



**COVID19 and Continued learning for students with disabilities:  
Report of an international survey  
Executive summary  
April 2020**

**Association d'Aide à l'Education de l'Enfant Handicapé**



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**Cover image:** A classroom blurred

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The world is going through a worrying health crisis due to the coronavirus epidemic. Many countries have closed schools and universities to limit or slow the spread of Covid-19.

The education of many pupils and students is disrupted, the case of learners with special needs is even more complicated.

In this context, in order to ensure continued learning for pupils and students, alternative solutions such as platforms and resources for distance learning, among others, are being implemented.

AAEEH has received news from parents of students with disabilities worried or distraught about educational continuity for their child. AAEEH was interested in understanding the lived experience of students with disabilities, what national measures are put in place? What are the difficulties encountered in implementing those measures? What are the possible solutions?

From April 10 to 30, 2020, the Association d'Aide à l'Education de l'Enfant Handicapé (AAEEH) conducted a survey of parents or other family members of disabled students, teachers and professionals working with disabled students.

The objective of the survey was to have an overview of the experience of continued learning for students with disabilities, following the closure of schools due to the Coronavirus pandemic.

About thirty (35) people mainly made up of parents of disabled pupils (75%) in Europe and French-speaking Africa responded to our survey.

The findings highlight the education of children with disabilities in the face of the current health crisis. They indeed reveal the difficulties of ensuring the continuity of learning for disabled pupils even if measures have been put in place. For example, a parent says that he *must "play the role of physiotherapist for his child because the medical follow-up was not maintained due to the lock down"*.

In other contexts, children with disabilities remain marginalized from proposed solutions for a variety of reasons. For example, a parent indicates that in his country, *"the courses given on television are not accessible to hearing impaired children"*.

The findings raise the question of whether the health crisis due to the Covid19 pandemic would not be an opportunity for education systems to question the consideration of disability in educational policies and practices.

This report provides a summary of the survey, including the methodology used, the characteristics of the respondents and the limitations. The report also presents the summary of the main results relating to measures implemented, difficulties encountered and suggestions for better taking into account disabled students in educational policies and practices even after lock down and the health crisis of COVID19. The report uses the words of the respondents as often as possible to convey their voice.

In the conclusion, the report presents recommendations to States, decision-makers, United Nations and international cooperation agencies to take into account the needs of pupils/students with disabilities in all education responses to and after COVID19.

Students with disabilities are at risk dropping out of school because the health crisis has shown the weaknesses of education systems in adapting education responses to their specific situation and needs. In order to facilitate the continuity of learning for students with disabilities in the short and long term, governments and United Nations agencies should ensure that the specific needs of students with disabilities are considered in national and international priorities for education response to the coronavirus and all crisis or emergency situations.

## MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

### To decision makers / States

- Involve parents of students with disabilities in defining educational responses
- Set up listening devices to support and accompany parents of disabled students during the period of lock down
- Coordinate the educational support for disabled students
- Ensure the continuity of the intervention of other professionals with the disabled pupils/student (medico-social)
- Ensure the accessibility of learning taking into account specific needs by type of disability
- Guarantee educational continuity for all based on the right to education for all

- Include the education of children with disabilities as a priority of the national education policy with particular attention to girls with disabilities
- Include disability in national measures and responses in crisis and emergency situations

### To United Nations Agencies

- Ensure that all guidance documents developed and provided to states recognize the impact of COVID19 on students with disabilities and advocate for a dualist approach by ensuring that students with disabilities are included in the targets concerned by response efforts.
- Ensure that girls with disabilities receive special attention in Covid19 responses because of their specificity.
- Ensure that students with disabilities are included in education information and data provided to states to ensure inclusive rights-based COVID19 education responses and strategies (Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Agenda2030).
- Strengthen cooperation in the framework of the implementation of projects on inclusive education of children with disabilities.

### Read more

[AAEEH's Full report](#) in French language



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Association d'Aide à l'Education de l'Enfant Handicapé (AAEEH) is an international organization in special consultative status with UN ECOSOC since 2013 that works for quality education for children with disability through advocacy, awareness, research and multifaceted support to learners with disabilities and their families. It works for a world where children with disabilities acquire skills and competences for their empowerment through education.

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