



THE TIMES OF INDIA

INCLUSIVE OF DELHI TIMES (CIRCULATED ONLY IN DELHI NCR) | *APPLICABLE ONLY ON MONTHLY PURCHASE (IN DELHI NCR)

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Schools Go Virtual, But Struggle Is Real

Teachers Say In-Person Learning Can't Be Replicated; For Parents Too, It's Not A Walk In Park

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New Delhi: Schools have moved to online classes because of pollution-related restrictions, but the change has its limitations.

Some have become accustomed to the new setup, but some teachers argue that the experience of in-person learning cannot be replicated in an online environment. Some schools are also struggling with infrastructure problems.

"Each class is conducted by a teacher, with a second teacher acting as a controller to ensure that the camera is on, students remain engaged, and their posture is correct, among other things. Our infrastructure is equipped to ensure that classes run smoothly," Ameeta Mohan, principal of Amity International School in Pushp Vihar, said.

Mohan, however, acknowledged that online learning cannot fully replace in-person

interactions. "We strive to make the online experience enriching for students by using various learning tools, such as Pear Deck and Word Wall," she said. "Teachers are attentive and ensure that every student participates by answering questions when prompted. We encourage peer learning in the virtual setting. One of the main challenges, however, is the increased screen time and the distractions that come with a home environment."

A teacher at DPS, RK Puram, noted that infrastructure was not an issue as every student has access to a phone, tablet or laptop. "However, to prevent students from relying on AI or other tools to answer questions during online classes, we make it a point to randomly select students and ask questions by name. This method ensures that they stay engaged and attentive throughout the lesson," she said.

Rooma Pathak, the principal

Toxic air: Classes X, XII also go online

New Delhi: Chief minister Atishi announced the suspension of in-person classes for all students in Delhi. This decision follows Delhi govt's announcement on Sunday, which initially suspended classes for all, except students in classes X and XII, due to the city's alarming pollution levels. "From tomorrow, physical classes shall be suspended for classes X and XII as well, and all studies will be shifted to online mode," Atishi wrote in a post on X.

Soon after, Directorate of Education (DoE) issued an order, stating "In view of the prevailing severe air quality and high AQI levels in Delhi, all heads of govt, govt-aided and unaided private recognised schools under DoE, MCD, NDMC and DCB are hereby directed to discontinue physical classes for all students of all classes, including Class X and Class XII until further orders". **TNN**

pal of MM Public School in Pitampura, too emphasised that in-person learning cannot be fully replicated in a virtual setting. "When students attend school in person, they not only engage in academic lessons but also participate in activities like library sessions, computer classes and co-curricular programmes. This provides a more holistic approach to their development. In the online format, we

are limited to covering only the theoretical aspects of the syllabus," she said.

There are concerns about why teachers, as well as students in classes X and XII, are still required to attend school and expose themselves to the polluted air. "Students in classes X and XII are expected to be in school every day, along with the teachers. I'm concerned about how the exposure to pollution could im-

part them. The problem of pollution needs to be nipped in the bud. It is not like Covid, which was unpredictable. Something needs to be done about it," Pathak said.

The situation in govt schools is quite different. The institutions and their students often lack the necessary digital resources. "Only a handful of students have laptops, and many don't have access to phones or internet connectivity. Often, students and their parents struggle with technical issues and are unable to connect to classes, leading to a loss of interest over time," Sunita, the principal of Ravi Shankar SKV in Bawana, said.

Joginder Kumar, the principal of Government Co-Ed Sarvodaya Vidyalaya in Rohini, said that some classes are conducted in the evening. "Many students don't have laptops or phones and rely on their parents' devices. As a result, we sometimes have to

schedule classes late in the evening based on the availability of these devices," he said.

Geeta, a cook in Mayur Vihar, said she has stopped taking her phone to work as "my child can use it for her online classes. After she's done, my elder son uses it for his lessons. I'm without a phone during work hours.... I can't be reached by residents."

Parents are also in a dilemma. "My son is in KG. With primary schoolchildren, one parent must sit with them during classes. This means I'm unable to focus on household chores for three hours every day. My child often gets distracted by the other activities around the house," said Mousumi Bhattacharya.

Although online learning is a response to current challenges, it is a temporary substitute for a holistic, interactive experience, underscoring the need for long-term solutions for reducing pollution and educational accessibility.