

## LEARNING RECOVERY PROGRAMME AFTER THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC



*By Corporate Communications Division, Ministry of Education*

The world has gone through a significant transformation due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This caused shock to the educational system worldwide due to school closures, thus slowing down the progress toward reaching global development goals, particularly those related to education. The disruptions in the educational systems without face to face sessions have already resulted in significant learning deficits and inequalities.

His Majesty Sultan Haji Hassanal Bolkiah Mu'izzaddin Waddaulah ibni Al-Marhum Sultan Haji Omar 'Ali Saifuddien Sa'adul Khairi Waddien, Sultan and Yang Di-Pertuan of Brunei Darussalam highlighted during the 32nd Teacher's Day Celebration that with 15 weeks of school closure, students in the first wave experienced an average learning loss of more than half a year. If there is no intervention, the learning loss will have a long-term detrimental impact on the productivity and well-being of the students.

While it is commendable that remote learning has been attempted, it has come with its own limitations. School closures have affected children's well-being and development, in addition to their academic progress. Following the COVID-19 pandemic, it was insufficient for schools to merely reopen: students need to be supported and help them adjust and catch up with the lessons they have missed. The education authority must assist schools in tackling enormous challenges that lie ahead, as the future of an entire generation is at stake. Consequently, now is the time to act.

### **CHALLENGES SCHOOLS FACE POST-COVID-19 PANDEMIC**

Following the COVID-19 outbreak in Brunei Darussalam, schools were facing numerous challenges. Students and teachers across the country faced possible learning deficits as teaching and learning online caused delay in work schemes or syllabus coverage. Many teachers found studying online at home was less effective than face-to-face teaching, particularly when comprehension requires dialogue teaching and more so on topics students will find difficult. As students return to face to face lessons, the usage of masks has also made teaching phonics and reading extremely difficult for primary school students.

Teachers also had to cover the entire syllabus in a short amount of time without full attendance as many students were infected with the virus. For students with special needs, losing out on social interactions and changing routines, as well as having their sleep and eating patterns interrupted due to the pandemic, can be especially distressing to their development. All those above can contribute to learning loss.

In order to safeguard teachers and students, they were required to adhere to standard operating procedures and maintain social distancing. Practical classes were conducted in the afternoon or split into smaller groups if possible. Large areas are used as learning spaces such as conference rooms, libraries, school halls and surau. However, this posed yet another logistical challenge for some school leaders as not all schools have spacious areas for their specialist rooms.

### **LEARNING RECOVERY PROGRAMME**

To address students' learning loss and reduce learning gaps brought on by school closures during the COVID-19 pandemic, the Brunei Ministry of Education has initiated a learning recovery task force. Their objectives are to support schools develop short, medium and long-term learning recovery strategies ; to collect, evaluate, and exchange assessment data; and to establish monitoring and evaluation (M&E) tools. The expected results are reduced learning gaps, improved learning outcomes, increased student attendance, effective use of assessment data, and teachers with the knowledge and skills to administer the Learning Recovery Programme.

Tutty Hyrneeita Haji Abd Latip, Principal of Sekolah Tinggi Perempuan Raja Isteri emphasised that:

“The Learning Recovery Programme is crucial to ensuring that every student has the opportunity to reach their full potential. Teachers at the school put in a lot of effort to complete the program using a balanced education that would not only address the academic loss but also support the student holistically. A balanced education at the school entails considering how to best provide the ideal learning environment for the students to demonstrate their value to the institution by offering them extra classes....

....Furthermore, it is to give students the chance to have discussions with their teachers and fellow students both inside and outside the classroom, to work in groups or collaboratively, and, finally, to ensure that by the time exam season arrives, students have learnt at least 90% of what their teachers had planned for them to learn.”

### **EMPHASISE ON DATA-DRIVEN CULTURE**

The necessity of establishing a data-driven culture in schools was emphasised repeatedly throughout the Learning Recovery Programme workshop. Teachers are expected to utilise data to guide their decisions in a culture that is driven by data. Schools must form teams to collect and analyse various data so that students' learning progress can be monitored and help avoid prolonged learning loss as school reopens.

It is vital that the school leadership team and all teachers evaluate on a regular basis and make instructional decisions on how to assist students affected by school closure during the COVID-19 pandemic. These decisions will be translated into actions as important success criteria to ensure that schools have recovered from the learning loss.



*School Leaders Discussing the Challenges in Schools after the Pandemic during the Learning Recovery Programme Workshop*

Hajah Nor Zurina binti Haji Assim, one of the members of the Learning Recovery Task Force highlighted that:

“During the COVID-19 pandemic, teachers attempted to deliver lessons via Home-Based Learning in replacement of face-to-face lessons. Managing teaching and learning during these difficult times has posed many challenges for the teachers and the school leaders. Hence, when the school reopens, teachers can identify their students’ learning loss impacted by the school closure by analysing the data from the Students Learning Survey conducted in May 2022. The next way forward is to strengthen the schools’ data-driven culture by consistently monitoring students’ learning progress using multiple education data to help them get back on track.”



**Hajah Nor Zurina binti Haji Assim,  
Learning Recovery Task Force**

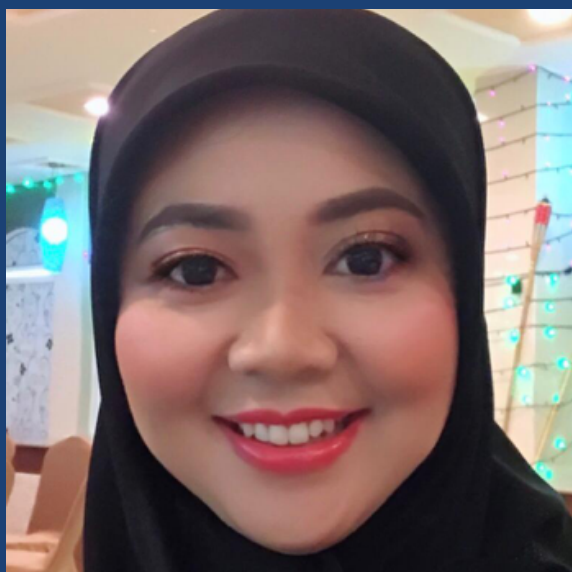
As a means of supporting the Ministry of Education initiatives, schools have implemented a number of strategic initiatives in their recovery plan programme. It involves reinforcing the foundation of literacy and numeracy for the primary level and reteaching content-based learning for the secondary level. Learning is also accelerated during curriculum hours by altering and integrating lessons and enhancing the pedagogy of differentiated teaching and learning. The use of digital learning, such as blended and flipped classrooms, is another educational activity that can help teachers expedite their students' learning. Furthermore, some schools are also emphasising growth mindset activities to promote and develop their students' socio-emotional learning.

“The Learning Recovery Programme has led to the inclusion of items during intervention programmes on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday that are concentrated on topics that must be stressed to assist students with their learning loss.”



**Principal of Mentiri Primary School  
Sarimah binti Hj Lusin**

“Head of Departments and team would analyse the data gathered and identify the weakest items and reteach it.”



**Principal of Pengiran Anak Besar  
Primary School  
Salinawati binti Md Zainal**

As stated by the school leaders, once the data is gathered, the information should be regarded as one of the most valuable resources since it can be used to monitor students' growth and pinpoint areas where teachers' lesson plans need to be improved. The fourth industrial revolution, also known as the digital age, requires society to adapt to working with data and information. A holistic approach to school learning recovery is when school leaders interact with and seek cooperation from the school community to ensure that the plan is understood.

Furthermore, it is crucial to regularly assess how well the programme is working in practice. School administrators would take the initiative in discussions with teachers to analyse programme outcomes and impacts through the proper use of data.

The Learning Recovery Programme illustrates how data, when used wisely, may be used to enhance lesson plans, foster closer bonds with students and teachers, and ultimately, encourage better results. If schools are to remain adaptable, strategic and able to fulfil the demands of contemporary education, they must learn to embrace a data-driven culture. Data-driven decision-making can assist in making the choices more manageable by providing a framework for accomplishing this goal. Schools can enhance instruction, raise academic success for all students, close the student-teacher gap, and make better decisions about programmes and policies when they adopt a data-driven culture especially after the loss that the COVID-19 pandemic caused.

### **FUTURE OF EDUCATION IN BRUNEI FOLLOWING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC**

Brunei's education environment was severely impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the introduction of the Learning Recovery Programme and an emphasis on data-driven culture as part of the Ministry of Education's initiatives to recover from learning loss has helped schools not only to be more aware of the problems faced by the teachers and students but also to create solutions. From here, schools can gradually improve and address issues to create a better teaching and learning environment. The pandemic has also catapulted and enhanced the use of digital technology which can now be incorporated further into teaching and learning approaches.

For more information about the Learning Recovery Programme, please visit <https://bit.ly/3FLxL3y>