

How Aga Khan Academies Mombasa parents transitioned to online learning

theexchange.africa/industry-and-trade/health-industry-and-trade/how-aga-khan-academies-mombasa-parents-transitioned-to-online-learning/



Florence Oduol, who works at the Academy and has two children who attend it, said she has been working with her children's teachers to learn about the best practices to keep her children focused during their online. Photo courtesy AKA Mombasa

"It's getting better by the day," said Minal Shah, who has two children that attend the Academy. "It took us a few days, in the beginning, to settle with the new routines and now it's become a new way of learning for all of us."

Most Academy parents have found that the best way they can help their child during online learning is to help them organise their time wisely, provide a good workspace and be there for them for moral support.

"We have been providing a quiet and conducive study location for our child," said Colin Williams, a parent of an Academy student. "Lots of hugs and emotional support are also included, along with additional art supplies, books, and study materials. We're also answering any questions our daughter may have and we help her with researching."

With schools being shut, daily routines have become less structured. This has encouraged many Academy parents to create a new schedule for their child while at home in order to keep productivity at a high.

"I make sure that both of my kids follow routines in terms of sleeping and waking up, as well as screen time rules," said Mehnaaz Jamal, who has two children at the Academy. "This enables them to wake up fresh and ready to learn with a fresh mindset."

Physical exercise and other activities are also something many Academy parents have found to be very helpful during this time, especially when done as an entire family.

“We all play lots of board games and cards, while also reading many, many books,” Colin said. “Art is also a great outlet during this time.”

However, there are some challenges parents are facing during distance learning, especially with younger children. The transition to online learning due to the COVID-19 pandemic has been a unique experience for parents at the Aga Khan Academy Mombasa. Although tricky to navigate at first, parents have worked with their children’s teachers to make a few adjustments at home to ensure the continuity of education.

“The main challenge is getting my Year 2 and Year 3 to sit down and do their homework without them getting distracted and wanting to go to the bathroom or drink water,” said Florence Oduol, who works at the Academy and has two children who attend it. “It’s hard for my children to focus and it can be hard to just get them to sit down for a specific amount of time.”

To help get through this, Florence said she consults with her children’s’ teachers to see what practices worked best while they were in school physically.

“The teachers have been very helpful and supportive during this time,” Florence said. “I speak to my sons’ teachers and they shared tips with me on how to keep my children focused during their online learning.”

Because the online learning journey has been different for all, AKA Mombasa teachers have been providing additional help to their students after school hours via video call or WhatsApp. Teachers and mentors at the Academy have also been doing individual check-in calls with parents and students to work out ways to best support students during this time. The Academy’s student support and wellbeing department has also begun hosting online sessions for parents to help them adapt to these difficult and uncertain times, and to ensure the wellbeing of their children’s mental health.

“In my opinion, the Academy has done an excellent job,” Mehnaaz said. “I would really like to thank all the teachers for putting in a lot of effort in making this online learning experience enjoyable as well as beneficial for the students. Both of my kids are enjoying



Colin Williams, who is currently in Seattle, Washington in the United States and has one daughter who attends AKA Mombasa, has found that being patient with your child helps support them through the online learning

their learning and they look forward to seeing their friends and teachers via Zoom.”

Although this experience has its challenges for a few parents, others are seeing it as a time to get to know and understand their children.

“As parents we don’t really get to ‘watch’ our kids in schools – how they learn, behave and interact with their peers and teachers,” said Minal, who is also the head of the student support and wellbeing at the Academy. “Take this time to get to know these behaviours of your child. It might give you some new insights, giving you opportunities to make new connections with them. It’s just important that you are there for them, supporting them. Take time out to talk to them and gauge their emotional well-being. When you are able to do this, the stories of your shared experiences will become a support for each other.”

By Anusha Lalani, Communications Fellow, Aga Khan Academy Mombasa.

Tags: [Aga Khan](#)[Aga Khan Academies Mombasa](#)[Education in Kenya](#)[Kenya](#)