

Distance Learning and Student Well-Being: PE, Pastoral Care and Guidance

**A position paper submitted on behalf of the Al Durrah International School Pastoral Team,
prepared by Mark Wentzel, Head of Pastoral Care
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An Unprecedented Global Crisis, not to be underestimated

“Not since World War II have so many countries around the world seen schools and educational institutions go into lockdown at around the same time and for the same reason. While we know that the impact of this virus will be far-reaching”, we can only speculate or strategize what the long term affects may be:

<https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2020/03/4-ways-covid-19-education-future-generations/>

Within only 1 month of our own “social distancing”, W.H.O. is calling on schools to focus on the impact of stress of the COVID-19 outbreak and social distancing on student well-being. According to the World Health Organization viewpoint, social well-being is an important dimension of health along with physical and mental aspects. On March 18, the WHO issued the following resource announcement on “Mental health and psychosocial considerations during the COVID-19 outbreak”

https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/mental-health-considerations.pdf?sfvrsn=6d3578af_2.

Al Durrah International School student well-being during COVID-19

As a school that aspires to be a regional leader, we should seize the opportunity to lead in this area of student well-being during this unprecedented time of global crisis. There are already leaders in distance education, and those with greater resources to do so; this is all the more reason for us not to satisfy ourselves with minimum requirements by local authorities or by parental concerns born out of stress and a few of the noisiest based on a hope of free 'home schooling'. National governments are supportive of tuition refunds for “home schooling”, while being supportive of tuition structures for those schools that do provide bona fide “distance learning”, which can be done in a way that accommodates the diverse needs of students and families through a hybrid of synchronous and asynchronous teaching and learning strategies.

Since March 1st when this crisis first began, while students were still in the school, I have worked with the Boys pastoral team to prepare for a potential health crisis, and even prepared a briefing packet for our first SLT on the subject. I did so based on training received during the SARS crisis the affected parts of the US. As things rapidly worsened, the Boys pastoral team began to review how we could modify our pastoral support for students through distance learning.

Given the role of PE curriculum and classes as the foundation to our pastoral program (1), I delegated Mr. Khalil the lead to consult with his professional network and resources to see how PE could help respond and support student well-being during an extended period of time of social distancing, while I reviewed the American Counseling Association research and recommendations on providing career guidance and developmental counseling support and intervention through virtual services..

On March 17, after Mr. Khalil updated me on the training he engaged in with other PE coordinators and HODs in Sharjah and Dubai, and the related work he had initiated with our PE teachers, Mr. Tarek and I then sat in on the PE Department meeting where Mr. Khalil facilitated the first group training with our PE teachers on distance learning. This meeting included A/V presentation on introducing the various

eLearning resources for PE, with demonstration of use of Google classroom, Nearpod and PP with interactive tools, presentations of AV materials used in the past by Ms. Xyza and Ms. Jasmine, and an open sharing of related experience and ideas by all teachers. After their discussions, I underscored the importance of their role in helping to maintain positivity with the students, with a focus on maintaining health lifestyles, healthy relationships. I underscored that if we got into extended distance learning, we would work together with the full pastoral team to assess any new needs and then work even closer together to support student development and well-being during such a unprecedented time.

Fortunately, as the importance of PE to student well-being is well establish in both the US and UK, there is already a plethora of online resources specific to the COVID-19 outbreak already being promoted by Shape America US PE curriculum association and the UK Association for Physical Education counterpart. The UAE, which already started to strengthen the role of PE in its own curriculum 2 years ago, is also now promoting PE in distance learning for one class per week for at least Grades 5-12.

US PE curriculum and importance of COVID 19 resources: <https://www.shapeamerica.org/covid19-resources.aspx>

Table 3: Personal Development, Health and Physical Education K-6 Objectives		
Values and Attitudes	Skills	Knowledge
To develop students':	To develop students' skills in:	To develop students' knowledge and understanding about:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Appreciation of and a commitment to healthy and socially just ways of living 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Making, communicating and acting upon health decisions; Moving with competence and confidence; and Forming and maintaining positive relationships 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ways to enhance personal and community health and wellbeing, and; The composition, performance and appraisal of movement.

What Is Online Physical Education?

“Online physical education is an alternative medium used to deliver physical education — often to secondary students — to gain physical education credit and satisfy graduation requirements outside of the brick-and-mortar context (Buschner, 2006; Daum & Buschner, 2014; Mosier, 2012). Instruction can occur in a hybrid context (Mohnsen, 2012a; 2012b; Mosier, 2012; NASPE, 2007), where students complete most coursework outside of class individually and meet periodically in person for instruction and assessment, allowing for flexibility in learning to accommodate students’ interest, activity and developmental level. Instruction can also occur exclusively online, where students and teachers interact through a course/learning management system asynchronously or synchronously. Much like the hybrid model, online courses are designed with the intention to deliver instruction that is flexible to meet the needs of students.”

(<https://www.shapeamerica.org/uploads/pdfs/2020/guidelines/Online-PE-Guidance-Document.pdf>)

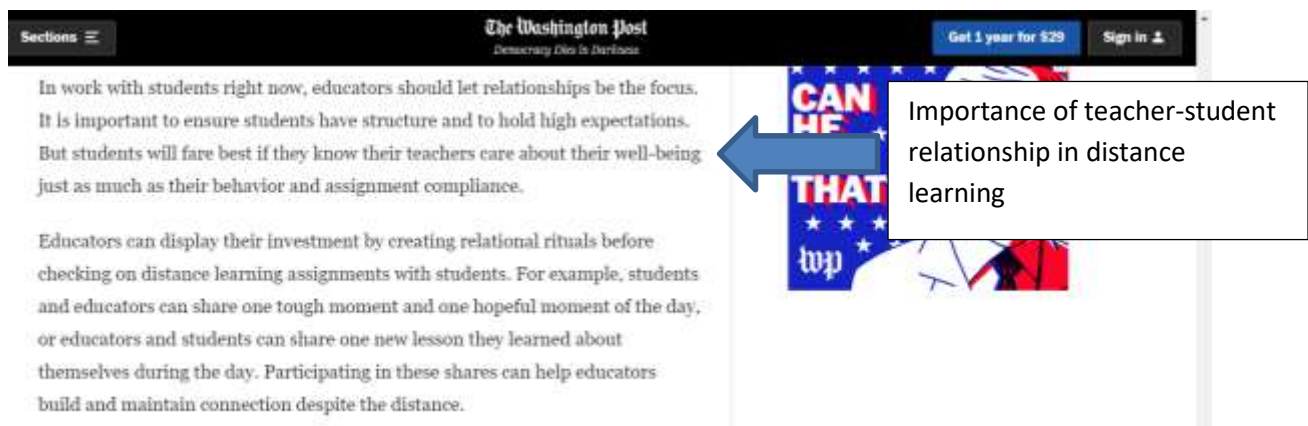
THE STRONG LINK BETWEEN WELL BEING, PE AND ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT

“There is a wealth of very robust evidence that supports a link between physical, emotional and social wellbeing and progress, achievement and attainment. It is imperative as subject specialists and school leaders that this correlation is not only understood but also addressed and evidenced in your school setting.”

The following is a selection of resource documents that take the argument out of minimizing the efforts of pastoral care in any school that aspires to fulfill its mission where “students come first” and where we empower them “in a nurturing environment” to “experience success in learning, personal growth and achievement..” :

Well-being, Physical Education and Attainment

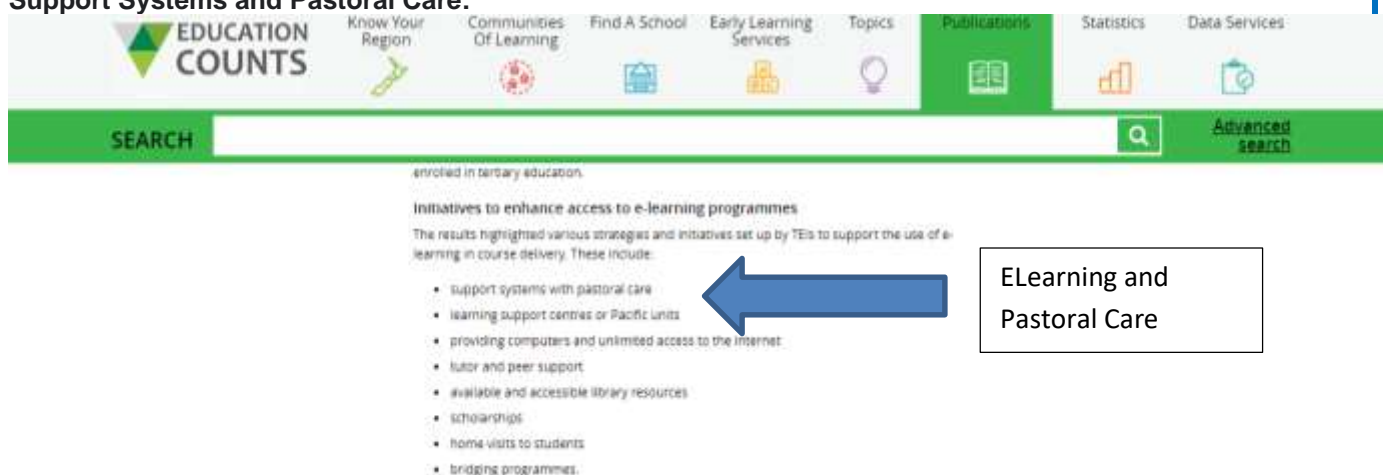
1. **Link between well being and attainment:**
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/370686/HT_briefing_layoutvFINALvii.pdf
2. **Active children do better:** <https://teamactiv.org/app/uploads/2016/06/Designed-to-Move-active-schools-executive-summary.pdf>
3. **Student behavior, well being and Educational Outcomes:**
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/219638/DFE-RR253.pdf
4. **Physical Education as Important as Schoolwork:** <https://educationandbehavior.com/is-physical-education-important-in-schools/>
5. **How do you teach...PE online.** <https://www.edsurge.com/news/2020-03-10-how-do-you-teach-art-music-and-pe-online-in-china-they-re-figuring-it-out>
6. **Well Being and Physical Education:** <https://wellbeingandphysicaleducation.com/wellbeing/john-hattie/>
7. **Teacher – Student Relationships in Distance Learning:**



Importance of teacher-student relationship in distance learning

School's role in dealing with impact of COVID 19 on st

8. **Planning for Virtual/Distance School Counseling During an Emergency Shutdown** (American School Counselor Association) <https://www.schoolcounselor.org/asca/media/asca/home/EmergencyShutdown.pdf>
9. **W.H.O. – Helping Children Cope with Stress during the COVID outbreak:** https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/helping-children-cope-with-stress-print.pdf?sfvrsn=f3a063ff_2
10. **(Video) Impact of COVID-19 Stress and Social Distancing on kids mental health:**
<https://www.newsy.com/stories/how-covid-19-social-distancing-affects-kids-mental-health/>
11. **Support Systems and Pastoral Care:**



ELearning and Pastoral Care

- support systems with pastoral care
- learning support centres or Pacific Units
- providing computers and unlimited access to the Internet
- tutor and peer support
- available and accessible library resources
- scholarships
- home visits to students
- bridging programmes

Schools taking the lead on COVID 19 threat in the UAE and in the Middle East:

12. Middle East discovers value of the virtual classroom amid coronavirus threat

<https://www.arabnews.com/node/1640526/middle-east>

"This could be seen in the successful application of distance learning even to practical classes such as lab work and physical education (PE), "

13. <https://gulfnews.com/technology/consumer-electronics/gym-class-without-the-gym-with-technology-its-catching-on-1.1578148304949>

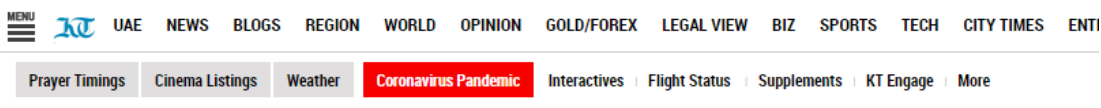
14. From Sunday, March 22, schools will roll out a comprehensive e-learning curriculum for pupils, in subjects ranging from algebra to physical education. <https://www.arabnews.com/node/1640526/middle-east>

15. PARENTS IN DUBAI AND ABU DHABI RESPOND AS UAE CLOSES SCHOOLS IN RESPONSE TO CORONAVIRUS COVID-19

"...We pride ourselves on being innovative at Taaleem and the **PE staff will be providing live** 'wake-up-shake-up' sessions every day and ongoing active 'brain-breaks' for all students to follow."

<https://schoolscompared.com/news/parents-in-dubai-and-abu-dhabi-respond-as-uae-closes-schools-in-response-to-coronavirus-covid-19/>

16. Dubai British School:



Springdalian Samarra Dutta, a Grade 6 student, said: "It was a different experience to interact online. While the internet connection was smooth and there were no glitches, to adapt to this new shift feels exciting and satisfying. Our school has definitely been supportive in this experience. Even our parents had a 30- second session online".

Meanwhile, Avantika Swaroop, a Grade 7 student of Dubai Scholars, said: "We also moved to using online resources like Google classroom where lesson plans, Powerpoint presentations, and notes were shared and discussed. We didn't have streaming classes but our teachers were available from 9am to 1pm clarifying doubts and giving us due dates for work submissions."

Ollie Fenner, a Year 7 student of Dubai British School, said: "The work teachers gave us were varied - for some, we watched online videos and tutorials and for others, textbooks and workbooks. **Physical Education** was fun and was a great way to start the day because for my practical, I took my dog for a run."

Navigating through some challenges as pedagogical shifts to technical learning commenced today, American expat Shukri Deria was overwhelmed with the experience. "The homeroom teacher posted a video of the list of things that needed to be done. Each section had how to do it, games to play and by what time it had to be done. Then each subject teacher posted videos or assignments. It was overbearing. I really got tired, handling all this for my two kids, who are both in primary school and need adult guidance."



Note the difference between 'home schooling, where the relationship between teacher and student is passive and is parent dependent (hence, parental frustration), versus upper grades where students can navigate online streaming. Year 7 noted in the 2nd and 3rd paragraphs are equivalent to our Grade 6, of whom can and do successfully engage in online learning, which can alleviate the demands of 'home schooling', which is parent dependent.



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LASTLY, Primavera Online School, a notable example of US hybrid distance learning, from a fully accredited online school (they have both a Grade 6-12 school and an Elementary School):

Primavera covers all subjects, electives – including health and physical education, and provides guidance and counseling services as well:

The screenshot shows the Primavera Online High School website. The header includes the school logo, navigation links (ACADEMICS, PROGRAMS, ABOUT US, BLOG, STUDENTS & PARENTS), and buttons for ENROLL NOW and REQUEST INFO. The main content area is titled "COURSE CATALOG" and lists several courses under the heading "Health/Physical Education". The courses listed are: Health, Personal Fitness A, Personal Fitness B, Physical Education 1A, Physical Education 1B, and Health Sciences: The Whole Individual. A "Translate" button is visible in the bottom left corner.

The screenshot shows the Primavera Online High School website, specifically the page for the Physical Education (PE) online course. The header is identical to the previous screenshot. The main content area features a search bar and a section titled "How Primavera's PE online course works". The text describes the course as a hybrid learning experience where students keep a weekly log of their exercises and stay connected with their instructor. It also mentions that instructors help students choose workouts they are interested in, as stated by instructor Gabriel Garcia.



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