

POSITION PAPER

Prioritize teachers in COVID-19 vaccinations

March 19, 2021

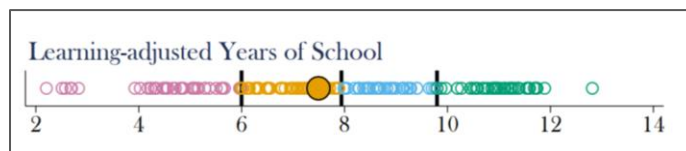
We, the undersigned organizations, call on the government to prioritize teachers in COVID-19 vaccination. We propose that teachers, currently in B1 priority under NITAG Resolution No. 1, s. 2021¹, be moved up to A4 priority. Further, definition of the A4 priority should be revised into:

“Frontline personnel (non-health) in essential sectors: first responders (fire fighters, police, and the like) and those who work in the education sector (teachers, support staff, day care workers).”

Teachers are critical to the continued functioning of society. Even in various degrees of community quarantines, schools remain closed. This affected more than 38 million² youth in our school-age population (ages 5-22 years old). To this date, there is no complete and concrete plan for the safe reopening of schools.

Learning has evidently regressed. Around 2.7 million elementary students did not enroll in the current school year. Based on a latest World Bank estimate, our learning-adjusted years of school (LAYS) will have been pushed back from 7.5 years pre-pandemic to 5.9-6.5 years, depending on the duration of further school closures and the effectiveness of distance learning. This means that while our basic education system offers twelve (12) years of instruction, our students only exhibit proficiency of around six (6) years in school.

Philippines' Learning-adjusted Years of School (LAYS) at 7.5 years (pre-pandemic) compared to other countries (smaller circles). Source: World Bank Human Capital Index (2020) and forthcoming update



¹ NITAG Resolution Number 1 here: <https://doh.gov.ph/sites/default/files/health-update/NITAG-RESO1.pdf>

² UNESCO Institute for Statistics <http://uis.unesco.org/en/country/ph>

While teachers are at an average risk level of COVID infection, vaccinating them increases confidence to open schools.

We estimate that around 1.3 million teachers and teaching support staff should be vaccinated. This number covers both public and private sector in the basic, tertiary, and TVET education.

Estimated number of teachers and teaching staff in the education sector. Data from DepEd, CHED, TESDA

Sub-group	Number (rounded-off, pre-pandemic data)
Basic education teachers (public and private)	1,180,000
Tertiary education faculty (public and private)	137,000
TVET trainers (public and private)	11,000

The prioritization of teacher and education personnel is the common standard internationally. The US Center for Disease Control included teachers as essential workers. They will be vaccinated after health care personnel and long-term care facility residents. Saudi Arabia and Russia similarly put teachers high on the list. In Southeast Asia, Indonesia and Singapore already started inoculation of their teachers. Cambodia has put teachers next in the priority list after health workers.

International organizations recommended and called on countries to prioritize teachers in COVID-19 vaccination. On separate dates in December 2020, UNICEF and UNESCO issued similar statements. UNICEF Executive Director Henrietta Fore called “for teachers to be prioritized to receive the COVID-19 vaccine, once frontline health personnel and high-risk populations are vaccinated. This will help protect teachers from the virus, allow them to teach in person, and ultimately keep schools open.”

SIGNED:

Action for Economic Reforms	Educational Research & Development Assistance Foundation Inc.	Private Education Assistance Committee
Advocates of Inclusion	ICCP Group Foundation, Inc.	Public Services Labor Independent Confederation
Angat Bayi	Kasilak Foundation	Samahan ng Nagkakaisang Pamilya ng Pantawid
Aral Pilipinas	Makati Business Club	Save the Children
ASA Philippines Foundation	Management Association of the Philippines	School of Knowledge for Industrial Labor, Leadership and Service, Inc.
Assessment, Curriculum and Technology Research Centre	Manila Doctors Hospital	Synergeia Foundation
Ateneo Center for Educational Development	Philippine Business for Education	Teach for the Philippines
Coalition for Better Education	Philippine Business for Social Progress	Teachers, Inc.
De La Salle Philippines	Philippine National Research Center for Teacher Quality	The Asia Foundation
Dualtech Training Center Foundation, Inc.	Philippine Normal University	Working Group on Education for Economic Development
E-Net Philippines	Philippine Pediatric Society	Young Public Servants