

APRIL 2, 2020

# AL NOOR - ABA NEWS



Dear ABA Families,

This week, we started back to online classes after our unusual staycations. My week commenced with my normal Senior Leadership team meeting on Sunday, a Board meeting on Sunday evening and a Faculty briefing on Monday morning. They all needed lots of work and a tremendous amount of planning. Virtual meetings, it turns out, take about 6X the amount of planning time and effort than a regular meeting. I immediately empathized with my teacher colleagues. None of us has a production studio with Big Bird and lots of film editors who complete 6 hours of filming for a 10 minute sound bite. This is the real world of online teaching and learning.

By the time Wednesday rolled around, I still miss the human touch. I miss the kids. I am inundated with every insurance company, every store, every association giving me advice and defining my COVID-19 experience for me. Perhaps like me, it is adding to your stress.

I miss you! You are ABA and we are what defines this magnificent school! A student sent me a video this week and he said "I miss you so much. I feel good about you." That was enough. That was enough.

Dr. Susan R. Groesbeck  
Head of School

## STUDENT VIDEOS

10th Grader, Aditya B, made his own video of a science experiment for chemistry class. Watch it [here](#).

Isabella from Grade 9 created a video modeling how food goes through the digestive system for biology class. Watch it [here](#).

# MESSAGE FROM THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Another busy week of online learning! Our first Wellness Wednesday was well received. An opportunity to catch breath, reflect on the week so far, and check in on our own wellbeing. Ms O'Driscoll shared a wealth of useful material focused on resilience - a trait we are all calling on right now! She also shared a survey link for students to complete - they may need a little help from you, but this feedback will really help us to keep track of how everyone is doing, and offer support where possible. You will find the link in the slideshow that was shared on Seesaw on Wednesday.

Some teachers have begun piloting the use of Webex, our video conferencing tool. As with all new technology, we are finding and addressing many issues as we experiment. Our biggest hurdle so far is that unfortunately, Webex cannot be downloaded onto the student iPads, due to our security settings. The workaround during our pilot has been to ask parents to set up Webex on a different device at home. We are reviewing the implications of this, and will communicate with you as soon as we have a clear way forward. We hope that we will soon be able to make use of this tool for quick check-ins with large groups, as well as some smaller group interaction.

While we are not taking formal attendance during this phase of online learning, we are following up with families where we have not heard from a particular student for a few days. We want to ensure that all members of our community are safe, well, and as connected as possible. We are not concerned about whether children are completing all the tasks assigned every day. More important for us is to know that each family is managing to juggle the various demands in a balance suitable for them, and that children feel connected, stimulated, engaged and supported.

Please keep us updated if anything has changed in your family, or if you are facing particular challenges with the online learning platform or your child's involvement. We will continue to work together with resilience and empathy to endure this difficult time.

A Message from Mrs. O'D Hi everyone. I am so excited that I get a chance to say 'Hello' to you all this morning. It is very strange not being in school and seeing you everyday. I am missing you a lot! So today is Wednesday and from now on we are going to call it 'Wellness Wednesday'. Every Wednesday I will send you some ideas to help you remember and practice ways to feel good. But first watch the video.



How have you been feeling? \*

	
<input type="checkbox"/> Happy	<input type="checkbox"/> Worried
	
<input type="checkbox"/> Calm	<input type="checkbox"/> Bored
	
<input type="checkbox"/> Angry	<input type="checkbox"/> Scared
<input type="checkbox"/> Other:	



# ONLINE LEARNING: ELEMENTARY





# MESSAGE FROM THE MIDDLE SCHOOL

We hope you were able to enjoy last week and the gift of time in close quarters with your families. As we continue activities online, your child(ren) may feel further isolated from their peers and worry may be evident, therefore, we are providing opportunities during lessons and advisory for students to connect with each other, explore their feelings and build resilience. In this time of change, being resilient and having the ability to 'bounce back' from unexpected change and difficulties, is essential to the health of each individual.

During this week, we introduced your child to the idea of resilience, they researched what resilience was and how they can develop and build their resilience. Virtual assemblies were held so MS students had a chance to say hello. More information and activities can be found on each advisor's google classroom site ([Here is a direct link to the slide show](#)).

Sierra Filucci has written a [recent article](#) on [CommonSenseMedia.org](#) which addresses the issue of media balance, healthy communication and news literacy for families. As our children are exposed to more information online, it is worthwhile considering,

'Kids will be seeing lots more viral content, including memes, TikToks, and YouTube videos in the days to come. Some of it may be entertaining and thought-provoking, but lots of it will be fake.'

Having conversations about the coronavirus and your own home country situations can help to reduce anxiety in young adults. It is important that children of all ages are given the opportunity to talk about what they are reading and hearing and obtain clarification from a trusted adult. Further explaining news items will help them understand and also give them the opportunity to talk about difficult subjects both now and in the future.

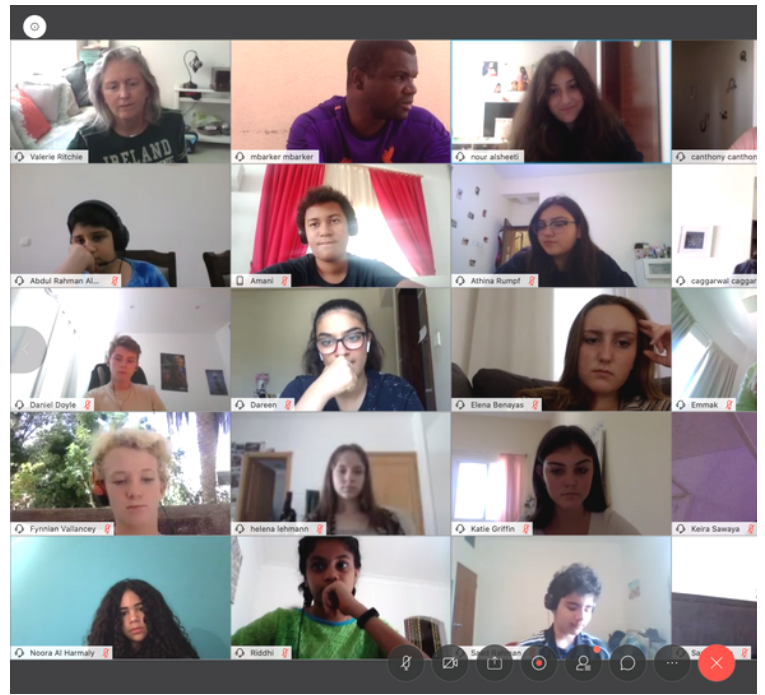
There are many skills for tweens and teens to learn and Ms. Filucci urges parents and students to build these skills and give a number of different activities to complete together:

- **Build critical thinking skills.** Walk kids through an analysis of a piece of news or information by asking: Who made this? Why did they make it? Is it for or against something or someone? Are they trying to get a big reaction from me or just inform me? How can I tell? What's left out of this content?
- **Notice your feelings.** Clickbait and fake news strive for extreme reactions. If the news you're reading makes you really angry, scared, or smug, take note. Check multiple sources before trusting.
- **Investigate the source.** Look for unusual URLs, site names, or social media profiles that try to look like legitimate news or information sites, but aren't. Also, learn more about who wrote or created the content: Are they credible? Biased?
- **Put it in context.** Consider whether other credible, mainstream news outlets are reporting the same news. If they're not, it doesn't mean it's not true, but it does mean you should dig deeper.
- **Cross-reference.** Go to Snopes and other fact-checking sources before trusting or sharing news that seems too good (or bad) to be true.

Both the World Health Organization and the Centers for Disease Control have published authoritative information about the coronavirus and are constantly updating their websites.

- Middle School Team  
Kathleen, Megel and Claire

# ONLINE LEARNING: MIDDLE SCHOOL ASSEMBLY



## LIVING HISTORY OPPORTUNITY

It is certainly a unique challenge that we are facing at this time and one that will be memorable for your children. In an effort to document first-hand responses from students of all ages around the world, researchers from the University of Berkeley in California are actively collecting journal entries and have contacted us for our contribution. They are liaising with schools across the USA and the world to collate primary sources as a record. We are living through a time that will be considered historically significant in the future.

If you would like to encourage your children to contribute to this project, please have them upload their journal entries on [this google form](#) to be considered for submission. Please be reassured that any student journal entries used for future research publications will be made anonymous.

We look forward to reading the responses. Should you have any questions, feel free to contact us at [ishih@abaoman.org](mailto:ishih@abaoman.org) or [jcole@abaoman.org](mailto:jcole@abaoman.org).

Thank you very much,  
Ms. Isabel Shih and Mr. Jeff Cole  
MYP 1, 2 & 3 Language and literature teachers

 (copy and paste!)

# LIFE ONLINE- A PRINCIPAL'S PERSONAL PERSPECTIVE

As we all work towards adapting to our new context I thought I would share my personal experiences with our community. On March 14th we were informed that all schools in Oman would be closed for four weeks to prevent the spread of COVID-19, more commonly known as the Coronavirus. As we all know, this has changed how we live and perhaps how we think and what we prioritise.



One of the main reasons that human beings have been so successful is our ability to adapt. In the Walker household we are certainly having to do this. As a Principal in isolation, it means juggling my time between collaborating virtually with my colleagues to navigating our way through uncharted and challenging seas. Naturally I feel a responsibility for all of your children in the High School and we want to make the best decisions that mean everyone feels cared for, continues to be included in our community and that student learning continues. For our Senior students, we want to make sure that their achievements are celebrated in the best way as they complete their ABA voyage. At the same time, I see at first hand the number of hours that my wife (Jelena) is working to ensure that online lessons are interactive and no student slips through the gaps. It is not uncommon for the Walker household to be online and working from before 6am and after

11pm. I know from talking to my dedicated team of teachers and leadership that this is being repeated in multiple homes.

As a mum and dad, Jelena and I are hugely appreciative of the efforts of the Early Childhood team. The morning messages and ukulele playing of Miss Amy (Ben's teacher) have us all singing along once we get over our own personal discomforts. Ms Batool's messages of how much she misses the children are mirrored by how much Ben misses her. The current situation means that we are spending more time together as a family than we ever have done-sometimes this works and other times we retreat into our own spaces, until Ben brings us back together again. It is heartbreaking when your son or daughter asks when they can see their friends again, to explain why they are not travelling to see a grandparent during the break anymore or to struggle to find the words to help them understand why they can't go to school. However, this is also a reminder of how special our school is and perhaps we will all appreciate it and each other a little more once we return.





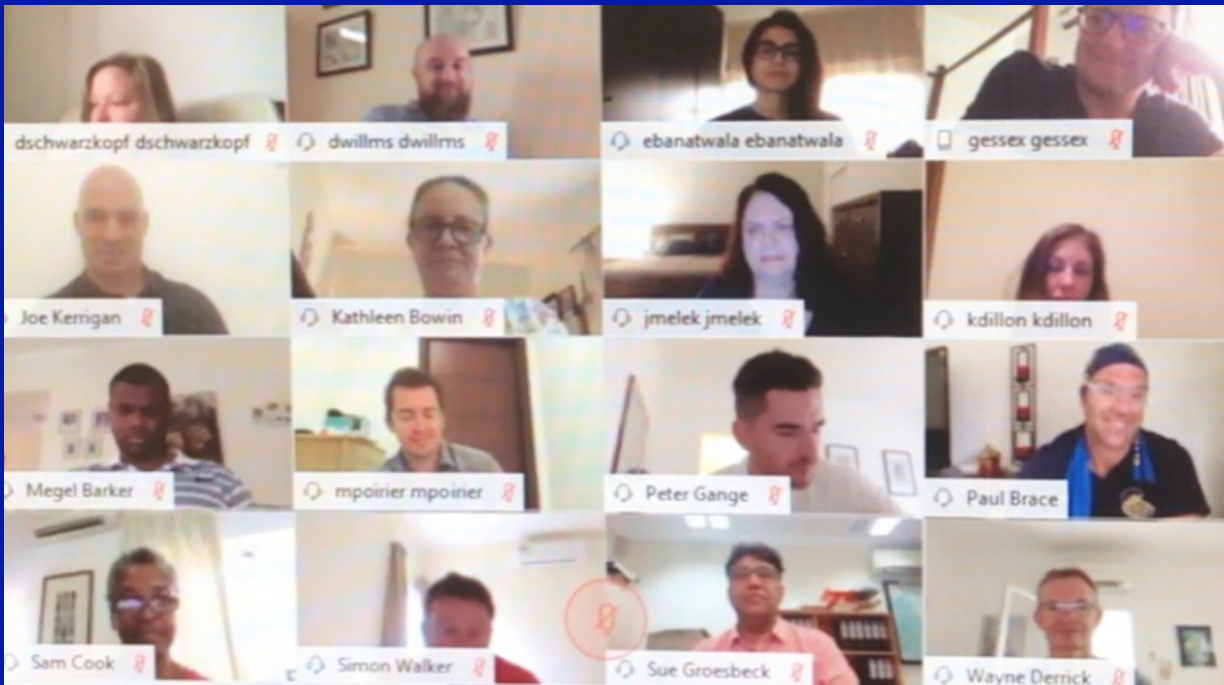
It is a real challenge being a working parent and keeping up with the activities in Seesaw (and argue whether mum or dad should have done this) but this doesn't matter too much and as parents we cannot be perfect (we certainly are not in the Walker household). However, we are learning to catch geckos, use morning Cosmic Yoga for kids to buy us a wee bit of time and speak more to Ben's grandparents who are many seas away.

So, in troubled waters we learn a great deal, for me I have learnt how lucky we are. I take my hat off to all those on our ABA ship (students, parents, teachers and all other staff) who are making sure that we will all be just fine.

- Simon Walker  
High School Principal



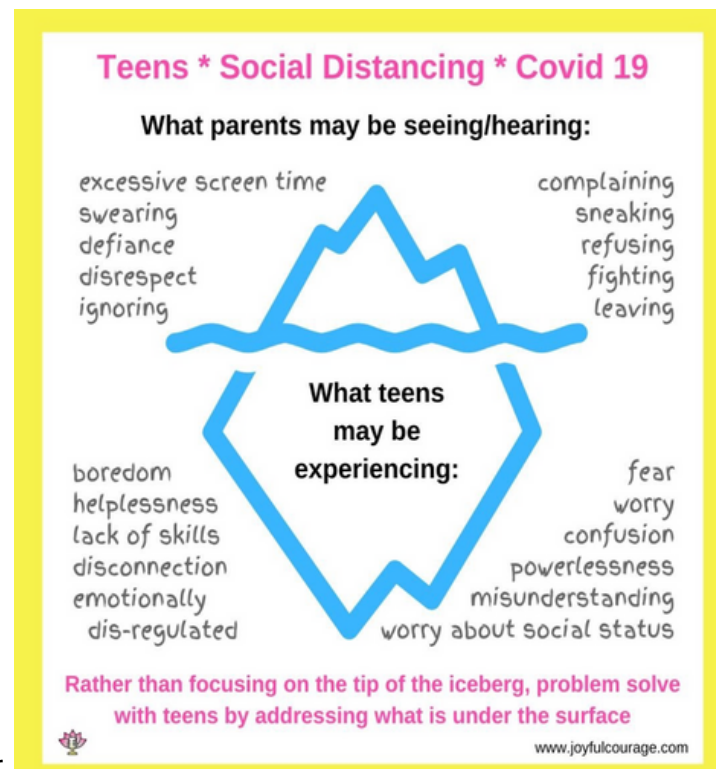
# ONLINE LEARNING: STAFF MEETING



# MESSAGE FROM THE HIGH SCHOOL COUNSELING DEPARTMENT

Dear High School Parents,

Covid-19 and the current global situation understandably has us facing challenges and concerns that we have never experienced before. With my focus the last few weeks being primarily on the well-being of our high school students, I have had the opportunity to learn more on how isolation and social distancing can be particularly difficult for teenagers. Bonding with their friends and staying socially connected are normal, innate, developmental motivations for your child. For many, being with their friends is hugely important and some may even feel that all of these new restrictions are not only impacting their friendship connections, but their sense of independence as well. As you can see on the iceberg picture to the right, some teenagers may be experiencing deeper feelings about all the recent changes than parents initially see.



Please see below a few suggestions on how to continue to support your child's wellbeing and foster their independence throughout these uncertain times:

- Try to understand and listen to their frustrations. Validate any disappointments they may be feeling (for example, the postponement of the ABA Prom).
- Continue to encourage healthy habits - nutritious foods, good sleep hygiene and regular exercise.
- Request them to contribute to the household in meaningful ways, such as preparing for dinner, cleaning the family room, etc.
- Use non-controlling/non-directive language. For example, you can ask them, "is there anything I can do to help you get exercise today?" Or "how can I support you with your daily online school schedule?"
- Allow them to manage themselves to some degree/give them some space to encourage their responsibilities, with supportive expectations and structure in place.
- Many parents are now working from home as well. Encourage your child to help you with your work. For example, requesting they don't interrupt your phone/online meetings.
- Recognize their strengths, resilience and instances when they overcome a difficult situation.
- Acknowledge that this is REALLY hard and that there are times when it just feels more difficult.

Please don't hesitate to contact me regarding concerns about your child and his or her well-being at [ahostetter@abaoman.org](mailto:ahostetter@abaoman.org).

- The High School Counseling Department