

1 Warmer

A Discuss with a partner or in groups.

1. How did school programmes changed during the COVID pandemic where you live?
2. What are schools in your area doing now to make up for that "lost" time?
3. Are there are safety measures in place for children, e.g., mask wearing or social distancing?

Back to School

Summer has ended early for some. Several school districts across the U.S. decided to start the academic year in August to make up for students' missed learning during the COVID-19 pandemic and all the issues that come with it.

The pandemic and lockdowns have been a stressful time for many families and brought more worries about isolation, finances, sickness, and, for some, dealing with loss. This has affected both adults and children. It has long been thought that children learn best in a safe, secure, and stable environment, so it comes as no surprise that students' learning has suffered.



But children may have suffered more than adults in certain areas. According to Ofsted (The UK's Office for Standards in Education), some young children find it difficult to recognise facial expressions. Not only did they miss many months of learning in the classroom, but they also didn't go on play dates or after-school activities, and interacted mostly with people wearing masks. Many young children's social skills have been delayed as a result. This group in particular, experiences anxiety about safety. They are also used to wearing masks, and many are still worried about infections now that masks are becoming optional.

In addition, students from disadvantaged backgrounds have suffered much more. For two years, most education programs have dropped exams and relied on teacher assessments for grades. In many cases, this hid the disadvantages that some students have faced, like not having access to technology needed for learning or a quiet place to study. But now that students are going back to school, these disadvantages might become clearer as missed learning and student mental health affect some much more than others.

Some schools are organising "catch-up sessions" for children (even as young as six), but perhaps what children need now more than ever are more opportunities for play and to catch up on the social, physical, and emotional skills that they have missed.

2 Understanding the article

A Choose the correct way to finish each sentence.

1. Some schools in the U.S. decided to
 - a ... let students go on summer vacation early.
 - b ... restart classes earlier than usual after summer vacation.

2. According to the article, students' learning has suffered because
 - a ... the COVID pandemic has been a stressful time.
 - b ... they have been in a secure and safe environment.

3. According to Ofsted, some young children's social skills have not developed because
 - a ... they missed out on normal activities inside and outside the classroom.
 - b ... online learning is very different to being inside a classroom.

4. One example of a disadvantage faced by a student is
 - a ... not having a quiet place to study.
 - b ... not having to do exams.

5. According to the article, it might be more important to give students
 - a ... extra classes so they can catch up on missed learning.
 - b ... more time to play and interact with each other.

3 Exploring the topic

Imagine you are the head of a local school. Choose three issues your students face now going back to school after the COVID-19 pandemic and lockdowns. Work in groups and brainstorm solutions. Then present your ideas to the class

Issue	Solutions
1.	
2.	
3.	