Parent 1:

(silence) Hello.

Administrator:

(silence) Hi, everyone. I'm [Administrator 00:02:05]. I'm the one that's been contacting you guys about the focus group. Thank you guys so much for being here. We're just waiting for our clinician Moderator 1 to get on the call, and then we'll get started. (silence) Hi. Sorry, guys. I'm talking to my coworker, but I see you guys. I'm so sorry.

Moderator 1:

Hi everyone. Welcome. I'm Moderator 1. I'll be leading the discussion today. We're just going to wait for a couple more people that sign on. Thank you so much for joining. Administrator, how many people are we expecting today?

Administrator:

We should have a full house, so six. (silence)

Moderator 1:

I think we're still waiting for a couple more people to join, but maybe we can just get started with some introductions. My name is Moderator 1. I work with the Healthy Brain Network. I'm a neuropsychologist. Maybe we could just go around, say your name and maybe the ages of your kids. Parent 1, do you mind to start us off?

Parent 1:

I'm Parent 1. I'm a mother of twin girls who are both seven, so double the trouble and [crosstalk 00:05:34] everything all at once.

Moderator 1:

Thanks, Parent 1. Nice to meet you. Parent 2, you want to go next?

Parent 2:

Hi. I'm Parent 2. I am the mother of seven, ages five, two, 21.

Moderator 1:

Wow. Okay. So you'll be able to provide a perspective across the age ranges. That's actually very helpful. Nice to meet you, Parent 2.

Parent 2:

You too.

Moderator 1:

Parent 3?

Parent 3:

Hi, everyone. I'm Parent 3. I have three children, two of whom are being remote schooled right now, so if I mute and I look like I'm gesticulating and screaming at people off camera, that's why. My oldest is almost 11, my middle is almost nine and my little is four.

Moderator 1:

Thanks, Parent 3. Nice to meet you. Maybe we'll get to see a live demonstration of how technology impacts education.

Parent 3:

Fingers crossed we won't.

Moderator 1:

Okay. Parent 4? Is that the right name? Sometimes people have a different name written down there.

Parent 4:

Hi. I'm actually Parent 4.

Moderator 1:

Hi, Parent 4.

Parent 4:

Hi. I should rename it. As you can see, he's active in the virtual world. His name pops up first before mine. Okay. I've done the change. Okay. Yeah. Hi. I'm Parent 4. I have an eight year old son who's experiencing full remote learning, and it's been highly structured so it's been good actually for him and me. I've been able to really work on some target needs, but it's been challenging. I don't know if I can do this another year. I really don't know [crosstalk 00:07:39].

Moderator 1:

Yeah.

Parent 4:

[crosstalk 00:07:42], so I don't think he can either.

Moderator 1:

All right. Thank you, Parent 4. Yeah. We're definitely interested to get a little more into that. Parent 5, hello again. Welcome.

Parent 5:

Hi, again. My name is Parent 5. I have two girls, one nine and one seven. They're doing a hybrid model, but it's mostly in person.

Moderator 1:

Okay. Thanks, Parent 5. And then, Parent 6, I think that you're having a little trouble with your audio, but we'll do introductions when she comes back. Okay. The purpose of this group is to learn a little bit more in depth about how technology has impacted your kids over the course of the pandemic. You gave us a lot of useful information through the crisis survey, but this allows us to dig in a little deeper and really get some insights from you so that we can better understand the situation and really try to spotlight on what parents are experiencing.

Just to start off, maybe if everyone could grab a paper and a pen, if you have one nearby, and just try to write down a couple of positive ways that you've noticed that technology has impacted your children since the pandemic and also try to outline a couple of negative ways that technology has impacted your children. [inaudible 00:10:25] have a couple down in each category, I'd like you to try to think which of the two categories you think have had a [inaudible 00:10:36] overall impact, and then circle which category has had the bigger impact as the positive influences or the negative effects had a bigger role [inaudible 00:10:49]. I'm hearing a lot of background noise from someone. I think, Parent 6, is that coming from you?

Parent 6:

Yeah. I can hear you now. Can you hear me?

Moderator 1:

You can hear us now. Great. Yes. Awesome. I think we might be getting ... All right. No. I don't hear the background noise anymore. Great. I'm glad you can hear us. Maybe, Parent 6, if you want to just introduce yourself and say the ages of your kids.

Parent 6:

Hi. I'm Parent 6 and I have two boys, one age 14 and one age 13.

Moderator 1:

Okay. Thank you so much for joining us. We were just taking some time to try to outline a couple of positives impacts that you've noticed technology have on your children over the past year since the pandemic started, and also if you've noticed any negative effects, and then just trying to think overall which has stood out the more, the positive impacts of technology or the negative.

Parent 6:

I'd say the positive is obviously they've been working remotely from school, which they are still doing. We felt safe that they could be at home and on Zoom and listening to teachers, interacting with friends, trying to be a little bit social online and just being part of the classroom setting. I guess that was positive. I'm actually glad that they're home and they won't be going until September. We made that choice. Obviously, the negative effects of that is way to much time on the screen because they're on the screen throughout the day for school, and then they want their phone time on screens.

Moderator 1:

Yeah.

Parent 6:

To me, it is way too much time just sat in front of a computer.

Moderator 1:

Okay. Thanks Parent 6. I'll ask you to go a little more into that in a few minutes. Just to get a general understanding, by show of hands, how many of you feel like the positives impacts of technology have had the greater overall impact? I see Parent 5, Parent 4, Parent 6. Anyone else feel like the positive has been greater overall?

Parent 1:

For one of my daughters.

Moderator 1:

Parent 1? Okay. Depends which one, so it's different depending on the kids. Okay. Yeah. We'll discuss that. Who feels like the negative impacts have been a greater overall impact? Parent 2 and Parent 3. Okay.

Parent 3:

No, no. I'm sorry. I was waving at my daughter.

Moderator 1:

You were waving at your daughter.

Parent 3:

My vote was positive.

Moderator 1:

Your vote was positive. Okay.

Parent 3:

Can I ask a quick question?

Moderator 1:

Yeah. Of course.

Parent 3:

When answering these questions, am I thinking only of my special needs child or all my kids?

Moderator 1:

All your kids.

Parent 3:

Okay.

Moderator 1:

Yeah. We're interested to hear whatever insights you have overall.

Parent 3:

Okay. Got you. Thank you.

Moderator 1:

Okay. So for the first question ... Well, before I get started, what we've seen is that a lot of parents have had a lot of overlapping experiences, and then we've definitely seen that there are parents who have more unique experiences or different experiences, and we really appreciate that everyone really feel free to chime in if you have had a different experience than someone else is saying. We really want to try to welcome all perspectives. I just want to start by saying that. For the first question that I'd like to put out there is just if you could share ... First, I'd like to focus on education and how technology has impacted your children's education. If you could share was technology used for education for your kids before the pandemic, and then did you have any concerns about it before the pandemic, or did you find it beneficial before the pandemic, and then how did that change once the pandemic hit? Would anyone like to start us off?

Parent 6:

Well, I think technology with kids these days is always a part of education, even for research or doing some assignments at home and sending them in. I know for my kids it was always there, but since the pandemic obviously everything now is done via technology.

Moderator 1:

So you just find that it's just going to be necessary during this time.

Parent 6:

Definitely during this time. Definitely.

Moderator 1:

Yeah. And then, also in general as well.

Parent 6:

Yeah.

Moderator 1:

Okay. Thanks, Parent 6. Can someone else ... Yeah, Parent 5.

Parent 5:

The technology use before the pandemic for my nine year old was a little bit for school, half an hour maybe of iPad time a day, and then when we switched to all remote in March of last year it became the entirety of their experience is all on the iPad whether it was asynchronous or synchronous. Are you asking if it's a positive change?

Moderator 1:

No. Both. Just explaining how it changed and then also what concerns or benefits you've seen.

Parent 5:

The benefits surprisingly, my nine year old was having a lot of social issues in school. She was having problems with her teachers and problems with other kids. When it became remote school, it's the perfect solution for her because she was able to focus on the work and didn't have to deal with the ... I think she was overwhelmed by interacting with one kid at a time. With the change, remote school was an ideal solution for her. When they went to hybrid learning in October, she had matured enough or maybe she had gained confidence, I don't know what the difference was, but she was able to negotiate the social situations that she had not been able to deal with before. It's been an overall very positive experience.

Moderator 1:

Interesting. You already saw those positive impacts play out even as she returned.

Parent 6:

I would say too my son was diagnosed with ADD and seemed to focus so much better from home without any distractions from classmates and the anxiety from being in the classroom, people looking at him or [inaudible 00:18:18] put on the spot or whatever, and just having zero ... He sits in his room, never comes out, [inaudible 00:18:27] and just very focused. He's actually doing better academically.

Moderator 1:

Okay.

Parent 6:

Not socially, but academically there's no extra noise going on.

Moderator 1:

Okay. Thanks, Parent 6. Parent 1, you were going to ...

Parent 1:

Yeah. For my family, there was no such thing as technology prior to the pandemic. We were given computers so that the kids could get on. It was just a production of how do we get on, what do we do, how do we use [inaudible 00:19:07], the different moving parts just to educate your child, be on top of your child with ADHD. Two of them which one of my children has emotional issues and the other one is just all over the place. It was pure hell back in March, and working full time from home trying to get it to happen. That's when my husband and I had made a decision that if our kids are like this, maybe they need medication. We started going down the medication route and started our kids on medication this year in September. The medication actually has helped them a glorious amount from September to be able to be focused to be able to learn, to not talk back as much and what have you. The pandemic did that to us. We had been holding off for so long.

Moderator 1:

Right. Parent 1, may I ask you, did you have concerns about their attention prior to the pandemic?

Parent 1:

Well, yes. One of my daughters went through the whole healthy brain thing. We have the packet and we're waiting for the other one to go through the process. One of them classified as emotionally disturbed and ADD, ADHD. The other one has sensory issues and ADD, ADHD, anxiety as well, and the other one suffers from depression. Emotions flying high just trying to help everyone and give everybody what they needed, and also try to work.

Moderator 1:

Yeah.

Parent 1:

It was just really, really challenging some days. I'm a school teacher. The work's got to get done.

Moderator 1:

Yeah. It sounds like it was a pretty stressful time and really exacerbated some issues for your kids.

Parent 1:

Yeah.

Moderator 1:

Thanks, Parent 1. Who would like to share next? Parent 2.

Parent 2:

Okay. I think I'm probably taking the other side of what most people said. I hated online learning. As I said, I have seven children, and you can imagine what was going on in this house, seven different devices, eight different devices because my husband was working from home too. We didn't even have them. My daughter runs down, she starts kicking my husband off the computer, "I'm late for class," and he is talking to a patient. Thank God our kids all went back in September. One kid had to quarantine for two weeks because someone in her class got it, but other than that, they've all been in school and we are so grateful for that because the online learning was terrible. My daughter who's five now, but she was four when the pandemic started, a four year old gains nothing from online learning. Even when she went back to school, she wasn't in every day, I didn't put her on the day she was on. I'd rather take her to the beach or take her to the park and give her real-life experiences where she's gaining as opposed to just watching the screen.

My high school kids hated it, my teenage girls, because the social interaction wasn't there. They were texting in the middle of classes. Someone said to me, "You're going to let them do that?" I said, "Well, they talk in class. Let's be real. They need the socialization." I did let them text during class. Overall, I don't like to get my kids online, I don't like the texting, I don't like the phones, and it made it much harder to limit it. My 13 year old was ADHD, he was playing Lego during class. He couldn't focus. Some of the teachers were just not understanding at all. Some I felt were much stricter than they would've been even in the classroom, and it was just very difficult for my kids.

Moderator 1:

Right. Across the board, challenging. They weren't really learning.

Parent 2:

No. No learning going on.

Moderator 1:

Okay.

Parent 2:

No learning going on.

Moderator 1:

Okay. Thanks, Parent 2. Parent 4? You're on mute, Parent 4. Sorry.

Parent 4:

Hi. Hold on. Parent 4, Child 1, could you log on? It's time. Miss Johnson. Yes. Do you hear me? Acknowledge. Confirm. Okay. Anyway. The benefits outweigh this. There is a silver lining. I'm very busy. I teach and I tutor and I do a lot of freelance marketing because that's my background. I had to splice away all of that, and so the negative is the income became significantly last, but I've also lowered my expenditure, shall we say, and I got to spend time with my son. I felt like I didn't rely on the school system. I got to see my son in his way. I learned how to work with them and we still are. It's a work in progress. I actually changed his school amidst this pandemic. It provoked a lot of sleepless nights, I didn't know whether to do it or not, but being the ADHD where he's [inaudible 00:25:23], I experienced a lot of what other people said about ...

He would get on, but these pockets of time in between was disconcerting. I couldn't handle it. I'm a single mom. It just felt like Jekyll and Hyde pulling and pushing. And then, in the beginning a year ago in March, April, it didn't feel like remote learning at his former school. Even though it's a wonderful school, it felt like assignment learning. They just stacked on the assignments. There were times we would just spend until midnight completing one assignment because in between, we'd just be running around the apartment, there were just so many tantrums. It's their way of reacting to this pandemic and the sudden change of environments. I get it, but I actually put them into a school. It is structured, but not as negative as what people say. People do know the school system quite well. I'm actually rather impressed. They have them in school from 9:00 to 3:00 full time, non-stop. When they're doing their work independently, they're still logged on.

Moderator 1:

9:00 to 3:00 virtually.

Parent 4:

Yeah. Virtually. It has to be fully remote, but what they've set up is this full system on the Chromebooks and they use a platform called GoGuardian where there's three teachers by the way in the classroom and they watch as the child is doing the work. The silver lining here is that I feel like there's more one-on-one [inaudible 00:27:12]. I have to say, I'm a teacher so I'm really honing in and learning and seeing what they're doing, how they're carrying about. I was rather impressed with this engagement that seemed more in the moment, live.

Moderator 1:

Yeah.

Parent 4:

If the child is doing their math problem incorrectly, they'll say, "What's going on there? Rethink this. Do this. Fix that strategy." As a result, my son's grades have increased while the sacrifice of socioemotional is there also. With ADHD, I feel like there's this ability to focus because ADHD involved processing, and so this ability to hone in on the screen has been really wonderful. Also, we started the medication process as well. The silver lining here, which this is my last point, is that I was able to work on the medication management, so I had actually really good data to provide to the psychiatrist and what have you. When he goes to school, and they're starting school in August, August 2, they're cutting the school year end of May, and then the school is starting the school year the ninth of August after he comes back [inaudible 00:28:34] because they feel like there's still a learning loss despite this structured system, and so they're starting school early the second of August. I think he'll be more prepared all because of this time that we had, although it's been [crosstalk 00:28:54].

Moderator 1:

It sounds like you've been able to take this time and become really involved in his education.

Parent 4:

Yeah.

Moderator 1:

And he's been able to make some improvements and-

Parent 4:

Yeah.

Moderator 1:

Yeah. Interesting.

Parent 6:

I think also, I would add that it depends on the school too.

Parent 4:

Yes.

Parent 6:

My son's high school, I think they've done such a wonderful job. We were away with a friend for two weeks, and she goes to one of the great high schools here in New York City, and I hated how they taught. She was all over the place, and there was no accountability. She would log on, but then she'd be texting, [inaudible 00:29:32] breakfast, she was loud. I'm like, "How is she learning anything?" This was Clinton. She goes to Clinton. Whereas my son, he logs on and he has to be on camera. If they ask a question and he does not answer or respond, [inaudible 00:29:49] and they have to have a reason why. He's had a lot of accountability. My middle schooler started very light. To me, they weren't doing enough, but they progressed and they seem to be doing a much better job. I was just really [inaudible 00:30:06] the difference between two high schools. My son knows he has to get on, he has to be on camera, he has to participate, he has to give an assignment some time, or we get text, we get notified. For him, I think it's been very positive academically.

Moderator 1:

Yeah, Parent 6. Thanks for highlighting that. Yeah. I think it sounds like there is a big difference-

Parent 6:

School-wise.

Moderator 1:

... on how they're able to [inaudible 00:30:35] technology.

Parent 6:

I feel like some of the smaller day schools, because we're in a small school rather than [inaudible 00:30:42] high school, I seem to feel like the smaller ones have been able to handle it slightly better for some reason.

Moderator 1:

Interesting.

Parent 6:

With less students.

Moderator 1:

Parent 3, do you want to share a little bit? We can come back to you if you-

Parent 3:

No. I can share. Parent 3, Child 1 is supposed to be in socialization class. He's wandering. I'll start with Parent 3, Child 1, my oldest, who has speech therapy and occupational therapy. Prior to the pandemic, he did have an iPad at school where we tried to use an app called TouchChat that didn't quite work. He's very familiar with ... Well, see, the teacher wants you to unmute. Put this on. Parent 3, Teacher asked you a question. [inaudible 00:31:31]. Sorry. [inaudible 00:31:34] and answer Parent 3, Teacher. Remote school [inaudible 00:31:38]. There's a question just about the technology or remote schooling in general?

Moderator 1:

I'm curious about how technology has impacted your child's education.

Parent 3:

Okay. We focus on the positive. The children have been remote, and they will be remote until September. Technology has enabled them to connect with their friends. They haven't missed a day of school, unless we took a mental health day which have been necessary on occasion.

Moderator 1:

Yeah. Sure.

Parent 3:

I would say that the main benefit for me is that the children are now more self-reliant. Parent 3, Child 1 has had to figure out how to navigate a computer. He has to put the password in and turn it on and open up the internet himself, which he was able to do on an iPad, but now he's fluent with a PC for example. My other son, his class is fully in person. He's the only remote student. This has been very interesting. A positive for him is that my middle son has auditory processing disorder, so I've been able to observe how he learns, make ... What? No. Not you. My daughter ... I'm sorry. She said I haven't spoken about her. My four year old had just started nursery school when this all happened, but she was not connecting on the Zoom, not because she wasn't able, but she does not like speaking and not being acknowledged. She does not like raising her hand and not being called on, and she did not like not being able to just socialize with her friends on the Zoom when she was in class.

Moderator 1:

Right.

Parent 3:

She has not been back to school. Fingers crossed she will be back in September. Overall, then technology has been a positive. With Parent 3, Child 1, we'll see how it shakes out socially though because he is a loner by nature and also he is on the spectrum, and so socializing is not his favorite thing. He's been able to give into his tendency to just want to be alone with an iPad, which is a downside. We're hoping that we will smoothly transition back into in-person school in September and he'll be able to reconnect with all of his friends, right Parent 3, Child 1?

Moderator 1:

Thanks, Parent 3. Actually, you just gave me the perfect transition because my next question is as we do start to return and people are going back or have gone back, I'd like to hear from you guys about what challenges you anticipate chasing as your kids start to integrate back, if you think there will be challenges-

Parent 3:

I'll start that one since I finished the last one.

Moderator 1:

Thanks, Parent 3.

Parent 3:

We have been socializing as much as we can. We try to facilitate safe play dates outside with masks on, but it'll be interesting to see how Parent 3, Child 1 integrates back into an in-person world. I think this is his sweet spot. He's loved this, and it helps that he has siblings because I know only children are [inaudible 00:34:58] in this situation. He does have some interaction, but really we are I wouldn't say concerned, but we're just going to have this top of mind, how to get him back on track socially.

Moderator 1:

So you're anticipating it, and you're going to have to be quite conscious of it.

Parent 3:

Yeah. The great thing is Parent 3, Child 1 is actually graduating and going to middle school, which for his school would involve him going to a new building. This is also top of mind for his school because they are holding his class in another back in their elementary school building where he's been since preschool. They want to make this transition as easy as possible for Parent 3, Child 1 and his classmates.

Moderator 1:

Interesting.

Parent 3:

Yeah.

Moderator 1:

Anyone else about anticipating? Yeah, Parent 2.

Parent 2:

Like I said, all my kids did go back already, but even my kids who did not like school before the pandemic were happy to go back to school, which I guess was a plus about the whole thing, even the ones who had the social anxiety. I have 12th grader. She hated school until this point. I'm not going to say she loves school now, but she appreciates it so much more, even the socialization which she did not like. She's just much happier. For us, going back to school was a tremendous benefit, and of course for our four year old who gains nothing. Like [inaudible 00:36:28] said, [crosstalk 00:36:29] home there's no [inaudible 00:36:31] school.

Moderator 1:

Interesting. Yeah.

Parent 6:

Yeah. My 14 year old always loved school. He really loved his middle school. He started a new high school that he has not set one foot inside, so that'll be interested when he just go back, but he loved his elementary and loved his middle school. My younger one, my 13 year old, was always the kind of kid if he could stay home, he would. He says, "I have a stomachache." He never loved school, but he did say to me a few weeks ago that he missed school, that he did miss going on. We've been out since March of last year too, so it is a long time. I was very surprised to hear him say that it is better to be in school, even though he's also very shy and it's not like he has a ton of friends in school, but I just think just being around kids their own age I think is so important.

Moderator 1:

Yeah.

Parent 6:

The other one seems happy at home, but [inaudible 00:37:37] friends. I thought he would actually miss it more because he, like I said, loved his school, but it was just surprising to hear my younger one say school is actually better.

Moderator 1:

Yeah. I'm hearing that it seems similar to what Parent 2 was saying that [crosstalk 00:37:57] not have liked school, that they actually gained an appreciation.

Parent 6:

Yeah. He used to complain about going to school and school was boring. Now, it's like, "I want to be in school."

Moderator 1:

No. That's really interesting. Anyone else? Parent 4, Parent 1? Yeah, Parent 1.

Parent 1:

My kids have been back at school, not back at school, back at school, not back at school. Someone gets COVID and then it gets shut down. My daughter actually when she was six got COVID. Everybody in our entire house had to [inaudible 00:38:36] and this, that and other things. There's this sensationalized trauma of what is COVID and am I going to die. My kids really didn't understand it, the one that got it. She sneezed the other day, and they're like, "Well, if your child has any sort of symptoms of seasonal allergies or something like that, you need to bring in a doctor's note to the nurse so that they're not going to be sent home for seasonal allergies."

It gets to a point where they called me because she complained of a cough or something. I went and I took her to the doctor's, I went and took her to the pediatrician's office. I got a note saying that there was nothing wrong with my child, so I went back to the school, I dropped her right back off at school, gave them a note and they're like, "What are you doing?" I said, "There's nothing wrong with my child. Here. Educator, this is where she needs to be in order to learn." Because they're trying to throw them off and to get rid of them because it's easier that way, because if they're a trouble maker or one that makes things a little bit more challenging, it's easier to have one less. Why not just have one less in the class that does that? That's really the way that I felt with her whereas her sister, they understand she has allergies. She's had a sniffle for the past seven months. It's not gone away. It's just the whole am I going to get it, can I get a vaccination, those sorts of questions are what [crosstalk 00:40:46].

Moderator 1:

Yeah. So that's a whole new complicating factor is even just the health concerns and COVID and kids dealing with that.

Parent 1:

Yeah.

Moderator 1:

Parent 4, do you want to share any challenges you anticipate or anything with the integrating back in August?

Parent 4:

Yeah. I think I'm more nervous. Actually, we had a choice of doing remote learning versus hybrid two day versus five day. Being that this is a particular charter school, not all charter schools are the same, but this very good school laid down the policies just last week, and they basically create this model to incentivize the parents to bring back the kids to the school. Now, if a child has an IEP, and mine does being that he has ADHD and speech, so they're saying that the kids with the IEPs have to come back to the classroom. That's interesting for me because I was actually thinking of keeping them remote until he gets the vaccine.

I'm very anxious to answer your question because my son is very fidgety even though he's on the medication. He's very fidgety, and he's very touchy. I have a feeling you guys know what I'm talking about. It's very concerning to me because we're all so germ phobic. I know that there are some kids out there who get it, and we can't even see, we can't even tell that they're sick even though they're COVID positive. To me, we don't know everything about this COVID virus, and so we don't know if maybe there are some hidden effects on the child that we will not discover until they're older. The lack of full awareness of the science and the epidemiology behind this is what's concerning me.

Now, I'm actually getting ready mentally to have him back in school. It'd be good for him, although I'm very worried about the EF skills because I've actually been his support helping him organize like, "Hey, you have an exam. Don't forget. Let's study." I have access to information because I'm hearing everything and seeing everything, but this is going to be a transition. I'll just leave it at that. Thank you.

Moderator 1:

No. Yeah. No. I think you highlighted some important aspects of transitioning back. It sounds like you in particular have been able to really get an up close view, and then having to pull back and see if he can do these skills independently. It's definitely something to think about. Parent 5, it looks like you're out and about. Do you want to share any challenges your child's facing [crosstalk 00:44:07]?

Parent 5:

She's hybrid now, and it's going really well. I can't think of what's coming that will be challenging when they go back to full class. That might be a challenge for her just because it's more kids and that might provoke nervousness, but she's been doing so well in person, and she's so excited about school now. She was hesitant to go to school sometimes pre-COVID. I think it's just a net positive. I feel very lucky.

Moderator 1:

Okay. Great, Parent 5. We have a little bit of time left. Maybe the last question I'll put out there is just expanding. We're focusing on education, so thinking about social media use, gaming, internet usage, how has that changed for your child, benefits, concerns, in that realm.

Parent 6:

We have the same struggles that we always did. Trying to get them off, trying to get them off Fortnite. With the additional screen time that they get, I think they thought they could get more screen time for the fun games, but it's like no. Even though you finished earlier, you finished school earlier, you're home, we're around the apartment a lot more than if you were in school, that does not equal more video game time. We've made a real conscious effort to still limit that and watch what they're doing and how much time because we still make them go out every day. They have to go, even if they take a walk. You need to get out even during the winter. We all need to go out, get some fresh air. You can't just vegetate on a video game. We've always been that way.

Like I say, their expectations are like, "Well, we're not commuting back from school. There's no after school, so we have more time." I'm like, "Well, that does not mean more time on Fortnite or just wasting your brain doing absolutely nothing." It's a constant battle, but it's a battle we had pre-COVID too. They always want that five more minutes, five more minutes, five more minutes. It's worse now than it used to be because there's not as much going on, but we just have to be ... We're the parents, whether it causes a huge fight sometimes. We just got to stick by it and limit the time. Sometimes, on the weekend they may get more time than we would like if we're busy doing something, but we just set the rules and really try to keep it within a reasonable amount.

Moderator 1:

Okay. Yeah. Thanks, Parent 6. Yeah, Parent 1.

Parent 1:

I'll go. I'm a phys ed teacher, so when I was teaching, my kids would always try and come in and play and do the games that we were doing and that sort of thing. I found that my kids don't want technology at all on the weekends. Now, we've come up with game night, we've come up with physical activity night, and then we've come up with movie night. Even sometimes they don't even want to watch a movie because it is something that's just going to drain your brain or what have you. Through COVID, we were going for walks every single morning just so that we could wake up our brains to get ready to learn. In terms of that, I guess that was a good bonding, positive thing. They got a chance to see mommy in action teaching a bunch of kids, other kids [inaudible 00:48:46] acting silly.

We have a Nintendo Switch. We've used it four times a year because it causes more fights than anything because they're trying to compete against each other when we're just trying to be together and create those sorts of values. I'm sorry for those of you who have kids who love the technology world, but it's been more of a family, so it was kind of good.

Moderator 1:

Thanks, Parent 1. Yeah. Anybody else share your experience with social media use, internet usage, gaming? Yeah, Parent 2.

Parent 2:

My eight year old, to get her on Zooms call, and when she was on the computer all she wanted was the fun of the computer. Pre-COVID, she was hardly ever on the computer. Now, I had to give her fun time on the computer every day. Once we switched to Zoom school, actually I started giving her 20 minutes a day of computer time where she could sit and watch something fun and whatever. That was very hard. When she started school again, I had to cut that back. I told her, "No more." We brought it back down to 20 minutes a week as opposed to 20 minutes a day.

The funny thing is that I don't feel that more screen time necessarily contradicts with more outdoor time because when COVID started last March and the kids were home and they had some more free time between classes, my daughter learned to ride a two-wheeler, the other kid learned to ride roller blades. There was a lot of outside time as well. I don't know that they necessarily contradict each other, but we really do try to steer clear of the screen time, but everyone ... You're lucky, Parent 1. Everyone [inaudible 00:50:59] wants as much as they could get.

Moderator 1:

Thanks, Parent 2. Yeah. I hear what you're saying that there can be both. One doesn't have to preclude the other, but it's just you have to set those limits.

Parent 6:

Do I have the two oldest kids too, 13, 14? I seem to have the oldest, right?

Moderator 1:

I think we have [inaudible 00:51:23] older kids.

Parent 2:

I have a daughter who's turning 22.

Parent 6:

I think if I had an eight year old, this would be a completely different experience. Yeah.

Moderator 1:

For sure. Yeah. I think that's why we appreciate having parents of kids of all ages because we are hearing that it is different based on that as well. Parent 3, Parent 4, anything to share regarding your changes in social media use, internet usage, any concerns or benefits, things you'd like to see stick around, things you'd like to see never [inaudible 00:52:02]?

Parent 4:

Well, my son has also ... He's not a picky eater. He's a problematic eater, so he's had a history of that since he was two and a half years old. His relationship to food is something that has to be focused on, even though he's eight and a half. It's a power struggle. Really, what it comes down to is it's a power struggle. He won't eat unless he gets to watch any. If I say no, then he's like, "Okay. I'm not going to eat," and he follows through with that. Being that we're home all the time, that has manifested. We were really making headway with that, meaning where he doesn't have a device. He had support for feeding, even in the school it was arranged. Now, with the pandemic it's like he will not eat unless he gets to watch [inaudible 00:53:11].

It's almost because he doesn't want to look at the food. You know what I mean? It's just his way of escaping. It's a sensory thing too, sensory avoidance. It's something that has manifested. That is something I need to work on. He's looking healthy, but he's also very thin. He has been dizzy at a few times, and I do believe that the adrenaline, the overstimulation that is created by the ... It's elicited by the use of these devices, otherwise prior to, it would just be the television. Now, all the devices are out, I have passwords on everything, but it's a battle. I don't like the little battles through the day. That's what I don't like.

Moderator 1:

Right. [crosstalk 00:54:04]. That can be very tricky.

Parent 4:

Yeah.

Moderator 1:

Thanks, Parent 4. All right. So I think we can end [inaudible 00:54:16]. Does anyone have any last insights or anything we didn't discuss that you think would be useful for us to know?

Parent 3:

I'm going to say something that might sound a little crazy, but I just want to share that-

Moderator 1:

Go for it.

Parent 3:

I know I keep saying we try to take the positive, but I actually had what I felt like was a great learning moment with my middle child who I don't know if you guys ... Do your kids play Among Us?

Parent 6:

Yeah.

Parent 3:

This was his first exposure to online gaming, and so this was his first exposure to playing with strangers on the internet. It sparked the conversation about the dangers of the internet. He was in a room and people were asking. I had to teach him about tricky questions and how to be safe online. I thought it was important to still let him play it. I'm monitoring him the whole time, but this was a really great teaching moment for him. Thank, goodness. I shouldn't have said Among Us out loud because he hasn't played it in a month, but he's probably going to be on it tonight. That was the positive.

As for Parent 3, Child 1, Parent 4, I think you mentioned the overstimulation. Our struggle with that is I don't know if you can hear Parent 3, Child 1, but when Parent 3, Child 1 falls into his iPad, he watches cooking videos and sometimes [inaudible 00:55:35] videos. I don't know the ins and outs of how the brain works, but we can always tell when he's on his iPad because [inaudible 00:55:43] up and up and up and up. The great thing is that whenever I tell any of them to put something down, they just put it down. Parent 3, Child 1 always asks to pick up his iPad which is great for his break time. We've fallen into a pattern of I just let them use it until it's time to put it down.

Moderator 1:

Okay. Yeah. Thanks, Parent 3, for bringing up also that cybersecurity aspect because we have heard about that from a few parents. Just highlighting that that definitely needs oversight and there has to be conversations around that. Okay. Parent 5, yeah?

Parent 5:

I just wanted to say that although we don't have these fights over technology, we have these same fights control and time allocated for reading. My daughter uses ... She's an avid reader. She loves reading which is great, but she uses books as a negotiating tactic what meal she gets to read during. She uses it as a shield against interacting with people sometimes, just for what it's worth.

Moderator 1:

Okay. Yeah. I guess technology is not its own animal, I guess, if there are other similar [inaudible 00:57:11] we're dealing with.

Parent 4:

That was me growing up, by the way.

Moderator 1:

Oh, really?

Parent 4:

That was totally me. I used to hide in the bathroom and read [crosstalk 00:57:23]. It's a good thing.

Moderator 1:

It turned out well for you. All right. Well, thank you everyone. This has been a really great group. We really appreciate you giving us your insights and taking some time to share with us today. We've heard a lot of similar themes from parents, but a lot of new stuff came out today as well, so we really appreciate all of it. I'll let Administrator end us off.

Administrator:

Hi, everyone. Just like Moderator 1 said, thank you guys so much for your participation today in our focus group. It not only helps us with the research that we're doing, but the town hall that we are looking to host in either late May or early June. We're looking to basically give resources to parents who are having a difficult time throughout the pandemic, and then also for parents who may not be having a difficult time because resources can be used for a multitude of reasons. We thank you guys so much for just all the information and insight you guys gave us today. In regards to compensation, you should receive it no later than Friday. It's sent via email, so if you don't receive an email from Amazon that says Healthy Brain Network or Child Mind Institute by Friday, please do not hesitate to reach out to me via email or through phone call, through my phone number, and I will definitely be happy to assist and get that done. Thank you guys again.

Moderator 1:

All right. Bye everyone. Have a great afternoon.

Parent 6:

Bye. Thank you.

Parent 4:

Bye. Be well everyone.

Parent 2:

Thank you. Bye everyone. Have a great day.

Parent 6:

Bye.

Parent 5:

Bye.