



Implementation of Blended Schooling (July 2021 to June 2022)

Support to the New Norm Project (SSNN), Phase 2

Concept Note

July 2021

Abbreviations and Acronyms

BBP	UWTT Building Bridges from Learning to Success Impact Programme
CBO	Community Based Organisation
CDC	Centre for Disease Control
CKFTO	Caribbean Kids and Families Therapy Organization
FEEL	Foundation for the Enhancement and Enrichment of Life
MiFi	mini wireless hotspot
MoE	Ministry of Education
MoH	Ministry of Health
PSG	Parent Support Group
PTA	Parent Teacher Association
SEA	Secondary Entrance Examination
SSNN	UWTT Support to the New Norm in Primary Schools Project
UWTT	The United Way of Trinidad and Tobago

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Executive Summary

The Ministry of Education (MoE) Updated Draft Guidelines for Reopening of Schools, September 2021 sets out protocols and guidance to schools for safe operations, in keeping with national policy for the New Norm of COVID 19. In May 2021, the US Centre for Disease Control (CDC) released guidelines for safe reopening of schools that emphasize ventilation as critical to safe reopening, along with handwashing, mask wearing and physical distancing. Evidence to date remains that younger children, under 10 years, do not appear to transmit the disease and remain either asymptomatic or mildly ill compared to other SARs viruses which means that the same safety and public health protocols that we are implementing to keep businesses open can be applied to schools.

As we plan for blended schooling which involves return to in person school rotated with remote school, there is much work to be done to address the learning loss in our vulnerable communities. While remote schooling allowed continuity of schooling during the lockdown, and despite the generosity of individuals and corporate sector in the form of devices and connectivity, lower income families struggle to sustain the effort needed for their children to keep up. Studies on learning loss in communities which already suffered from high levels of learning poverty calls for an acceleration and intensification of inputs for these children.

The project is designed as a public-private partnership learning through action. Our Goal is **to support blending schooling**, including re-opening of in person schooling. This must be done in ways to give our children a real chance to adapt while addressing the critical issue of learning loss so that vulnerable communities do not fall further behind for the next school year 2021-2022.

This Project builds on our UWTT 2020 Support to the New Norm in Primary Schools Project, Phase 1 which worked with 15 schools to build capacity for handwashing, mask wearing, child and parent friendly communication materials and among school leadership. We will continue to embed this in our Building Bridges to Success Impact Programme to ensure sustainability of efforts.

Objectives of the Project

1. Support parents to better engage in learning process of blended schooling
2. Provide teachers with support for small group learning and supervision during break time
3. Strengthen capacity for blended schooling, including connectivity for school and students and capacity of school as connectivity hub
4. Support implementation of safety protocols of handwashing, mask wearing, physical distancing and good ventilation as key fundamentals of returning to in person school

Project Targets

- Teacher Aides from the local community recruited and trained to support teachers with supervising of breaks and maintaining safety protocols
- Parent support provided for future engagement in blended learning
- School capacity improved as an internet community hub
- School capacity supported for maintaining safety standards for COVID 19 with attention to ventilation
- Mobilising estimated budget per school of \$75,000 for continued infrastructural investment and \$200,000 for programme support with a focus on under 8-year-old for the school year.
- UWTT is also implementing a more comprehensive pilot school ventilation Project at Mucurapo Boys RC Primary School

Background

The schools of Trinidad and Tobago have been closed for in person schooling since March 2020 covering four academic terms as we try to keep our children and their teachers safe from the COVID-19 pandemic. To ensure learning did not stop, online learning approaches have been adopted, supplemented by paper packages for those children who are not able to access and follow online.

We are aware of the difficulty in estimating just how far behind students have fallen, extent of virtual absenteeism or even how real the progress of those who seem to have adapted. But whatever the quantifiable element turns out to be, we already know that far too many educators, policy makers and thinkers are calling this “Covid’s lost generation of learners” and the inequitable effect on vulnerable communities and learners. Recent reports¹ are that as many as 25,000 children or about 10% of our children, mostly primary, are not online consistently - and this translates to a much higher proportion of these children will come from our low income and vulnerable communities.

In January 2021, the American Academy of Pediatrics reiterated that evidence to date is that younger children, under 10 years, do not appear to transmit the disease and remain either asymptomatic or mildly ill compared to other SARs viruses. In the AAP Guidelines² Guidance for Safe Schools, they **strongly advocate that all policy considerations for school COVID-19 plans should start with a goal of having students physically present in school** once safety protocols are in place – *“We know that some children are really suffering without the support of in-person classroom experiences or adequate technology at home.”* The CDC^{3,4} has also been advocating for safe return to in person school, citing studies that showed schools not being the source of infection but rather mirroring what exists in the community or even lower levels. In May 2021, CDC released guidelines which include adequate ventilation as the critical public health area to be addressed along with handwashing, mask wearing and distancing. The AAP and CDC agree that 3 ft distancing is practical and adequate once the other measures are addressed.

The Ministry of Education Draft Guidelines for September 2021 for the reopening of schools sets out protocols and guidance to schools for safe operations, in keeping with national policy for the New Norm of COVID-19. The Guidelines also begins to ask school leadership to think about how they will identify and address learning loss among students when they return to in person schooling.

UWTT Support to the New Norm in Primary Schools, Phase 1

As part of our National Time of Caring 2020 initiative, UWTT Support to the New Norm in Primary Schools Project Phase 1 worked with 15 primary schools to strengthen capacity in handwashing, mask wearing, child and parent friendly communication materials and school leadership, July 2020 to March 2021 in preparation for Term 3 in April 2021 opening. We have also continued working with the

¹ [Trinidad Guardian](#) Secondary Students quitting for jobs – January 21, 2021: article reporting from Joint Select Committee on effect of Hybrid Learning on Performance of students.

² [COVID-19 Guidance for Safe Schools \(aap.org\)](#)

³ [Airborne Coronavirus Is a Threat, the C.D.C. Acknowledges - The New York Times \(nytimes.com\)](#)

⁴ [How Coronavirus Spreads | CDC](#)

Principals to ensure that the importance of safety protocols is understood and to determine resources required to ensure that they are followed by all – students, parents and teachers⁵. These schools are part of our Building Bridges from Learning to Success Programme and are listed in Figure 1. Studies on learning loss in communities which already suffered from high levels of learning poverty calls for an acceleration and intensification of inputs for these children. **This translates to ensuring that schools have additional resources, human and financial, to assess learning loss and conduct as much learning as possible in small groups.**

Figure 1: Map showing location of Schools and List of Schools included in Project



1. Belle Garden Anglican School (Tobago)	8. Matura Government Primary School
2. Cocorite Government Primary School	9. Nelson Street Boys Roman Catholic Primary
3. Cocoyea Government Primary School	10. Nelson Street Girls Roman Catholic Primary
4. Diamond Vale Government Primary School	11. Salazar Trace Government Primary School
5. Diego Martin Boys RC Primary School	12. Santa Rosa Government Primary School
6. LaHorquetta South Government Primary School	13. St. Gregory's Anglican Primary School (Rural)
7. Marabella Boys Anglican Primary School	14. St. Mary's Mucurapo Boys RC Primary School
	15. St. Mary's Mucurapo Girls RC Primary School

⁵ [UWTT Support to the New Norm, Phase 1 Final Report, March 2021](#) and [Final Video](#)

Goal of the Support to the New Norm Project, Phase 2

UWTT will implement this as a continuation of our Phase 1 Support to the New Norm Project started in 2020. The Goal of the Phase 2 Project is to support the implementation of the Blended Schooling model for the schools supported in the UWTT Building Bridges Programme. There is no doubt that additional resources will be required, particularly for those communities with greater learning loss, and it is critical that we accelerate our input for this upcoming year in anticipation of a level of continued disruption because of blended schooling and the pandemic.

Objectives of the Project

In order to achieve the Goal, the Project will take a systems approach to:

1. Support parents to better engage in learning process of blended schooling
2. Provide teachers with support for small group learning and supervision during break time
3. Strengthen capacity for blended schooling, including connectivity for school and students and capacity of school as connectivity hub
4. Support implementation of safety protocols of handwashing, mask wearing, physical distancing and good ventilation as key fundamentals of returning to in person school

The Project will be implemented aligned to the UWTT Building Bridges Programme (Annex 2) to ensure sustainability of the initiatives. Annex 3 provides the project framework and the proposed activities and indicators.

Project Targets

- 4,930 students supported with returning to in person school
- 500 Infant 1 and Infant 2 students receive small pod learning support
- Teachers' Aides from the local community recruited and trained to support teachers with supervising of breaks and maintaining safety protocols
- Parent support provided for future engagement in blended learning
- School capacity improved as an internet community hub
- School capacity strengthened, with a focus on ventilation

Implementing Partners and Role of UWTT

UWTT plays the role of backbone organisation with the key responsibilities for:

- Mobilization of finance and in-kind resources
- Monitoring of project results
- Project Management including contracting providers
- Communication and Visibility

This Project will be implemented in partnership with providers, both other Non Profits and qualified providers of necessary services. Providers involved in the Building Bridges Programme currently include: Families in Action, FEEL, CKFTO, Morris Centre.

Timeline of Activities

Phase 2 of the SSNN will run July 2021 to June 2022.

Budget

Table 1 below summarises the inputs and costs required for the 12-month project, with the face-to-face schooling starting in September 2021. The timing is dependent on MoE approval. Annex 2 provides the Project logframe with objectives, indicators and activities outlined. Since the Project is being implemented aligned to UWTT Building Bridges Programme, the programmatic monthly costs will come from the BB Budget and one off costs will come from the Support to the New Norm Project Phase 2. We are estimating average cost of one off or infrastructure investment at \$75,000 per school and programme costs of \$200,000 per school. This will benefit an average of 250 children per school.

Table 1: Project Budget for July 2021 to June 2022 per school

Goal: To support Blended schooling									
	Objective	Activity	Inputs	Units	Unit cost	Monthly Cost	One off cost	%	Source
1	Support parents to better engage in learning process	Provide parenting support	Provider	1	1,667	1,667		7%	BB
2	Provide teachers with support for small group learning and supervision during break time	Recruit support for language development, SEL	Provider	1	1,333	1,333		6%	BB
		Develop Recess time protocols	Provider	1	5,000		5,000		
		Recruit and train aides for support for supervision	School Aides	3	3,500	10,500	5,000	45%	
		Support for Teachers	Teachers Aides			-			MoE
3	Support for Tutoring	Small Group learning	Tutors	50	100	5,000		21%	BB
		Materials for classrooms				-	5,000	0%	
4	Strengthen capacity for blended schooling, including provision of devices and connectivity for school and student	Computer skills lab		5	3,000		15,000		SSNN
		Support for printed packages for infants		1	10,000		10,000		SSNN
		Connectivity for School as hub in lieu of MiFi for students		1	10,000	2,000	10,000	8%	SSNN/BB
5	Support implementation of safety protocols of handwashing, mask wearing and physical distancing as key fundamentals of returning to in person school	Support to implementation of safety protocols for improving ventilation		1	25,000		25,000	0%	SSNN
	Sub TOTAL (inc MoE)					20,500	75,000		-
	Administrative OH (transport, contingency, communication)			5%		1,025		4.3%	
	Project management and monitoring			10%		2,050		8.7%	
	Monthly Total					23,575			
	Project Total July to June			9		212,175			

Annexes

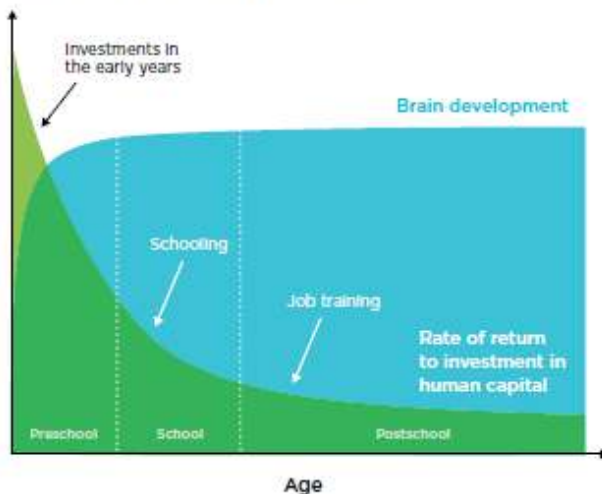
Annex 1: The case for the Entry level cohorts – Infants 1 and 2 to return to In Person Schooling

The McKinsey Report: *Back to school: Lessons for effective remote and hybrid learning, August 2020*⁶ lists 3 important lessons for effective remote and blended learning:

1. Differentiate by the level of need and capability
2. Design specifically for remote and hybrid environment
3. Relationships are the foundation of learning

The Report argues the case for focusing available resources for in person schooling on those facing the greatest challenges and identifies those groups to include vulnerable students at risk remotely, children who require childcare and transition students. Using this differentiation allows us to bring back students most in need of in person schooling in smaller groups than would be otherwise possible. All of this is predicated on having all the health protocols in place for all scenarios. Refer Annex 1 for the relevant exhibits from the McKinsey Report.

Figure 5.1 Investments in high-quality programs during children's early years pay off



Source: WDR 2018 team, based on Carneiro, Cunha, and Heckman (2003); Martin (2012).

For our entry level children to Primary School between ages 4-6 years, the infants 1 and 2 years, the urgency is not about exams – it is about the science of brain development - the opportunity for learning and likelihood of success. The ability to 'read to learn' by age 8 is an important milestone and predictor of success in school, particularly in our education system where we still do not have universal pre-school and have an exam at Standard 5 to transition to high school. Further, there is little evidence that remote schooling is effective for building foundational skills in this age group. UWTT Building Bridges to Success Programme is built on investment in early years as the highest return on social investment for student success. Refer Annex 2 for a summary of the key components of the Programme.

⁶ [Back to school: Lessons for effective remote and hybrid learning | McKinsey](#)

Exhibit 1

The urgency to get back to the classroom varies by circumstances.

Need for in-person learning, by student segment

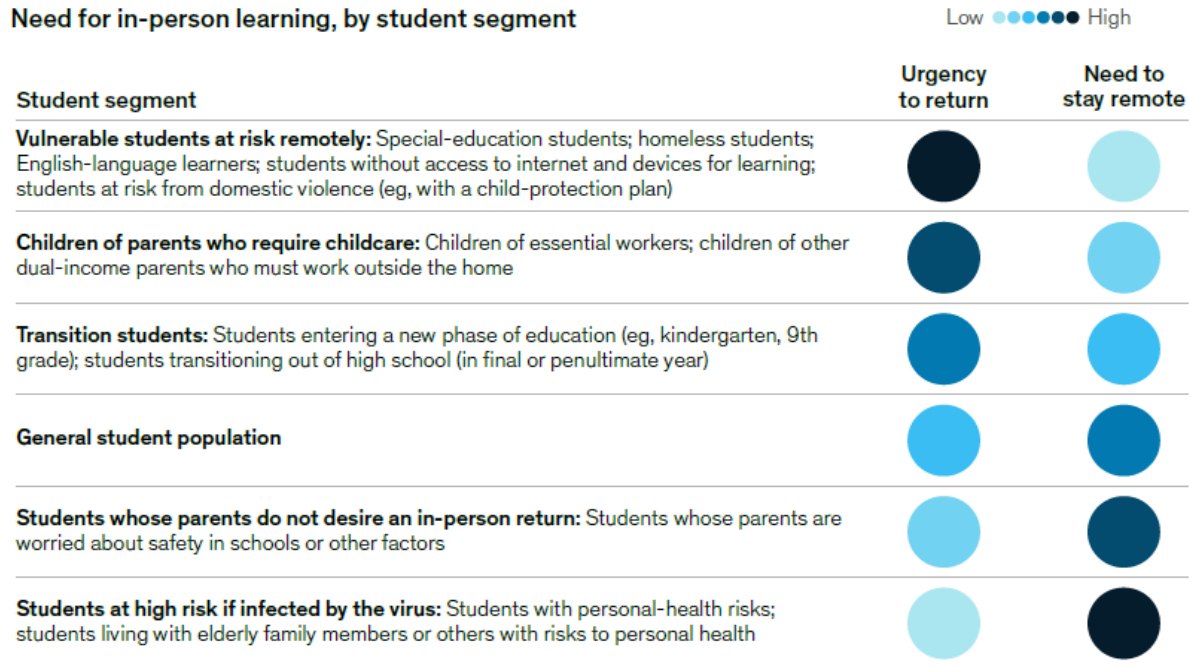


Exhibit 2

Different grades have different needs for in-person learning.

Considerations for returning to classrooms, by student segment¹

Based on current evidence

● Return in person ● Inconclusive ● Stay remote

	Early elementary (ages 4–8)	Late elementary (ages 8–12)	Secondary (ages 12–18)	Secondary graduating class (ages 17–18)
Criticality of remoteness for public safety²	Possible lower risk of transmission; hardest to enforce physical distancing and masks	Possible lower risk of transmission; harder to enforce physical distancing and masks	More risk of transmission; easier to enforce physical distancing and masks	More risk of transmission; easiest to enforce physical distancing and masks
Criticality of school reopening for economic activity	Highest need for childcare	High need for childcare	Low need for childcare	Lowest need for childcare
Risk of losing learning during school closure	Critical phase for initial literacy and cognitive development	Medium risk of disruption of academic progression	Medium risk of disruption of academic progression; higher risk of dropouts	Risk of disruption to academic progression to university; higher risk of dropouts
Effectiveness of remote learning	Lowest effectiveness: young children need social learning and supervision	Low effectiveness: ongoing need for social learning and supervision	Medium to high effectiveness, depending on student profile	Higher effectiveness with growing student autonomy
Logistics of scheduling safely in person	Easy to maintain stable cohorts		Hard to create cohorts (as a result of different combinations of subjects and tracks)	

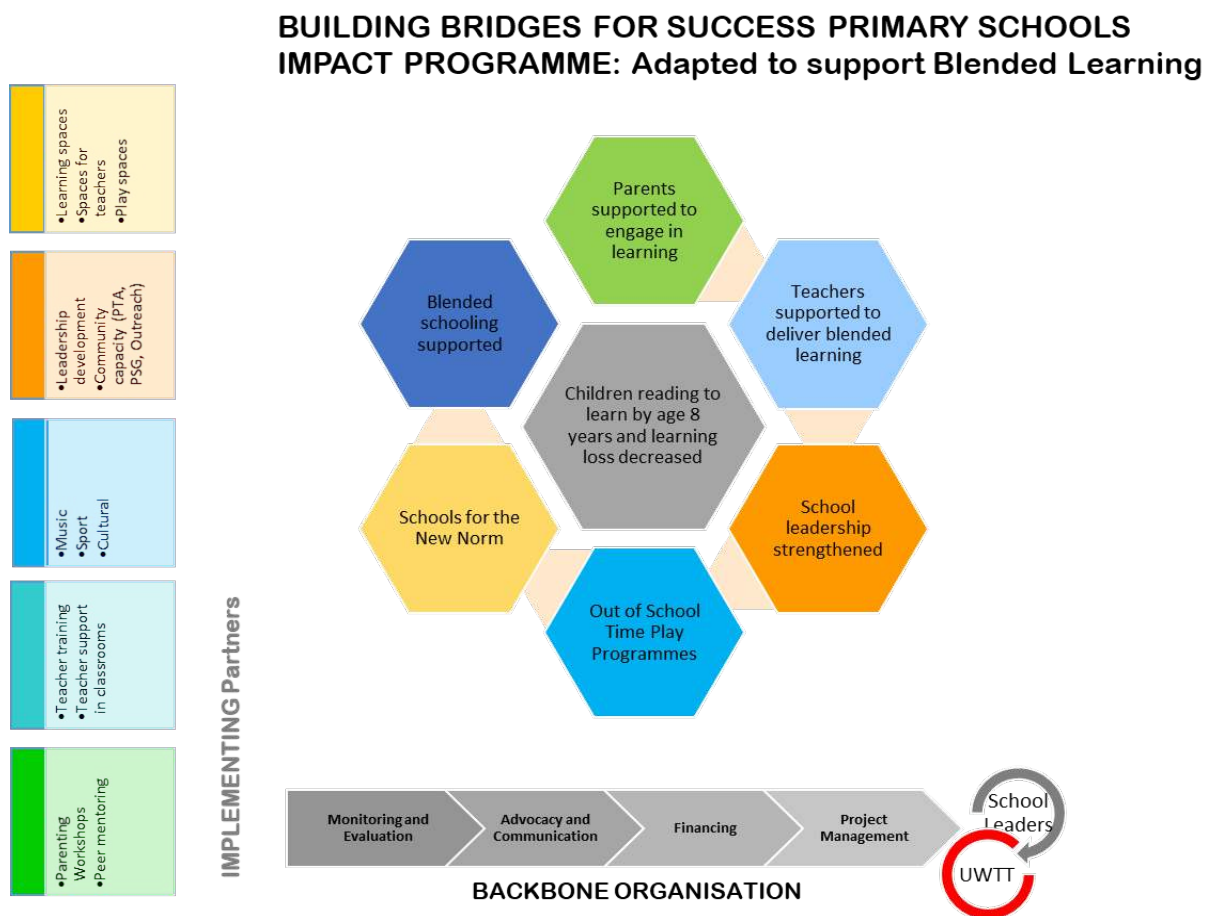
¹All protocols are contingent on viral transmission being under control.

²The path to zero and schools: Achieving pandemic resilient teaching and learning spaces,* Harvard Global Health Institute.

Annex 2: Summary UWTT Building Bridges from Learning to Success Programme 2019-2022

The UWTT **Building Bridges from Learning to Success** Programme, launched in July 2019, focuses on the 4 to 8 years old students to build strong foundational skills (literacy and numeracy) in at least 10 low-income school communities (9 primary schools and 1 Early Childhood Centres for Education (ECCE)). In turn, this will ensure that they approach learning with enthusiasm and joy, ultimately entering secondary school prepared and ready, leading to achieving the longer-term goal finishing secondary school successfully, and entering the world of work and adult life better able to take care of themselves and their own families. UWTT provides the backbone organisation role. The key objectives or Components of the Programme are illustrated in the figure below (adapted for the blended learning model) and include;

1. *A structured parenting programme implemented*
2. *Teacher capacity increased to identify and manage diverse learning needs*
3. *Out of school time play programmes supported*
4. *School leadership and School Communities (Parent Support Groups (PSGs), Parents Teacher Association (PTA), local CBOs) capacity strengthened for blending schooling models*
5. *Improving quality of essential school spaces for foundational skills and blended schooling for blended schooling model*



Annex 3: Project Framework

	Objective	Indicator	Means of Verification	Assumptions
	GOAL			
	To support implementation of a blended learning model for primary schools	Model piloted and results shared by September 2022	Model available to MoE and partners	Schools reopen for in person schooling September 2021 Community transmission remains managed
	OBJECTIVES			
1	Support parents to better engage in learning process	At least 25 parents attending sessions	Provider reports	Parents approval for project
2	Provide teachers with support for small group learning and supervision during break time	Teachers better prepared for blended schooling model and full restart	Survey	Teachers approval for project
3	Provide tutoring support for children in need	Tutor sessions provided	Tutor reports	Willing and able tutors for these communities
4	Strengthen capacity for blended schooling, including provision of devices and connectivity for school and students and access to in person schooling	Computer skills lab established School with adequate connectivity for blended schooling	Progress Report	Resources available for improving connectivity in area
5	Support implementation of safety protocols with emphasis on ventilation for the new school year	Tailored plans by school	Progress Report and Protocols	
	ACTIVITIES			
1.1	Provide parenting support	Provider recruited to support parents	Contract	Families in Action continue to support parents
2.1	Recruit support for language development	Provider recruited to support teachers with catch up learning	Contract	Morris Centre, CKFTO, Let's Read, Moms for Literacy
2.2	Recruit school aides for support for supervision	Aides supporting teachers trained and recruited	Contracts	
3.1	Recruit Tutors and assign to remedial students	Contract signed	Contract	
4.1	Establish Computer skills lab			
4.2	Support for printed packages for infants			

	Objective	Indicator	Means of Verification	Assumptions
4.3	Connectivity for School as hub	Options costed and tech solution installed	Contract	
5	Support to implementation of ventilation protocols		Progress Reports	
	BUDGET			
	July 2021 to June 2022	TT200,000 per school		
		TT 75,000 per school		



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