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MOE Decides to Postpone the New School Year

Introduction / Background information

- The Ministry of Education (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Education, Yoo Eun-hae) asked all daycare centers, kindergartens, elementary schools, middle schools, high schools, and special education schools across the nation to postpone the opening of the new school year for the next two weeks from March 23rd to April 6th.
- The Korea Centers for Disease Control and Procedure (KCDC) and experts have advocated the next two to three weeks a critical period as infectious diseases spread more rapidly in dense places like schools, and it can increase the person-to-person transmission.
- Although COVID-19 rates have been falling, it is too early to loosen up, and the Korean government is requesting the public's active participation in social distancing practices, once again, with the delay of the new school year.
- The academic calendar for daycare centers, kindergartens, and schools at all levels will be changed accordingly due to the five-week school closures.
- The Ministry of Education will advise the Metropolitan and Provincial Offices of Education as well as schools to cut the number of holidays (10 days) from the mandated class instruction days (190 days for

elementary and middle schools, 180 days for kindergartens), and also reduce the class hours respectively.

- The Ministry of Education is also reviewing possible ways to change the university admission schedule, considering the delay in the opening of the new school year in high schools.
- The Ministry of Education will consult with KCDC, analyze the progression of COVID-19 epidemic closely, and adjust the time and ways to reopen schools with flexibility.

Financial support as follow-up measures

- Prior to the opening of the new school year, the government will bolster support for disinfecting school buildings and classrooms as well as use additional fund to minimize disruption in learning and childcare due to the prolonged school closures.
- The Ministry of Education will consult with the Metropolitan and Provincial Offices of Education to utilize the local education fund up to about KRW 253.4 billion to respond to COVID-19, particularly for providing the emergency childcare program, buying masks and hand sanitizers, and operating online classes.
- In addition, a task force team in preparation for the new school year

will be headed by the Vice Minister of Education, working with the Metropolitan and Provincial Offices of Education to decontaminate school facilities, manage school hygiene, and provide academic support for students.

Preparation for the opening of the new school year

1. Healthier school infection control

- The Ministry of Education, in consultation with health authorities, will distribute guidelines on how to disinfect school buildings and classrooms to prevent the potential entry and spread of the infectious diseases.
- In addition, with the cooperation of relevant Ministries, medical masks will be secured in the event of an outbreak in school, and ways to distribute cotton masks for all students will be discussed.
- As part of efforts to build a safer learning environment, stricter social distancing practices will be implemented, students' desks will be spaced out, foodservice environment will be enhanced, limited number of students will use common areas, safe zones for teachers will be ensured, and disinfectant products and hand sanitizers will be placed.

2. Online learning

- Online learning will be facilitated in response to concerns of students and parents with regard to filling the gap in instruction due to the prolonged school closures.
- Virtual platforms will be set up by March 20th, which will give students access to academic contents, daily instructions, and so forth.
- Starting March 23rd, individual teachers will offer a variety of teaching and learning activities, and in preparation for the new school year, they will increase the effective use of online learning by giving students assignments and relevant comments.
- The “ICT support project” will take effect to provide increased grants on computer and internet fees for digitally disadvantaged students, and the “school computer rental service” will help guarantee online learning for all students.
- A group of teachers who volunteer the remote support (called “Teacher On”) for classroom teachers will start on March 16th, and best online teaching and learning practices will be shared.
- The Ministry of Education and the Metropolitan and Provincial Offices of Education will hold a meeting at least two times a week to assess and support the smooth operation of online learning.

3. Administrative and Financial Support

- To resolve issues arising from the school closures such as emergency childcare and managing private academic institutions, relevant measures will be implemented according to the local needs.
- The Ministry of Education will create a “Childcare Ideas” tab on the Nuri House website for students participating in the emergency childcare program, and pamphlets containing best practices and e-learning contents (EBS, Nuri House, etc.) will be disseminated to the Metropolitan and Provincial Offices of Education.
- “Play and relax” centered programs linked to children’s developmental stages as well as the Nuri Curriculum will be carried out at the kindergarten level.
- In cooperation with the Metropolitan and Provincial Offices of Education, the emergency childcare program including meals will be a top priority. School staff members will join the efforts and take alternative coverage such as school facility management as well as cleaning and disinfecting schools.
- The eligibility requirements to receive the “small and medium business management fund” will be lessened, and a “special guarantee loan for

private academic institutions” will be granted in March, bolstering measures to support small private academic institutions in financial distress as a result of COVID-19.

- In addition, the Metropolitan and Provincial Offices of Education and local governments will thoroughly inspect the infection control status of private academic institutions, and distribute relevant guidelines for to prevent the spread of infectious diseases.
- Daycare centers will also offer the emergency childcare program, and administrative and financial support to combat the infectious diseases will be equivalent to that of schools.
- Deputy Prime Minister and Minister Yoo emphasized, “The Ministry of Education will spare no effort in facilitating the continuity of learning amid the prolonged school closures as a result of COVID-19, and help schools reopen promptly.” She also requested the government and the public to put best efforts and work together to overcome the national crisis.

