

Gearing up for the hidden costs of school during a pandemic

Cape Town, 21 January 2021: As the COVID-19 pandemic enters its second year and the reopening of schools is pushed back to mid-February, parents may find themselves having to fork out more for their children's schooling than they did pre-COVID-19: think digital enablement, personal safety, and emotional wellbeing.

To see your child through their schooling career – primary, secondary, and tertiary schooling – you are looking at upwards of R1 million in today's money. This considers fees for public (R30 000 – R60 000 per year) or private school (R100 000 – R200 000 per year) and a typical degree (R30 000 – R75 000 per year, or up to R300 000 for a 4-year degree). Historically education costs have increased by 2 - 3% above general inflation meaning that, over time, they become a larger proportion of a household's budget, notes André Wentzel, Solutions Manager at [Sanlam](#).

Besides preparing for the monthly tuition fees, parents need to be prepared for the hidden costs brought about by the pandemic, explains Wentzel. Here, Wentzel breaks down some of these:

1. Devices

In 2020 many parents found themselves having to purchase online equipment such as laptops and other digital devices when schools were closed as a result of COVID-19, to ensure continuous learning via online platforms. Many [private](#) schools have reverted to online learning at the start of 2021 as a result of the two week reopening delay. Wentzel urges parents to consider making provision for the costs of devices should schools reopening be delayed even further, forcing more schools to revert to online learning. [With computer coding and robotics on the cards as new subjects for more schools next year](#), according to the Department of Basic Education Director-General, Mathanzima Mveli, this would also require electronic devices to be purchased.

2. Emotional well-being

Many children are battling the emotional fall-out of COVID-19 and may need professional support. While some schools are lucky enough to have counsellors on-site, learners may need the additional support of a life coach or psychologist and this can cost anything from R750 -R1200 per session.

Clinical psychologist, Irene Streeten explains that the COVID-19 pandemic has created various levels of anxiety. One of them being that the new strain in the second wave affects children more severely, carrying a direct threat to children with schools becoming less of a safe space. The lockdown has also had a serious impact on socialisation which can cause children to become withdrawn and depressed or even rebellious. While COVID-19 itself is the designated pandemic, anxiety and depression have been labelled the shadow pandemics because they are the two main emotional consequences of the pandemic and lockdown, notes Streeten.

3. Health and safety costs

To ensure your child adheres to COVID-19 safety regulations, keep in mind that there will be costs involved for face masks, face shields and hand sanitiser. Parents are also urged to ensure their children are taking multivitamins every day and giving them good nutrition to build up their immune systems against the virus.

How to gear up for the extras?

Sanlam's independently-commissioned survey on educational savings in South Africa showed that most participants save under R20 000 for education a year. Once school fees are deducted, that leaves little wiggle room for extras. Wentzel says it's easy for parents to feel overwhelmed. "That's where a financial adviser can play an important role in 'breaking the elephant into bite-sized pieces'. It helps to have an objective professional alongside you to create an achievable plan for every step of the savings journey."

He adds that taking action to feel financially in control is the best defence against feeling overwhelmed. "Saving vehicles such as Sanlam Goal Manager enables a trusted financial adviser to take parents through the education savings journey in its entirety. It calculates the cost of a child's future education and then creates a smart contribution plan that's affordable and flexible." Wentzel explains that with the rise in inflation, a savings plan must take into account the increasing costs of education, adjusting contributions.

"Parents shouldn't feel that they need to do this giant savings task alone. There are people who they can partner with to make the process easier-including getting to grips with school cost curveballs! A financial adviser will be able to help you review your goals and current circumstances to choose the best path forward for you and your family, especially during the uncertain economic times we are currently living in," concludes Wentzel.

-ends-

(SANLAM Media Release)