICEF made reference to scientific studies from various countries that showed that schools were not a driver of Covid-19 transmission and that the risk for education staff in schools was not higher than for the general population. The organization also highlighted that children were the “hidden victims” of the pandemic, with school closures having a negative impact on their mental health, leading to an increase of domestic violence and cutting many off from school feeding programs. According to the third edition of the study “Primary and Secondary Impacts of Covid-19 on Children and Adolescents”, launched by UNICEF in June 2021, 13% of interviewees living with students under 18 said that they did not have enough money to buy food for their children at some point during the pandemic, and 48% had no access to school meals.<sup>2</sup>

The pediatrician Daniel Becker, a professor at the Institute for Public Health of the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (IECS/UFRJ) and a member of the Covid-19 Response Committee, set up by Mayor Eduardo Paes, added: “Children missed school, nature, outdoor activities, the contact with other children and teachers. Domestic violence and screen time increased. Children were spending eight hours a day on cell phones, computers, video games, and television. Some children started wetting their beds, others stopped talking. When they returned to in-person classes, the situation changed completely. Schools are an important place of protection for all children.”

### **Managing remote education with apps and print material**

While schools were closed, the network provided remote activities for children and teenagers. The Secretariat of Education created an app through which teachers could organize distance learning activities. Students could watch live and recorded classes and access didactic materials without having to use mobile data. Starting in August 2020, video classes were aired daily on broadcast television. Volunteer teachers recorded didactic content from home or in the studios of MultiRio, a company attached to the secretariat of Education.

<sup>1</sup> [COVID-19 and School Closures: One year of education disruption](#) | <sup>2</sup> [Impactos Primários e Secundários da Covid-19 em Crianças e Adolescentes](#) | <sup>3</sup> [Cenário da Exclusão Escolar no Brasil](#)

However, education apps turned out to pose many problems, particularly for poor families. In addition to the shortage of devices such as cell phones and tablets for students, many families did not have sufficient quality access to the internet. Students could also pick up printed learning material at their school.

Already in March 2020, the Secretariat of Education created email accounts for the more than 600,000 students aimed at preventing students from dropping out. According to the Advisor of the Department of Elementary Education who is responsible for the project *Rioeduca* (Rio teaches) on television, Krisna Santos, the focus was on ensuring that students did not lose their contact to the school. However, at least 5,000 students were lost (see below).

The learning app was updated in 2021, and these online classes continued even after the reopening of schools. A team of 39 teachers replaced the 179 volunteers working exclusively on the remote learning project. This hybrid strategy allows teachers to teach in the classroom while also using online education.

### **Covid-19 Response Committee**

The Covid-19 Response Committee set up by Mayor Eduardo Paes consists of independent health experts, academics from the major universities in Rio de Janeiro and research institutes, two former Health Ministers as well as representatives of the Federal Ministry of Health and of the State of Rio de Janeiro. They meet on a monthly basis. The participation of Professor Becker and Luciana Phebo, UNICEF Chief of the Field Office in Rio de Janeiro and Territory Coordinator of the South-East Region, ensure special attention to children's need. The Committee has been monitoring the corona virus transmission in Rio and the activities of the public health system (Sistema Único de Saúde, SUS) in Rio. Based on this analysis it has been elaborating recommendations on protection and prevention measures, including the roll-out of vaccinations.

The close and effective collaboration between the Secretariats of Health and Education was key to paving the way towards the reopening of schools, a key priority of Education Secretary Renan Ferreirinha. Under his leadership, experts of the local administration analyzed the experience of countries around the world - including China, Denmark, Israel, South Africa, Angola, and New Zealand - and sought advice from organizations, such as UNICEF and the Oswaldo Cruz Foundation (Fiocruz). Their work resulted in a [Covid-19 Prevention Protocol](#) (link to the original document and abstract at the end of the document), with an in-person return plan that guides the decisions of the Education Secretariat.

According to the Municipal Secretary of Health, Daniel Soranz, the main challenge was to overcome the school community's fear that classrooms and schoolyards could become contagion points. He highlights the important role UNICEF played in developing the protocol for a safe return to school. "We understood that it was possible to return safely."

The Covid-19 Protocol recommends the creation of a Local Health and Education Committee involving the entire school community, supported by the local health network. Soranz stresses that it was key having both students and their parents as well as teachers taking a role in ensuring compliance with the prevention rules in each school.

Rio's Mayor Eduardo Paes highlights that the return strategy is strictly based on scientific and education guidelines, combining a series of interventions including social distancing, the

distribution of quality protective masks and hand sanitizers as well as prioritizing the vaccination of education professionals. Through these measures he sought to ensure public support for the return to in-person learning. According to Education Secretariat of the State of Rio de Janeiro (SEEDUC), as of 16 August 2021, 95% of Education staff already received one dose of a Covid-19 vaccine, and 45% were fully vaccinated.

### The return to school

#### ***UNICEF's recommendations to the Covid-19 Response Committee***

- Reopen schools based on safety standards
- Engage the school community in supervising compliance with the protocols
- The vaccination of education professionals should not be a pre-requisite for in-person education, but it should be prioritized when possible.
- Ensure efficient communication between health authorities and the school communities and the functioning of a surveillance system of prevention measures and the management of Covid cases
- Inform the public about the low risk of corona virus transmission in schools using data and evidence from other countries.

Already before the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic, many of Rio's municipal schools needed thorough maintenance and repair. Some schools are located in historical buildings, making any improvement and intervention even more complex. After a year of complete suspension of in-person activities, the new City Hall management was therefore confronted with substantive logistical and operational difficulties, including related to the electricity network and internet connections.

Another key challenge was the preparation of 1 million school meals per day, which had also been interrupted. When schools were closed in March 2020, some students received a food basket card, worth R\$100 (around US\$19). It was later replaced by a meal card, worth R\$54.25 (around US\$10), which could be received by all students enrolled in a municipal school.

As of August 2021, due to lack of funding, access to the card was limited to students with co-morbidities who cannot attend in-person classes. According to the Secretariat of Education, the cost of meals provided in schools is less than half of the amount needed for the food card (R\$190 million vs. R\$420 million). The Secretariat authorized students who opted for not yet participating in classroom lessons to get a meal at school.

Before reopening, each school had to adapt its operation to the Safety Protocol. Key elements include:

- Guiding marks on the floor.
- 1m distance between desks (at first, it was 1.5m).
- Dispensers of alcohol-based hand sanitizer to be made available in the school building or alcohol-based gel to be directly applied to students by school staff.
- Storage of sufficient face masks.
- Garbage cans without lid or pedal.
- Ventilation of classrooms preferably through open windows or doors.

- Ensure availability of safe water, liquid soap and paper towels.
- Ensure that toilets are in appropriate conditions.
- Adaptation of drinking fountains so water can easily be filled into bottles and cups.

Education Secretary Ferreirinha summarizes the approach: “We were losing our children to child labor and crime. I spoke with each of the eleven Regional Offices of Education, with representatives of school principals, teachers, and parents. We faced many logistical and operational challenges, but we were able to overcome all of them. All our decisions regarding the reopening of schools are based on science.”

### ***Active School Search (Busca Ativa Escolar)***

In November 2020, in Brazil 5.1 million children and adolescents, aged between 6 and 17 years old, were not attending school or were enrolled but without school activities, which corresponds to 13.9% of this age group in the entire country. The survey “State of School Exclusion in Brazil ([Cenário da Exclusão Escolar no Brasil](#))”, launched by UNICEF in partnership with the CENPEC Institute (Center of Studies and Research on Education and Community Actions, Centro de Estudos e Pesquisas em Educação e Ações Comunitárias), revealed that more than 40% of those excluded from education were children aged 6 to 10 years, an age group for which Brazil had already ensured practically universal access before Covid-19. These shortcomings pose great risks for the further learning opportunities of these children.

In Rio, by the beginning of the new school year in early 2021, 5,000 students had lost access and contact to their schools: They did not pick up their meal card, didactic material or school uniform nor did they access the remote learning app.

Education Secretary Renan Ferreirinha highlights that the pandemic caused a combination of damages to children: in addition to the learning deficit, many have been facing an increased risk of dropping out, others were living with mental health issues due to the lack of social interaction.

The platform [Busca Ativa Escolar](#) (Active School Search), developed by UNICEF therefore became an important tool to facilitate the return of these students to school. In early 2021, the municipality of Rio was the first big Brazilian metropolis to join the program, which supports governments in identifying, registering, and following up with children and adolescents who are out of school or at risk of dropping out. The tool works like a large database that supports communication between different areas of the local administration, stores relevant data, and supports information management.

The program has three major components:

- a platform that facilitates intersectoral collaboration between the teams of the Health, Education, and Social Assistance Secretariats,
- analysis of the causes for dropping out which helps determine which sector will have to act first.
- data generation from this interaction.

From January to July 2021, the City Hall of Rio was already able to locate and bring back 593 children and adolescents, representing approximately 11% of the formerly “lost” students. The authorities continue to follow up on other dropouts, including through home visits by the School Community Council. The local Commissions for Student Integration and Protection also monitor

the frequency of school attendance to assess potential risks of dropping out as well as suspected or confirmed cases of violence and other violations of children's and adolescents' rights. The Interdisciplinary Center of School Support, with a team of more than 200 professionals, including teachers, social workers, and psychologists, has representatives in these Commissions and is another key player using the Busca Ativa Escolar platform.

According to Alessandra Santos, Manager of the Students Protection Department, the Education Secretariat used to not look into the causes of school dropouts. Now, she highlights, the administration not only focuses on reintegrating students, but also on ensuring that they remain in school.

### ***Reforço Rio***

Besides encouraging and supporting the return to in-person education, the municipality of Rio has been investing in helping students to make good for the lost learning time during the pandemic. In June 2021, the local government launched the tutoring program *Reforço Rio* (Strengthen Rio), through which the Education Secretariat can engage volunteers to help children in grades 1 to 9 to catch up, with a focus on lessons in Portuguese and Mathematics.

According to the coordinator of Elementary Education in the Municipal Secretariat of Education, Michelle Almeida, the curriculum was adapted to cover content from the school years 2020 and 2021. The goal is to not leave any student behind.

### **The role of teachers and their trade union**

The trade unions representing the interests of teachers at state-run schools (SEPE) and schools managed by the municipality (SINPRO) strongly opposed the reopening of schools, particularly in moments of an increase of infection rates. In early April 2021, for instance, when ITUs were registered occupation levels of more than 90%, they called on the judiciary to intervene. As a result, the Court of Justice briefly prohibited the reopening of schools after a short emergency break of 10 days, declared by Eduardo Paes. In their resistance, the unions were supported by deputies from the opposition in the City Parliament.

Asked by UNICEF, Izabel Costa, teacher and SEPE's coordinator, said representatives of education staff have not been able to participate in decisions concerning the return to school. The union insists that the entities representing education professionals should also be consulted. She suggests that local committees should assume a crucial role in supervising and improving the rules for a return to in-person education.

Further to this, SEPE criticizes that the secretariat of Education did not provide tablets and laptops to students to facilitate online learning. "We have a very perverse reality," she said. While being provided with free access to the platform *RioEduca*, students did not receive the necessary technological equipment. This made access to remote education difficult for poor children, whose families only have one cell phone. "In many homes, two, three, four children had to share the same device. Now we are returning to in-person education, and those who will continue remote learning will not receive the same education as others." She stresses that this will further exacerbate previously existing disparities.

The Secretariat of Education, however, insists that it met with SEPE on several occasions seeking inputs and proposals for a safe reopening of schools. It recognizes challenges related to the availability of online devices among children from poor families, but stresses it lacked resources to address this problem.

Nevertheless, in their rejection of a safe school reopening, the trade unions hardly ever made reference to children's best interests. Their resistance rather stems from long-standing grievances related to their salary, recognition and working conditions, including access and availability of technological devices.

Luciana Phebo argues it would be an opportune time to appreciate teachers' work: "It's a historically undervalued class. A moment like this would be a chance to change the picture, to think differently. The public healthcare system (SUS) and doctors gained a great deal of acknowledgment. By comparison, teachers did not get the same attention."

## **Human interest stories**

### **Protocols followed to the letter in a school in the *Complexo da Maré***

The Director of the IV Centenário Municipal School at Maré – the largest and one of the most violent favela areas in Rio - , Alessandra Aguiar, follows the protocols of the Rio de Janeiro City Government, implementing extra actions that she calls “VIP protocols.” She is proud that her school even goes beyond the recommendations of the Covid-19 Response Committee: “We guarantee that every student has their own designated desk and school kit. We have enough plates and cutlery for all students and the staff, and we take our time to wash and sanitize everything after the meals. In the morning, we send messages to all parents and students, reminding them to take two spare clean masks to school and asking them to stay home if they have a cold or have been in contact with someone who is sick.”

Alessandra’s school had only one Covid case among students after the reopening. The student had arrived at school without symptoms and remained in class until 10 a.m. When he mentioned that other members of his family were infected at home, the teacher immediately removed him from the classroom, and the Director contacted the parents and the community health center. The boy was tested positive, “but fortunately, no one else was contaminated. And I am sure the respect to protocols, the use of alcohol gel and masks, and the social distancing helped not to disseminate the virus, not to mention the partnership with the health center that keeps a nurse at our disposal to answer questions and assist on this type of case,” says the Director.

The first students returned to IV Centenário Municipal School on March 10, 2021. In the second semester, only five of the 307 enrolled students enrolled in grades one to five were planning not to come back in August, after the winter break. All 24 employees, including a teacher over 65 years old, wanted to return as soon as possible. Alessandra attributes the success of the return to in-person classes to a good relationship with the community. “I can’t say I’m calm. I’m panicked about this virus. I’m in the risk group. I had surgery for stomach reduction. My blood test results are not normal. But I understand my social role. I know that these children no longer have anyone to stay with at home. They need the school, they need to learn, and they need the school meals,” she says.

At the beginning of the second semester, after a year and a half of the pandemic, 100 out of the 307 students had not yet been able to access the app Rioeduca em Casa. Parents were meeting with the Assistant Director, who personally helped them to install and access the program. During the second semester, the school will continue with its weekly rotation of students, which means they will have to participate in online classes every other week. “To avoid disrupting children’s routine completely, we developed a task board they have to complete during the period they study at home. This also includes a schedule for getting up, watching classes on television, and time to study,” says Alessandra.

### **Teacher mom**

Henrique, 11 years old, and Rafael, 6 years old, arrived in Rio de Janeiro on August 4, 2020. They came from an orphanage run by nuns in Paraná State, straight to the neighborhood of Quintino, in the Rio’s North Zone, adopted by a family of a teacher and a military, seven cats and a dog. The brothers were enrolled in the Oswaldo Teixeira municipal school in Quintino, where their mother teaches in Primary Education. She was able to spend six months on maternity leave, they

were lucky to have her by their side, supporting them through remote learning. “They had a routine like the one in Paraná, as if they were going to school in person. Every day we woke up at 7 a.m., had breakfast, and between 8 a.m. and 12 p.m. was study time,” explains Jacqueline Cardelly Jooris.

Enrolled in 7th grade, Henrique says that, when he returned to school in 2021, only five students in his class remained at home and 29 boys and girls went to school every day. The classroom is spacious and allows them to maintain a 1-meter distance between desks. “It’s weird for us to walk into a room and see everyone wearing a mask. At lunch, classes go down one at a time. But, at any rate, I’m thinking in-person learning is much better than remote learning, a thousand times better. If we had a question online, it was more difficult. Our questions were not 100% answered. Some things we still did not understand. In the classroom, we ask the teacher, and he answers well,” says the student.

### **“We are essential, too”**

“How can I stay calm at home without knowing how my students are doing? How can I just worry about didactic content without first thinking if they are all okay, without knowing who they are with, while their parents are working?” Aniger Capano, an English teacher, says that most of her students at the Malba Tahan municipal school in Irajá live in a favela called Fim do Mundo (the End of the World).

In March 2020, the teacher said Goodbye hoping to see her students again soon. But she only returned to school in December, and it was not yet to start teaching in person again: “I remember going back and finding things on the table. Everything was just the way I had left it. It was very strange. My heart ached. I felt something very strong too when we returned to in-person classes in March 2021: There was an 8th-grade boy who did not attend the online classes. He had not interacted with us once since the beginning of the pandemic. The family collected the printed material at school, but we had no contact with the student. I saw his eyes filled with tears. I noticed the relief he felt for being there, seeing his friends, the teachers, the school. I cannot compare ourselves to those on the health frontline, but we are also essential for the children and teenagers of this city. They need us, the school, their friends.”

## **Highlights**

### **City of Rio de Janeiro: the largest municipal network in Latin America**

644,000 students

1,543 schools

55,000 teachers and other education staff

### **Return to in-person classes**

The first 38 schools welcomed students back on February 24, 2021

Every professional received six PFF2 masks

By July, 82% of parents said they wanted their children to go back to school

In August, classes of the *Rio Reforço* tutoring program started

### **From remote to hybrid education**

Contact via WhatsApp and groups on social networks

Distribution of print material

Meal card worth R\$ 54.25 (US\$ 10.38) for all until July 2021

Video classes of the *Rioeduca* television program

*Rioeduca em Casa* app

## Summary of the [Covid-19 Prevention Protocol](#) for School Units and Day Nurseries

### Who returns and how?

- Students and professionals belonging to risk groups will not participate in in-person activities that are returning gradually and in phases
- Professionals of risk groups must return to in-person activities 14 days after receiving the second shot of the Covid-19 vaccine
- Each school's capacity to welcome students depends on the level of contagion risk of its region – low risk: up to 75% of the original capacity; medium risk: up to 50%; high risk: up to 30% (This specificity is not in the protocol's last version but could be a good model for cities that have not yet returned.) | If the demand exceeds the capacity, there should be student rotation. | In case rotation is not possible, students in greater social vulnerability have priority

### Getting ready for, arriving at, and leaving school

- Students, teachers, and parents must watch out for possible signs of Covid-19, warning the school in case of symptoms so that prevention and contact tracing measures can take place
- Wearing a mask is mandatory throughout the journey to school
- The school will offer masks to students, teachers, and collaborators, if necessary
- Teachers must instruct students about the correct way of wearing the mask, covering the mouth and the nose, and handling it
- We advise students, staff, and collaborators to take at least two spare masks to school, besides plastic bags to store clean and used masks
- The school must prepare itself: cleaning and disinfection will happen before the beginning of classes, during breaks on each shift, and whenever necessary; marks on the floor and student desks should be 1 meter apart; 70% alcohol-based sanitizers and sinks with soap and water will be available for handwashing; digital thermometers will be available
- Classes' entry and exiting hours must be interspersed to avoid crowds
- The school should have a well-ventilated room to keep people with Covid-19 symptoms isolated until they can go home or to a health center

### In-person activities

- Events are prohibited
- Sports or artistic activities can happen, preferably outdoors, as long as people wear masks, stay at least 1 meter apart from each other, sanitize their hands before and after the activity, and change their masks afterward
- If possible, classroom doors and windows should stay open
- Students must have a regular desk space and cannot share objects like books and pens. Avoid objects that are hard to clean, like modeling clays, small game pieces, and cloth
- Children up to 10 years old can use playgrounds wearing their masks and respecting a 1-meter distance. Sanitize playgrounds between changes in groups.

- Libraries and reading rooms may open in compliance with distancing and hygiene protocols. Use 70% alcohol-based sanitizer before and after handling the collection. Quarantine books for a day before returning them to the shelves and releasing them for a new loan.

### **Breaks, meals, and restrooms**

- Give instructions on how to adequately store the mask and not talking during meals
- Only one group can use the dining hall at a time, respecting the 1-meter distance between people and sanitizing tables and banquettes between changes in groups
- We recommend students and staff to have their own bottle of water to reduce the flow around drinking fountains, adapted with taps for filling containers
- Every class has to respect a specific period for recess to not get into contact with other groups

### **Monitoring, risk management and contingency plan**

- Students, parents or guardians, and staff members that have symptoms or close contact with contaminated people must inform the school so that the institution can take the appropriate measures; symptomatic people should self-notify through the app or in-person if they are unable to do it over the phone or online
- People with symptoms or that had contact with suspect cases must stay in isolation for 14 days, beginning on the first day of contact (if the suspect case is unconfirmed, isolation can be suspended).
- If the suspect case is a student, they will have classes through the remote system; if it is a teacher, the entire class will transfer to the remote system if there is no substitute teacher available.
- Only classes that have suspected or confirmed cases of Covid-19 must stay in quarantine if there is respect to group divisions and classes do not come in contact with each other. The other classes can continue in-person activities normally.
- The city's Primary Care Units can test for Covid-19 through the following methods: RT-PCR, rapid antigen test, and rapid serology test. Healthcare professionals assess the need for the exam case by case.
- If the same group confirms three cases (students, teachers, or employees) within a period of 14 days, the school must alert the Municipal Health Secretariat (SMS), which will decide about the school's possible closure and later reopening.

### **Early Childhood Education and Special Education**

- In the case of children that need adaptation, it is important to schedule only one parent or guardian at a time; they are instructed not to come in contact with other children; airy and well-ventilated spaces are preferable.
- Lap children should be carried by only one reference educator even when entering and exiting school (the professional must sanitize their hands before and after contact).

- Children over three years old must wear a mask; for student groups of up to three years old, the recommendation is for schools to install sinks in every classroom
- Always instruct washing hands, using the mask, and applying alcohol-based hand sanitizer
- In mealtime, professionals should assist one child at a time.
- In nap time, mats must be 1 meter apart and cleaned after use.
- Because these groups require physical contact and closeness, we recommend: washing hands and using alcohol-based sanitizer before and after any interaction, besides disinfecting environments, like diaper changing tables, toys, and common use objects; it is necessary to wear a face shield and an apron while performing hygiene and activities that cause splashes.
- All personal use material (clothes, diapers, pacifiers, and transition objects) must be arranged separately in plastic bags or containers bearing the child's name.
- Children should not take toys from home to school.
- In the case of Special Education children and adolescents, the family and health and education teams are responsible for checking the individual specificities, guaranteeing a reference professional to assist and guide each student and the specific PPEs if necessary.

#### **Planning and everyone's participation**

- The creation of a Local Health and School Environment Committee, with the involvement of the entire school community and the support of the local Health Network, is recommended; management, teachers, staff, parents, and students, with due protagonism to the latter group, must learn and incorporate the Covid-19 Prevention Protocol.
- Interdisciplinary and primary care teams must be called to help in cases of students suffering psychological problems that harm their quality of life and sociability.

#### **Communicating with students and families**

- Parents or guardians and students must receive instructions on the reopening rules, protocols, and school operations through easy-to-understand materials about Covid-19 prevention.
- Online assistance is preferable; in-person assistance has to be scheduled in advance.
- Students need to be involved in the elaboration of actions to monitor and enforce sanitary protocols and the back-to-school plan.
- All staff needs to receive training on this protocol, especially cleaning teams, which should receive PPEs and work inputs for work.

(Read [here](#) the complete original - version 1.7)