

# UIS Regional Virtual Meeting

Thursday 15<sup>th</sup> May 2020

A presentation from the Cook Islands

## Current status – Education in the Cook Islands, 2020.

- Cook Islands is COVID-19 free. We are currently operating in CODE YELLOW of our National response framework. This is an alert stage with measures designed to delay widespread disease transmission.
- The Ministry of Education are directed by Te Marae Ora (TMO, Ministry of Health). A national response Framework has been developed and applied since the 24. 03. 2020. (See attached)
- Schools are open with revised and heightened hygiene and physical distancing requirements in place.
- Hygiene: washing hands on entry to classroom spaces, before and after eating and at the end of each day, tooth brushing drills have been suspended until further notice as well as sports and cultural activities that involve the gathering of large groups of people.
- New physical distancing norms include spacing desks in classrooms, staggered play times/break times (which is proving to be very difficult), assemblies and meetings are held either virtually or outside/in a large hall for space and ventilation.



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# Effects on Education Sector

- 23<sup>rd</sup> of March to 17<sup>th</sup> April – Moved from CODE BLUE (Preparation and Readiness) to CODE YELLOW. An earlier than anticipated school holiday of two weeks was scheduled, followed by an additional two weeks where schools were closed. During this time, negotiations were active in regard to border control and COVID 19 cases around the world were on the rise.
- Academic calendar adjusted.
- Remote learning platform activated. Schools prepared both hard copy and virtual lessons/learning resources for students. We have identified a need to continue developing this in case we go into a CODE RED (Activation stage, mitigating impact of disease) with school closures.
- Remote working platforms activated also, installment of ZOOM and higher than usual usage of virtual meeting platforms etc.
- Initial scoping of student and staff accessibility to internet while at home showed gaps. Impact of internet access on families and staff while remote.
- Sporting and cultural events postponed.
- No large gatherings for schools. This affected school AGM's, scheduled school events, teacher professional development.
- NZQA (Our National Qualifications Authority) have made recent changes to the NCEA (National Certification) where assessment timelines have been extended.
- In school and MOE health policies revisited – strengthened restrictions on children and staff coming to school sick. If you feel sick in the morning – even suspected – stay away!
- Local travel restrictions have impacted on the usual school visits that advisors make to Pa Eua (outer island) schools for support and programme implementation.
- No singing in schools – big cultural impact for the Cook Islands.
- Some Education staff remain in New Zealand and not all have made it onto the repatriation flights. This will impact on project and programme plans like CTT. (MoE teacher training).
- The annual school review schedule has been altered and due to the border closures to the Pa Eua (outer islands), we are planning to implement a remote review strategy.
- Adjustment to budget allocations across the Education sector.

## Data collection activities affected?

- Our National aggregate data collection processes are still operating as per usual. We continue with the collection of EMIS and Term Returns which capture student numbers, teachers, school closures and student movement.
- School assessment data may be affected depending on subject – e.g: Physical Education/ performances to audiences, music and cultural assessments etc. We are still yet to scope this and see what the potential impacts could be.
- School Review data is affected slightly without the face to face interactions and meetings. The outcome of a remote review strategy is yet to be known.
- We have discussed the possible development of a policy to allow for parents to keep children at home if they wish during Code Yellow. This policy is in draft.
- The 4 week holiday proved to be challenging for parents and majority of them sent their children back to school as soon as schools reopened. This also indicated families high level of confidence in the public health and education measures when sending their children back to school.



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## New data collection approaches/Key issues and challenges

- Our National Focus Area (NFA) will include a collection of data on the experiences and challenges of schools during the COVID 19 pandemic. This will be led by the MoE Review team.
- Remote learning platform to be strengthened. (greatest challenge)
- SMS (Edge) to be consolidated and strengthened.
- Internet accessibility and affordability from home.

## Data production during crisis?

- Data to share with external agencies e.g, Internal Affairs. Social welfare, child benefits, Te Marae Ora, Ministry of Finance and Economic Management.
- Tracking student and staff movement between Rarotonga and Pa Enua/overseas. e.g, scholarship students returning home during crisis, staff as well.
- Monitor accessibility to remote learning platforms and resources for students while at home. e.g, internet connectivity and laptops/mobile phones, apps like ZOOM, google classroom etc.
- Number of vulnerable students and staff in the education - Inclusive Education population – safety and resources for continued learning.
- Number of staff who care for vulnerable people.
- Student achievement – monitor any changes in enrolment data, achievement data, analyse if any correlation with pandemic changes to school/education norms.