Parent 1:

(silence) Hi!

Administrator:

Hi there.

Parent 1:

Hello.

Administrator:

Hi. How are you?

Parent 1:

I'm good. Sorry I'm late. I can't figure this out, so-

Administrator:

You're actually on time, so-

Parent 1:

Oh, good!

Administrator:

That's perfect. (silence)

Moderator 1:

Hi everyone. I'm Moderator 1.

Parent 1:

Hello.

Moderator 1:

Thanks for joining. We're just going to wait for a couple more people to come. How many people are we expecting today, Administrator?

Administrator:

Five.

Moderator 1:

Five. Okay, cool. All right, so we'll wait for more people to sign on, then we'll get started. (silence)

Hi, [Parent 2 00:05:53]. Welcome. Thanks for joining. We're just waiting, I think, for one or two more people. So hopefully we'll get started in a couple of minutes or so. (silence)

Administrator, what do you think? Do you think we should... Oh, she's on the phone. Sorry.

Administrator:

2:10? [crosstalk 00:07:48] Or... Yeah.

Moderator 1:

Yeah. 2:10 sounds good. (silence)

Hi, Parent 1 Welcome. We're going to get started in a minute or so. (silence)

Okay. So I think that there's still one more person who's going to join us, but we can get started at least with some introductions. So my name is Moderator 1. I'm a neuropsychologist with the Healthy Brain Network. Thank you so much for taking some time to speak with us today. These focus groups have been really helpful, if just giving us a deeper understanding of issues that families are facing. And one of the things that we're seeing is that people are having really different experiences. And I think some people are having shared experiences, and then some people are having unique experiences. And I just want to encourage you that even if you're experiencing something different than what someone else is saying to please speak up. If you're experiencing something similar, please speak up. We really just want to hear from everyone. So maybe we could just start by going around, just introduce yourself, your name, and tell us how many kids you have and what their ages are. Just so we understand. Parent 2, you want to start us off? You're in the top-right of my screen.

Parent 2:

Hi, I'm Parent 2. I have two kids, a boy and a girl. My son is 12. My daughter's 10, almost 11. I guess, I don't know. What else did you want to know in the introduction? Sorry.

Moderator 1:

That's it for now. Thank you, Parent 2. Perfect. So I see Anthony Hill, but I'm not sure if that's your name.

Parent 1:

Hi. No, it's Parent 1. It's under my husband's name and I couldn't figure out how to change it on my... I'm not as savvy as my teenage son on computers. So I have two children. Two boys, one 13 and one eight. And a little dog that's sitting on my lap. Hi! So, that's it.

Moderator 1:

Okay, great. We'd like to hear about the dog's experiences during COVID also. Okay, and Parent 3? Can you hear us? I don't think we can hear you, Parent 3. I'm not sure if you can hear us, but maybe write to us in the chat if there's something we can help with. [Parent 4 00:13:17]? Introduce yourself.

Parent 4:

Hi, I'm Parent 4. I'm at work, so I'll turn my camera on and off. So, sorry. I'm the mom of a 16-year-old boy and a 13-year-old girl.

Moderator 1:

Great. Thank you for joining us. Administrator, Maybe you could reach out to Parent 3 and see...

Administrator:

So she's at work. I'm not sure if she's muted, but she told me that she would mute and unmute whenever she needed to.

Moderator 1:

So whenever you're able to speak, just let us know and speak up. We'd like to hear from you also. So I was thinking, let's start with an exercise, just to kind of organize some thoughts about technology and how it's affected your kid's life over the course of the pandemic. So if you can just take a minute to jot down two or three positive ways that technology has impacted your child over the pandemic, and maybe two or three negative ways that technology has impacted your child over the pandemic. And then we'll discuss it. (silence)

Once you've outlined a couple, also circle whichever group had the biggest impact. So, positive group had the biggest overall impact, circle that. If the negative group had the biggest overall impact, circle that one. (silence)

Okay. So by show of hands, who circled the positive group as having the bigger overall impact over the course of the pandemic? Parent 4, no? Okay. So did all three of you circle the negative group as having the bigger overall effect? Okay. So let's get into that a little bit. So I guess the first question that we can discuss is... Let's talk a little bit about how did your children use technology before the pandemic? Did you think that technology was a problem? Did you have concerns or problems with their use of technology for educational purposes before the pandemic and their usage? So whoever wants to speak first can go ahead.

Parent 4:

I can speak. So I- [crosstalk 00:17:26] Sure. So my 16-year-old, I don't think that he... I mean, I guess they must've used technology before, but... I guess they used Google classroom and stuff, but not as much as they obviously did during the pandemic. They always had PupilPath and different things to, sort of, follow their assignments. But I think during the pandemic, my son, the 16-year-old, has ADHD. And so, he has two screens in his room. So on one screen, there's a Zoom with his class. And on the other screen, he's playing video games. And to me, it's just very frustrating and it's been... You can't take technology away from them because they need it for school. So that's been a very frustrating part of the whole experience. And he feels like he's not really learning very much because, well, I mean, I would say it's because he's playing video games while they're trying to teach him. But he says it's just not conducive to his learning, so.

Moderator 1:

Gotcha. So it's been a distraction, but it's just challenging because you can't really limit it because he's also using it for school. So you can't place the same limits that you used to. Thanks, Parent 4. Yeah, Parent 1?

Parent 1:

I can go next. So what was the question? It was...

Moderator 1:

So I guess just speaking a little bit about how did your- [crosstalk 00:19:14]

Parent 1:

Oh, before and after.

Moderator 1:

Use technology before the pandemic, did you have any concerns before? And then-

Parent 1:

They never really-

Moderator 1:

You can speak a little bit to how that changed.

Parent 1:

So they never, definitely my eight-year-old, never used technology for school. They don't even have homework at that age. My 13-year-old, he also has ADD, ADHD and he has an IEP and all that stuff. And so, he would do his homework at school. So I don't even know what he'd used in terms of technology, but he didn't use it at home. That's for sure. And then afterwards, he had to use it for... It's the same situation with the two screens, and he would have his Chromebook open doing school. And then I can't helicopter him, so-

Moderator 1:

Right.

Parent 1:

Because I'm working full-time from home. So I'm jumping between mom hat, work hat. And so I go in there into his room and I have to keep the door open because then I can't trust him. He sneaks it and he has another screen going. It's like crack, it's like a drug, like he has to have it. And I'm like, "You don't play at school, video games. So why would you think you can do it during school hours at home?" And then he's, "Of course. Of course, Mom." And then he does it anyway. So there's the sneaking. And really, I can't put any limits on him because that's not just for school. It's also how they socialize. So he's not seeing his friends at school. So how... Anyway, I think that before it was almost non-existence in terms of education.

Moderator 1:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Parent 1:

And then it was really just not effective at home because I couldn't monitor it. And because of the ADHD, I think he had a really hard time just logging in to show that he was present for the class. So he had like 40 absences and I'm like, "No, he didn't have 40 absences. He was online. He did the work. I saw him online. He just didn't check in." And so, it just ended up being one negative thing after the other. And he's getting in trouble with his teachers and he missed assignments. And it was a nightmare. And the Chromebooks were really an issue. They're not as capable as they should be. And they- [crosstalk 00:21:53]

Moderator 1:

In terms of what? In terms of being able to filter or block or- [crosstalk 00:21:57]

Parent 1:

In terms of what they can do. And the ease of use, too.

Moderator 1:

Okay.

Parent 1:

And the filters. The filters, for sure. But also the ease of use. He should have been able to log into his Chromebook and then log into that class and boom! Automatically be counted as present. [crosstalk 00:22:09] But now, you have to go through seven steps to get there.

Moderator 1:

Right. [crosstalk 00:22:13]

Parent 1:

I mean-

Moderator 1:

And it's just a new organizational thing that he has to do, which could be very confusing. [crosstalk 00:22:16]

Parent 1:

Yeah, which he can't do anyway! [crosstalk 00:22:17]

Moderator 1:

Right, with organizational- [crosstalk 00:22:19]

Parent 1:

I mean, even he's got to do Google Classroom, now he has to check email-

Moderator 1:

Right.

Parent 1:

Now he has to check the instant chats and the non-instant chats. I don't know, just-

Moderator 1:

It's a lot of extra responsibilities that are very independent and it's... Yeah. [crosstalk 00:22:36]

Parent 1:

Yep. And I couldn't figure it out, so how's he going to figure it out? [crosstalk 00:22:38]

Moderator 1:

Right, yeah. And the social part is interesting, also, that you're saying. That it also makes it hard to limit.

Parent 1:

I can't take it away from him.

Moderator 1:

Yeah, yeah.

Parent 1:

I can't take the drug away.

Moderator 1:

Right.

Parent 1:

That's his only outlet, even now. That's just how it... I don't know if that's how it would normally be anyway, just because of their age and the era that we live in. It's a digital age, so maybe it would have been anyway, but-

Moderator 1:

Right, but it's an extra complication, sounds like. All right.

Parent 1:

And extra screen time on top of extra screen time, so.

Moderator 1:

Yeah.

Parent 1:

That's it.

Moderator 1:

Parent 2, can you speak a little bit, your kids' usage before and how that changed during the pandemic?

Parent 2:

Sure. It's pretty similar to what you guys are saying. My son is the oldest, he's 12, so he didn't really use technology much in school. He's ADHD, as well as dyslexic. So purposefully, they avoided technology just for the process of writing is better. So he did use some apps for reading, like Learning Ally for reading and stuff. But basically, one positive thing is he's definitely learned how to type, which is amazing. At first I would watch him. It was so tedious. It was painful. For him, some parts would have been positive, like learning to type, it actually helped him be a little more organized because all of his work was in Google Classroom instead of forgetting papers at school. And so, he would get a notification from his teacher that he had work to do, and it would be right there.

It wasn't something that he'd written and forgotten about or whatever. So in a lot of ways, it sort of helped him be a little more accountable because it was just in his face. I could look at it and see and help him. I don't know if he says he didn't have something, I could see that he did and it wasn't just something that he forgot he had, right? The negatives are definitely what you're saying, as far as being distracted and like... It was hopeless. I tried so hard in the beginning to keep him off of video games. But for him, it was a total distraction, but somehow he was able to manage to keep up with schoolwork. I don't know how he did it, but he definitely did his schoolwork, in addition to watching videos while the teacher was talking, which makes no sense.

It would drive me batty, but the same thing. I'm trying to work and I can't stay on top of him. I tried all the screen time things, but then he would just find ways around it. The greatest one was figuring out that he had to have Google Docs. So he figured out how he could import his YouTube videos into Google Doc and watch them, even though I turned off YouTube. One day, I'm like, "How is he watching that?" And he even told me, he was like, "Oh!" Like he was so proud, but I was like, "That's great that you figured it out, but it's-" [crosstalk 00:25:52]

Parent 1:

That's clever.

Parent 2:

So, besides that, I'm thinking... I mean, I think previous to this, he leaned towards the...

PART 1 OF 4 ENDS [00:26:04]

Parent 2:

I mean, I think previous to this, he leaned towards being really hyper-focused on video games. But it was a little more manageable because we could draw the line. He didn't need the computer or the iPad to do something, so we could take it away. But like you're saying, the school, it's how he socialized, how he did all of his schoolwork. So it was a little hard to sort of... But part of me realizes it's his personality. So, in general, it's something that we have to work on anyway because there's always going to be the temptation of electronic. I mean, as adults, we still have to learn how to turn off all the other distractions and do our work, so.

Moderator 1:

Right.

Parent 2:

I mean his school, they made us feel better because they're like, "We're dealing with all the kids." So it's like, well, they're well aware. So in a lot of ways, they changed some of their strategies to make things a little more interactive instead of a little less, sort of cut and dry, so they can engage them more, which helped somewhat, but.

Anyways, so my daughter, I don't know, she's totally addicted to her device, which she didn't... Well, we had a family iPad before, but then once this happened, she's 10, almost 11. So we eventually... She has her own device so that she could do the school stuff and she's addicted to it. But it's been a little tricky for her because she's definitely become... It's hard to motivate her to do other things because it's like... So the gratification is there. It's so easy. I don't know. I feel like that's the hardest part is how do you scale back, isn't it?

Moderator 1:

Yeah.

Parent 2:

She went back to school. And there's not the excuse now. Her work isn't on the device, so.

Moderator 1:

Yeah.

Parent 2:

I don't know, but it's been definitely hard to reel it in a little.

Moderator 1:

Yeah, that's actually going to be my next question. It's just about returning back and different challenges that we're anticipating. But I just want to check in with Parent 3. Any progress? Are you able to speak now for a minute? Or is your audio able to be turned on? Okay, so we'll move on, but if you figure out your audio, please speak up at any point.

So, okay. So moving on to the next question, which is, as we have already started going back to school or planning to return to school, what challenges do you anticipate for your children returning to school? And are there any parts that you would maybe want to see continue or things that you would definitely want to see disappear? So anyone can take that one first.

Parent 1:

Sorry. Can you repeat that?

Moderator 1:

So yeah, just as we're going back, what challenges do you anticipate your children facing? And is there anything that you'd like to see stay or go away?

Parent 1:

Well, since I'm already muting, I think that going forward, it's never, it's not going to ever be the same the way it was. We're in for the whole new life, basically. And I think that I'm not ever going to get my iPad back. That's gone, so that's a bummer. And I think that I'm going to see what I saw at the very end of the year when they went back. And I think I'm going to see that in the fall, meaning towards the end of the year, my son was failing out of school. And it was because I don't think anybody was monitoring him. At least when he was home, I was monitoring him a little bit. Enough to be like, "Did you do this? Did you do that?"

Well, I'm not a helicopter parent anyway, but I'm certainly not... I'm thinking that he's got special ed teachers who keep him on track and make them write down what he needs to do at the end of every day. But I found out that he was missing entire homeworks, entire reports, and when I would ask him, he would, "Oh yeah, no, I turned everything in. Everything's totally fine." And then I get an email from the school saying, "He's got an F," Or "He's got a D." He's missing these six things. And so I anticipate it's going to be very similar to that.

As Parent 2 mentioned with the dyslexia, my son also has dyslexia. He was just diagnosed, though. And it's not the one where you flip the things. It's a much more weird. I don't know. Anyways, he's doing the Wilson book programs. And so, and he has summer school because of it, because and he's only on grade three, it's really bad. And so, I mean, the guy can barely read, and even when he reads, he can't comprehend. So I just feel like I'm already starting off with just a huge catch-up that is unrealistic. He's not going to catch up. And so it's going to take years to get there. And it's going to take a lot of summer school, so.

I mean, and I think that I actually anticipate that he's going to need outside help and not just tutors, but people who are specifically trained in where he has deficiencies, with the ADHD and the focusing and the reading comprehension, and really, because he has to unlearn the way he learned and then relearn it a different way with the Wilson, that I think that I'm just anticipating a shit show.

Moderator 1:

Right. No, I hear what you're saying that it's going... No, no, I hear what you're saying, that things probably will be different going forward. And I think you're right to highlight that, especially kids that do need specialized support, everyone's going to struggle going back, but.

Parent 1:

Another thing, everybody is going to struggle. It's just our kids, who need a little bit more support, are going to have a very hard time. And not just, he's going to get extra support through sports through the school, for sure, because I make sure it's in his IEP. I fight for him, like nobody's business. But he's going to need even more outside support and including me, my husband, and that sort of thing.

Moderator 1:

So you're anticipating having to supplement outside of what [crosstalk 00:33:21] the school system.

Parent 1:

Absolutely, absolutely. I think I'm going to have to fight tooth and nail to get everything that he needs. And then I'm going to have to get a second job to pay for all of the tutoring he's going to need, so. Yeah. That's, I'm anticipating a [crosstalk 00:33:33].

Moderator 1:

I hear you. I hear you. All right. Thanks.

Parent 1:

The other thing is it's going to be hard for everybody.

Moderator 1:

Yeah, No, [crosstalk 00:33:43] but I think it will affect different kids differently, so.

Parent 1:

Well, I actually thought that they should repeat personally because I don't think he learned anything. And I feel like we lost so much that I'm like, "Why are we even moving them onto the grade that they didn't even...?" Let's just redo it. Everybody redo it. And then that's just-

Moderator 1:

I've heard that argument.

Parent 1:

So anyway, Next.

Moderator 1:

Thank you, Parent 1. Parent 4?

Parent 4:

Yeah. So I don't know, I think that there were some good things, like with the Google classroom and stuff, I could, not that I did, but because he gets very upset if I try to stay on top of him. He was able to see what he was missing and everything. And so I think going back, I think that he has learned some executive skills that he didn't have before, which is really good for somebody who's 16 and theoretically will fly the coop in two years. I do think he has expressed the fact that he is looking forward to going back to school. Because he will not be allowed to play video games while he's supposed to be listening to the teachers, so that's a good thing. I do agree that he has not learned as much as he should have. And I think that the thing that I'm most worried about is his math because he's supposed to go into pre-calculus next year, and I'm not sure he knows trigonometry or whatever he was supposed to learn this year. But we'll deal with it, tutors, whatever if he gets into trouble.

I'm not sure that I would agree with leaving everybody back because I do think... For my daughter, she's much more high functioning than my son. And she had a 99 average between her classes and went to school and got all her schoolwork done and never handed anything in late. And meanwhile, my son had 20 missing assignments the day before school ended, and somehow he got it down to six. So, I think my daughter, I think she actually benefited because she's a seventh-grade girl and seventh-grade girls are so mean to each other and the fact that they were at home and did not have to interact with all the other mean girls. I think that was actually good for her. So-

Moderator 1:

Yeah, that's interesting. We've heard that, that some of the social pressure was lessened. And they didn't have to deal with the social drama as much and could focus on their work a little bit. So have you felt that was true for your daughter?

Parent 4:

Yeah. And for my son too. I mean, my son was, I guess, I don't know how much, whatever's on, confidential. But the day before COVID hit, he was suspended for substance abuse in the school. And then he didn't have to do his suspension. Because they were like, "No, don't come in." Because I'm a health care worker, and they're like, "No, no, she's been exposed to COVID." So COVID was amazing because he was not allowed to interact with anybody for the first six months. And so he sort of was forced to deal with the substance abuse stuff and didn't have access to it and all that, so that [crosstalk 00:37:34] was good. And now, I'm really worried about him going back because all those things are going to be there again. The social pressures and all that stuff.

Moderator 1:

Yeah. And yeah, those are things that they haven't dealt with and maybe don't necessarily have the skills and the coping skills, and it's going to be a relearning process for how to deal with those pressures, but okay. Thank you. And yeah, no, it's interesting to hear that he does also kind of want to go back to and recognize it that it has been distracting for him. And let me think, Parent 4, Administrator, were you going to ask the question before?

Administrator:

Yeah, I was. And this is a question for everybody. We've heard a lot of parents talk about the pros and cons of the ways in which their children's teachers have managed their kid's specific needs, how Google classroom plays a role. How discord, how these other online resources affect that. So I just wanted to know, from you guys' perspective, how your specific teachers have either contributed or aided in the problems that your kids have dealt with throughout the pandemic and online technology in-school use and things like that.

Parent 2:

One thing I would say sort of to add to both of these things is my daughter's 10, and she's in fifth grade. So one negative thing that I saw that her teacher actually helped with a little was I think it was a lot for them to have to stare at themselves on the screen all the time. My daughter started, I don't know, worrying about things about herself, like "My eyebrows are too... You can't see my...", all these crazy things. And it's because she's looking at all of her friends and herself straight on all the time. So it did become sort of a conversation with her teacher. And they were pretty strict at first about trying to get them to turn all their cameras on.

But I think they became a little more lenient when they sort of realized that kids can have their camera off but still be paying attention, which is the case with my daughter, probably not my son. But my daughter definitely, she would be doing what she needed to do most of the time. But so I do think it kind of, I don't know, it was this weird... She became a little more self-conscious, I think, I don't know.

But then it was interesting also to see the difference between my daughter's teachers and my son's teachers. He had way more daily, all the time classes in-person on Zoom. Whereas my daughter was a little more... She did have in-person, but it was, I don't know, half the amount of time as him probably. So I don't know. She had to work more independently than he did. I don't know.

Moderator 1:

I have to step away for one moment. That's a good point, and Administrator, maybe you could just continue with this. [inaudible 00:41:12].

Parent 1:

I'll go. So I think that the teachers... It really depended on the type of teacher. The general ed teachers, I found, were less tolerant of any adjustments to the technology or to the timeframes of things. And they were just less flexible. And I think it's because they were just overwhelmed with so many kids, plus so many kids with technology issues. And my boys didn't have the same experience because I don't have a girl. But I really, if I had been her, I would have been like, "Oh my God, oh my God." I would have been like, "Whoa, this is not good. Everybody's seeing me." I would have flipped, so. But my kids are like, "I have to shower, what?" So I think that the general ed teachers were... I found some of them to be mean and just intolerant to any adjustments.

And, but then the special ed teachers would come in and say, "Okay, let's deal with this." And much the way they do at the actual school in-person. And so, I felt that they really helped facilitate the situation. And also act as a go-between in between me, the general ed teacher, and [inaudible 00:42:49] and my kids, both of them really. And so, I think that because they had two teachers, that really helped a lot. But also, I would find they would just disappear. We would log into school, and they would be like, "So-and-so is out." Okay. And they would be out for one day. "So here's an assignment. We're not going to give you any instructions." Or "We don't have a teacher for you because we don't have subs. So go do it."

And that was very hard for them to understand that. And then you had also the ones who were like, "Well, I'm out for whatever," or "I'm sick." A lot of them did get sick, so they were out for a month. And so, in that case, if they had two teachers, the other one picked up the slack. But it was mostly just one day here, one day there, where it wasn't anticipated. And so the kids were just sort of left hanging. And it was tough because they were like, "Well, how do we do attendance if she's not there? Or he's not there?" And it was just, Anyway, I think the teachers were frustrated, and that showed, that came through very much so. And honestly, they should have been frustrated. It was frustrating for everybody. So, that's it.

Moderator 1:

Yeah. Thank you, Parent 1. Any other, so Administrator, did we get some answers on that-

Administrator:

Yeah.

Moderator 1:

... question?

Administrator:

Yeah.

Moderator 1:

Okay.

Parent 4:

About teachers?

Moderator 1:

Yeah.

Parent 4:

I mean, so my kids have a lot of teachers because they're in high school and middle school. So, there was definitely a wide range of responses. Some teachers handled things really well. And I have to say that at my son's school, they were very lenient about handing in assignments late. And my daughter's school. They were also trying to focus on sort of the kids who were not handing in assignments, which I thought was really nice of them.

So, but there were definitely, there were some teachers who showed up every day and wanted the cameras on. I mean, I guess they all showed up every day, but there was definitely some people who allowed the kids... Like Parent 4, Child 1 would, sorry, my son would lay in bed for his first, for the morning of classes. And some of the teachers were like, "Fine. He's in bed." But some of the teachers were like, "No, he has to sit up, and we have to see him sit up." Because he would fall back to sleep during some of the classes, so. But I think the teachers were all... But my kids go to these really progressive schools in the city. So I think that that had something to do with the fact that the teachers were very lenient and forgiving of all the craziness that was happening.

Moderator 1:

Yeah. The school can make a big difference. Okay. So, Parent 2, I think we did want to hear from you a little bit. Do you have anything to say about any challenges you're anticipating in going back and returning to being fully in-person?

Parent 2:

I think as far as challenges, I think it's more social. Right now, it's hard to get my kids to... I don't know. They feel like they've become hermits in some ways. So it is hard for me to get them to think outside of their video game box. You could give them a list of things to do and they can't. I don't know, they don't seem to want to do anything, so I think that's going to be the challenge. I mean, just really social, I think.

Moderator 1:

Okay. So I think the last question we'll discuss is just diving a little bit deeper into gaming usage in particular because I'm hearing from you that you all felt like that was a big issue. And do you feel like they're addicted? So I guess if you guys could just speak a little bit more to that, about how you saw that change? And what do you anticipate in terms of their gaming usage going forward?

Parent 1:

I'll go. I think, first of all, we need to remember that it's not the '80s, and we're in a totally different era with or without COVID. I think that they are online all the time. And talk to adults who are young, much younger than us, but still in their 20s and things. And that's how they live. They're constantly online, be it for work and for gaming. And in some cases, I think that's just going to be the new norm, and it's not all bad because some gaming will teach you strategy and it's conflict resolution and all sorts of things. I mean, you can go one way or the other. In terms of the gaming, though. I think that I'm seeing that my youngest, my eight-year-old is much more addicted than he ever was.

Before. Yes, he had my iPad. Yes, but I could easily take it away from him. Now, it's almost like the Chromebooks became a gateway drug to this whole, like a video game addiction thing. And both of my kids are complete addicts, complete. If I take it away from them, they will go through absolute withdrawals, to the point where I'm like, "Whoa, this is not an appropriate reaction to what's going on." And the world is ending apparently, if I turn off the internet, so. And so I think that because it's sort of the Chromebooks came in and they figured out how to use them, and the teachers taught them how to use them. Now they've got all these skills that they can use for good or evil. And so they're using it for both.

And I do find my eight-year-old, who would never lie and sneak, sneaks the iPad, sneaks the video games. He still admits to it, but soon, he will not admit to it. And he will not say, "Oh mom, last night I woke up, and I played the video." At some point, he's going to start lying. My other one is I actually have to cut him off at the knees. I have to say, "Everything's being shut down in 10 minutes." Otherwise, he will be up until 3:00 AM, every single night playing, playing, playing. And so are all of his friends. That's what I don't understand. I'm like, "Who are you playing with?" And he's like, "All of my friends." And so they're all. I don't know what's going on, but everybody is just constantly on video games.

And that's how they interact socially. And we're not into play dates yet anymore, or them getting together socially outside yet. Maybe it's because everybody tends to have younger kids. So they don't want to expose those who are vaccinated. I mean, those who are not vaccinated to anything, which I totally get. And so they still need that for socialization. So I'm stuck, I'm stuck between both. And I think it's just going to get worse, and I think we just need to embrace it and try and figure out what they're really getting out of it in a positive way and emphasize that.

And so, and I think there are a lot... I can't think of all of them now, but I read an article that was just really, it was pro-gaming, and it was awesome. Because I was like, "Oh, I never thought of that." The strategy and conflict resolution. And they had brothers who lived... Were really close, and then they moved far away from each other. But the one thing they had in common was video games, and they talk every day. That's a good thing. And so I think there's a lot of positives that people forget about. On the flip side, they need to be-

PART 2 OF 4 ENDS [00:52:04]

Parent 1:

On the flip side, they need to be able to control it. And it's hard. It's almost like... It's not like drugs, cigarettes, or something like that, it's like sugar or caffeine. You can't avoid sugar. You have to have a little bit of it, but you got to be able to control it. So, we could look at it like, sugar can be a good thing, sometimes it makes things taste good, but there has to be a balance and a way of figuring that out. And so, I would love help from the school and from Child Mind Institute.

Moderator 1:

Yeah. We're trying to gather some resources. I think you're highlighting a really important point, that moderation is always much harder than that all or nothing. And I appreciate your point about that, but here is a certain element of it that we have to embrace, because it is a new way of the world, and it is a nice attitude to try to embrace the positive parts of it that emphasize those parts, while still trying to teach those skills for how to regulate and stepping in where we need to. But that was well said, thank you.

Parent 2:

We've had a lot of the same thing, but a few things. I sort of have a specific time, like the internet goes off. That way, it takes me out of it. Like they know, and then, I mean, they will ask for me to turn it back on or whatever, but it's like, I don't know. Because if it were up to me, I would forget, and it would be much later. So, that kind of helps a lot. The thing with my kids are, the different things they're doing, lots of things are positive, Minecraft, all those things, but the most annoying thing are the YouTube videos of craziness that just keep going and going. It's just such a mind numbing time-suck that my daughter gets into. I mean, so it really depends on what they're doing, but it's also difficult to always know what they're doing, because they know how to get around everything.

So, I don't know, but the other positive thing is, my kids have definitely been playing games and things with their cousins who live on the west coast, in upstate New York, and their friends have become friends with their cousins on these. So, their circle is bigger and more connected through these. So, it's really, really sweet to my daughter. Now, her cousin knows her best friend and it's not just this person that exists. So, that's good, but it's definitely trying to do it in moderation and to be able take a break and do other things and be engaged in the conversation around you and not need it every second. Every break in the day doesn't have to be video games, but I don't know, it's a battle.

Moderator 1:

Yeah, definitely. But yeah. Now, you highlighted some nice positives also, and yeah, I think it's kind of a new frontier for everyone. Parent 4 Did you have any?

Parent 4:

No, I mean, I think my son was way addicted before COVID and is still as addicted to video gaming as he was before.

Moderator 1:

Have you noticed it get worse or it's just the fact that it's impacting his academics somehow?

Parent 4:

No, I don't. It's sort of always impacted his academics. So, yeah, he's had a problem with it for a while. I think one thing that I actually wanted to say that I didn't bring up before about the social thing, my son actually had a girlfriend all from COVID. So, they've been together for the past 17 months or something. And for a while, they were like their own pod, and he went to her lake house and she would spend time with us. And now that things are opening up, he wants to spend time with his friends and she wants to spend time with her friends. And so, they're having these issues that they haven't had for the past 17 months with things that girlfriends and boyfriends probably should have learned how to navigate by this point in their relationship. So, I know that has nothing to do with video gaming, but I wanted to say it before, but I forgot.

Moderator 1:

Yeah, that's definitely a challenge that I think a lot of adults are facing. And yeah, that's something that we would want to represent also. So, I think we have a couple more minutes. Anyone have any last thoughts of anything related to technologies over the pandemic that we didn't bring up?

Parent 1:

I just have a suggestion for everybody. My eight year old, he's like a walking encyclopedia, and it's because he's been watching these YouTube videos and I... I got to fly around me, sorry. This is driving me crazy. And it's called, he has learned so much and he can regurgitate it on the fly, because it's called over-simplified. And it's these little tiny clips of just oversimplified history, oversimplified explanations about things. And he introduced it to us. He's eight years old. My 13 year old and I both like it and I learn stuff from it. I'm like, "Wow, I'm a history major, no, I remember that". But my explanation was dragged out and their eyes rolled into the back of heads in history class. But this oversimplified, you should guys should check it out. It's really cool.

Moderator 1:

I'm sure I can learn from it too. That sounds really cool. Anyone else have any tips or anything else to share? Okay. So, thank you so much for taking time to do this with us. We've, we've learned a lot through these focus groups and this was a great group, and it really does help us understand what people are going through. So, thank you so much, and you'll obviously be invited to the Town Hall when we have it. And we hope to present some of the findings.

Parent 1:

When will we have the tips and suggestions on how to handle all this out?

Administrator:

So, we have one more group, and then once we're done with all of our focus groups, we've been in talks since about April or May about different resources that CMI can provide to you all, just based on the information that we've collected. Like Moderator 1 said, everything that you guys have said is very consistent with everything that we've been hearing over the past couple of months. So, we're figuring out like what resources we can provide you guys with. I'm not sure on like a hard date when the Town Hall will happen, but it will happen definitely before the end of Summer. So, I will definitely be in contact with you guys once that date is scheduled. If there are any questions or concerns or anything that, any things that you would want us to potentially cover in a Town Hall, any resources that like might be valuable to you guys, definitely let us know.

Just like I said, one, because information is consistent, but two, we want to also ensure that based on the wide range of kids ages that we see who have different needs, that we're trying to like really target everybody and meet them where they're at.

So, I guess it's me now, I'll clean up. Hi Moderator 1. So, yes. Once again, thank you guys so much for participating in our focus group today. I'm going to be sending our administrator your emails, so that way you guys can receive the $50 Amazon gift card. If you do not receive it by Friday, please do not hesitate to either email me or give me a call and we will sort that out. But once again, thank you guys so much for all of your help today, and I will definitely contact you guys in a few. Just let you guys know more about next steps and things like that at the Town Hall.

Moderator 1:

Thank you everyone. So nice to meet you.

Speaker 3:

Thank you.

Moderator 1:

Thank you guys. Have a good day.

Parent 1:

Thank you.

PART 3 OF 4 ENDS [01:18:04]

Parent 3:

(silence).

As you can see, he's not used to going to the office.

Parent 3:

Oh.

Parent 3:

[inaudible 01:27:05], but it was like a year prior to the (silence).

PART 4 OF 4 ENDS [01:41:18]