

AL-IKHLAS TRAINING ACADEMY

Roles and Responsibilities for ATA Parents and Guardians

E-Learning Platform

Dear Respected Parents/Guardians:

In light of the recent announcement made by our Governor, our school building will be closed for the remainder of this school year, 2019-2020. So, we will be transitioning to E-Learning or distance learning, as it is commonly called. Though we know this will be challenging for families, it is doable. Parenting adults will need to think differently about how to support their children; how to create structures and routines that allow their children to be successful; and how to monitor and support their children's learning. Some students will thrive with distance learning, while others may struggle. The guidelines provided below are intended to help parents think about what they can do to help their children find success in a distance learning environment.

- **Establish routines and expectations:** From the first day ATA implements its E-Learning Plan (ELP), parents need to establish routines and expectations. ATA encourages parents to set regular hours for their children's school work. Students will begin their school day at 9:30am and end at 3:30pm. Keep normal bedtime routines for your high school students and try not to let them stay up late and sleep in. Your children should move regularly and take periodic breaks as they study. It is important that parents set these expectations for how their children will spend their days starting as soon as distance learning is implemented, not several days later after it becomes apparent a child is struggling with the absence of routine.
- **Define the physical space for your child's study:** your child may have a regular place for doing homework under normal circumstances, but this space may or may not be suitable for an extended period of time, as will be the case if this ELP is implemented. We encourage families to establish a space/location where their children will learn most of the time. It should be a place that can be quiet at times and have a strong wireless internet signal, if possible. Consider having a space that is public in order to monitor a student's focus during the day.
- **Monitor communications from your children's teachers:** Teachers will communicate with parents through email, when and as necessary. The frequency and detail of these communications will be determined by your student's degree of independence. We ask that parents remember that teachers will be communicating with dozens of other families. Communications should be essential, succinct, and self-aware.
- **Daily check-ins:** Parents are encouraged to start and finish each day with a simple check-in with their student(s). In the morning, ask what is your child learning today? What are their learning targets or goals? How will they spend their time? What resources do they require? What support do they need? This brief grounding conversation matters. It allows children to process the instructions they've received from their teachers. It helps them organize themselves and set priorities. Older students may not want to have these check-ins with parents (that's normal!), but they should nevertheless. Parents are encouraged to establish these check-ins as regular parts of each day for consistency. Not all students thrive in a distance learning environment; some struggle with too much independence or lack of structure. These check-in routines need to be established early, before students fall behind or begin to struggle.

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- **Take an active role in helping your children process and own their learning:** In the course of a regular school day at ATA, your student engages with other students or adults dozens, if not hundreds of times. These social interactions and opportunities for mediation include turning to a peer to exchange a thought or idea, participating in small or large group discussions, asking questions for clarification, collaborating on group projects, and countless other moments. While some of these social interactions will be re-created on virtual platforms, others will not. Human beings learn best when they have opportunities to process their learning with others. Beyond the check-ins recommended at the start and end of each day, it's helpful if parents regularly circle back and engage with their children about what they're learning. However, it's important that your child own their work; don't complete assignments for them, even when they are struggling.
- **Establish times for quiet and reflection:** A huge challenge for families with multiple children will be how to manage all of their children's needs, especially when those children are different ages and have different needs. There may be times when siblings need to work in different rooms to avoid distraction. Parents may even experiment with noise-cancelling headphones to block out distractions.
- **Encourage physical activity and/or exercise:** Make sure your children remember to move and exercise. This is vitally important to their health, wellbeing, and to their learning. It is important for parents to model and encourage exercise.
- **Remain mindful of your child's stress or worry:** One thing is for certain, ATA is only implementing this ELP because of the emergency which has occurred. Therefore, it is imperative for parents to help their children manage the worry, anxiety, and range of emotions they may experience. Difficult though it may be, do your best not to transfer your stress or worry to your children. They will be out of sorts, whether they admit it or not, and need as much routine as parents can provide.
- **Consider monitoring how much time your child is spending online:** ATA does not want its students staring at computer screens for 7-8 hours a day. We ask that parents remember most teachers are not experts in distance learning and that it will require some trial-and-error before we find the right balance between online and offline learning experiences. We thank you in advance for your patience and partnership!
- **Keep your children social, but set rules around their social media interactions:** As we at ATA implement this ELP, the initial excitement of school being closed will fade quickly when students start missing their friends, classmates, and teachers. Help your children maintain contact with friends and see them in person when circumstances permit. ATA asks parents to monitor your children's social media use, especially during this extended school closure. Older students will rely more on social media to communicate with friends. Social media apps such as SnapChat, Instagram, WhatsApp, or Facebook are not official, school-sanctioned channels of communication. Remind your children to be polite, respectful, and appropriate in their communications and to represent your family's values in their interactions with others. A student's written words and tone can sometimes offend or cause harm to others. **Note that all school rules apply to students.**

Please review and post a copy of your children's new class schedule that's forwarded along with this letter.

We are wishing the best for you and your loved ones during these very difficult times. Please make sure that you and your children do your very best to abide by the CDC guidelines for preventing or spreading this novel coronavirus.

May Allah bless and protect you all.

Nadir S. Ahmad, *Director*