

Distance learning in Kazakhstan under quarantine

The state of emergency in connection with the COVID-19 outbreak was introduced in Kazakhstan for the period from March 15 to April 15. For schoolchildren, an early school holidays were announced from March 16 to April 5. In order to ensure the continuity of the educational process, schoolchildren and students were transferred to the distance learning format, in accordance with the approved academic load, plan, program and schedule. At the same time, the dates of the Republican Olympiad of schoolchildren in general education subjects, the National Intellectual Olympiad for rural schools and other competitions have been postponed.

Until April 5, the Ministry of education and science of the Republic of Kazakhstan (hereinafter – the Ministry) has conducted organizational work and preparation for the transition to distance learning, including content provision of information systems, teacher training, testing services, etc. The experience of other countries that have transferred students to distance learning was studied.

During this period, school teachers have already started to work remotely, performing methodological and preparatory work while at home. Teachers were transferred to the remote format of work with the preservation of salaries on the same terms and in the same amounts as in the usual time. Teachers have prepared for 1.5 months, took online courses, and have been learning to use digital technologies.

On April 1, teachers have conducted trial distance lessons, on April 2, parents' meetings have been held online, and on April 3, class hours were held throughout the country.

To prepare for the transition to distance learning the Ministry has created a working group to conduct preparatory work in several areas:

A) Information systems that provide sending the task, task completion verification, evaluation, and feedback.

B) Systems that provide access to video lessons, tasks, assessments, tests, discussion and problem solving; if necessary, teachers can use video streaming services with their classes.

C) Classes via dedicated TV channels, where video lessons will be broadcasted according to the schedule. This is especially important for rural schools that have insufficient Internet capacity and lack of equipment. TV channels for this purpose have already been allocated to the Ministry.

At the same time, the Ministry sought to create an effective format for distance learning, which should not be identified with online learning. According to the Minister of education and science of Kazakhstan Askhat Aimagambetov, "the distance learning is much broader and involves the use of several methods and tools at once. It provides a large field for gamification, opportunities for self-organization, and, most importantly, personalization of learning." So, for example, more than 400 video lessons were prepared for airing on television, as well as on the YouTube platform.

Educational organizations were provided by the guidelines from the Ministry on the educational process at all levels of education, which can be updated if

necessary. The Ministry has also distributed recommendations for parents on how to help children learn remotely.

To organize the educational process, the Ministry has provided the access for students to electronic platforms such as "Bilimland", "Kundelik", "Google Classroom", "MOODLE", "Univer", "Platonus", "Canvas", "Daryn online". The Coursera platform has provided free access to courses, while ZOOM has provided free access for classes. Teachers were provided with conditions for remote work.

The Ministry has recommended a number of educational resources that can be useful for schoolchildren:

1. «Bilim media Group» (by a domestic IT company). A huge database with educational content, which contains more than 40 thousand materials. All resources are open for free. <https://bilimland.kz>

2. «Daryn Online». This educational resource has also provided free access to content. All content meets the state's mandatory educational standards. <https://daryn.online>

3. Opiq Platform (Estonian project). The interactive resource contains school textbooks. www.opiq.kz

4. Virtual simulator for preparing for the unified national testing iTest. www.itest.kz

5. Educational portal for schoolchildren and students. <https://100ballov.kz/>

6. NIS Play <http://play.nis.edu.kz/application/registration>

7. STEM Academy. <https://stem-academia.com/en/main-page/>

8. Primary school program iMektep. www.imektep.kz

9. Platform for learning STEM. <http://makeathon.kazneuro.kz/>

In order to provide free access to these educational resources, a Memorandum of cooperation was signed between the Ministry of education and science, the Ministry of digital development, innovation and aerospace industry, as well as a number of telecommunication operators, such as Kazakhtelecom JSC, TransTeleCom JSC, Kar-Tel LLP, Kcell JSC, Mobile Telecom Service LLP, Astel JSC. In other words, when using these sites, subscribers will not be charged Internet traffic (megabytes).

On April 6, the first day of distance learning, 3.2 million Kazakhstani schoolchildren have started distance learning, with 2.4 million of them studying via the Internet only. The electronic portal "Kundelik" had 32 million sessions; 2.2 million unique users visited the website.

Video lessons, personal consultations online, online courses are used as a means of learning, too. The electronic portal "Kundelik", "Mektep.edu.kz" and "Bilimal.kz", "Google Classroom", email and messengers are used for getting feedback.

Video lessons were held on the TV channels "Balapan" (in Kazakh), El arna (in Russian), regional TV channels and Qazaq Radio. In addition to the broadcast, the web site of the "Balapan TV channel was visited by 95,533 people, and the YouTube channel balapantv showed 386 thousand views in 6 hours. All video lessons that streamed on TV are also available on the Internet for re-watching.

Regular education process is possible in schools with a number of children from 5 to 80 that are located in remote isolated localities, in compliance with strict sanitary safety measures (quartz, ventilation, rotation, etc.), as well as in cases of absence of quarantine and registered cases of coronavirus by decision of the local executive body with the approval of health authorities.

Source: Ministry of education and science of the Republic of Kazakhstan