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The Effect of Virtual Learning on Parents During COVID-19

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Abstract

Parents were affected in numerous ways by the sudden shut down of schools and switch to virtual learning in March 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Some of these ways included use of technology, income, race, time, mental health, family life and parent insecurities. This study investigates parents' perspectives of some ways they were affected in regards to the virtual learning of their child(ren). All parents with children enrolled at Madison Campus Elementary School were invited to participate in the study, as they had at least one year's experience with their child(ren) in virtual learning.

Data was collected using a survey emailed via ClassClimate®, a survey tool used at Andrews University. Fifty-five parents returned the survey. Findings showed that parents with more than one child were more likely to report having difficulty with distraction 80-100% of the time. Furthermore, race greatly affected the level of stress parents felt when it came to the technology needed for virtual learning. Hispanic parents had the greatest percentage (87.5%) who were stressed by technology. Parents, in general, reported problems with too much screen time for their children, children's lack of social interaction, and personally holding down a job while their children participated in virtual learning.

Keywords: virtual learning, parents, online learning, distance learning, effects of virtual learning on parents, Covid-19,

Andrews University
College of Education and International Services

THE EFFECT OF VIRTUAL LEARNING ON PARENTS DURING COVID-19

A Thesis
Presented in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Science

by
Sheila Reeves

2021

The Effect of Virtual Learning on Parents During COVID-19

A thesis
presented in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree
Masters of Science Special Education

by

Sheila Reeves

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

On March 13, 2020 the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention released guidance for school closures due to the Covid-19 pandemic (Blad, 2020). In a span of a few days, by 12pm on March 17, 2020; 74,000 of the United States' 98,277 public schools had either been closed or scheduled to close. To put this in greater perspective, at that time there were nearly 50.8 million public school students in the United States and 38.8 million or more of these students had been affected by these school closures (Blad, 2020). While people around the world from all walks of life had their jobs, families, health, and day-to-day life altered in astounding ways by the Covid-19 pandemic, parents of school-aged children were affected in unique ways by this life-altering pandemic. Parents were suddenly expected to step up, with absolutely no notice, and become responsible for their child's learning at home. Although teachers have given their best to continue to teach each child, it became an impossible mission that teachers could not accomplish without the help of the parents.

There has been laser focus on students and how Covid-19 has affected their education; however, parents were and continue to be asked to step up and fill a huge gap in their children's learning experience. While teachers spent many long hours ensuring that virtual learning was as much of a success as possible, the parents were given the sudden and often unwarranted responsibilities of making sure their child had the

appropriate technology to learn remotely. They were responsible for making sure that their child had a quiet place to work; a task that could prove impossible if multiple or younger children were part of the family. Parents were suddenly responsible for making sure that their child successfully completed their school work despite barriers such as English not being the primary language of the home. What if the parent had to work away from home? They then had to figure out who was going to watch their child in a world that was social distancing. Even if they could work at home they were suddenly expected to balance their child's schooling with their own work deadlines. This became a nearly impossible task for many parents.

As a first grade classroom teacher in a private school I watched some of my own students' parents work to adapt to the ever-changing and sometimes challenging new way of learning for their children. This raised many questions in my mind. Did it cause them to struggle financially? Did they have to give up their jobs? I had families in my classroom that had children doing virtual school for the entire 2020-2021 school year while still holding down jobs. This caused a tough balance of work and school for these parents. Though some of them had the luxury of being there with their child as they were logging into Zoom® or doing their homework, others did not. Some had to lay out their child's work for the next day and hope the child was able to accomplish it and log into class at the appropriate times.

Did they have emotional challenges? Once again, I had parents express to me that they were barely making it with virtual learning despite my best efforts to make it as easy a process as possible. Were some of these struggles related to mental health and emotional overload?

Was the technology side of virtual learning difficult? I received texts, calls, and emails from parents who were trying to use a device or figure out how to log into a website or app and were having technological difficulties. Admittedly the teachers were also left to learn technology quickly and (at least in my case) were sometimes at a loss on how to help parents solve their technology troubles.

Did it affect family life? If parents were working and suddenly they were expected to keep on top of all their child's learning did they lose family time? Perhaps the opposite occurred and they were suddenly together all the time. Did that improve family relationships? Or did the struggle of keeping on top of work and school under one roof cause family tensions? What positive aspects were there for virtual learning? These were just a sampling of the questions that motivated me to pursue this thesis.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Search Methods and Description of Articles

Different search methods were used to gather the data for this research. Table 1 outlines the key words used, databases searched, and number of articles reviewed for this literature review. The following inclusion criteria was used to decide what articles to keep: (1) articles had to be between 2015-2020, (2) articles had to include information regarding students in K-8th grade, (3) articles had to involve parents who had children who were online learning. Peer reviewed articles were not listed as a criteria due to the fact that research on virtual learning during Covid-19 is still so new and articles have not had time to be peer reviewed.

Table 1

Steps in the Review

1st set of keywords: Distance learning AND effect on parents AND covid

Data Base	Netted	Kept
Academic Search Complete	2	1
SAGE	329	2-narrowed to 1

2nd set of keywords: Distance Learning AND parents AND covid 19

Data Base	Netted	Kept
Academic Search Complete	6	1
ERIC	2	2
PsychoInfor	3	1

3rd set of keywords: Remote learning OR distance learning OR virtual learning AND parents AND covid 19

Data Base	Netted	Kept
ERIC	24,649	2

Google search: “ed weekly articles”, then clicked on “Education Week K-12”, then searched “parents”

Website	Netted	Kept
Education Week	1313	7-narrowed to 5

Google search: “ed weekly articles”, then clicked on “Education Week K-12”, then searched “schools shutdown”

Website	Netted	Kept
Education Week	700	1

Referenced Articles

Retrieved from Article: Parents’ views on young children distance learning and screen time during Covid 19 Class Suspension in Hong Kong		
Data base	Searched new article title and netted	Kept
Academic Search Complete	1	1

Other searches for pre-covid research:

Key word: Florida Virtual		
Data Base	Netted	Kept
ERIC	47	1
Key Words: Virtual learning AND Elementary Students		
ERIC	250	2-narrowed to 1
Key word: Journal of Online Learning Research, clicked on “LearnTechLib”, searched “parents”		
Google	10545	1

A total of 17 articles were retained and used in the current research. Table 2 gives a brief outline of the purpose of each article in this lit review.

Table 2

Author, Title, and Purpose of articles

Author, Year	Title
	Research questions or Purpose
Akbulut, Sahin, Esen, 2020	More than a virus: How Covid 19 infected education in Turkey?
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The purpose of this report was to evaluate how Turkey had been impacted by Covid 19 in the areas of education and citizenship education in the country of Turkey.
Bhamani, Makhdoom, Bharuchi, Ali, Kaleem, Ahmed, 2020	Home Learning in Time of Covid: Experiences of Parents
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The purpose of this qualitative study was to investigate the real experiences of parents in Pakistan as they navigated homeschooling during COVID-10

Blad, 2020	EdWeek Graphic: Visualizing the School Shutdown Wave
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The purpose of this article was to exam the number of schools that were being shut down in the United States due to Covid-19
Davis, Grooms, Ortega, Rubalcaba, Vargas, 2021	Distance Learning and Parental Mental Health During COVID-19
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The purpose of the brief was to better understand what kind of relationship there is between parents' mental health and distance learning.
Dong, Cao, Li, 2020	Young children's online learning during COVID-19 pandemic: Chinese parents' beliefs and attitudes
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Young children had many experiences with online learning during Covid-19. What were some of those experiences they faced? Chinese parents held certain beliefs regarding virtual learning; what were some of those beliefs during Covid 19 Chinese parents also held certain beliefs regarding how virtual learning was going for their young children.
Eivers, Worth, Ghosh, 2020	Home learning during Covid-19: Findings from the Understanding Society Longitudinal Study
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How has long term distance learning affected students and families in the UK? What can remote learning do to help aid some of the negative effects? What type of remote learning was used and how long did parents and

	<p>students spend working on homework?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How many students live with an adult who is at a clinically greater risk for a serious case of Covid-19
Gewertz, 2020	How Are Parents Dividing Home-Teaching Duties During Coronavirus?
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Which parent is taking on a greater role of supervising schoolwork during distance learning in the USA?
Matney, 2020	COVID-19 Parent Response Survey Report, 2020-2021
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The purpose of this report was for the Houston Independent School District to better understand parents' reactions and needs for remote learning.
Klein, 2020	What Do Parents Think of Online Learning?
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The purpose of the article was to look further into what parents thought of online learning when it came to technology, data privacy, what a child sees on the internet, quality of education, and reliable internet.
Klein, 2020	Parents Worry About Learning Loss in Remote Education Environments
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • According to the National Parents Union what percentage of parents were worried that their children had learned less due to distance learning?
Lau, Lee, 2020	Parents' Views on Young Children's Distance Learning and Screen Time

	During COVID-19 Class Suspension in Hong Kong
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The purpose of this study was to understand how parents of children in kindergarten and primary school in Hong Kong experienced distance learning and what kind of support they needed. • How long do students spend on a screen during distance learning?
Lian, Yoon, 2020	Burden, Resilience, and Mutual Support: A Comparative Study of Families in China and South Korea Amid the COVID-19 Pandemic
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The purpose of this paper was to investigate ways that families in both China and South Korea have used to cope with the changes that Covid-19 has brought to families. • The 3 main areas of changes studied were education, economic, and mental health.
Lucic, Brkljacic, Zganec, 2020	Effects of COVID-19 related restrictive measures on parents of children with developmental difficulties
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What additional stressors have affected parents of children with DD in Croatia due to social distancing and school closers?
Lueken, Ritter Beck, 2015	Value-added in a Virtual Learning Environment: An Evaluation of a Virtual Charter School
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The purpose was to determine how academic growth of students in the state were similar compared to the academic growth of SVA students. How does growth in math and literacy compare on state standardized tests to students in

	the online charter school vs. those in a traditional school from 2010-2012
Morgan, 2015	Online Instruction and Virtual Schools for Middle and High School Students: Twenty-First-Century Fads or Progressive Teaching Methods for Today's Pupils?
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The purpose of this article was to explore the existing research on online instruction and to offer strategies to help parents pick quality virtual schools. • The purpose was to offer strategies that would help current online programs improve their programs.
Sawchuk, 2020	What Do Parents Think of COVID 19-Era Learning Now?
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The purpose of this article was to explore the Pew Research Center survey which was weighted for gender, race, ethnicity, and education in the USA. • The purpose was to better understand how parents view distance learning.
Superville, 2020	Poll: Their Kids Learned Less, But Parents Satisfied With Remote Education
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How satisfied were parents with remote learning based on their income? • How satisfied were parents with remote learning based on race?
Weame, 2016	A Descriptive Survey of Why Parents Choose Hybrid Homeschools
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are there specific qualities in a family that causes them to send

	<p>their children to hybrid homeschools?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are there things that parents most value in a hybrid homeschools program and if so what are they? • What type of information are parents looking for when they are trying to decide whether to put their child in Hybrid Homeschooling?
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Table 3 lists the sample and instrument used in each study if one was available.

Table 3

Sample and instrument used in each article

Author	Sample	Instrument
Akbulut, Sahin, Esen, 2020	N/A	Social media, Lit review, observations of authors
Bhamani, Makhdoom, Bharuchi, Ali, Kaleem, Ahmed, 2020	19 parents	Google Docs form with open-ended questions related to Covid-19 and home learning
Blad, 2020	N/A	N/A
Davis, Grooms, Ortega, Rubalcaba, Vargas, 2021	3,338 households	Survey: National Panel Study of Coronavirus pandemic (NPSC-19) & Patient Health Questionnaire (PHQ-9); General Anxiety Disorder (GAD-7)
Dong, Cao, Li, 2020	3,275 Chinese parents with students in early childhood education	Questionnaire: 41 closed questions and 2 opened ended questions; given in March

Eivers, Worth, Ghosh, 2020	Parents of 4,168 students; in 2, 462 households	Survey of parents after first month of homeschooling
Gewertz, 2020	2, 200 parents with children younger than 12; poll by ParentsTogether of its 1600 members	Survey published in The New York Times.
Matney, 2020	62,994 households	Response Parent Survey via SurveyMonkey
Klein, 2020	1,277 parents	Survey
Klein, 2020	1,140 public school parents	Survey by National Parent Union
Lau, Lee, 2020	6,702 parents, 93% mothers	Online survey
Lian, Yoon, 2020	N/A	N/A
Lucic, Brkljacic, Zganec, 2020	N/A	Used official state documents, communication with professional, online support groups for parents of children with DD
Lueken, Ritter, Beck, 2015	3-year students in SVA	N/A
Morgan, 2015	N/A	N/A
Sawchuk, 2020	More than 2,500 parents of children under 18	Pew Research Center Survey
Superville, 2020	1,249 Parents	Education Next Poll
Weame, 2016	136 surveys completed by parents of children in hybrid homeschools in Georgia	Online Survey

Table 4 gives a brief summary of the major findings in each of the articles.

Table 4

Major Findings

Author	Major Findings
Akbulut, Sahin, Esen, 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of internet and technology is a problem for parents in Turkey. • There is a lack of help for students who have disabilities.
Bhamani, Makhdoom, Bharuchi, Ali, Kaleem, Ahmed, 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents struggle to provide routine for children in Pakistan • Parents worry about the social and emotional development of children • Online learning provided more family bonding time • Online learning requires computers and internet, sometimes at exact hours • Technical issues can cause students to miss learning • More than 1 child makes it more difficult • Parents spend more time helping students with their schoolwork • It is hard for parents to keep their children busy • Parents have no access to someone who is tech savvy to help children
Blad, 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 74,000 public schools had been closed by 12 pm on March 17, 2020 • There are 98,277 public school in the United States (National Center for Education Statistics) • 38.8 million students affected when article published • 50.8 million public students in United States
Davis, Grooms, Ortega, Rubalcaba, Vargas, 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents have heightened levels of mental health stress when their child struggles with distance learning
Dong, Cao, Li, 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 92.7% of parents said they had online learning • Parents believed that online learning was less effective than in person learning • Parents felt like online learning didn't provide a learning atmosphere or the appropriate social interactions • Social isolation from peers and lack of interactivity were two problems • Many Chinese parents concerned about vision problems in their children due to too much screen time from online learning • Parents worried that children didn't have enough physical activity • Parents rejected online learning because children lacked self-regulation skills

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents rejected online learning because children weren't focused during online learning • Parents didn't have the time required to help their children with online learning • Parents didn't feel capable of teaching their children at home
Eivers, Worth, Ghosh, 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents from lowest-income households spent more time helping their children with school work UK. • 49% of parents spent at least two hours every day helping their children with school work in the primary levels • Only 40-45% spent two hours a day at other grade levels • Mandatory school attendance might be a burden for those parents that are at very high risk for complications from Covid-19.
Gewertz, 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Almost half of all fathers surveyed said they were responsible for homeschooling their children, but only 3% of mothers agreed with the fathers. • 80% of all mothers surveyed said they were responsible for homeschooling their children • A second survey said that 75% of all mothers were responsible for homeschooling their children; but 57% of men said they were responsible for it • Men were more likely than women to say that they shared homeschooling equally with the mothers.
Matney, 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3% of parents had no device • 52% needed technology devices for 2020-2021 school year • 47% said would need help with child's questions on school work • 35% would need better internet • 39% would need help with using virtual technology • 20% might or would need help understanding work because English was not primary language • 71% of parents were satisfied • 29% not satisfied • 9% needed supervision at home because parents working • 44% weren't sure or knew that caregiver couldn't help child with schoolwork • Greatest percent of dissatisfaction was 31% in Prek-2 grade level <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Reasons for dissatisfaction included: schoolwork took too much time, didn't know what or when to

	<p>do the work, child not interested, child had difficulty concentrating, communication between parent and teacher unclear, difficulty accommodating special education, lack of lesson plans, not enough teacher interaction, no device or Wi-Fi, not enough work, parents no able to help with dual language assignments, tech difficulties, too much busywork, parents working and couldn't help students</p>
<p>Klein, 2020</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 68% of parents were worried about “unauthorized access of online activities or unauthorized communication” with their child • 64% worried about student data privacy • 64% worried about not being able to monitor what child sees on internet • 61% worried about student information security • 76% worried about quality of education • 71% said bullying was a headache • 68% of African American families have access to reliable internet • 48% of African American families have a printer • 54% of all students have access to a printer • More than half of parents take away technology if rules are broken and have rules about screen-time
<p>Klein, 2020</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 38% of parents felt their child was learning less than a normal school year • Education Week survey found that 36% of parents felt their child was making less progress in ELA than a normal school year • 80% of teachers felt children making less progress in LA and Math • 54% of parents want more energy put into online learning • 37% of parent want more energy put into opening school buildings
<p>Lau, Lee, 2020</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents experience parental burnout • Lacked school support • Thought children used electronics too much • Lack of resources or equipment • The limitations of home environment need to be considered • There were either too many activities or not enough

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disruptions by other family members
Lian, Yoon, 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shutdowns in China and South Korea intensified work-family or school-family conflicts • Parents limited by financial situations, time, or own education • Families experience high levels of stress and anxiety
Lucic, Brkljacic, Zganec, 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents of children with DD) suffered many effects from Covid-19 lockdown. These included: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Lack of access to support ○ No one to give parents a break ○ Education not fitted to meet the needs of children with DD
Lueken, Ritter, Beck 2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Florida Virtual School (FLVS) was the first state-wide online public school in the United States. It opened in 1997. • 30 states have online schools that have about 275,000 students • SVA: A fully online public charter school K-8 • At SVA, 1st-year students experienced a transition period that negatively affected their standardized test scores compared to those in traditional school. • However, the growth of these students was similar to the growth of non-SVA students in the next two years. • Those with special needs made more gains than similar students in traditional school by the 3rd year
Morgan, 2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Between 2007 and 2009 the number of students taking online courses grew by 47% • In 2011 and 2012 virtual enrollment had grown by 38% • Of K-12 students enrolled in virtual schools 68% were high school, 29% were ungraded or in a combined school, 2% were middle school students or junior high students. Just 1% were elementary students • A lack of good implementation can lead to poorer results in online instruction • Parents who favored online instruction still struggled with the ability to monitor their child's work; deal with technology issues; and the ability to make sure their child stayed on schedule • Online instruction can be helpful for those with disabilities • Online instruction can allow more individualized instruction

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Online instruction can provide a flexible location ● Online instruction allows learners to adapt to new technology ● Online provides the ability to take classes one might not be able to take otherwise ● Online learning can make attendance hard and cheating easy ● Online learning can lack the level of teacher interaction needed for students with disabilities
Sawchuk, 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 90% of parents were very satisfied or somewhat satisfied with in-person learning ● 75% of parents were very satisfied or somewhat satisfied with online or hybrid learning; but only 30% of those were very satisfied ● 4 out of every 10 students had only online learning in upper-income households ● 5 out of every 10 students had only online learning in lower-income households ● 55% of parents in upper-income households worried about their child falling behind ● 72% of parents in lower-income households worried about their child falling behind
Superville, 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 72% of parents were satisfied with activities and instruction that the school was providing ● According to a poll in The Education Trust-New York it was found that 57% of parents found online learning to be successful in March, but by June only 43% found it to be so ● According to the same poll in The Education Trust-New York it was found that 52% of Blacks and Hispanics said they had live instruction, phone calls, or video calls; but 57% of White parents had the same things ● White parents spent about 3.1 hours a day helping their child with school work; but Black parents spent 4.3 hours a day and Hispanic parents spent 3.9 hours a day. ● 48% of those in upper-income families said online learning was successful ● 36% of those in lower-income families found online learning to be successful
Weame, 2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Estimate 3% of school age children are homeschooled ● Reasons for homeschooling <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Religion

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Public schools have academic struggles ○ Public schools with social or environmental problems ○ Family issues: such as special needs, special circumstances, or the desire to with their children ● Parents value that their children are ready for college and/or careers ● Reasons for hybrid homeschooling <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 81.7% said religious education ○ 79.4% said better learning environment ○ 79.4% said smaller class sizes ○ 76.2 % less time wanted during the school day ○ 64.3% more individual attention for my child ● Some Parents couldn't afford full time private education
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Results

For this literature review I focused on one question: How has distance learning during Covid-19 affected parents? For the purpose of this lit review I will be using the words, remote learning, distance learning, virtual learning, or online learning interchangeably. When I reference these terms I am referring to anytime that students are learning online with a teacher overseeing their education through technology or from a distance. As I searched for articles I quickly became aware that there is little research that has been done on parents and distance learning; especially in the United States. Due to this fact I have included several international studies in my literature review. China, who was first hit with Covid-19 had several interesting studies that we will explore as well as some from other Asian countries.

Pre-Covid Virtual Learning

Online learning is not a new idea; although it became much more vastly implemented in 2020-2021 than any other time. The Florida Virtual School (FLVS) became the first state-wide online public school system in 1997. However, there are at

least 30 states that have adopted an online public school system and these virtual schools enroll about 275,000 students (Lueken et al., 2015). According to one article it was found that the number of students who were taking online courses had risen 47% between 2007 and 2009 (Morgan, 2015). Furthermore it was found that those enrolled in virtual learning had grown by 38% in just 2011 and 2012 alone (Morgan, 2015). However, as Covid-19 hit nearly all grade level students transitioned to online learning in some form; whereas in 2012, 68% of students K-12 who were enrolled in virtual schools were high schoolers, 29% were not listed in a grade, 2% were in middle school and just 1% were in elementary school (Morgan, 2015).

The number of elementary school parents who had ever experienced online learning was very limited before Covid-19. Many parents chose online learning during Covid-19 because students had disabilities or because online learning provided a more individualized education plan than an in-person classroom setting (Morgan, 2015). On the flip side of that, some students with disabilities didn't have the necessary teacher interaction required for them to be successful during online learning. The option of online learning also allowed students to be able to take classes that they might not have been able to take otherwise (Morgan, 2015).

However, there were still things that parents struggled with during online learning pre-Covid-19. For example, they struggled with the ability to monitor their child's work and had trouble making sure that their child stayed on schedule. Another big issue was the technology side of virtual learning; as we will see later this continues to be a struggle today (Morgan, 2015).

Related to virtual learning and hybrid learning is the idea of hybrid homeschooling. It was found that parents often chose this option because it offered religious education, a better learning environment, smaller class sizes, and more individual attention for their child (Weame, 2016). Whatever the reason for choosing non-traditional schooling prior to Covid-19 most parents were unprepared for sudden changes they had to adapt to as they were forced to switch to some form of non-traditional schooling in early 2020.

Technology

Probably the most obvious struggle for parents during virtual learning was technology. Many parents simply did not understand how to use the technology that was required for virtual learning or had no one who had the technology skills to help their children (Bhamani, 2020). According to a study done of 62,994 households in the Houston Independent School District (HISD) it was found that as many as 39% of households would need help using the technology required for virtual learning (Matney, 2020). According to a study done in Turkey the lack of internet caused parents to struggle with remote learning and this was a problem that was a struggle for many parents outside of Turkey as well (Akbulut et al., 2020). In fact according to HISD it was found that 35% of households would need better internet for the 2020-2021 school year. According to a survey of 1,277 parents it was found that only 68% of African American families had reliable internet that they were able to access (Klein, 2020). Without reliable internet online learning becomes nearly impossible.

In addition to the lack of internet, the lack of technology devices was also a problem that many parents faced. Once again looking at the households in the HISD it

was found that 3% of parents had no device at all and over half of them at 52% would need technology devices for the 2020-2021 school year. The lack of a printer was also a problem for some parents. Just more than half of all students have access to a printer (Klein, 2020). According to an online survey of 6,702 parents in Hong Kong it was found once again that many parents lacked resources or equipment to be successful at remote learning (Lau & Lee, 2020). Due to the lack of internet or technological devices as well as issues with the equipment it was easy for students to miss vital learning (Bhamani et al., 2020).

With the sudden use of virtual learning online safety became a problem that parents had to face as they navigated this new way of learning. In fact, according to a survey of 1,277 parents it was found that 68% of them were worried that their child would be able to communicate with unauthorized people (Klein, 2020). 64% of these parents were also concerned because they were not able to monitor what their child was seeing on the internet and 71% worried about online bullying (Klein, 2020).

Lau and Lee point out another struggle with technology during remote learning. Many parents felt like their children were using technology devices too much (2020). In addition, according to Klein, more than half of parents used taking away technology if their child broke rules and they also had rules about how much screen time their child could have in a day (2020). This creates a problem of opposing forces when technology and screen time is needed for children to learn.

Disabilities

Parents of students with disabilities also faced their own special challenges during virtual learning. According to research done in Turkey, students with disabilities were not

receiving the help they need to continue to be successful at school (Akbulut et al., 2020). A study done in Croatia of parents of students with developmental difficulties found that not only did the virtual education not fit the needs of these students; but the parents were unable to access the support they needed to help their children learn and because of the shuts downs and social distancing there was no one to help many of these parents by simply giving them a break (Lucic et al., 2020).

Effects of Income

Income or lack thereof played a major role in how virtual learning affected parents. A study was done of 4,168 students from 2,462 households in the UK. These parents were surveyed one month into the Covid-19 virtual learning experience. It was found that those parents that came from the lowest income households spent more time helping their children with their homework (Eivers, et al., 2020). A fascinating study done by the Pew Research Center of more than 2,500 parents of children under 18 found that parents with lower income were more likely to be only online learning. Half of all lower-income families had only online learning; but that number was at only 40% for those who came from upper income households (Sawchuk, 2020). Which means that the other 60% had access to at least some sort of blended in-class and virtual learning. They also found that 55% of parents with higher income worried that their child would fall behind; but that number was significantly higher at 72% for those in lower income households (Sawchuk, 2020). Furthermore, according to another study done in an Education Next Poll of 1,249 parents it was found that 48% of those parents who came from upper-income families felt like online learning was successful; but only 36% of

those in lower-income families felt like remote learning was a success for their child (Superville, 2020).

Effects of Race

Race and the role it played for parents who were immersed in only virtual learning is very fascinating. First of all, 20% of parents in the HISD survey said that they would need extra support because they did not understand the work given to their child in English (Matney, 2020). This is a problem that needs more research to determine how prevalent it is. Many students came from homes that did not have English-speaking parents making virtual learning all the more difficult. We have already mentioned that the lack of technology was and is a problem for many families; however, according to Klein, in the survey done to determine what parents thought about online learning it was found that if you were African American only 68% of you had reliable internet (Klein, 2020). This might seem high, but this means that 32% of these children were not able to access that internet in a way that would allow them to be successful at remote learning. Furthermore as referenced to earlier it was found in this same survey just more than half of all students have access to a printer, however African American families had under half who had access to a printer (Klein, 2020). More research needs to be done to determine the impact that race had and continues to have on parents in the Covid-19 era.

Time

Time played a huge role in the lives of parents as they attempted to help their children be successful at online learning. This time however was not always equally dispersed between the father and mother. In a survey published in the New York Times of 2,200 parents of children who were 12 and younger it was found that nearly half of all

fathers felt like they were the ones who were responsible for their child's online learning, but of these nearly 50% only 3% of the mothers agreed. Furthermore, 80% of the mothers said they were responsible for their child's learning (Gewertz, 2020). In a similar poll taken by ParentsTogether of its 1600 members it was found that 75% of mothers felt like they were responsible for their child's online learning and similar to the previous survey 57% of men felt like they were responsible for it (Gewertz, 2020). In conclusion it was found that men were more likely than women to say that they shared the responsibilities of their child's learning equally with the mothers (Gewertz, 2020).

Not only was time spent working on remote learning something that both parents struggled to find a balance in supporting each other. The simple lack of time to devote to their child's learning was a huge problem. According to a questionnaire given in March of 2020 to 3,275 Chinese parents with children in early childhood education, it was found that many parents did not have the time to help their child with their online learning (Dong et al., 2020). Similar results were found in the survey given to the Pakistani parents (Bhamani, 2020). In the HISD survey, 31% of PreK-2nd grade parents were dissatisfied with virtual learning. While several reasons contributed to this, one was the lack of time to help their child due to schoolwork taking too much time or the parents working (Matney, 2020).

Mental Health

Mental health also affected parents in many ways during remote learning. According to the Hong Kong study it was found that parents were experiencing what was called parental burnout (Lau & Lee, 2020). Furthermore, according to a survey by the National Panel Study of Coronavirus Pandemic (NPSC-19) of 3,338 households it was

found that parents who had children that were struggling with remote learning experienced levels of stress that were higher than usual (Davis et al., 2021). The study done on China and South Korea families found that the families as a whole were experiencing more stress and anxiety due to shut downs and online learning. Not only that, but parents had to deal with increased family conflict as families had to work out work-family conflicts or school-family conflicts (Lian & Loon, 2020).

Parental Concerns

Many parents faced many general concerns when it came to the idea of virtual learning. For example, parents were worried about the social isolation that was occurring for the children as schools shut down, they were worried that the usual interactions that helped their children grow socially and emotionally was missing (Bhamani et al., 2020; Dong et al., 2020). Many felt like virtual learning could not provide that learning atmosphere that promotes learning for many children (Dong et al., 2020). Not only were parents attempting to create the learning atmosphere outside of the classroom; but they also had to deal with disruptions that were caused by other family members (Lau & Lee, 2020). Routine is something that many children were used to as they went to school on weekdays and had a certain schedule to their life. However, when Covid-19 hit, creating a routine was something that many parents worried about, as it became much harder to create routines for their children as their children were stuck at home (Bhamani et al., 2020). Parents also worried that their children would not get enough physical activity (Dong et al., 2020). Physical activity is something that most children get on a regular basis at school with recess and gym classes; but Covid-19 changed that. The lack of focus and self-regulation became a concern for many parents as well. These skills were needed

all the more with virtual learning as it required the ability to focus on something that is on a screen and not physically in front of you. Furthermore, with many parents working they were not able to make sure that their children could self-regulate and stay on task (Dong et al., 2020; Matney et al., 2020). More research needs to be done to determine how focus and self-regulation affected students.

Parent Insecurities

Parents had many insecurities when they were all of a sudden asked to be their child's teacher in many ways. Many parents felt like they lacked the support of their school when it came to helping them navigate virtual learning (Lau & Lee, 2020). Not only did parents lack support; but many of them felt like they did not have the proper education to help their child (Dong et al., 2020; Lian & Yoon, 2020). Just like many parents did not feel like they had the necessary education, many also struggled because English was not their primary language. In the United States instructions for virtual learning and homework were usually given in English; but for parents who either did not speak English or were not fluent at it, it was difficult to help their students with virtual learning in English (Matney, 2020). The lack of money as already previously mentioned was an insecurity for many parents. Many of them could not provide their students with the needs required to be successful at virtual learning (Lian & Yoon, 2020).

Other Difficulties

Multiple children in the house also caused more difficulties for parents in the online learning process (Bhamani, 2020). Not only did parents potentially have more than one child to help and make sure they stayed caught up on their school work. But they also had to deal with more disruptions that come with more than one child (Lau & Lee, 2020).

More research needs to be done to determine the effect of multiple children on parents who are using remote learning. Probably one of the least covered difficulties in the articles in this lit review; but one of the most important was parents' concern over the lack of academic progress in their children. According to the Survey done by the National Parent Union 38% of parents felt like their child was learning less than they would during a typical school year (Klein, 2020). Furthermore, according to a study done by Education Week it was similarly found that 36% of parents felt like their child was learning less and making less progress in English Language Arts than they would in a typical school year (Klein, 2020).

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

For this thesis my goal was to better understand how parents were affected by virtual learning throughout either the Spring of 2020, the 2020-2021 school year, or both. I wanted to collect quantitative data that would aid in analyzing what areas parents struggled with as their children were learning virtually. I also wanted some written feedback on how virtual learning went for them specifically.

Population and Sample

The potential population for my study included all parents in the United States with children experiencing virtual learning during either Spring 2020, the 2020-2021 school year, or both. As it was not feasible or possible to survey the entire population, I decided to delimit my study to a smaller group of parents who would be most likely to respond to my survey.

At the time of this study, I was teaching at Madison Campus Elementary (MCE) in Madison, TN. As these parents would be familiar with me to a certain extent, I decided to use the parents of that school as my study sample. I concluded that would be the best way to access a fairly large group of parents whose children had participated in virtual learning. Though this was a somewhat limited group of people because they all came from the same school, they represented many different backgrounds and family situation

so the data still gave me a broad range of circumstances that parents would have dealt with during virtual learning.

Instrumentation

The work done for my Literature Review directly informed my instrument development. The literature analysis provided a clearer picture of the different categories in which previous research showed parents had been affected by their children's participation in virtual learning. In my review of the literature, all of the research articles I read collected data via surveys, polls, or questionnaires. Those researchers had demonstrated the use of a survey was a reliable and valid way to collect data on this topic. Therefore, I chose to collect data using a survey as well.

Instrument Development

I used the main problem areas for parents, as identified in prior research. I created survey items to align with each of the major areas identified in the literature review (see Validity and Reliability below). The final survey consisted of 20 multiple-choice questions and two open-ended questions. I planned to analyze the majority of survey responses by calculating percentages for different categories of parents who struggled with specific virtual learning issues. So, multiple-choice questions made sense. However, I also wanted to give parents a chance to voice how things went in general, so I included the open-ended questions. Appendix A contains all survey items with their associated response options. See Appendix B for all the answers parents gave for the open-ended questions.

Validity and Reliability

Content validity is the extent that an instrument measures all facets of what it claims to measure (Business Research Methodology, 2021). To document the content validity of this study's instrument, I created a figure showing the alignment of findings from my literature review and individual survey items. My analysis of the literature identified 9 areas which caused issues for parents of children doing remote learning. Figure 1 lists these areas on the left side and the corresponding survey questions on the right side. Thus, the survey contains a minimum of 2 items for each of the areas identified in the literature review. Valid surveys, in general, are reliable. Thus, the reliability estimate reported below, .74, is further support for the validity of the instrument.

Figure 1

Areas of Struggle Identified in literature review and corresponding survey question

Area Identified in Literature Review	Corresponding survey question
Technology	#9) Did MCE provide you with technology? #10) Was technology a source of stress during virtual learning?*
Disabilities	
Income	#14) Did you hold down a job while your child(ren) were virtual learning?*#15) Did virtual learning negatively affect your job?*
Race	#3) Please specify your race #4) Please specify your ethnicity #6) What is the primary language spoken in your home?

Time-gender/age	#1) Please specify your gender #8)What grade is your child(ren)? #12) How many children did you have virtual learning at once? #17) About how much time did you spend helping your child with virtual learning?
Mental Health	#10 Was technology a source of stress during virtual learning? #11) Did virtual learning negatively affect your family or home life?*
General-ability for child to focus, learning atmosphere,	#13) Do you feel like your child had too much screen time due to virtual learning? #14) Did you hold down a job while your child(ren) were virtual learning? #16) Were you able to be at home while your child was virtual learning? #20) Did you find it difficult to eliminate distractions when your child was virtually learning?*
Parental Insecurities	#2) Please specify your age range #5) What is your highest level of education? #18) Did you feel qualified to help your child with virtual learning?*
Other difficulties: Multiple children	#8)What grade is your child(ren)? #12) How many children did you have virtual learning at once?

*Indicates a survey item included in the Parent Stress Related to Virtual Learning Scale.

Reliability is a measure of an instrument's ability to provide consistent results over time ((Business Research Methodology, 2021). There are multiple ways to test for reliability, with Cronbach's *alpha*, being one of the most commonly used as it is fairly simple to compute and interpret. Cronbach's *alpha* is an estimate of the internal

consistency of an instrument. If a Cronbach *alpha* is above .70 it is considered acceptable, while those below .50 are deemed unacceptable (Glen, 2021 & Institute for Digital Research & Education Statistical Consulting, 2021). I identified seven of the survey items which were closely related to parental stress conceptually (see Figure 1 above). These items were used to form the Parent Stress Related to Virtual Learning Scale. The Cronbach *alpha* for the Parent Stress Related to Virtual Learning Scale was .76, or .74 based on the standardized items. As either value is greater than .70, this scale is acceptable for use. However, as developing a scale for measuring parental stress was not one of the purposes of this study, I did not conduct any analysis using the scale in this thesis.

Procedures

I used software called ClassClimate[®] to implement my online survey. Personnel in the Andrews University Assessment Office set up a ClassClimate[®] account for me. I entered all of my questions into an online survey template. I then had ClassClimate[®] generate a link to send to survey participants.

Before I sent out my survey I submitted an application for approval of this study to the Internal Review Board (IRB) at Andrews University. In addition to the application form itself, the packet included a copy of my survey, a research protocol, a signed permission letter from my principal and education superintendent of the Kentucky Tennessee Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, and electronic approval of the approval by my thesis advisor. The IRB reviewed my documents and gave me permission to begin data collection.

I then asked the administrative assistant at MCE to send out my email explaining to parents what my Thesis was about and why I needed parents to participate in the survey. This email also included the link to my survey. She sent out the email and the survey link using the MCE parent email database; there were a total of 158 students and the survey was sent to their guardians. So a rough estimate of the number of surveys sent out would be around 300. I left the survey open for approximately a week and a half. During that time, 55 parents responded to my survey. Once my data was collected I imported it into SPSS[®] and ran descriptive statistical analysis on the data to find patterns and better understand what the data had to say.

CHAPTER 4

ANALYSIS/RESULTS

The demographics of the 55 respondents to the survey are shown in Table 5. When the data was analyzed it was found that one participant had put down two races for their answer. This data point was not used; so any data that analyzed race had n=54, while all others had n=55. Female Caucasians made up the biggest group of those that responded to the survey. Also, over 75% of the parents had a college degree.

Table 5

Demographics of Participants

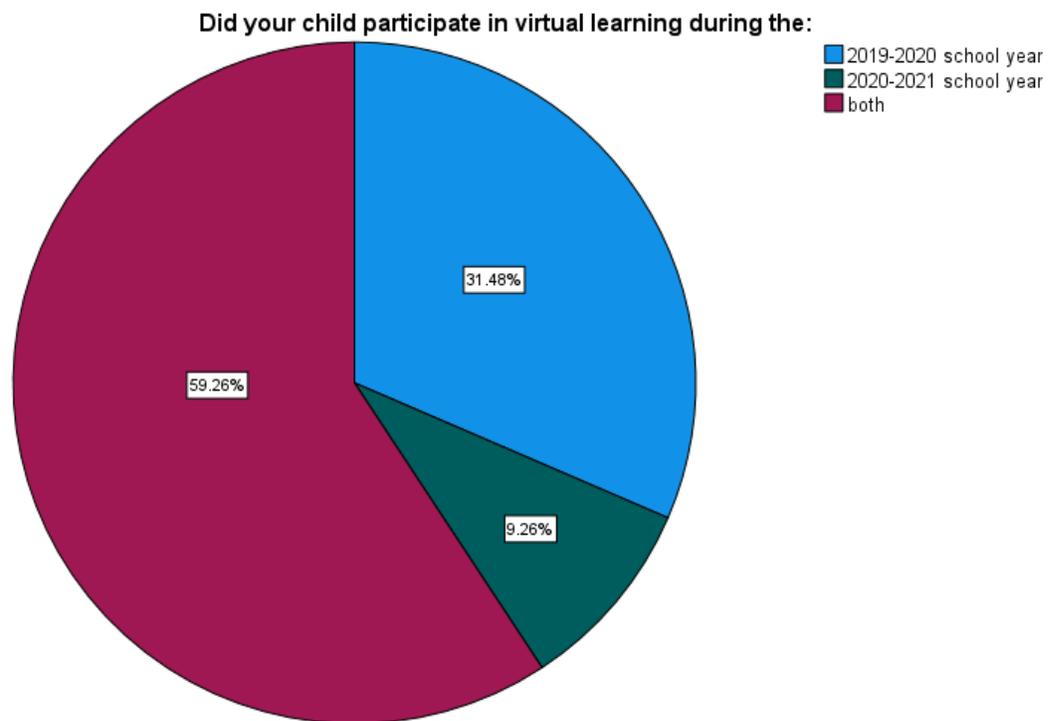
Category	Group	Frequency	Percent
Gender	Male	15	27.3
	Female	40	72.3
Race	Hispanic/Latino	7	12.7
	Black or African American	6	10.9
	Asian/Pacific Islander	2	3.6
	Caucasian	36	65.5
	Other	3	5.5
Level of Education	High school diploma	11	20.0
	Associate Degree	5	9.1
	Bachelor's Degree	19	34.5
	Master's Degree	13	23.6
	Doctorate Degree	5	9.1
	N/A	2	3.6

Note: n=55, except for race where n=54 due to one missing value

This data was based on parents who participated in virtual learning during the 2019-2020 school year, 2020-2021 school year, or both. Figure 2 shows a breakdown of those numbers. Nearly, 70% of the parents had participated in virtual learning during the 2020-2021 school year hopefully giving them a broader perspective on virtual learning than they would have had if they had just experienced it for a few months.

Figure 2

Breakdown of virtual schooling years



Parents were asked mostly multiple-choice questions; but they were also asked to respond to two open-ended questions. The first was to name two negative things about virtual learning and the second was to name two positive things about virtual learning. Parents' comments will be referred to in context throughout this chapter.

Technology

Parents identified technology as one of the areas in which they struggled the most. The data was first analyzed looking at technology being a source of stress based on race. These results are shown in Table 6. When parents were asked if technology was a source of stress for them, 56.4% of all respondents said it was. However, it is insightful to see the breakdown when grouped by race. Hispanics had the greatest percent (100%) of parents that were stressed by technology. The majority of Caucasian parents also indicated being stressed by technology. Fewer than half of parents in the other race categories said that technology caused them stress.

Furthermore, when looking at access to technology, specifically the need for a laptop, 12 total laptops were needed, or about 22% of those that filled out the survey. This is a significantly large number when parents were faced with complete virtual learning at the end of the 2019-2020 school year. Not having a laptop likely implied a greater struggle as they attempted to participate in virtual learning. A greater number of Caucasians needed laptops, 8 or about 67% of the laptops given out according to the survey went to Caucasian families. This was actually a surprise given the number of Hispanics that struggled with technology and virtual learning as mentioned above. However, as Table 5 showed, 65.5% of the participants were Caucasian. So, one might expect them to have more technology needs simply because they had a greater response in general. This is similar to what the HISD survey showed where 52% of parents would need technology for the 2020-2021 school year (Matney, 2020). Klein also found that only 68% of African American had access to reliable internet and only 48% had a printer (2020).

Screen time was another technology area that concerned parents. Nearly 62% of parents said that their child had too much screen time. When parents were asked to specifically name negative issues with virtual learning, six said too much screen time was a negative. “It’s really the amount of screen time that was my biggest concern. I think it negatively impacts kids socially.” This echoes the same thoughts as the literature review expressed, as Klein (2020) found that parental screen time rules often had to be broken due to virtual learning.

Table 6

Was technology a source of stress for you during virtual learning?

Race	Yes n (%)	No n (%)
Hispanic/Latino	7 (100)	0 (n/a)
Native American	0 (n/a)	0 (n/a)
Caucasian	21 (58.3)	15 (41.7)
Asian/Pacific Islander	0 (n/a)	2 (100)
Black or African American	2 (33.3)	4 (66.7)
Other	1 (33.3)	2 (66.7)
Total	31 (57.4)	23 (42.6)

Note. n=54, 1 missing value

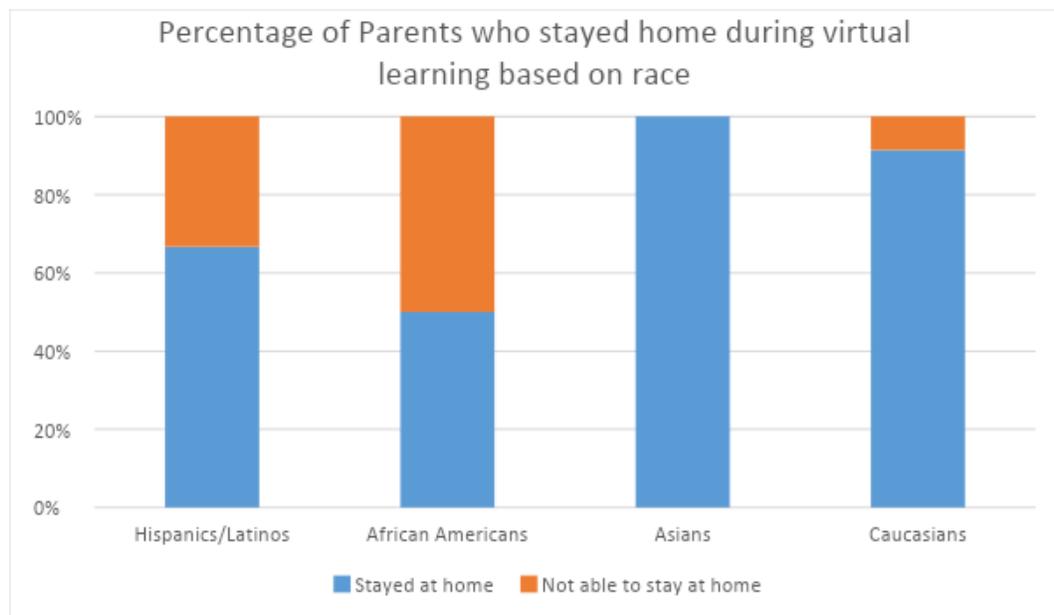
Race

At MCE 7.2% of homes have a first language other than English. Parents in those households who are trying to help their child with online learning in English will likely have more difficulties than parents whose first language is English. In Matney’s study (2020), 20% of parents needed support because they did not understand English very well

(2020). Although the percentage of parents at MCE was not as large as in Matney’s study, for those families the issue is still important.

The data was also analyzed to see if there was any connection between race and parents being at home while their child was virtual learning. Table 7 shows this connection more clearly.

Table 7



Of the 52 participants that answered this question, 82.7% of parents were able to stay at home and 17.3% could not. Four of Hispanics/Latinos were able to stay home and 2 were not, 3 African Americans were able to stay home and 3 were not; the 2 Asians were able to stay home and then 32 Caucasians were able to stay home compared to 3 who couldn’t stay home. Two from the other category were able to stay home and 1 was not able to. Breaking these numbers down a little we can see that about 91% of Caucasians were able to stay home with their children, compared to about 67% of Hispanics and 50% of African Americans. Though the literature review did not have

information regarding parents who were not able to stay home to help their children; this small amount of data seems to support the idea that race did affect a parent's ability to help your child with virtual learning. If parents were not able to be at home they were not as likely to be able to monitor their child and help them be successful.

Mental Health

According to the data, not only did 56.4% of participants say technology was a source of stress, but nearly 53% of parents said that sometimes they felt overwhelmed by virtual learning and 28.3% often felt overwhelmed. The mere fact that over 80% of parents felt overwhelmed by virtual learning at least sometimes suggests a potential area of concern. As one parent put it: "Sometimes the stress level was through the roof." Furthermore, parents made 11 comments that technology created negative experiences for them. These included internet issues, figuring out logins, too many people trying to work and learn at one computer, or lack of technology.

The data was analyzed further to see if having multiple children was more likely to cause parents to feel overwhelmed (see Table 8). While no pattern is evident for parents who indicated they rarely or sometimes felt overwhelmed, the pattern is clear for parents who often felt overwhelmed. The more children in a household who were virtual learning the greater the percentage of parents that found themselves to be feeling overwhelmed due to virtual learning often. One child showed this percentage to be around 20%, but with 4 or more children the percentage jumped to 50%. Lau & Lee made this point when they talked about how parents had to deal with the disruptions that were caused by other family members (2020).

Table 8

Overwhelmed feelings based on number of children

# of children	How often did you feel overwhelmed by virtual learning?		
	Rarely	Sometimes	Often
1	24%	52%	20%
2	11.1%	61.1%	27.8%
3	14.3%	42.9%	42.9%
4 or more	25%	25%	50%

n=53

The data was further analyzed to see if there was a connection between the level of overwhelmed feelings the parents felt and the year their student was virtual learning. Was there a difference between the 2019-2020 school year and the 2020-2021 school year? According to the MCE data, about 94% of parents whose children participated in virtual learning in the 2019-2020 school year felt overwhelmed either sometimes or often. For those parents whose children only participated in virtual learning during the 2020-2021 school year about 60% of parents felt overwhelmed either sometimes or often. For those parents whose children were part of both school years the percentage was 75%. Although none of those are desirable percentages when looking at how overwhelmed parents were feeling, they provide a small amount of hope as it appears that parents did become a little less overwhelmed as time passed. The literature review is silent on this comparison because at the time of article collection in February/March 2021; there was little data on how virtual learning in 2021 was going.

Parental Insecurities

The analysis to compare a parent's level of education and their feelings of competence when it came to their role in virtual learning revealed something interesting (see Table 9). According to the data, parents seemed to feel much less qualified if they had only a high school diploma; their confidence dramatically increased if they had at

least some college. Eighty percent of parents felt qualified if they had a doctorate. Based on this it can be assumed that a college degree played a major role in a parent’s perceived ability to help their child(ren) through virtual learning. However, it should be noted that the literature did not bring up any connection to the level of education and parental feelings of competence.

Table 9

Comparison of level of education vs. feelings of competence

Did you feel qualified to help teach your child in virtual learning?			
Level of education	Yes	No	Sometimes
No High School Diploma	50%	0%	50%
High School Diploma	9.1%	27.3%	63.6%
Associate’s Degree	60%	20%	20%
Bachelor’s Degree	73.7%	0%	26.3%
Master’s Degree	53.8%	7.7%	38.5%
Doctorate Degree	80%	0%	20%

n=55

Time

When looking at the combined data across grades K-8, 18.2% of parents spent less than one hour a day helping their child(ren), 49.1% of parents spent 1-2 hours a day helping their child(ren), 18.2% spent 3-4 hours a day helping their child(ren), and 9.1% spent more than 4 hours a day helping their child(ren). Analysis comparing data from 1st grade with 8th grade revealed interesting differences. For parents with 8th graders, 50% spent less than an hour a day and another 40% spent 1-2 hours a day helping their child(ren). However, if the child was in 1st grade about 47.1% spent 1-2 hours a day helping their child and another 23.5% spent 3-4 hours a day. This is reasonable since the

younger the child, generally the less independent they are in completing tasks. That would mean their parents needed to be more involved with their learning. Lack of time as shown in the literature review was a reason for parents to be dissatisfied with virtual learning. In the HISD survey parents gave several reasons for dissatisfaction with virtual learning and one of those reasons was parents working and not having enough time to help the students. (Matney, 2020).

Other Difficulties

Distractions

I analyzed the data to compare the number of children in a family and the level of distractions parents reported (see Table 10). Families with one or two children reported fewer distractions than those with three or four children. Even so, 76% of parents with a single child virtual learning reported they sometimes or often found it difficult to eliminate distractions. Those with three or four children found that they either sometimes or often had difficulty with distraction to the amount 100% of the time. “Managing younger sibling not to disturb during virtual learning” one parent indicated as a negative aspect of virtual learning. This validates the literature review that the more children parents had the greater the burden of virtual learning was on them (Lau & Lee, 2020).

Furthermore, distractions did not just come from younger siblings as these parents mentioned: “Distractions on and off the computer.” “Kids got distracted too easily and not always did what they were supposed to.” “Technology distractions, child going to YouTube while in school.” These findings are in agreement with those reported by Lau and Lee (2020) that many parents also had to deal with the distractions that come with trying to get their child to focus, especially if more than one child was virtual learning.

Table 10

Level of distractions based on the number of children in a household

Number of children	Did you find it difficult to eliminate distractions when your child was virtual learning?		
	Rarely	Sometimes	Often
1	24%	32%	44%
2	16.7%	44.4%	38.9%
3	0%	71%	28.6%
4 or more	0%	50%	50%

n=54

Family Life

According to the data collected in this survey it appears that virtual learning did not have as big a negative effect on family or home life as might have been expected. About 33.3% of parents said virtual learning did affect their family life, but 50% of parents said it did not affect their family life negatively. Another 16.7% were not sure of the effect that virtual learning had on home life. Although more parents said that virtual learning did NOT negatively affect their life; there were still one-third of parents who said it did. One specific problem a parent stated was the lack of ability “to separate home life from school life” and virtual learning being “invasive in the home.” The literature review did not specifically address virtual learning and family life; though many areas in the literature review could be connected to family life.

When looking more specifically at how the 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 school year differed as far as the effect on family life it was found that out of the 18 parents that said that virtual learning negatively affected their family life 15 of them had participated in

the 2019-2020 school year and 10 of them had participated in both the 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 school year. This actually makes a lot of sense as one would expect the 2019-2020 school year to have had a greater negative effect on family life considering the sudden switch to virtual learning. Parents and teachers hopefully had learned from the previous year and were able to improve the virtual learning experience for the 2020-2021 school year. This is a new finding as the literature review was finished before any information was published comparing virtual learning between the 2019-2020 school year and the 2020-2021 school year.

Parental Jobs

Another obvious difficulty that arose with virtual learning was the fact that many parents had jobs and now had to balance work responsibilities, even if they were working from home, with helping their children with virtual learning. Of the parents surveyed at MCE, 44 were working, 10 were not, and 1 did not respond. When parents were asked if they felt like virtual learning negatively affected their job, 14 of the 44 (32%) responded with “yes”. The other 30 (68%) responded with “no.” This was a surprising result as one would expect virtual learning to affect parents’ jobs more. In the survey, one parent did mention their struggles with online learning while having a job.

For our family it was difficult because my husband was teaching from home while at the same time trying to manage two kids needing to login and have virtual school. I am a nurse and was working full time during the pandemic so it was very difficult, especially, for our 1st grader to keep up with the assignments because both parents were working, still.

The literature review, although it addressed parents being too busy to help their children with online learning, it did not specifically address percentages of parents’ whose jobs were negatively affected by their child’s virtual learning (Matney, 2020).

Isolation from Peers

A common theme that kept coming up when looking at the open-ended responses was the isolation from other classmates that virtual learning brought. Nine separate comments referred to the fact that the parent felt like their child was lacking the social interaction that comes with in-person school or was feeling isolated. It was also mentioned that this type of social isolation was affecting the students emotionally. One parent put it like this: “The lack of in-person social interaction my child had with his teacher and friends. This had a huge emotional impact on him.” Dong brought up this point in his survey of 3,275 Chinese parents in which parents were concerned about the social isolation from peers (2020).

Positives

Despite the negatives mentioned with online learning, there were several positives that parents stated in the survey. One of the more common things mentioned was the ability of the parents to spend more time with their child and have more family time. As one parent said:

When Covid hit a year ago March, everything shut down. But it gave us unbelievable family [time] that I will always cherish. Sometimes we get so busy with school, sports, music, and are just constantly on the go. This forced us to stay home. And we had some great family time.

Several also stated that they gained knowledge about their child and how they learned. They better understood their child’s strengths and weaknesses when it came to academics. This was a major finding as the literature review had not eluded to how parents were able to understand their child’s learning processes due to virtual learning. Another major positive aspect of virtual learning that was mentioned repeatedly was how

much the parents appreciated the teachers and everything they did to help facilitate virtual learning. One parent said: “This helped me see where my kids’ strengths were and made me truly appreciate our teachers.” Another positive that was mentioned several times was the fact that parents did not have to commute back and forth from school. So despite the many negatives, the data shows that there were also many positive experiences that arose out of virtual learning.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS

Delimitations and Limitations

There were several delimitations and limitations to this study. First of all, the sample was delimited to a single, private, Christian school. This was done to increase the likelihood of receiving an adequate number of responses, as I was known to them as a teacher at the school.

A second delimitation concerned the language of the survey items. The survey questions were provided only in English. Several MCE parents spoke only Spanish. If I had provided a Spanish version of the survey, those parents that spoke and read only Spanish would have had an opportunity to be better represented.

The primary limitation of this study is its sample size. As a result, the sample may not have represented the typical parent population of the general public. Even though the Madison Campus Elementary (MCE) is diverse, the sample still did not likely represent races and ethnicity equitably. Also, a larger sample size would have provided greater confidence to generalize these results to populations other than MCE.

A second limitation was the absence of a question in the survey asking whether a family was a single-parent household. This would have likely provided additional insights as single-parent households probably faced unique challenges. Time was also a contributing limitation; the survey was only open for about a week and half. Had it been

sent out multiple times and kept open longer it is possible that the sample size would have been larger. The final limitation concerned the literature review. There was limited literature available since the topic was so new. This meant that not only were there not many articles to review, but the articles were not in peer reviewed publications.

Implications to the Field

There are many implications to the field of teaching from this study. To begin with, parent involvement is needed to support children academically whether they are learning at home or at school. This research shows that parents struggled with feeling overwhelmed, the lack of appropriate resources, the lack of time, and the lack of a proper learning environment for their children. This means that parents were not equipped to meet the learning needs of their children which they were asked to meet in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Results from this study add new knowledge to the field of inquiry indicating hope that the experience for parents supporting their children's virtual learning can be improved and less stressful. This is based on the finding that virtual learning did seem to be less overwhelming for parents, at least to some extent, during their second year (the 2020-2021 school year) when compared to their first year (the 2019-2020 school year). This likely was attributable to at least two factors. First, the parents had increased levels of experience with supporting their children's virtual learning from Spring 2020 to the 2020-2021 school year. Second, teachers learned from their experience in Spring 2020 and improved planning, delivery and support of their students' virtual learning because they had time for pre-school-year planning over the summer of 2020. Teachers gave their absolute best to provide students the best learning experience during the Covid-19

pandemic; but there will be huge gaps in children's learning if a solution is not found to support parents and teachers alike so both groups have what they need to ensure each child is successful.

Further Study

There are many areas where further study would be useful on this topic. Virtual learning appears to cause a mental strain on parents; but to what extent? More research specifically looking at the effects of virtual learning on the mental health of parents would be warranted. This study found that parents seemed to be less overwhelmed during the 2020-2021 school year than they did during the 2019-2020 school year. Did parents feel less overwhelmed simply because they were becoming more comfortable with the idea of virtual learning? Did they have systems figured out to help them cope? Were teachers and schools better prepared for virtual learning and thus the process was less overwhelming for parents?

Findings showed parents with a college degree seemed more confident in helping their child during virtual learning; more research needs to be done on this specific area to see how a parent's education level affects their confidence in helping their children. Even if parents were not part of virtual learning, does their educational level affect the types of academic support they can provide their children at home, working in tandem with a classroom teacher.

Further study needs to be done to identify potential, specific negative impacts virtual learning can have on home life. If virtual learning is indeed negatively influencing home life this is an issue that needs to be researched so ways can be proposed to combat the negative effects for future children and their families. Lastly, research should be done

to identify the effects on a parent's job when their children are engaged in virtual learning. These job-related effects should then be differentiated by single or multi-parent homes.

Final Conclusion

In conclusion, virtual learning put a major strain on parents during the Covid-19 pandemic and left them with many challenges they were unable to successfully resolve. These challenges at times were connected to race and the family dynamics of each family. There were a couple of new findings that presented themselves in this study. Looking at the 2019-2020 school year vs. the 2020-2021 school year parents were less overwhelmed during the 2020-2021 school year. The percentage of parents who felt overwhelmed either some of the time or often dropped from 94%-60%. Furthermore, I found that parents appreciated the ability to get to know how their students learned and understand their strengths and weaknesses. This turned out to be a positive that was not found in the literature review. More research needs to be done and supports need to be put in place to help parents as they work to support children's virtual learning at home.

APPENDIX A

SURVEY USED TO COLLECT DATA

1. Please specify your gender
 - a. male
 - b. female
 - c. Prefer not to say
2. Please specify your age range
 - a. 20-29
 - b. 30-39
 - c. 40-49
 - d. 50-59
 - e. 60+
3. Please specify your race
 - a. Hispanic or Latino
 - b. Black or African American
 - c. Native American
 - d. Asian/Pacific Islander
 - e. Caucasian
 - f. Other
4. Please specify your ethnicity
 - a. Hispanic
 - b. non-Hispanic
5. What is your highest level of education
 - a. High school diploma
 - b. Associate Degree
 - c. Bachelor's degree
 - d. Master's degree
 - e. Doctorate degree
 - f. N/A
6. What is the primary language spoken in your home
 - a. English
 - b. Spanish
 - c. Other
7. Did your child participate in virtual learning during the?
 - a. 2019-2020 school year

- b. 2020-2021 school year
 - c. both
8. What grade is your child(ren)?
- a. K
 - b. 1st
 - c. 2nd
 - d. 3rd
 - e. 4th
 - f. 5th
 - g. 6th
 - h. 7th
 - i. 8th
9. Did MCE provide you with technology?
- a. laptop
 - b. WiFi
 - c. other
 - d. I had all the technology I needed
10. Was technology a source of stress during virtual learning
- a. yes
 - b. no
11. Did virtual learning negatively affect your family or home life?
- a. yes
 - b. no
12. How many children did you have virtual learning at once?
- a. 1
 - b. 2
 - c. 3
 - d. 4 or more
13. Do you feel like your child had too much screen time due to virtual learning?
- a. yes
 - b. no
14. Did you hold down a job while your child(ren) were virtual learning?
- a. yes
 - b. no
15. Did virtual learning negatively affect your job?
- a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. NA
16. Were you able to be at home while your child was virtual learning?
- a. yes
 - b. no
17. About how much time did you spend helping your child with virtual learning?

- a. less than an hour
 - b. 1-2 hours
 - c. 3-4 hours
 - d. more than 4 hours
18. Did you feel qualified to help your child with virtual learning?
- a. yes
 - b. no
19. How often did you feel overwhelmed by virtual learning?
- a. Rarely
 - b. Sometimes
 - c. Often
20. Did you find it difficult to eliminate distractions when your child was virtually learning?
- a. Yes
 - b. no
21. What are the top 3 negative or frustrating things about your virtual learning experience?
22. What are the top 3 positive things about your virtual learning experience?

APPENDIX B

ANSWERS TO OPEN-ENDED SURVEY QUESTIONS

What are the top 2 negative or frustrating things about your virtual learning experience?

- The kids were too excited about seeing their friends on a screen so paying attention was hard
- The personal experience and the ability to fully grasp something wasn't completely there which is very important
- Struggle with focusing
- Sense of isolation from peers
- unclear expectations at the beginning-we were all figuring it out together!
- blurring of work/school/home boundaries
- Questions were not able to be answered right away because teachers had too much going on while trying to teach.
- There was too many playing and interruptions with others on the zoom meetings
- no physical interaction with others,
- little time spent on each topic
- Child unable to interact face to face with peers, others outside home environment. Contributes to poor life skills, hampers development on many levels. Sense of isolation can ensue, loss of connecting to others.

- Internet connectivity for us many times unreliable leading to high levels of frustration to the child.
- Disturbing my flow of work tasks and deadlines.
- Limited focus for my younger child.
- Having the children set up in different areas of the house while they were both doing virtual.
- When the connection froze and the children were kicked out of the zoom meeting.
- Less work was given out vs being in-person.
- When my child was not understanding the concept and trying to schedule time with the teacher to assist.
- Motivating child to do school work in a timely manner
- Managing younger sibling not to disturb during virtual learning
- My child learns better in person not thru a screen.
- It is near impossible for two adults to work from home and a young child to do virtual learning.
- Not enough explanation of expectations.
- Trying to create an environment conducive to learning was a challenge.
- Very stressful trying to keep kids engaged and still manage my own work. Was frequently distracted from my work.
- Used too much internet at one time in our house. Both husband and i worked from home, that was 5 people all trying to use it.

- We working more than usual, so trying to provide the support that the kids needed was next to impossible. No one's fault at all, everyone was doing way more than their usual role, it was just difficult.
- Uneven schedules for our 2 kids. This was NOT at Madison because we were elsewhere for most of our virtual learning, but our 6th grader basically had a normal day online while our 3rd grader just had 2-3 hours total broken up over the day. It was hard to entertain one and make sure the other was on task.
- WiFi issues
- Distractions on and off the computer
- Not being able to locate school work within technology.
- Being there to help. And having the teachers show up for the zoom meetings.
- First off i qm not very computer literate and that created issues with moving around the laptop. I relied on my older grandchildren to help but they had schoolwork also. And i believe spending 3 to four hours looking at a laptop was not beneficial. Especcailly the 1st grader who gave completely up.
- First year of virtual school created the most frustration as everything had to be figured out for the first time: organization, time use, how to teach your child, technology and software.
- First, we knew early on that the risks of virtual learning far outweighed the risks of children getting the virus. The toll that virtual learning took on our children's ability to learn in person, interact socially, and grown emotionally has been exponentially impacted. We, as a society, will be feeling these repercussions for quite a long time.

- Second, small children needed much more help with virtual education. If they couldn't log on it led to very frustrating circumstances. Sometimes the stress level was through the roof, and that was even with an adult there to help. For our family it was difficult because my husband and I was teaching from home while at the same time trying to manage two kids needing to login and have virtual school at the same time. I am a nurse and was working full time during the pandemic, so it was very difficult, especially, for our 1st grader to keep up with the assignments because both parents were working, still. So overall I would say coordination and time needed.
- Having to help more than usual with making sure she got work done and turned in. Seeing her be more isolated and lonely because she couldn't interact with friends.
- I didn't like the Google Classroom platform- wasn't practical for kindergarten-level students to navigate or "turn in" assignments I didn't like Calvin sitting on the tablet for a solid hour- would have preferred 15-20 minute intervals
- I don't have computer
- I don't have internet
- I just don't think she was fully engaged. She was easily distracted and my wife was often not very helpful, so I would have to get involved. Also, her little sister distracted her.
- I worked full time and had to be at home while she was doing virtual and I needed to be in the office some days. It was also more work on me.

- It was difficult to focus on my job, it was hard to keep up with two classes school work. It was hard to make my son sit down and listen and do what the teacher was asking him to do on virtual it was a struggle. And also my son did not do very well on virtual he does better when he has workbooks.
- It's really the amount of screen time that was my biggest concern. I think it negatively impacts kids socially.
- Kids got distracted too easily and not always did what they were supposed to. Getting in and out of the online meetings was frustrating at times but not terrible.
- Lack of 1.) advanced placement programs and 2.) after school programs for gifted students
- Lack of adequate WiFi and trying to help / teach two kids at the same time.
- Lack of structure from the school. Online education is different from virtual, however, most schools and teachers due to the lack of training just migrated the traditional classroom teaching online.
- My child was so young and needed the actual in-person social and emotional development. I noticed his attitude was awful on virtual school days.
- My children were argumentative If they did not understand the material being taught. They did not want me to reteach them even though I am also an educator. They had a hard time going between the teacher and parent instruction. My children complained about being on the computer so much.
- My child's lack of interest and being easily distracted.
- My child's frustration at doing so many online videos and slideshows vs. doing activities with friends in the classroom.

- Network quality
- Lack of social contact
- No classmates to interact with in person. Time taken away from work to supervise the online schooling with my youngest child.
- No social interaction for my child face to face. A change in personality because of that and not sure how to interact once back in the classroom
- Not able to be in class to ask question.
- Not able to be with her friend.
- Our WiFi was glitchy on occasion which could make it difficult at times. The kids missed the socializing with their friends. Also, if there was trouble with the computer- I would sometimes have to interrupt the schooling of my oldest to help with the youngest.
- Outside dsitractions..
- Screen time was more than I would prefer and abnormal spotty internet
- The amount of screen time.
- The lack of in person/hands on experiences for learning activities
- The lack of in person social interaction my child had with his teacher and friends. This had a huge emotional impact on him. It was also very hard to keep him focused while on the computer and with his school work. Lots of frustration when he didn't understand an assignment.
- The technology distractions , child going to YouTube while in school. Just not doing well without being in the classroom
- Too much screen time

- Hard to separate home life from school life
- Too much screen time
- It took some time to get the hang of things
- Too much screen time
- Invasive in the home
- Trying to keep our child focused.
- Don't believe she learned as much or as easy at home virtual as she would in the classroom
- We didn't have many negative experiences. Probably the only two issues I remember was the chat feature being open between the students during a class period and they would chat back and forth while they should have been listening. I didn't understand why that wasn't disabled while the teacher was teaching. But my kids are older, so not a huge deal.
- We had never used zoom or any other virtual leaning program, so trying to figure out how to use it, getting the correct codes and links was a little confusing at first.
- Having my youngest sit still that long and not get distracted was a little challenging.
- When there's no accurate information regarding changes of schedule or when necessary materials from school are missing.
- teacher instruction did not modify to embrace the opportunities that virtual learning presents. Both teachers completely missed the boat on how to adapt and embrace the crazy that was the virtual setting..... the side lesson it taught my child: teachers don't have to keep learning, sad!

What are the top 2 positive things about your virtual learning experience?

- The choice to finish work later because of our jobs
- A little more involvement in our kids education –
- Allowed for more bonding time with my child
- Accessibility of time and place ...
- AMAAZING teachers who went above and beyond anything that could be expected.
- Seriously, the teachers.
- Child able to progress toward learning goals and pass on to the next grade level unlike others without the means to do so.
- Child is comfortable and adept at using technology. Child able to navigate the virtual learning environment with minimal instruction and minimal active supervision. Was surprised how my child adapted to this experience once the basics of the how and the expectations of the what to do was understood.
- Enjoyed having more time together as a family.
- Was easy to see what my children were doing on school because of the google classroom.
- I felt it gave me a detailed knowledge of the material my child was covering at school..which help me to understand areas of strength and weakness so I can focus the help I provide to my child.
- I liked not having to do drop off and pick up. Gave me more flexibility with my time.
- Not having to commute to/from school.

- Children not having extremely long days.
- Teachers worked very hard and quickly to continue to educate our children through virtual learning.
- More time at home with family. Less travel time.
- The students were able to still see classmates.
- Able to take test online without having to come to the school in-person.
- The teacher was amazing and went above and beyond for each child.
- The teacher provided paper packets to go with the virtual learning.
- We were home together and spent more time interacting.
- Not needing to commute
- Availability while our family had covid and our child did not have to miss. One of the teachers recognized that it was okay for the pace to slow down a little to minimize screen time.
- Both of my kids loved that they were able to work on their own pace once all of the work was given. But again, they are older and are pretty responsible for their own tasks at home in general.
- Continued learning during a pandemic.
- More time with kids
- Convenience and stay active from home.
- Convenience of staying home not shuttling her to school
- Spending more time with our child
- Convenient keeps learning happening to some degree when it was not possible to be in school.

- Easier schedule - not rushing out the door in the morning and being done earlier in the day. More access as a parent to the material he was learning - made it easier to see what areas he needed to focus more or less on.
- Family being together
- Flexible schedule
- Having more family time and not having to commute. Her teachers being so patient and working so hard to make virtual learning a reality.
- Having personal one on one time. N/a
- He was still able to continue with school and not fall behind.
- Her teacher for 4th grade was very helpful and brought things by for school and printed off there assignments which was very helpful for her to have ready for each week.
- I learned so much about my childs learning ability, weakness, strengths, and how to and even created the desire to want to do more.
- I think the novelty of it was appealing to my daughter. Also, we didn't have to commute.
- I was able to spend quality time with the children qnd we spent alot of time outdoors and exercising.
- Increased time with child and the ability to provide one on one instruction to help excel child in all areas of the curriculum, especially reading
- It was convenient not having to drive to and from school each day.
- Getting to interact with the teachers some and seeing how hard they work! We got to witness the teachers teach and how they teach.

- More time spent as a family. A better understanding of what our children's schoolwork is like other than the usual homework.
- More time with my children
- More insight into their learning needs
- Most activities/videos were interactive and the work was appropriate/ I was able to assist when needed
- My children were still able to participate in class even when they were sick during the 2020-2021 school year. My children did not fall behind in their grade level either year because MCE did an excellent job of accountability, and the teachers continued to teach the most important standards. The MAP standardized testing showed growth in all subject areas for both my children. They both tested at or above grade level in every subject tested.
- My kids don't have to wear mask the whole time & we can monitor their behavior during classes.
- No driving
- Being together
- Not driving to and from school and being able to see if he made any progress.
- Not having to drive 45 minutes to and from school twice a day; getting to listen in on the kids classroom experiences
- Noticed how much help my child needed. And pushed me to put her in a better environment.
- Opportunities for 1.)
- mentoring and 2.)

- coaching fellow students
- Saves time and flexible for parents
- Allowed our child to work on her own pace
- Teacher one on one time if needed
- Started later in the day and less hours online
- That when my son was done I felt like there was no more stress trying to get him to understand that he had to be on virtual so that he could get the learning he needed.
- The ability to use other resources for my child's education
- The kids were able to learn how to adapt and also realized how much they loved actual school :)
- The teaches (some) all though busy were trying to stay connected and reaching out with the students.
- The school was able to provide a laptop to one of my kids
- There was really nothing positive about virtual learning.
- They stay at home.
- No rushing to pick them up .
- This helped me see where my kids strengths were and made me truly appreciate our teachers.
- To feel my kids were safe at home during the earlier stages of the pandemic.
- The family could wake up a little later since there was no time lost dressing or driving to the school.

- Was able to teach my child about self sustainability through gardening etc.
Spending time with both my children.
- When Covid hit a year ago March, everything shut down. But it gave us unbelievable family time that I will always cherish. Sometimes we get so busy with school, sports, music, and are just constantly on the go. This forced us to stay home. And we had some great family time. The teachers abbreviated their school day. I would never want the kids on computers all day long.
- school could continue for our students because of virtual... while many across the country could not.

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