



PR#483

## PRESS RELEASE

### MoECST Announces Transition to Hybrid Learning

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At the beginning of this academic year, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Science and Technology (MoECST) postponed the transition to hybrid learning, due to a sharp rise in COVID-19 cases and the absence of approved vaccinations for students. At the time of that announcement, the Ministry had also pledged to work on reopening some schools for hybrid learning by October 2021.

In keeping with that pledge with thanks to vaccination efforts, and noting the rate of transmission of the virus in some communities, the MoECST is pleased to announce that some schools will be given the green light to reopen for hybrid learning beginning October 4, 2021. The selection of those schools will be based on the following criteria:

- 1) Geographic location of the school and the level of contagion in that area;
- 2) Teacher vaccination status for the school;
- 3) Student vaccination status for the school (considering eligible students);
- 4) Physical readiness of the campus to accommodate students with the required protocols; and
- 5) Community context of the school and the need for a return to the classroom.

The MoECST recognises that the COVID-19 realities for each school community are dynamic and that data collection is a new process. While remaining aware of the realities, the goal is to have a structure within which schools can operate and to stay connected and supportive of one another during these challenging times. No plan is perfect and no one plan can suit everyone. The ministry fully anticipates that the status of some schools will change as the situation evolves in the coming months. However, the process will begin, as best as possible, to manage the new reality of hybrid education. This has to be done as Belizean children need to return to the classroom, even if it is only for a few days per week or a few hours per day.

The health and safety of the school community is a top priority for the MoECST. The ministry, therefore, encourages every student, teacher, administrator, and staff member to remain mindful of the need to wear masks properly, wash or sanitise hands frequently, and maintain physical distance. The ministry also encourages everyone 12 years and older to get vaccinated. This is the best chance at getting everyone back into the classroom.

**Ends**