

# Status and Readiness of a Public Elementary School in the Implementation of Limited Face-to-Face Classes

<sup>1</sup>Selfa Pilapil-Pimental, <sup>2</sup>Susan S. Janer, PhD

<sup>1</sup>Teacher III, <sup>2</sup>Professor VI

<sup>1</sup>Department of Education,

<sup>1</sup>Sorsogon State University, Sorsogon City, Philippines

**Abstract:** This study aimed to determine the status and readiness of the public elementary schools in Sorsogon City Division in the implementation of limited face-to-face classes during the academic year 2021-2022. It utilized a descriptive qualitative research design. Teachers and administrators were the informants of the present study. There were three teachers who were interviewed and they were designated as grade chairmen for Grades 1, 3 (primary level) and 4 (intermediate level). The school head the administrator was also interviewed. All in all, there were four interviewees for this present study. Relevant data from this research was extracted from the series of documentary analysis conducted. Interview with teachers, parents, and administrators was done to supply the needed qualitative data.

The status of the schools in managing its operations along shared responsibility, alternative work arrangement, classroom layout and structure, school traffic management, protective measures, hygiene practices, safety procedures, communication strategy, and contingency plan were evident but there are gaps to consider to fully comply to the standards set by SSAT. The status of the school in terms of focus on teaching and learning along with learning resources, limited face-to-face classes and teacher support were evident. The status of the school in terms of well-being and protection along personal protective equipment, COVID-19 case management, and including the most marginalized was also evident; however, no school clinic and health staff was placed exclusive for the school. The status of the school in terms of home-school coordination was evident. The school was ready for the limited face-to-face classes while several gaps has to be fulfilled to fully comply to the standards set by the SSAT. A proposed output is made to improve COVID-19 response and health services in public elementary schools.

School may install exhaust fans and HEPA filters guided by DOLE Department Order No.224-221 Guidelines on Ventilation for Workplaces and public Transport; install water supply and develop a communication plan. The school may keep profile of every learner through ICT intervention and provide an appropriate learning development support plan in the delivery of better-quality basic education services. The school may establish/refurbish a school clinic to provide basic health services to all school-goers, such as: health assessment and physical examination, as needed; appropriate intervention, first aid, or treatment; proper management of symptoms, including rest at home; and referral and follow-up of learners, teachers, and personnel to appropriate facilities. The school may develop a plan for coordination with the Barangay Local Government Unit (BLGU) or the Barangay Health Emergency Response Team (BHRT) in ensuring that protocols are observed properly. The school may determine gaps and challenges that confront them to fully comply with the SSAT. The school may consider the proposed output of this study to improve COVID-19 response and health services in public elementary schools.

**IndexTerms – Status, Readiness, Implementation of the Limited Face-to-Face Classes**

## INTRODUCTION

After a two-year school closure and after the number of COVID-19 cases has continuously subsided, the education sector is now attentive to reviving the physical site of education. During the two-year closure, many dimensions of schools have been affected which caused drastic changes and shifts to usual school practices. Mainly, the affected is the face-to-face instruction that altered to modular distance learning. Instruction is undertaken and continuous at the homes through modules and learning activity sheets (LAS) even without the teachers facilitating learning. However, the revival of school for the comeback of face-to-face learning can be greatly challenging because the threat of COVID-19 has not totally been eliminated yet and is still intimidating the health of each and everyone. Aside from that, the school has plenty of things to consider and their readiness is an essential aspect of their attempt to revive face-to-face learning.

According to UNICEF (2022), more than 1 billion children are at risk of falling behind due to school closures aimed at containing the spread of COVID-19. UNICEF is working with partners around the world to respond to the COVID-19 emergency, and part of the response entails ensuring that every child continues to learn (UNESCO East Asia and Pacific Regional Office (UNICEF EAPRO), 2022). Through remote learning, only that education can continue thus the facilitation of online, modular, radio-based, and television, among others learning. But those who have limited resources at home, which was even worsened by the pandemic, have limited means of continuing education. UNICEF added that online platforms were the most used means by the governments to deliver education while schools remain closed, with 83 percent of countries using this method. However, this allowed for potentially reaching only about a quarter of schoolchildren worldwide. With this given analysis, the need to reopen schools simultaneously with the decreasing number of COVID-19 cases is deemed urgent and critical.

To reopen, schools are faced with great challenges, especially in the different precautionary measures to consider while accepting learners to be physically present in the classroom. UNICEF adds that the Philippines had one of the longest school breaks in the world, without any type of formal classes from March 2020 to the present. Almost 27M students in the Philippines have missed more than a year of face-to-face learning. On September 20, 2021, the country has approved the pilot run of limited face-to-face schooling in low-risk areas. While in this testing, public health and safety measures are also important to keep every child and every teacher safe.

Distance learning cannot replace face-to-face classes. According to a UNICEF-SWS (UNICEF EAPRO, 2022) survey in May 2021, most parents (84%) observed that, despite spending more time guiding them, their children were learning less in distance learning than in traditional face-to-face learning. However, global data shows that schools are not the main drivers of COVID-19 transmission (UNICEF and UNESCO, 2020). Globally, children account for a very small proportion of confirmed COVID-19 cases. They have milder symptoms compared to adults, and they have not contributed significantly to the proportion of hospitalized cases or reported deaths (WHO-UNICEF, 2021). Children of primary school age and younger appear to be less likely infected and less likely to pass on the infection to others (WHO-UNICEF, 2021). In the Philippines, children and adolescents comprise a very small proportion (9%) of total reported cases (Pediatric Infectious Disease Society of the Philippines, 2021). Children and schools are unlikely to be the main drivers of COVID-19 transmission when community transmission is low.

Now, the Department of Education (DepEd) and the Department of Health (DOH) are in partnership to work for the reopening of classes. They issued a series of joint memoranda to plot policies and guidelines. DM 071, s. 2021 also known as "Preparations for the Pilot Face-to-Face, Expansion and Transitioning to New Normal"; DM 068, s. 2021 also known as "Additional Guidelines on the Implementation of DepEd Order No. 10, s. 2016 also known as "Policy and Guidelines for Comprehensive Water, Sanitation and Hygiene in Schools Program); and DepEd-DOH JMC No. 1, s. 2021, also known as "Operational Guidelines on the Implementation of Limited Face-to-Face Learning Modality." These are the guiding principles and the policies that generate action from the school to reopen and resume classes.

This elementary school is the biggest (population-wise) elementary school in the West District of Sorsogon City Division. It is located right at the heart of Sorsogon City which caters not only to the surrounding barangays but to the remotest barangays of the city and nearby municipalities. It is identified as a high-risk school considering its location and the origins of its learners. During the early part of 2022, the school has initiated to resume classes that kick off from the primary level. Later, it was fully implemented with the remaining intermediate level.

This study, therefore, glimpsed at the readiness of this elementary school in conduction resumption of classes after the height of the pandemic. It determined the preparations that the school has underwent for its limited face-to-face classes. This is a necessary attribute of the school at this time of emergency health crisis to ensure safety and health of every learner, every teacher and every non-teaching staff that are mobilizing within the school. Thus, this study was conducted..

## NEED OF THE STUDY

This study aimed to determine the status and readiness of the public elementary schools in Sorsogon City Division in the implementation of limited face-to-face classes during the academic year 2021-2022. It identified the status of the schools in managing its operations along shared responsibility, alternative work arrangement, classroom layout and structure, school traffic management, protective measures, hygiene practices, safety procedures, communication strategy, and contingency plan. It also included the status of the school in terms of focus on teaching and learning along, learning resources, limited face-to-face classes, and teacher support. It also determined the status of the school in terms of well-being and protection along personal protective equipment, COVID-19 case management and including the most marginalized. Lastly, it described the status of the school in terms of home-school coordination.

### 3.1 Population and Sample

Teachers and administrators were the informants of the present study. There were three teachers who were interviewed and they were designated as grade chairmen for Grades 1, 3 (primary level) and 4 (intermediate level). The school head being the administrator was also interviewed. All in all, there were four interviewees for this present study.

### 3.2 Data and Sources of Data

Data relevant to this present study was extracted from the documentary analysis conducted. It was guided by the standards set by DepEd Order No. 071, s. 2021 which indicates the School Safety Assessment Tool 2021 (SSAT). This tool is divided into four components such as Managing School Operations, Focusing on Teaching and Learning, Well-Being and Protection, and School-Community Coordination. Each of them has a corresponding indicator.

Likewise, an interview guide was used. It has a list of possible questions to be asked to informants. There set of questions prepared for the teachers and for the school head as each has different roles to play in the school.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study aimed to determine the status and readiness of the public elementary schools in Sorsogon City Division in the implementation of limited face-to-face classes during the academic year 2021-2022. It utilized a descriptive qualitative research design.

Relevant data from this research was extracted from the series of documentary analysis conducted. Interview with teachers, parents, and administrators was done to supply the needed qualitative data.

## IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 1. Status of the schools in managing its operations

Managing school operations has been taken by this pandemic to a more complicated situation where formerly it refers to records management, financial management, managing school facilities and equipment, management of staff, school safety for disaster and preparedness, mitigation, resiliency and emerging opportunities and challenges (Valenzuela & Buenvinida, 2021). However, the onset of the physical closure of the school has altered the scope of this school domain where the Joint Memorandum Circular No. 1, s. 2021 includes shared responsibility, alternative work arrangement; classroom layout and structure; school traffic management; protective measures, hygiene practices, safety procedures; communication strategy; and contingency plan. This discussion described the school management of public elementary schools to be ready for the implementation of face-to-face classes.

**Shared responsibility.** Shared responsibility is the principle of managing school operations that ensure the effective engagement of the entire society in making sure that learners are safe and healthy while attending face-to-face classes. Therefore, the role of the community is very significant in reopening face-to-face classes after schools have been closed for a while because of the pandemic.

The school has been steering the school's stakeholders in the different roles they play when preparing the school for the limited face-to-face classes. The school head and the teacher-designate for the different committees initiated the different tasks to do to call on the stakeholders and be united for the reopening of classes. During the planning activity for the reopening classes, external stakeholders (parents, LGU, concerned government agencies and non-government agencies were called to pledge their participation and support to the different assistance that they can extend to the school. In the case of this elementary school catchment barangays, Brgys. Sirangan, and Talisay, they instituted a resolution, Resolution No. 005-22, s. 2022 (Talisay) and Resolution No. 01, s. 2022 (Talisay) to state their support to implement limited face-to-face classes beginning March 1, 2022 during SY 2021-2022. This statement of support ensured that these barangays shall commit to helping the school in whatever needs arise for the successful conduct of the limited face-to-face classes.

This resolution has guaranteed that the school can seek any help that the barangays can extend. One is the upkeep of the surrounding of the school campus such as peace and order, the traffic flow, especially during rush hours and the implementation of the minimum health protocols in the surrounding areas. These are essential factors that the school had to coordinate with the barangays.

Another group of stakeholders that played important role in the reopening of classes is the parents. They are the immediate person to contact because they have direct responsibility over the pupils. They were consulted by the school, and their views and opinions matter to allow their children to already attend classes personally. Parents' attendance (Appendix D) during meetings showed that more parents would want their children to already attend schools physically; however, they sought assurance that their children be kept safe while inside the school. They were oriented during the meeting by the respective advisers of on how their children would be attending classes while observing the minimum health protocol being imposed by DepEd to be observed by every school.

During the meeting, some parents were convinced that their children would be safe because plans and protocols were presented to them. To minimize the crowd, one class was divided into two sets of pupils, Set A & B. They were scheduled to attend class half day and twice a week only. With this, parents were convinced that the crowd would be minimized because pupils were divided into two sets. On other weekdays that they were not in school would be spent on their modular learning.

Parents were also called to donate items that would facilitate the classroom's cleanliness and orderliness. These items were alcohol, tissue paper, cleaning materials, rags, signages, soap, alcohol dispensers, and others. This way, the school was helped and lessened their burdens in the various demand that may hinder the conduct of the limited face-to-face classes.

Likewise, the LGU participated in the readiness by donating personal protective equipment, sanitizing supplies, equipment and hygiene kit. They also sent school supplies, school bags, and t-shirt to pupils. The City DRRM is also every ready to do sanitization and sterilization of the school whenever needed. The City Emergency Response is also every ready to extend their services to the school. The LGU, therefore, assured that they would extent assistance in any way they can when need arises.

The alumni association of the school also extend their help to the school. There were graduates of the school who individually extended their help to the school by donating facemasks, alcohol, cleaning materials, and financial assistance. This initiative has helped the school in many ways especially that the school also faced financial struggles with its MOOE.

**Alternative work arrangement.** During the school closure, personnel was also limited from coming to school physically for their own safety. There were guidelines raised on the qualifications of teachers and employees to participate in the limited face-to-face classes. Stated in JMC No. 1, s. 2021 of Department of Health and DepEd, qualified personnel are aged 65 and below with no diagnosed co-morbidities; those who are lactating, pregnant and PWDs whose services are crucial maybe eligible. Those with stable comorbidities may join voluntarily. School administration may decide on the schedule to follow based on a careful analysis of risks and benefits. It was likewise stated that COVID-19 vaccination shall be a significant factor to harmonize with the existing



implementation of Prevention, Detection, Isolation, Treatment, Reintegration (PDITR) strategies and this vaccine being the cornerstone of the country's response to prevent further transmission.

In addition, the Civil Service Commission through CSC Memorandum No. 6, s. 2022 institutionalized the adoption of flexible work arrangements to provide safe work spaces for government workers, and protect their health and welfare while meeting the demands of public service.



Plate 1. A classroom with only a very limited number of pupils so that they can observe social distancing thus minimizing crowds in school.

During the limited face-to-face, only 20 pupils were allowed to get in the classroom as seen in Plate 1. The school decided to group each class into two and observe an alternate reporting to classes of these two groups. Reporting of pupils per week would be twice a week where Group A would come to school every Monday and Tuesday while Group B would come every Wednesday and Thursday. Friday would be work from home arrangement for some teachers, or they may report to school, whichever they prefer as long as they observe safety and minimum health protocol. However, during the height of the COVID-19 cases, no teachers are allowed to get in the campus unless necessary.

With this limited number of pupils, the work arrangements of teachers were set. As seen in the sample Class Program (Appendix E) of Grade 2, only two subjects were being taught for a half-day session of the class. Each subject would be taught for 80 minutes while the rest of the subjects used modules and were done at home thus blended learning. There were no in-person classes in the afternoon. In this way, alternative work arrangements are instituted during the limited face-to-face classes.

**Classroom layout and structure.** Classroom layout and structure compliant with the joint memorandum have also been complied with while in the limited face-to-face learning. The approval of the conduct of the limited face-to-face classes was signaled by the validation. Before validation, necessary preparations were done such as the physical facility arrangement required by the Department of Education and the Department of Health. Compliance with the required physical classroom setup was really necessary so that minimum health protocol can be observed.

In this school, every classroom has a comfort room as shown in Plate 2. This setup is an advantage to limiting the pupils inside the classroom while classes are ongoing. Each classroom has two doors where during the limited face-to-face classes were made to be exit and entrance doors respectively. Every desk would only be occupied by one learner to observe the social distancing. One-way traffic was likewise observed in each classroom to prevent the pupils from meeting each other.

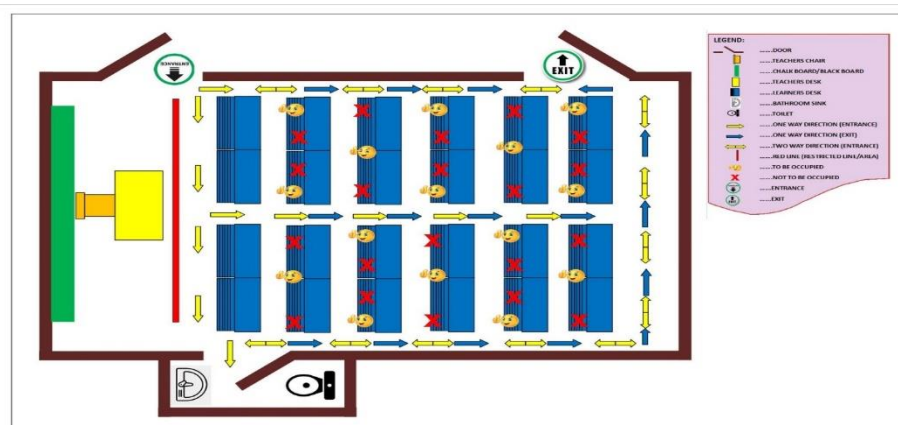


Plate 2. The classroom layout is intended to comply with the requirements to hold limited face-to-face learning.

Schools strived to comply with the necessary requirements on classroom layout and structures. Teachers sought the help of parents so that their classrooms be prepared for the validation, to begin to implement the limited face-to-face classes as shown in Plate 3.

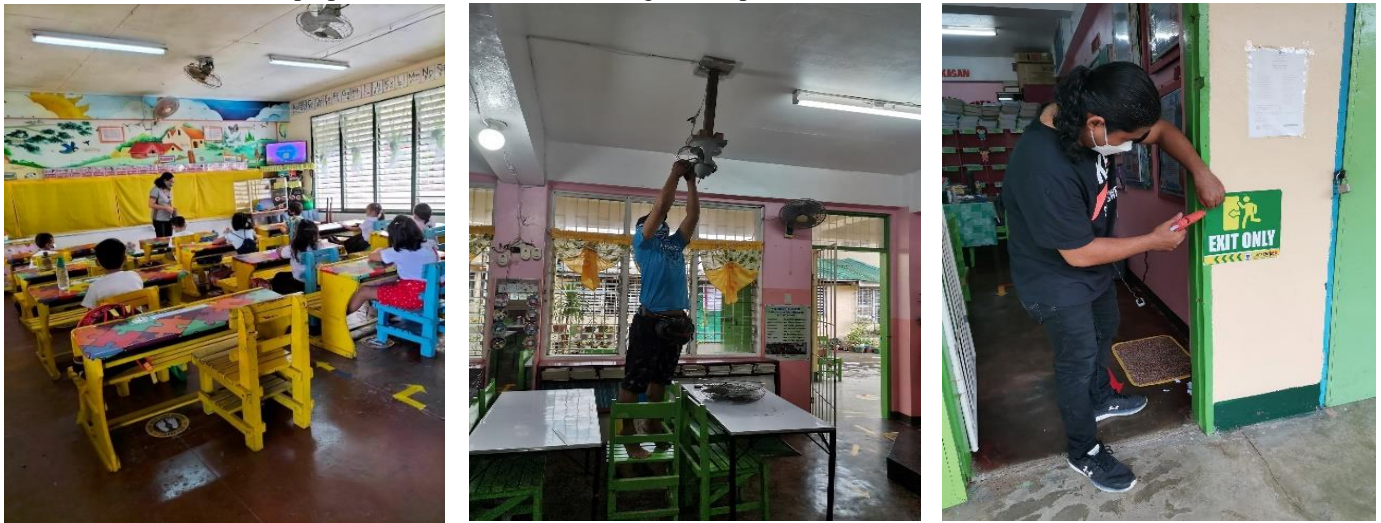


Plate 3. In the classroom, there are only 20 pupils and each of them is provided with one seat so that the room will have enough space to observe social distancing. Proper lighting and ventilation are also strictly observed.

**School traffic management.** School traffic management were evident in the signages, markers, stickers, posters, arrows, and labels that were placed to facilitate a smooth school traffic management. There were signages, marker and stickers especially on the floor to signal the flow of traffic inside the classroom as well as around the whole campus.

Plates 4 - 5 show the physical layouts of the whole school campus divided into two portions: the Luzon Area and the Mindanao Area. Some features were placed such as markers of the entrance and exit areas, the hand washing areas, the triage, isolation facility, and the one-way pedestrian traffic.

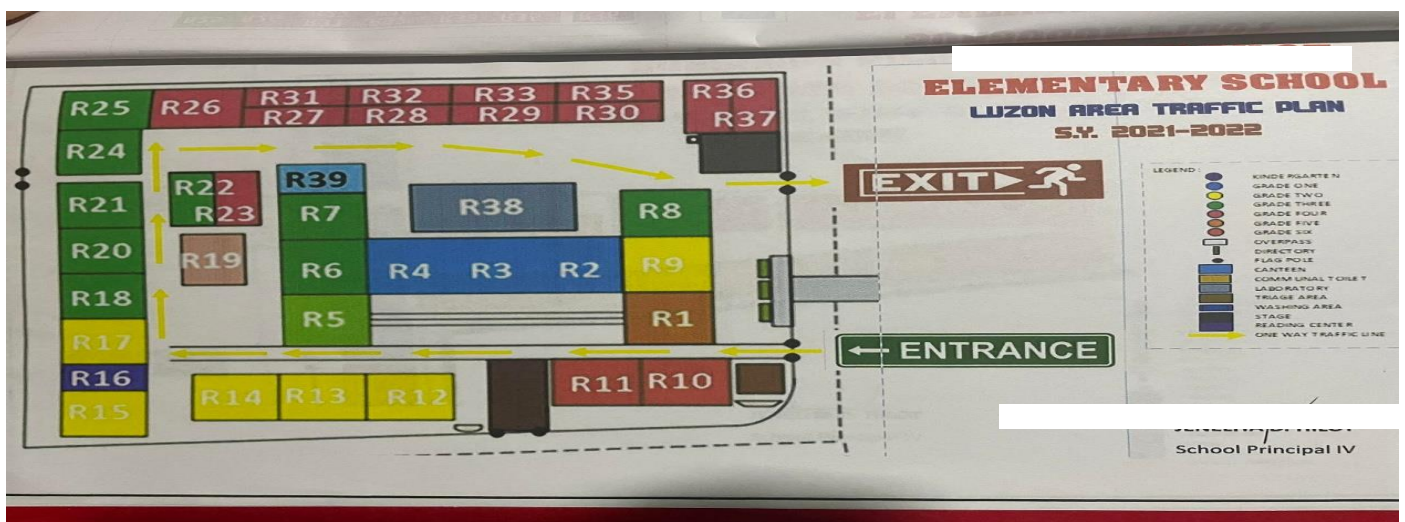


Plate 4. A schematic diagram of Luzon Area Traffic Plan



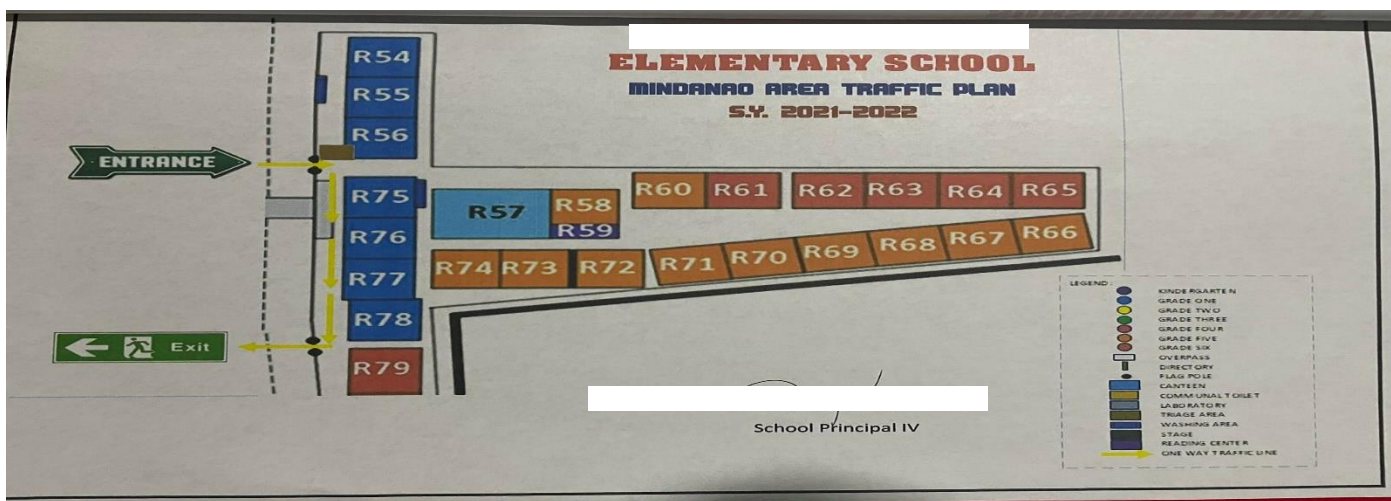


Plate 5. A schematic diagram of Mindanao Area Traffic Plan



Plate 6. Posters and signages are posted in strategic places.

Plate 6 shows the different signages actually posted in the classroom. These serve as reminders to school children how to keep themselves complied with the standards when they are at the crowd. Likewise, Plate 7 shows a picture of the Triage and the entrance gate with arrows showing the direction of traffic within the school campus.



Plate 7. The Triage located at the entrance gate to observe minimum health protocols.



Plate 8 shows a classroom appropriately labeling its floor with arrow to show the direction of traffic inside the classroom.



Plate 8. Floor of every classroom has been marked with corresponding arrows to show direction of traffic in each classroom.

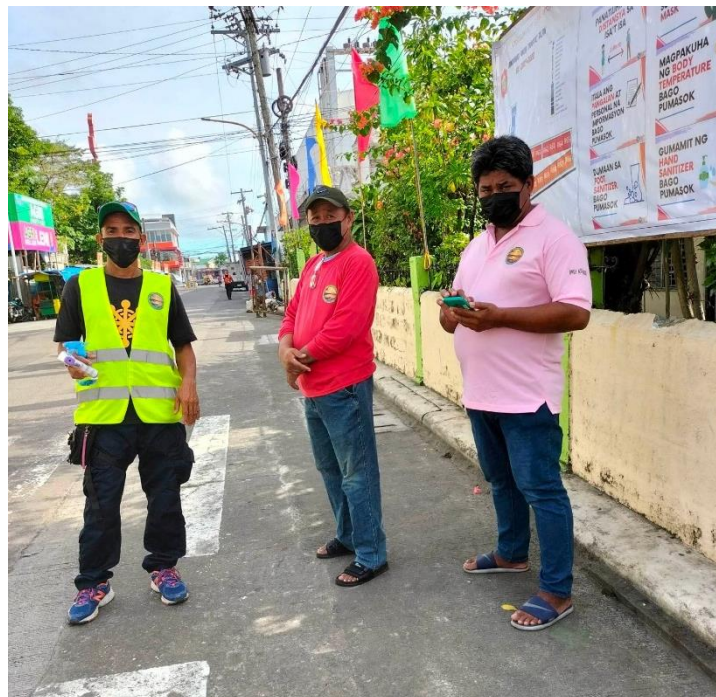


Plate 9. Barangay tanods are posted around the school area to ensure that the guidelines for the implementation of limited face-to-face classes are smoothly implemented.

Barangay tanods were also visible around the school to ensure that peace and order was maintained and that every individual followed the corresponding direction of traffic in and outside of the classroom. Barangay Talisay and Sirangan were the two barangays responsible for the school so they assigned watchers to ensure the smooth day-to-day operation of the school in terms of school traffic management. This is shown in Plate 9.

**Protective measures, hygiene practices, safety procedures.** Plate 10 plots the school sub-composite team for the face-to-face classes. One of the assignees was the School DRRM coordinator. This role is essential when the school is faced with a pandemic. The school mobilized the School DRRRM team.

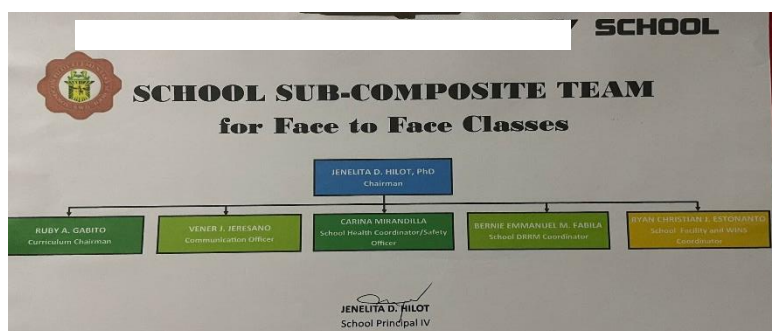


Plate 10. The School Sub-Composite Team

They ensured that effective implementation of the school's health and safety protocols are in place and are observed during the preparation and implementation of limited face-to-face classes. The school has set up a proper sanitation and hygiene facility for school-goers. Classroom CRs were ensured to be functional before the beginning of the limited face-to-face. There were hand washing stations with soap and clean water.

In the class schedule, there was a time provided for supervised handwashing and toothbrushing activities. Every pupil received the hygiene kit provided with tooth brush, toothpaste, soap, alcohol and a facemask. Trash bins were installed at a corner of the classroom color-coded and labeled properly.

Plates 4-5 show diagrams of the school's established safe entrance and exit procedures for teachers, pupils, non-teaching personnel and school visitors. There were also available scanners or thermal guns at these strategic points. There were available hand sanitizers alcohol dispensers, and surgical masks.

At the Triage, all individuals coming and out of the campus were required to place basic information. This served as the contact tracing procedures and tools. There was a health declaration sheet for school personnel, pupils and other visitors. The school's DRRM Team were mobilizing and on alert during that time.

**Communication strategy.** The school's sub-composite team was in charge of a platform of communication for coordination purposes among pupils, parents/guardians and teachers. They acquired the necessary data such as contact details and addresses of parents/guardians of the pupils to be used whenever their child shows flu-like symptoms while on the school premises. Every adviser has ensured that they get hold of the basic information about their pupils.

Information dissemination about the COVID-19 itself and how to deal with it was the top priority to conduct during the first days of the opening of the limited face-to-face classes. An hour session in the class program was being provided for this purpose. During the parents' meeting, information dissemination was also being practiced. For more efficient communication strategy, technology has been used. Each adviser put up a group chat. Parents' social media account was also utilized so that teachers would have quick access to parents whenever needed.

**Contingency plan.** The school was bounded to follow decision model and contingency plan of Local Task Force for reclosing and reopening the school in cases of COVID-19 resurgence in the community. The school was always attuned with the Local Task Force against COVID-19 in terms of deciding for a school lockdown. Protocol with the LTF was established and was familiarized to be used whenever suspected, probable and confirmed COVID-19 case to facilitate disinfection and contact tracing. Whenever COVID-19 case would be detected, the school should be closed and would be reverted to distance learning which did not happen in this school.

For local school concerns, Plate 11 shows the sub-composite team as immediate persons to handle decisions on suspension and resumption of classes due to COVID-19 resurgence. They were responsible to create for decisions points as basis to suspend classes, plans for continuous implementation of learning modalities during suspension; and strategies for the resumption of face-to-face classes after the suspension.

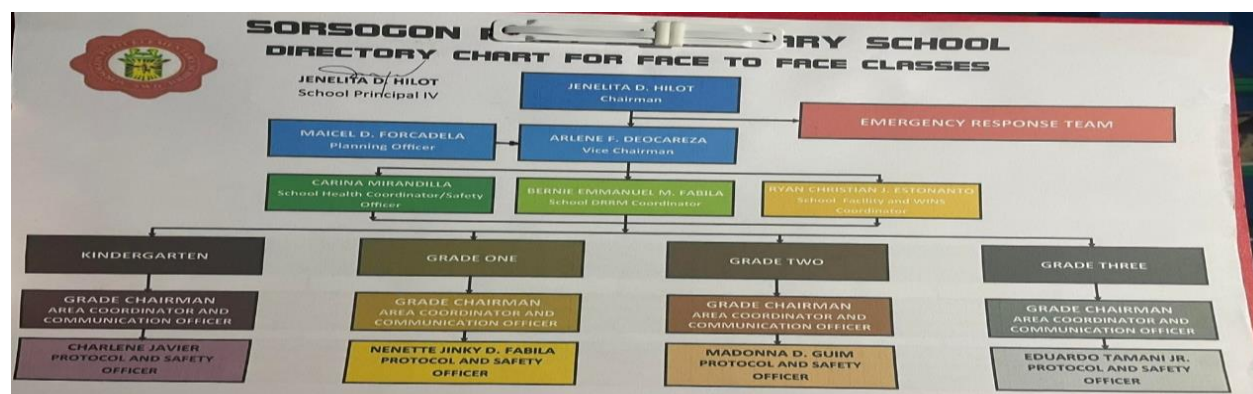


Plate 11. School Directory Chart for Face-to-Face Classes



Plate II displays the Directory Chart for Face-to-Face Classes that shows the cascading of authority to follow whenever local decisions and plans has to be made on the different areas of school operations especially that limited face-to-face classes were ongoing in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic.

In actual implementation, suspension and resumption of classes were dependent on the decision that the local IATF has been issued. The foremost concern of the school being embodied by this School Directory Chart was concerned with the strategies to do to ensure that learning continues through the alternative modes set by DepEd.

## 2. Status of the school in terms of focus on teaching and learning

Focus on teaching and learning is the component of school readiness that deals with teaching and learning activities. It concerns the most appropriate learning delivery modality to be adopted in combination with the face-to-face modality and the schedule of classes. Schools are to determine which appropriate learning delivery modality is suited to the community to which they belong.

**Learning Resources.** There are several learning resources that teachers use in their classes. In this school, books are the main learning resources. Even during the pre-pandemic period, books have been widely used. Inventory documents showed that books are distributed in 1:1 ratio among learners from Kinder to Grade 6 in all subjects. There are subjects that have two or more books being used such as English and Science. Some of the books authorized by DepEd to be used for instructions are shown in Plate 12. Still, these supplementary books are 1:1 ratio and are distributed among learners.



Plate 12. Books authorized by DepEd to be used for instruction and distributed in 1:1 ratio.

During distance learning, teachers still opted to use books. They still distributed the books among learners; however, it was found not enough, especially since books are designed for face-to-face learning. Parents have expressed that they found it difficult to guide their children in their learning with the books alone. So, modules were made and distributed. But modules were newly made and have to be reproduced. There were underlying challenges and shortcomings that the school encountered such as the making of the modules/activity sheets itself and their reproduction which entails expenses. Plate 13 shows the different modules used by the different subjects to facilitate distance learning.



Plate 13. Activity sheets distributed among learners to facilitate distance learning in modular learning mode.



Aside from modules and activity sheets, the school has no stable and strong internet connection that can be used to conduct online classes. In this situation, only modular learning was possible. To defray expenses on reproduction, teachers sought the assistance of parents for donations of bond papers and printers so that modules and activity sheets can be distributed on a 1:1 ratio among learners. Parents also would want to receive a 1:1 ratio of modules and learning activity sheets for health safety reasons.



Plate 14. Parents are regularly returning and picking up modules and activity sheets of their children on a weekly basis. They are strictly observing minimum health protocol while inside the school premises.

Plate 14 shows how modules and activity sheets are returned and picked up during the distance learning modality. Teachers carefully placed all the learning resources outside the classroom so that parents would not crowd inside the classroom. Social distancing is evident and personal bullpens are used. Parents came to school for this weekly or twice a month depending on the availability of modules and activity sheets.

**Limited Face-to-Face Classes.** In the conduct of the limited face-to-face classes, class schedules were made to suit the standards and requirements of the limited face-to-face classes. Appendix E shows the made schedule for Kindergarten and Grade 2 for maximum six-hour teaching. Only half-day teaching face-to-face was required. On another half of the day, teachers are required to perform other related teaching jobs such as the preparation and checking of the modules and activity sheets, and preparation for returning and distribution of the module and activity sheets.



Plate 15. A screenshot of an online google class of Gr. 4

Other teachers pursued teaching online using their personal internet connection. Only two to five teachers were conducting online classes. They were doing this on a weekly basis. Not everybody was required to join since not all pupils have an internet connection and gadgets at home. Plate 15 shows the screenshot of an online class conducted by a teacher while on a stay-at-home working arrangement. Teachers shared that it was fulfilling to still conduct online classes despite the limitations because of the different impact that online classes can be done compared with learning using modules or activity sheets only.

During the limited face-to-face which started on March 1, 2022, parents were given the option of whether they would like their children to attend face-to-face classes or not. Only those who wanted to join can participate in the online class. Attendance to online classes was not being graded. It was only done as a mere supplement lecture to the topics in the module and activity sheets.



In the conduct of the limited face-to-face learning, there were parents who chose not to include their children. They were still given the chance to participate in face-to-face classes through online platforms. A teacher initiated the conduct of a hybrid class that used three modes in her classes: limited face-to-face, modular and online. Plate 16 is a picture of a hybrid classroom under the observation of the school head.



Plate 16. A hybrid classroom under observation of the school head is using three modes of learning in one: face-to-face (those who intend to attend), online (those who intend to stay home) and modular (for all in other subjects).

In the sudden change of mode of instruction, this school was caught empty-handed with the tools needed to overcome challenges such as the internet connection, gadgets, online platforms and online learning resources. The administration and the teachers started from scratch even on modular or activity sheets. But as time went by, teachers were able to adopt different strategies so that they can be successful in the conduct of their teaching tasks. Teachers were guided by the Most Essential Learning Competencies (MELCS) deduced from the regular Basic Education Curriculum used for standard learning setup, face-to-face learning. The DepEd directed the use of MELCS, teachers were all well-oriented on this curriculum and the modules and activity sheets were aligned with these set competencies.

Plate 17 shows teachers conducting reading remedial sessions with primary grades pupils because they were the ones who were in critical years for reading. Teachers exerted effort to reach out to their pupils to do remedial and intervention reading activities. To ensure that this activity was successfully conducted, they did one-on-one reading sessions with the pupils.



Plate 17. Remedial classes in reading are also conducted to help learners cope with needed competencies.

Plate 18 shows an enrichment class for a pupil who represented the school in an online contest. The school still afforded to join contests even on a national level in an online platform. Corresponding teachers trained their pupils through online. This contest was in Mathematics and Science and they grabbed significant awards on this. It is extraordinary achievement to still win in contests when everyone is hindered and limited by this pandemic.



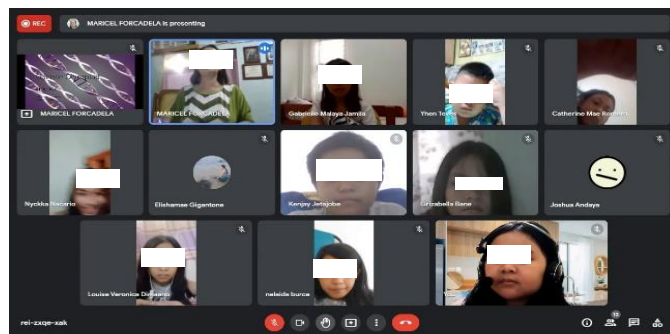


Plate 18. Enrichment classes are also conducted to prepare the pupils for an online contest.



Plate 19. A classroom with 15 learners in it during limited face-to-face learning.

Class size was also ensured to be of standard size of 15 to 20 learners. In the case of this school, there were only 20 learners who were allowed considering that each classroom can accommodate 15-20 learners because their classrooms can accommodate this number with compliance to the one-meter physical distancing.

Teachers kept a profile of every learner that included their addresses, transportation means when coming to school, health status of every learner, vaccination status, learning preferences, level of learning independence, and learning progress. Still, many pupils have not had their vaccination for COVID-19 but this did not hinder them from attending face-to-face classes when they chose to. From the data acquired, out of 2,585 learners enrolled, only 76 of them were vaccinated, that is only 3% had a complete COVID-19 vaccination dose.

**Teacher Support.** With the sudden shift in the mode of instruction followed the revamping of the curriculum to suit the delivery modes of distance learning. With the subsequent limitations, MELCS has been directed for strict implementation. This change required orientation among teachers so that they can be guided in the skills to include in their teaching through modules and learning activities. This orientation was conducted through Learning Actions Cells (LAC) sessions to ensure that the ability of teachers to deliver relevant teaching and learning strategies and ensure continuity of learning through a combination of distance learning and face-to-face classes.

For several sessions during the school year, LAC sessions were conducted. Plate 20 shows one LAC session conducted to orient teachers of the new orders, commands, and updates on the limited face-to-face classes.



Plate 20. LAC sessions of teachers



Coaching, mentoring and training relevant to facilitating blended learning were also conducted. Series of training was done to enrich and upgrade teachers of their knowledge and skills in teaching.

The school head also conducted supervisory tasks during the limited face-to-face classes. Plate 16 shows one of the observations conducted by the school head on hybrid teaching while Plate 21 shows mentoring by the school head to teachers and mentoring of teacher to the para-teacher. The school head prepared a schedule for her supervisory task (Appendix G). The main goal is to guide teachers in facing their teaching tasks.



Plate 21. Coaching and mentoring sessions are relevant to facilitate blended learning.

The results entail that due prior to the implementation of the different learning delivery modalities in the school, the schools have provided professional development training that will improve and maximize the competencies and skills of the teachers. It means that the teachers at present were also equipped with the necessary skills needed to face the challenges brought on by this pandemic. Teachers have to be equipped with different modes of teaching with or without the pandemic so that they can be ready to deliver their lessons in any mode. Online learning will still take effect not only during the pandemic but also during inclement weather and other calamities where the physical school is not available due to the damaged obtained or because schools are used as evacuation centers.

### 3) Status of the school in terms of well-being and protection

Well-being and protection is composed of three sub-indicators of personal protective equipment, COVID-19 case management, and including the most marginalized. All in all, it refers to the holistic approaches and the equipment to use to manage COVID-19 within the school's capacity with consideration to the most vulnerable and disadvantaged pupils. Each of these indicators is discussed.

**Personal Protective Equipment.** The school is bound to comply with the minimum health standards. The school acquired sanitation and disinfection materials which are placed in strategic places of the school. These materials are approved of the FDA and are ensured to comply with standards to serve its purposes.



Plate 22 Personal protective equipment donated to schools

Plate 22 shows the personal protective equipment that were donated to schools. Different sponsoring agencies sent their donations to the schools for personal protective equipment that the school can use. They come in soaps, alcohol, masks, thermometers, toothbrush, toothpaste, tissues, hand sanitizers, sanitizing equipment, and others.

School's MOOE is very limited and personal protective supplies are no longer afforded by the school. Sponsoring agencies are an advantage to the school. They help the school to sustain their needs for these different personal protective supplies. Most of the time, these personal protective supplies are shouldered by the teachers and the parents themselves through donations. But this only lasted for their classroom needs. Each of the classroom have sinks so that handwashing would be convenient to the pupils and teachers. They only need supplies of soap, sanitizers and tissue paper. Facemasks were also given to less fortunate children whose parents could not afford to sustain daily masks wearing of their children. But due to limitations of the school, these children can only be given face mask for their everyday wear.

This school regularly conducted school disinfection and sanitation. Personnel was assigned to do the disinfection according to the underlying protocol and standards. The school has acquired the standard tool and equipment to do the disinfection and sanitation successfully and accordingly. Plate 23 shows a picture of disinfection and sanitation activity.



Plate 23. Disinfection and sanitation activity

**COVID-19 case management.** There were strategies that the school has adopted to maintain the school and everyone in it safe from COVID-19. Crowd management was its top concern, which is why social distancing was always maintained. Everywhere in the school, signages around were strategically placed to remind everybody that social distancing should be observed all the time. Whenever one entered the school, their temperature was checked (anyone with a temperature more than 37° would not be allowed to enter the premises), hand sanitizing was done, feet/shoes sanitizing was done, face mask wearing was ensured, and signing names and cellphone number was done.

In every classroom, pupils were taught proper handwashing, toothbrushing, cleanliness of their tables or desk, hand sanitizing, and facemask wearing. They were under supervised recess so that teachers could still check on them even during recess time. Their temperature was also checked every now and then. Some classroom afforded to have thermometers so they had the facility to quickly get their temperature. DRRM personnel was on alert all the time and made rounds to check that the protocols were observed.

However, the school has no established school clinic. The functional clinic of the school is integrated in a classroom. It is presently located at Rm. 23 Luzon area which is also used for instruction by the designated school health coordinator (Appendix H). There is no school nurse assigned for this school and there was only a designated school health coordinator. A barangay health worker assisted the school to help the school with its health concerns.



Plate 24. Classroom integrated school clinic



The school practiced recording the basic contact information of school-goers. They would use this whenever contact tracing is needed. The school DRRM team was oriented on what to do whenever the need arises. Parents were also oriented that their children are not allowed to go to school whenever they feel flu-like symptoms. Parents were also asked to give relevant information whenever any of their family members got COVID-19.



*Plate 25. The improvised school isolation facility and the in-charge barangay health worker.*

Plate 25 shows the improvised isolation facility of the school. A barangay health worker stayed to facilitate any need for isolation to any of the school-goers. Whenever they encountered anyone who needs special attention like a high temperature, they would send him/her to this facility. The in-charge barangay worker sent by the barangay would take charge of the isolation.

In addition, the school implements Psychosocial Support Activity. The adviser allocated one hour per week. Through this activity, the community is encouraged to come together to ensure learning continuity and protect the right of every child to education. Teachers used the Psychosocial Support Activity Packets which is divided into three parts: I Am, I Can and I Have. They are meant to be used in that order – to build on safety, self-awareness, and self-regulation first, and then move on to a deeper exploration of the self, community, and community resources. Plate 26 displays sessions on psychosocial support activity as done in the classroom.



*Plate 26. Psychosocial Support Activities done in the classroom.*

**Including the most marginalized.** ‘Including the most marginalized’ are about the school’s initiative to identify learners who are most vulnerable and disadvantaged in terms of access to learning as indicated in the eligibility of learners including indigent children, out-of-school youth, physically and mentally handicapped, distressed individuals and families, low-resourced students and others (DepEd Order No. 71, 2. 2022). To facilitate the indicator of ‘Including the most marginalize’, teachers kept a record of their pupils’ socio-economic profile including pupils who are persons with disability (PWDs) and special needs. This way they can have functional knowledge about their pupils.

The school is harmonizing its plans and activities with the provisions in different DepEd Orders to support and implement relevant laws such as RA 10627 (Anti-Bullying Act) in DepEd Order No. 55, s. 2013, and RA 9262 (Violence Against Women and Children Act) in DepEd Order No. 272, s. 2021.

The school has established its committee on the Anti-Bullying Act which directly monitors the occurrences and scenarios of bullying, personal and online, with their pupils. The school has its Discipline Committee which would ensure that pupils obey rules and remain orderly and peaceful, especially during the limited face-to-face learning. Likewise, teacher-advisers have records of their pupils so that they orient other teachers and pupils who can be in contact with others within the school premises. This is to make them aware of the special condition of the pupils. Special considerations were also given to pupils who could not make it to school during limited face-to-face because of sickness and financial instability.

As shown in Plates 17, teachers conducted remedial classes especially in reading to primary-grade pupils to help them cope with their reading levels. Identified pupils are requested to meet teachers on scheduled days. For pupils who have access to internet, teachers conduct online classes with them aside from the modular lessons given to them. Online classes are not compulsory and their attendance in these is not graded. This is done voluntarily and for those who can afford it; those who cannot afford are not forced to attend.

In general, well-being and protection can be prevented through level of knowledge, attitudes and practices towards COVID-19 of everyone in the school. There should be different activities to undertake to enhance well-being and protection by everyone in the school. Instructional materials have to be locally made to contribute to enhanced awareness and knowledge of COVID-19 especially among pupils.

## REFERENCES

1. Baskaran, P., Raghav, P. Raveen, K. & Saurabh, S. (2021). Enabling Readiness of a School to Reopen during a Pandemic – A Field Experience. Cambridge University Press. <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/disaster-medicine-and-public-health-preparedness/article/abs/enabling-readiness-of-a-school-to-reopen-during-a-pandemic-a-field-experience/B5A43539EAA6CA56FA684F1DD1BE9C87>.
2. Borja, M. (22, March 2022). Are schools ready for face-to-face classes? Buiness Mirror. <https://businessmirror.com.ph/2022/03/22/are-schools-ready-for-face-to-face-classes/>.
3. Carvalho, S., Rossiter, J., Angrist, N. Hares, S., & Silverman, R. (2020). Planning for School Reopening and Recovery after COVID-19, An Evidence Kit for Policymakers. Center for Global Development. <https://www.cgdev.org/sites/default/files/planning-school-reopening-and-recovery-after-covid-19.pdf>.
4. Chernozhukov, V., Kasahara, H. & Schrimpf, P. (2021). The association of opening K-12 schools with the spread of COVID-19 in the United States: County-level panel data analysis. PNAS. <https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.2103420118>.
5. Dollente, R. & Tan, C. (2021). School Readiness on the Implementation of Learning Delivery Modalities (LDM's) in The City Schools Division Province of Laguna: An Input to Curriculum Policy Brief and Intervention Program. International Journal of Theory and Application in Elementary and Secondary School Education (IJTAESE) ISSN 2684-7167 (online) Volume 3Number 2: 101-124.
6. Dubik, S. (2021). Resumption of School amid the COVID-19 Pandemic: A Rapid Assessment of Knowledge, Attitudes, and Preventive Practices among Final-Year Senior High Students at a Technical Institute in Ghana. Hindawi. <https://www.hindawi.com/journals/edri/2021/8893057/>.
7. Jeong, H. & So, W. (2020). Difficulties of Online Physical Education Classes in Middle and High School and an Efficient Operation Plan to Address Them. International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health. ; doi:10.3390/ijerph17197279.
8. Kim, J. (2020). Learning and Teaching Online During Covid-19: Experiences of Student Teachers in an Early Childhood Education Practicum. International Journal of Early Childhood, 52(2), 145–158. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13158-020-00272-6>.
9. Oktavianingsih, E. & Arifiyanti, N. (2021). School Readiness for Early Childhood in Face-to-Face Learning in Pandemic COVID-19. Indonesian Journal of Educational Assessment. DOI: 10.26499/ijea.v4i1.103.
10. Pediatric Infectious Disease Society of the Philippines (PIDSP). (2021). <http://www.pidsphil.org/home/research/>.
11. Sparrow, R., Dartanto, T., Hartwig, R., Sparrow, R., & Hartwig, R. (2020). Indonesia Under the New Normal : Challenges and the Way Ahead. Bulletin of Indonesian Economic Studies, 56(3). <https://doi.org/10.1080/00074918.2020.1854079>.
12. UNESCO East Asia and Pacific Regional Office (UNICEF EAPRO). (2022). (School Safer, Preparedness & Reopening. <https://apa.sdg4education2030.org/taxonomy/term/346>.
13. UNICEF. (2020b). UNICEF Education COVID19 Response Update – October, 2020(October), 1–14.
14. UNICEF. (2021). Education and COVID 19. <https://data.unicef.org/topic/education/covid-19/>.
15. UNICEF. (2021). Framework for reopening schools supplement: From reopening to recovery – key resources. <https://www.unicef.org/media/94871/file/Framework%20for%20Reopening%20Schools%20Supplement-From%20Reopening%20to%20Recovery-Key%20Resources.pdf>.
16. WHO. (2020). Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19): Schools. <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/question-and-answers-hub/q-a-detail/coronavirus-disease-covid-19-schools>.
17. World Health Organization. (2020). Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. [https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/adgroupsurvey={adgroupsurvey}&gclid=Cj0KCOjwyYKUBhDJARIsAMj9lkG9xH\\_iZBwj-geArvfZzmT7prtABLSU9fMCNICS\\_m-Zhc8vGvJL3gaAh3nEALw\\_wcB](https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/adgroupsurvey={adgroupsurvey}&gclid=Cj0KCOjwyYKUBhDJARIsAMj9lkG9xH_iZBwj-geArvfZzmT7prtABLSU9fMCNICS_m-Zhc8vGvJL3gaAh3nEALw_wcB)