

For: THE CITIZEN  
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## INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS BRAVE NEW WORLD

According to Unesco, over 160 countries have implemented nationwide closures due to the COVID-19 pandemic, impacting just over 87% of the world's student population.

The global lockdowns have left parents, students and educators with a new challenge. While some institutions have been able to transform their daily instruction to virtual platforms, there are many challenges that go with this move.

In this article we examine the steps taken by private international schools in Arusha who teach from overseas curricula such as Cambridge or Baccalaureate.

"We accept that, especially for younger children, remote learning is demanding on parents and carers, but online learning is giving parents around the world a view and understanding of a teacher's daily life! We have often spoken at school about parents and teachers *working together* to support their child, and online learning is the epitome of this," said Mr Tony Macfadyen, headmaster of St Constantine's International School in Arusha.

Proponents of the **British Cambridge Curriculum**, St Constantine's has developed a unique three-pronged approach to its ongoing instruction – the Cambridge remote teaching plan, the Round Square integration for which the school is known, and its own online teaching plan and relationship nurturing between the teachers at school and the students working from home.

"For our part we have made the remote learning tasks as age specific and appropriate as we can. We endeavour to make the work, and accompanying instructions, as clear and obvious as possible, but accept that parents have to help (younger) children access the material," Mr Macfadyen said. "Every teacher, educator and trainer has to be a Tech-Savvy teacher."

Under the leadership of Primary Head, Mr Michael Murray, Primary staff at St Constantine's are touching base with each child and family weekly, through verbal feedback taking place during student individual video conferences each day.

"As we all know, it is imperative that we continue to interact with our students and to teach them, rather than simply sending out our online lessons and worksheets during the online learning period," he said.

Students can meet online through special accounts established by St Constantine's within the online programs Zoom, Google Meet/Hangouts and WhatsApp, to ensure that they are able to interact with their friends and fellow students not only gaining valuable insights into how others are handling work, but also ensuring that students don't feel alone and suffer depression, as has been witnessed in some schools.

At school we have USSR in Primary (uninterrupted, sustained, silent reading) and DEAR in Secondary (drop everything and read). We are encouraging students to sustain this at home *on a daily basis* for about half an hour and to discuss their books with one another.

Additionally, a competition has been developed for students to read their favourite excerpts to one another after creating illustration, or dressed in the garb of the protagonist.

For Secondary students, especially those looking to advance into tertiary studies and gain acceptance into universities world-wide, the cancellation or postponement of final exams has left many stressed and confused about how they will prove their level of attainment.

On 23 March 2020, Cambridge announced that they would not hold the June 2020 exam series anywhere in the world, to protect the safety of students and teachers. They said they would take steps to provide students with fair grades using alternative assessment methods, so students could get on with their educational journeys as soon as possible.

Their approach is to ask centres to collaborate with them as they make evidence-based decisions about grades for each candidate in each subject. In developing a new process to assess students and provide grades, they have engaged with different entities worldwide, including other awarding bodies, governments and universities. They have also engaged with the UK government's Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation (Ofqual), which has developed a similar process for the GCSEs and A Levels.

**This will affect students at three of the five top International Schools in Arusha - St Constantine's, Braeburn, Arusha Meru – giving them a clear path to study for; while Jaffrey Academy undertakes the GCSE, and UWCEA teachers the International Baccalaureate whose exams have also been cancelled.**

The Cambridge focus is on the approach to teaching and learning, rather than technology, and uses a range of tactics and techniques, that might not ordinarily be applied. The key, however, is to ensure that students are able to interact with their fellows as individuals and in small groups through such things as online seminars, interactive presentations, online challenges to gather feedback and assess understanding.

“St Constantine's teachers are therefore fully engaged in this initiative presently to ensure the year 13 students have their strongest profile available so they achieve the grade their hard work over 15 years deserves,” said Mr Macfadyen. It is important that students continue to develop skills for their future working life, while at the same time completing their school work,” he said.

At St Constantine's, Secondary, students have a straight forward way of emailing their teachers from the Google classroom and they have each other to share comments with to make progress together.

“Secondary tutor groups also have their own virtual tutor classroom (on Google) where they can access their form tutor and fellow tutees,” Mr Nderitu said. “The Cambridge program is strongly aware that online courses require more self-direction and stronger commitment with students having to be more responsible in getting work done on time, although they may have more flexibility learning online. Cambridge works hand-in-hand with its schools assisting them with the particular issues facing students such as managing stress and learning effectively at home where even getting started can appear intimidating at first,” according to Mr Nderitu.

As the first Round Square School in Tanzania, St Constantine's is also faithful to the Round Square IDEALS, while sharing a commitment to character education and experiential learning built around the six themes. The Round Square IDEALS are underpinned by twelve Discoveries that students explore on their learning journey.

“In order to keep these flowing through the school during this remote learning period, a number of challenges have been devised, each posing a Big Question to students. They are accompanied by activities and reflective exercises designed for students to do at home and catering for a broad range of ages from 13 – 18 years,” said Mr Macfadyen.

“This gives students the opportunity to share something with their peers across the global Round Square community via social media,” said Mr Macfadyen. “The current challenge – The Spirit of Service – asks students to consider ways in which they can work together with other members of the online communities that they are a part of, to support one another through difficult times and create a campaign plan for their ideas.”

The schools involved in the **Baccalaureate programme** are working under the auspices of their international body.

"Our students, their well-being and their progression in future stages of life have been at the forefront of our thinking as we respond to this extraordinary pandemic. Our days and deliberations have been 24x7 focusing on what is the ethical and responsible action in these trying times.

With considerable advisement from stakeholders across the globe including schools, students, universities and qualification bodies, we have determined the most responsible and ethical way forward” said Tine Hemelings, Chair and Anna Marsden, Director UWC East Africa in a joint statement.

UWCEA moved to their own online learning model set to continue until 20th April 2020 on ManageBac for secondary and through classroom teachers’ communications in primary. However, mindful of the changing parameters dictated by the spread of the virus, they have yet to share with families what learning will look like in Quarter 4 if schools do not return

“The May 2020 examinations, as scheduled between 30 April and 22 May, for Diploma Programme and Career-related Programme students, will no longer be held. Depending on what they registered for, the student will be awarded a Diploma or a Course Certificate. This is based on a student’s submitted coursework and the established assessment expertise, rigor and quality control already built into the programmes," according to a statement issued from UWCEA. “It is not yet clear how or whether MYP e-assessments will be conducted.”

In the meantime, all D1 and M5 students are connected to the college’s own planning platform Maia Learning, which they can log into via their school Google email account, and where resources and activities will be uploaded throughout the school year.

Whatever their platform or teaching methods, one thing remains obvious for schools and their staff, as a result of recent events they are all entering into a brave new world of technology and online study.

**ENDS**

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT LEONIE TRUBSHOE

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Captions:  
Ms Mary chats with Nataliya's mother  
as they discuss her online learning



Andre acts out his reading and study on ancient Egypt



Mr Nowak prepares for his  
secondary online English class



The grounds may be empty, but  
online, St Constantine's is a virtual  
hive of activity