Moderator 1:

(silence)

Administrator:

Hi, everyone. We're just waiting for Moderator 1, our clinician, and then the other parents to hop on, and then we'll get started.

(silence)

Hi, everyone. Hi, Parent 1. Hi, Parent 2. Thanks so much for joining. We're just going to wait a few minutes for another few people to come and then we can get started

(silence)

Hi, Parent 3. Thanks for coming. We're just waiting for one or two more people to join, but we'll get started in a couple minutes.

Parent 3:

Okay, I just have to address something with the kids. I'll be right back.

Moderator 1:

Yeah. No problem.

Parent 4:

[inaudible 00:06:49] For the Zoom?

Moderator 1:

Hi, Parent 4. Can you hear us okay? Okay. I think we're actually all here for now. One other person might join us but we can get started before she comes. And then if she comes, she can join us. Thank you, everyone, for making some time today to do this with us. We really appreciate getting to hear from you. The reason why we're doing this is to follow up to the crisis survey that you had all filled out and just get a deeper understanding of specific issues that families have been facing during COVID-19 specifically related to technology.

Before we get started, I think it would be nice if maybe we just go around and have a quick icebreaker. Just, let's say, introduce ourselves, maybe say the ages of your kids, and one TV show or movie that you recommend that you've seen over the past year. I can go first. My name is Moderator 1. I'm the clinical training and assessment manager of the Healthy Brain Network. One TV show that I've really gotten into recently is Good Girls. It's a good mix of funny and suspenseful. It's about three housewives who get involved in crime. I recommend it. Who wants to go next? Hi, Parent 5. Go ahead. I'm glad that she ... All right, Parent 3, you want to go next?

Parent 3:

Hi. My name is Parent 3. I have an 11-year-old and a nine-year-old. Although some days, it feels like I have 20 kids as opposed to just two. A good show, let me see. Well, I'm a fan of Sex in the City, but I've been watching that ad nauseum. But the Queen's Gambit actually is a great show and you know ...

Moderator 1:

Okay, thanks Parent 3. Parent 1, do you want to now?

Parent 1:

I'm Parent 1. I have a 12-year-old, and I really enjoyed The Good Place.

Moderator 1:

Wait, how old is your kids? Sorry, I miss that.

Parent 1:

12 years old, going on 20.

Moderator 1:

Who wants to go next? Parent 2?

Parent 2:

Hi, I'm Parent 2. My son is now 20. And Yellowstone, I got really into Yellowstone. It's a soap opera, western. [inaudible 00:10:13].

Moderator 1:

That can't be bad. I haven't heard of that one but I sure like Kevin Costner. Okay, who's next?

Parent 4:

Hi, good afternoon everyone. My name is [Parent 4 00:10:29]. My boy is 13, going to 14. Thank you.

Moderator 1:

Nice to meet you, Parent 4. Okay. Parent 5? I think you're on mute. I'm not sure if you can hear us.

Parent 3:

Me?

Moderator 1:

No, Parent 5.

Administrator:

Moderator 1, another parent is going to be joining in the next couple of minutes.

Moderator 1:

Okay. So we're going to have six today?

Administrator:

Yes.

Moderator 1:

Okay. Cool. Parent 5, I'm not sure if your audio is working. But if you can figure out how to unmute, then just speak up and introduce yourself. Okay? Before we get started with the discussion, I want to first do an exercise. So if everyone could just grab a paper and pen or something to write on nearby, and just take a few minutes and think about what are two or three positive ways that technology has impacted your child over the past year-and-a-half? And what are two or three negative ways that technology has impacted your child? If you could just jot down a couple of thoughts and then we'll discuss.

(silence)

Hi, Parent 5. We saw you there for a minute.

Parent 5:

Great. Sorry. Just having some technical difficulties trying to connect so hello.

Moderator 1:

No worries. Hi. Welcome. Thanks so much for joining.

Parent 5:

Thanks for having me.

Moderator 1:

If you want to introduce yourself quickly?

Parent 5:

Sure. My name Parent 5. And what else do are we saying? I have a ... Go ahead.

Moderator 1:

Age of your child.

Parent 5:

I have a recent 12-year-old who just turned 12 on Wednesday. Who are 12, six, and four. So thank you.

Moderator 1:

Nice. And if you have a recommendation for a TV show or a movie that you've watched over the pandemic you can share with us?

Parent 5:

A TV show that I've watched over the pandemic? Grey's Anatomy. I mean, does it have to be specific to the kids or I mean ...

Moderator 1:

This is just my way of getting recommendations of things to watch and getting [inaudible 00:13:47].

Parent 5:

Okay. What does it call it? I mean Grey's Anatomy and a couple of spin-offs that they had. They really were doing a really good job of kind of re-enacting what's been going on in the world with COVID and the Black Lives Matter movement. So those were, I mean, what I've been focused on over the COVID time.

Moderator 1:

Nice. Okay. Thank you. We're just taking a couple of minutes now to just write down a couple of positive ways that technology has impacted your child over the pandemic, and also a couple of negative ways that technology has impacted your child. After you do that, after you jot down a couple, I'd like you to circle whichever one has had the biggest overall impact, the good or the bad. And then we'll talk.

(silence)

By show of hands, who circled the negative group as having the bigger impact over since the pandemic? All right, so Parent 2, you think that the negative has a bigger impact, Parent 3 also, and Parent 1. Parent 4 and Parent 5, would you say that the negative or a positive has had a bigger impact overall?

Parent 4:

I will say both.

Moderator 1:

Okay. So you're kind of in the middle. Parent 5, what do you say ...

Parent 5:

I was going to say the same. For me, it's both.

Moderator 1:

Okay. All right. I wanted to get everyone thinking about it. And also, I think this really highlights that there's definitely good and bad impacts of technology. And we want to spend some time digging in on both sides of the issue. I just also really want to encourage everyone to share your specific perspective, because I know that a lot of people's experiences overlap. And then also people have their own unique experiences. So feel free to contrast what someone else says or agree or whatever your experience has been. The first question that I would like to discuss is, how did your child use technology before the pandemic for educational purposes? And did you find technology for educational purposes beneficial before the pandemic? Did you have any concerns before the pandemic? Whoever wants to share first can go. Anyone can jump in. Parent 5?

Parent 5:

My son goes to our charter school. Before the pandemic, he was using computers to do most of his work at home. But it was really just about schoolwork. So it wasn't doing anything above and beyond that. And I think your question was also what was after, right?

Moderator 1:

Yeah, we'll move into that. If it relates to what you're saying now, you can definitely do.

Parent 5:

I'll wait.

Moderator 1:

Okay. It seems like he was using it a little bit for school before, but it was pretty contained at the charter school that he was at?

Parent 5:

Yeah.

Moderator 1:

Got you. Did you have any concerns or do you find it beneficial in terms of technology and education?

Parent 5:

I definitely found that it was beneficial because he was able to access more materials. When I think of school books, I don't know, an Encyclopedia Britannica just always pops into my head. I'm like, at least you don't have to walk around with this large book, but now you have access to all of that content and much more. That's kind of the framework that I've always been able to use. But I didn't feel like he understood that at that time. Being able to go on Google and just search, I mean, it wasn't something that he really understood at the time.

Moderator 1:

He probably don't appreciate how amazing that is compared to books.

Parent 5:

Right.

Moderator 1:

Okay, anyone else experience with ... Yup, Parent 1?

Parent 1:

It was pretty minimal for school. It was mostly, I mean, they did use some Chromebooks for some projects at school that they share. She was in a public school, she still is. But overall, the use of the computer was mostly to do research, for project-based stuff. And punctually to, I mean, in fifth grade more than in sixth, strangely enough, there's a lot of use of Google Class, submitting essays, and things like that, but it was still very minimal.

Moderator 1:

Okay. Who wants to go now?

Parent 4:

My child also had access to the computer before the pandemic at school. He also learned [inaudible 00:19:59] at school. It was somewhat minimal. What I love then was that he would come back home, and use the computer for his assignment and most of his thing, and then he was more confident using the computer than writing. And I was trying to get him an access or get the accommodation for assistive technology for him all through the pandemic. And while working, they had to evaluate him and saw that it was more better for him to be on the computer, to use computer for his academic work more at school because it wasn't restricted somehow with the use of computer at school.

But when he got home, he did everything on the computer. And also, not just for academic work, he also did it for his games and every other thing. But when he transitioned to remote learning now, he's also gained confidence, independence in using everything on the computer. So that's why I say it's half-half. The other half is no. It's complete reliance on the computer. Now you can't get him off it, you can't tell him to stop. You give him a time, he [inaudible 00:21:23].

Moderator 1:

So now it's really hard to regulate that?

Parent 4:

Yes. They will scream and shout. One time he stays until 2:00 AM on the computer trying to [inaudible 00:21:37] and do it ...

Moderator 1:

That's hard. It sounds like from before the pandemic, that you noticed that technology was very beneficial for him in order to be able to express himself without the fine motor demands of writing, and you had actually worked into technology. So that part probably was a nice transition for him in gaining confidence but just it kind of went overboard. So we'll go more into that. Anyone else want to share? Parent 3?

Parent 3:

My son before the pandemic was mostly iPad for his ... He had an accommodation. So he would use the iPad occasionally, but nothing crazy. I mean, nothing obsessive. Since the pandemic, it has gone to zero to 100. As soon as they closed the school down, as soon as de Blasio said, "School's closing," it literally went from zero to 100. It's just like he's obsessed with it. Very similar experiences to Parent 4. He does not want to get off of it. It is a constant fight. It is a constant battle of putting in appropriate guidelines. It is a push and shove it. I feel bad some days because I'm like, "You can't use it except only for school." But then at the same time because of the pandemic, that's how he socializes a lot of time with his friends. So it's almost like, "Well, do I punish him by taking away the one thing he really holds most dear to his heart? But then if I do that, I take away his ability to socialize with his friends."

Moderator 1:

It makes it particularly hard to kind of ...

Parent 3:

Right. It's a very tough seat. I'm like on a seesaw. It's constancy seesaw, it's a constant weighing the pros and the cons. He's a high functioning ASD. He's got essentially Asperger's and ADHD so he gets hyper-focused and very upset very easily if his hyper focus if it's cut off.

Moderator 1:

Right. So it's particularly hard for him to transition out of it.

Parent 3:

Yeah. No matter how many minutes, no matter how many stop watches, countdowns, the whole nine, it's very trying. That's why I have these bands.

Moderator 1:

Parent 2, you want to share with us what ...

Parent 2:

Sure. My son's older through all these kids, but he's still trying to get his diploma from high school. He had a lot of issues on top of the ADD, he had some depression, and PTSD. We recently moved out to Maine. So now we're out of New York City and we're in the country. When he was in New York City and school's opened, being accepted to use the computer to hand in assignments, answer emails from teachers, that kind of thing. So he spends a lot of his time on the computer with gaming.

Moderator 1:

It says prior to the pandemic.

Parent 2:

Right, prior to. Technology has always been his thing. One, I think it just gives him something to do. That takes his brain away from everything else that's going on in his life. But school-wise, there was in-person learning so he didn't ... The transition to in-person learning, I mean, strictly computer learning has been difficult with him because he's actually a social kid. I think so beforehand, so when the pandemic first started, he was like, "This is awesome, because I'm an introvert and now I don't happen to see people." [inaudible 00:25:58] really quick. Now a lot of his stuff is he communicates with school and teachers and advisers, friends. I mean, again, there's a lot of online gaming that he does and he actually even streams movies and television and stuff.

Moderator 1:

Have you noticed that becoming more concerning and problematic, or it's always been hard for him to regulate that?

Parent 2:

It's always been hard for him to regulate that. Now that he is an adult and taller and stronger than I am, it's hard for me to kind of step in. I can't move on or just physically take it away from him.

Moderator 1:

The level of your child is much harder now.

Parent 2:

Right. He has a job, which has helped. That's gotten him out of the house.

Moderator 1:

So being able to go out is definitely key. So that actually leads to the next question. So the next question is how did your child's use of technology for school purposes changed during the pandemic? Was it beneficial? Did you have concerns or find it problematic? Parent 4 and Parent 3 and Parent 2, I think you guys kind of shared that it's been that way. But Parent 1 and Parent 5, I'd like to hear from you guys a little bit about how things changed in terms of was it beneficial? Was it problematic? Whoever wants to go first? Parent 1, go for it.

Parent 1:

I don't know. It's been ... I mean, because she was remote for a certain time ... I mean, it was horrible.

Moderator 1:

Sorry.

Parent 1:

It started well. And then it went to [inaudible 00:28:05] so much more that ... I mean, with her psychiatrists, we had to decide to use medication because it was too much. Then she was on blended learning, which ended up being remote for most of the time. Interestingly enough, the blended time was horrible when she was at home because it was asynchronous learning. So the fact that she was not engaged with a teacher and had to work independently using tools, I mean, we had to spy remotely on her computer because, I mean, it's Netflix, it's anime. We're in anime Japanese World 24/7 so much that she would even hide the laptop under her bed so that we forget about it and pull it out at night. We'd find her in the closet in the middle of the night watching anime.

And she said, "I don't remember. I must have been sleepwalking." Those times were hard. I don't know if it's maturity. I mean, it's hard. The remote school thing, I mean, it's constantly needing to juggle between trying to get her to be independent and also have her accept that we're still her parents, and we have to be teachers at the same time. We're in that really weird role of having to do both. Overall, I mean, she's a trooper for most of the time and medication had helped with the crisis and the fact that we put a doorstopper, like one of those remotes so she can't slam the door anymore and break the wall, all of that helped.

Moderator 1:

Just to follow up a little bit. It sounds like it started off okay but then it just kind of became really problematic. Was it her actual use of the technology itself that was so problematic or just kind of like secondary effects of use of technology or either her behavior or anxiety or ...

Parent 1:

I think the combination of both. I think the crisis, the pandemic coupled with so much screen time, the need of escapism, I don't know who brought that up earlier that, all of that combined with her anxiety was a wonderful melting pot. I mean, now it's much more under control. I mean, it's not perfect, but at least she doesn't have crisis as many, at all.

Moderator 1:

Okay, thank you for sharing that. I think we said that, Parent 5, we want to hear from you how was the use of technology for educational purposes once the pandemic started?

Parent 5:

When the pandemic started, they went completely virtual. And they tried, they did, they kept the same schedule as when they were in school, as far as hours were concerned. So his day starts at eight o'clock in the morning and goes until 3:45 in the afternoon. So typically, he'll go until 4:30. So he was pretty much in that space. They were doing 90-minute blocks. So they broke it down to do 35-minute blocks with a break before they went into the next. His level of focus, I guess it was good, because with his ADHD, he was able to make noise and kind of be in his face, and he was on mute so nobody really heard him. He's [crosstalk 00:32:33] stuff and doing things that keep his mind engaged.

In school, it presents a problem where he would yell out a lot during his class sessions. I'm just envisioning, I'm like, "Oh, my gosh. This is what you do in class and why the teachers are always having a fit and calling me and feeling like, 'What can we do to get him more focused?'" He hasn't been taking his medicine during the pandemic. We've had some times where it's almost like a threat, like, "If you don't focus, I'm going to make you take your medicine," kind of thing. Because the issue in class was he'll be in class all day but he wasn't doing any work. So his teachers would call me or they would text me, and there were like, "He turned in work but it's all blank." In addition to him having to do his night homework, he also now has to do all of the work that he didn't do for class during the day.

He's pretty much on his computer from when he wakes up in the morning at 7:00 until going to bed at night at 9:00 trying to ... With breaks to kind of go to the bathroom and eat. It's a lot. It's overwhelming. A lot of times, just like Parent 1 was just saying, we had to do some stop gaps, too. We got the blink camera to put in the room so that I'm able to see or listen or hear. If he's listening or watching a video game or watching YouTube instead of participating in classes, I'm like, "It has to be something more than you telling me that you're in class and you're not doing the work." I had him sit in a room and it's difficult because I'm working and it's like, "Okay, I'm trying to oversee," And like I said, I have three kids so I'm trying to [inaudible 00:34:33] all of them in virtual learning. And trying to keep them all up to par in what they're doing. I definitely felt that it was challenging.

But the good parts about it were that he was able to connect with friends and family members that he wouldn't on a regular basis. On the weekends, if he did well in school, I'm like, "Okay, then you can spend time with your family." But that just meant more time on the screen. Maybe on a different type of device. Now, it's the TV instead of the computer. Or maybe it's his, what do you call it? His phone or other electronic devices. But it's still, to me, overkill. And I feel like when he goes back to school, I think it's just going to be much harder, because I don't know what the [inaudible 00:35:27] kind of does that look like. With overstimulation and then they go from overstimulation to something not so [crosstalk 00:35:35]

Moderator 1:

Parent 5, you just segued us into the next topic, which is going to be returning to school. But before we do that, I just want to say hi to [inaudible 00:35:49]. I'm assuming that ...

Parent 6:

Hi. That's my son's name. I just didn't know how do it. I'm sorry. My name is Parent 6. It's Parent 6.

Moderator 1:

Hi, Parent 6. Welcome. Thank you for joining. Just to catch you up to speed a little bit where just moving through some different discussion questions to share your experience during the pandemic as it relates to technologies. Maybe if you don't mind just sharing the age of your kids and what your experience was with technology for educational purposes before the pandemic. Was it beneficial? Did you have any concerns? And maybe how that changed or if that changed with the pandemic?

Parent 6:

Okay. I have an 11-year-old boy who is in sixth grade, and I have a seven-year-old girl who is in first grade. Prior to the pandemic, I don't believe that they really use too much of the computer before for schoolwork, because they just had live classes. If they had to research something, my son, but not really, my daughter, too much. And the only time they ever really used gadgets and electronics is for pleasure or after school. But once the pandemic started, he came home with a Chromebook, and this is the end of it for us.

My son is ADHD, he does not take any meds. But I was fully remote with them when it started and was able to sit and watch these classes go on. At first, it didn't seem like much. It seemed like it was actually working with him, to helping him kind of some of the issues he was having in physical form in school he wasn't having so I thought like, "This is good. It's working for him." But that was not true. Like the other woman was saying how they would submit documents or the homework, and it would be submitted and you think it's done, the thing is blank.

Moderator 1:

Yes. It's very similar to what Parent 5 was saying.

Parent 6:

I realized that all these assignments, I mean, it was a huge issue because he had 16 assignments that he did not do in his strongest subject, which is even worse. It was dribs and drabs of many things with half of the work. I find that they've gone through so many changes as far as technology goes. Just being on it all day and then being on it for pleasure. I don't know, for me, I find that although I am handling a kid who is just starting puberty so I know that you get a lot of other things that come with that as far as friction with rules and stuff. We've argued more than ever, ever before. It is a constant argument about like, "It's so easy to work. All you have to do is show your face, ask a question, and submit the work."

The grades are watered down. I feel like the technology has just they justify the scheduling as though when you look at it like, "They're going to have two hours of live Zoom." But the two hours of live Zoom is just live. It's not the 10 hours or the eight hours that they spend a day on it to do the work, to do the Zoom, to do the rest, and then everything else. It has not been good on this end. For him, especially. For my daughter, not as much of an issue. But for him, yes.

And just to note, they've done remote, they've done in school, which they called kind of a hybrid. But it's still remote. It's still remote in a building. It's not remote in your house, because they're doing it off the computer. It's not like they're having live actual instruction like they used to. They're still with the same overstimulation and everything else that goes along with that. I haven't found anything really positive to say about it at all.

Moderator 1:

Thank you, Parent 6. Let's move into the next question, which is I think some people have returned already or anticipating returning. I'd like to hear a little bit about what do you anticipate as people return to in person. Do you have concerns? Is there anything about the educational technology would like to see continue? Is there anything that you hope will end? Whoever wants to go first. Parent 3?

Parent 3:

Okay. Real quick. Both my kids, my son is ADHD and ASD, my daughter is ADHD and learning disabilities. But I had to make the choice because of the sentiments that everyone said, I had to make the choice to put them in Catholic school this year, because I needed him to be in-person at least five days a week. And that was a financial decision that was not taken lightly. I actually found probably one of the cheaper, less expensive Catholic schools to put them in for five days a week. And even then, there was still points where he was fully remote because maybe someone was self-professed positive test for COVID. He actually tested positive for COVID as well so he was fully remote for three weeks, several times since September, we've been remote. So it's been very difficult.

Even in person, it's still very difficult. Because he still has people who are also remote in his classroom so that's also a big thing. That's also another distraction for him in class. So that's a different type of distraction. He's getting in-person but there's other kids who are being remote. So that's another distraction for him, which is another ball of wax. That when it's to distraction, he comes home, like today, he came home and it was obviously a very bad day for him because it was a very bad car ride for me. It was bad.

Moderator 1:

You can tell by that. Even in-person, you're still seeing challenges as he returns with ... I've heard a term yesterday in one school, they were calling them Roomies and Zoomies. So the people who are in the room are the roomies and the ...

Parent 3:

Exactly. My daughter, she even goes to a charter school and they were remote three days and in-person two days. Now they are remote one day, in person four days. But she has her own paraprofessional so it's a little bit easier for her but she gets overwhelmed. Her ADHD is more of the impulsive. I think I chalk it up to her being a girl. She's not as much as emotional as he is. He's very emotional. It causes a whole different ball of wax because like I said, if he's had a bad day at school, we are all going to have a very bad day at home.

Moderator 1:

So even being in-person, it sounds it can be challenging.

Parent 3:

Yeah.

Moderator 1:

Who wants to go next and share just concerns about returning? Parent 1?

Parent 1:

The return to school, I mean, right now, she's three days one week, two days the other week. That's been really awesome and nice. She's really happy every time she comes home, much more cooperative, it's still difficult to get her out of bed. It's awesome when she's in school for all of us. She keeps saying she miss being home. The concern I have is that where I'm hoping we're going to be able to go back five days a week. But the two concerns that I have about really as more and more kids transition to going back fully in school is addressing any form of, for lack of a better word, PTSD. I did bring it up at the school as part of the SLT to what are they going to do for social and emotional well-being of the kids when they go back to school.

The other thing that I would like to see taught in school is form of online ethics. I don't know. The fact that kids trust so much what they see and read online, and it would be great if there was a class about helping them learn about cyber security, being able to recognize on their chat rooms when there's possible grooming, phishing and all of that, and understanding that there's no privacy once you're online. It's not private, it's public. So all of that is something that, especially after seeing what ... They communicate in so many different places online and I can't control all of those chat rooms. There's [inaudible 00:47:18] publicly know that. And I think for their own safety, I think it would be great that ...

Moderator 1:

Yeah, that makes a lot of sense. If they're going to give them this tool, then teach them how to use it and how to be safe with it. I like that point a lot. Who wants to go next about returning back, anything you'd like to see stay? What would you like to see go? Concerns?

Parent 4:

I would say my son's school is not going back this session. They are going to be remote throughout this session, because he goes into charter school. Doing good independently. Unlike before, when he goes to school, he is not writing any notes, he's not doing anything. I get all these phone calls, emails. He has to come back home, I have to start writing, I have to start the homework, helping with most of the homework. Type it or write it in his notebook, because some of his teachers will insist that they want the note and it has to be updated. So I have to just write the note for him. He's back, less work for me now because he works independently, he's able to do his homework on his own on his computer, turns it in at the right time. I don't have to do all this paperwork for him. But my concern is now when he goes back to school, to him, he doesn't want to go. He wants to stay remote. He prefer in remote because he's able to do his work and is able to get ...

Moderator 1:

I'm sorry. Your son, he wants to stay remote because what?

Parent 4:

He wants to stay at home because he's able to do his work better and turns his own work faster. It doesn't have to do with all this side things like bullying, maybe harassing and the treatment from all those mates at school. He's in his pace at home, he moves around. Although he gets distracted sometimes. Just YouTube while the class is on, so he gets ... The teacher calls him, he's fumbling on his [inaudible 00:49:40] to respond and all those things.

Moderator 1:

Sorry.

Parent 4:

I have to go back to ... We'll be writing most of the time [inaudible 00:49:47] close to him. And when the teacher [inaudible 00:49:53] the teacher talk, put on the volume so I can hear and know when they him and just direct him and assist him. So going back to school next session is a problem that he doesn't want to think about for now. Because since the pandemic, he refused going anywhere. He doesn't trust anything. He doesn't even trust the vaccine. I told him I took the vaccine, I'm okay. He still does not because it was too fast to develop the vaccine. He's autism with ADHD, anxiety from depression, and all of those things with it.

My concern is going back. And as Parent 1 said, internet safety, very, very important. How will the school handle this when they go back? Sometimes he goes on some sites, and he just gets up and starts screaming and running around, "I'm scared, I'm scared." He can't sleep, he can't do anything because of some things that he saw when he was on that site. I have a nephew in England, his age, too, 13-year. And he is all over the world with people that he doesn't know. He also has autism. There was a time he told his mother he was leaving London to go to Birmingham to meet somebody that he had been communicating with on the internet. How do they recognize the good ones from the bad? How do they recognize who they are really chatting with when they're online? This is a very big issue and a concern to me, actually.

Moderator 1:

Does anyone else want to share thoughts or concerns about returning?

Parent 1:

My biggest concern with returning for my child is ... Like I said, I shared a little bit earlier is how he's going to be able to control his body. Again, when he was home, I'm not restricting him as far as controlling his body. But at school, they consider it as safety issue because if he's tapping or he's putting his pencil on top of ... I mean, there's plenty of chairs that my son has broken while he's been ... Folding chairs that he's broken because he's lean back on them or things like that. But that's home. School is a different story, that's a big like, "Oh, my gosh, that's so insane." I'm really worried about that and how that transition from being ...

And then he also hasn't been out as much, either, because he's been so bogged down with schoolwork. So I'm worried about the overstimulation because even for myself, my youngest starting into school, so I started to drop her off to school and pick her up. Just the fact of me going out for three hours a day, I come back so tired because I feel like I'm so overwhelmed with everything that I had to pay attention to and monitor that I didn't have to do for a year. So I'm concerned of how that if it's bothering me as an adult, I can only imagine how that's going to reflect on them.

Moderator 1:

That's suggesting back to the that concept of it that way. Parent 2?

Parent 2:

My child is on the verge of leaving the nest, I suppose, maybe. He has two credits left to go with high school. He's right now in the process of deciding whether or not he wants to go to a community college or going to a trade. I'm actually looking forward for him being out of the house and coming into contact with people. Because what I've been finding with him is that he has been getting along and listening to erroneous news, fake news, basically.

Some of this is also just being antagonistic and wanting to be. He just wants to do a reaction. He says something reactionary about everything that's going on from the pandemic itself, from vaccine, Black Matter, Asian sentiments that's been going on. It's just driving me crazy. And he needs to get out into the world instead of being locked up into this little box where he's controlling what information he's getting. That's what I want.

Moderator 1:

I think it's almost like you get trapped in this alternative world, that's not your life he can get sucked into. So it sounds like for you, you're just looking forward to him returning to normal life as much as possible. Let's now just transition into the last part. So sorry, Parent 6, but were you going to something?

Parent 6:

No. I was just going to say one of the things that I think really kind of concerns me is that as he's gone back into the building ... My children go to charter school as well. And they've created so much about wearing a mask, and my son, he's at home, he's not going to wear a mask in our house. So much emphasis on it. Even wearing a mask while they went to recess and his mask fell down a little bit under his nose, and they stopped him from recess and were like, "No, you have to. Your mask were down." I mean, some of the things are getting so kind of, for me, a little ridiculous that it's you're breathing your own CO2 all day, getting headaches, all this stuff. If the kid is going to go outside, then let him breathe the fresh air. They don't have to be next to each other. He can run alone, he doesn't need anybody running with him. He has so much energy. But it's like they're getting so ... There's so much more anxiety build up that it just doesn't help.

Moderator 1:

Right, so [crosstalk 00:57:06] those rules and restrictions that are associated with going back and social distancing. Especially if you've spent all your time at home and you're not used to wearing a mask, it can be hard to adjust in that.

Parent 6:

And the thing is when you have a kid like mine, super sensitive, he's very affectionate, he doesn't like ... For him to socialize with the new kids because he went into the school last year. So he didn't even really make friends when March came around. It's like he had no roots. He was in another school for four years. So it's like how do you make friends with people if you don't get close to them? He's a very touchy feely kid. And it's like, "Now this touchy feely kid was trying to make friends. Now has to be ..." The expectations, especially when they know your kid has special needs and special attentions and accommodations, that they don't really look at those things fully. And everybody's on someone's scale and it shouldn't be that way. Because I feel like kids with accommodations, those needs have to be met because these kids ... I find my kid is zoning out like things don't matter. And you're talking about a kid who was honorable student. And it's how can this be affecting him in that way? That's all I wanted to say.

Parent 3:

I'm sorry, I'm just going to real quick ... I apologize. I'm not going to hijack this time. I was just going to say for us parents who have our children in charter. My daughter's charter is 65% IEP so that's a little different. But other charter schools, that's the thing about charters, that's the gamble. They kind of comply with the IEPs, they kind of don't but that's the thing about charters. We got to take it, we don't have to take it. Just depends on the charter. It's such a hard thing. And I know a lot of folks have just mentioned about keeping track of your kid online.

I put Bark on child's my laptop. It's B-A-R-K, it's an app that you download. You have to pay for it but at least it tells you if someone's fishing them. If someone's saying the key words and stuff like, that they send an alert to you. So that's B-A-R-K. I put Bark on my kid's laptop so I can get the alerts. At least, that would be like, "Okay, let me figure this out." But it is an awful ... It's such a hard time that we're all going through. Even I as an adult, one of my emails got like I got an alert, alert. It's on the dark web. I'm like, "I don't even know what the hell the dark web is."

We're exposing to our kids all of these things. And if your child has ADHD or ASD or ADHD with other comorbidities, it's even more difficult. Because it's like it's so hard to protect them. You want to protect them, you want to do what's best. But at this point in time, you don't even know what's best for your child. Because you know the COVID rate amongst kids is less than 1%. Going back to what she was saying about if your child is a social little person, then what are you going to tell them? Like, "You can't be that social. You got to stay arms away." But that's so difficult for a kid to comprehend that.

I's very distressing. I'm not going to cry. But it's such a very distressing time that this is a distressing time for us as adults. It's an even more distressing time for our children. I know one mom just mentioned about the kid not being able to sit still. If that's the case, on your kid's IEP, you can get a sensory cushion and have that with your kid just so they can help. My son, for the longest time, I had him to have a sensory cushion. He was getting in trouble. He was sneaking ... In elementary school, he's in junior high school now, but he was sneaking into the classrooms, into the closets to inhale marker. That's not good. Like, "Oh, no," right, exactly. He inhale marker. Well, that is a sign of anxiety. And I said to them, I'm like, "When are you planning on telling me this? After he's graduated from smelling markers to something else? When are you planning on saying, 'Hey, your kid has anxiety?'"

Moderator 1:

Thank you, Parent 3. Now, I think you did a really nice ...

Parent 3:

I'm sorry.

Moderator 1:

No, no, don't apologize. It's important to highlight those points, especially the social part. I want to use another 10 minutes. I really appreciate your time. The last topic I would like to hear from you guys about is just a specific focus on social media. I know a few of you have touched on this a bunch. I'd like to hear from you a little bit about any concerns you had about social media prior to the pandemic, how that changed, benefits, concerns, just hearing both asides. Whoever wants to go first.

Parent 5:

I will go first because I have to get off. What social media is starting to ... I mean, he still hasn't really gotten on to it. The kid versions where he's able to connect with his cousins. I've also found that his relationships with school have not been the greatest because he hasn't been able to see them in person. But because he's able to see his cousin, those relationships have grown more. I'm not sure what the correlation is. It's been there. But that's who he's been in this space with. And very early on and a lot of you were talking about some of the challenges with navigating the world wide web with the children.

One of the things that we did, there was a, I forget, I was trying to see if I could find it, but it was a video that kind of talks about kidnappings and things like that that were kind of happening. It was an actual show, and we sat down and we watched it. We had a long conversation afterwards. Like, "This is why I don't want you having conversations about where you live or letting even ..." Because he has a younger brother, I'm like, "Even being able to communicate." I said, "Sometimes your brother might say something to give indicators about the community that we live in, that might lead them that much closer to the house." So just helping them to be more aware of and be mindful of their surroundings and how the information might be perceived on the other side has been a big point for my husband and I and what we've been trying to relay to him. Because we want to have him to be more autonomous.

I think somebody was sharing the site, I put on a blocker on the phone and on the computer as well so then I'm getting alerts where he's going to YouTube and some of these things. Because even videos that are coming up that are way too inappropriate, in my opinion, where they're showing crosses, devils, and all kinds of things. That's not something that I want my 12-year-old to be engaging and experiencing at this time. So the social media platform, I feel like has definitely expanded and is now more so like in the TikTok era, in the YouTube era. I know YouTube has been trying to do a lot to try to curb it but it's still not great. So those are just some of the things that I know that I've been doing to kind of manage it.

Moderator 1:

Thank you, Parent 5.

Parent 3:

I just wanted to jump in real quick. So sorry about outside. But in addition to social media use, I know that some kids aren't on social media yet. So even if it's just the YouTube or like watching movies or videos, any sorts of media that your child has been engaged in over the past year, definitely tell us about it. And once again, I'm very sorry about outside.

Moderator 1:

Sorry [inaudible 01:06:12].

Parent 1:

So social media, interestingly enough, I think it's been in a weird way better. I don't know if it's because she's maturing. Also, girls start social media, I think, earlier than boys in general. We had talks, we had contracts beforehand. There's no selfies allowed on Instagram. It's a way of showcasing art, it's not about looking how many likes. And it turns out that they don't really use Instagram the way that they were mostly about posting stories. So they're more in the Snapchat, in and out world of showcasing what they like.

I think it's been really fun, because I can see what she's interested in it in things. And they've been really good conversation starters. Also, it's a great way of monitoring her growth and seeing who she's chatting with. It's been kind of interesting. The only thing that worries me in the social media world is all those. Because I discovered Discord, and then there's chat rooms and games. But there's also, what is that? There's that one game that everyone plays and all the adults love too. I forgot what it's called.

Moderator 1:

Among Us?

Parent 1:

Yes. It's been great. Strategy and fun. The only area that I worry the most is YouTube, I must admit, because that's the area where she feels very comfortable commenting on a lot of things, and not realizing that she still comments like a little girl, with mistakes and all that. So that's my only concern, but overall, I find, interestingly enough, a positive experience.

Moderator 1:

[inaudible 01:08:18].

Parent 1:

I didn't expect it.

Parent 6:

I don't think my experience has been pretty good. I think for my little one ... My son is always on animes and looking at gamers showing videos of games and listening to commentary. I think he watches a lot of puppet show. Things I find very silly and immature. I'm like, "Okay, not a big deal." But my little one, she likes to watch all these toy openings and kids talking about things that they're opening and she wants a YouTube channel. But I have found that I had to put some blocks on there because I had a lot of completely sexualized, inappropriate things pop up that I was mortified that she was on it and it was ...

And her brother noticed it. And I'm like, "What is that?" She was on just some kind of kitten. It just popped up. And she, of course, you see something you never seen before. You're going to be like ... And it was so instinctual. She was trying to hide. And I was like, "How can this just come up out of nowhere?" There was like nothing that she was on before. I feel like the bad guy because I had to completely stop it. Like, "No, you can't get on it." And she said, "But I just want to see the video of the games and the kids. I want to have my own channel."

And I'm just like, "This kind of stuff. I can't have porn going in front of my seven-year-old. This is highly problematic." I find that even when you do it and you do the YouTube for kids, it's not even that safe either because there's some anime styles that are just, for my taste, a little too much at this point in time. I feel like they haven't been able to have so much happening. We couldn't go on vacation because of COVID and everything. When it first happened, we had to cancel. I feel like they've lost so much that the one thing they have is the internet. And it's now I have to be the bad guy and say, "No, you can't be on this." It's frustrating to say the least.

Moderator 1:

Anyone else, media use before the pandemic, had changed during the pandemic, concerns, benefits? Parent 3?

Parent 3:

Go ahead. I can wait. Parent 2, if you want, go ahead.

Parent 2:

Sorry. I'll be quick. One of the things that I find is that these kids, their attention spans ... I mean, first of all, the [inaudible 01:11:25] kind of problem with their attention span. And with the internet and everything that's on it moves at the speed of light and so quickly. They're getting information that is stunted in a lot of ways. So they're not even getting full pictures. But my son gets a lot of his news from memes. And they'll come to me and be like, "Mom, this and so and so." I'm like, "Are you freaking kidding me, dude? Why don't you watch PBS News Hour with me and get the full picture? And then you can make up your mind and have ..." It's just ridiculous. Anyway, that's my piece.

Parent 4:

Let me see. Mine go on these, YouTube videos, watch them. And then Discord, he does Discord so much now. He organizes his own, whatever you call the [inaudible 01:12:19], and when he says something that is obsessing, he comes back and start complaining about it. In the bathroom, you will hear him ranting and complaining and whining and everything continuously. Then I have to stress, "You know what? You have to stop it. I'm going to take you all. I'm going to take the computer, I'm going to take everything." "I'll stop. I'll stop it." Goes back in that circle and all of those things. I don't know how to stop him. I really want to but I don't know how to stop him. But his cousin is engaged, he connect with other people. And this is it.

Moderator 1:

Parent 4, can I just ask as a follow up, did you notice that has happened a change since the start of the pandemic or was that always the case that it was a challenge with media?

Parent 4:

Because of pandemic. He came too engrossed in that [inaudible 01:13:19] before the pandemic.

Moderator 1:

Thank you.

Parent 3:

I just want to say, Parent 4, why are you in my house? Parent 1, why are you in my house? Parent 2, the only thing you're miss ... I'm missing out on memes. [crosstalk 01:13:34] because everything you guys just said is my house. The screaming at the computer and just the ridiculous ... I call it bochinche, which is Spanish for gossip. Not even good gossip. Like little lady gossip, "All the bochinche, all the bochinche." "It's like, "Stop with the bochinche and the nonsense." It's so much worse. Then also the other thing is when your kids are in-person, "How much can mommy say brush your teeth? And put deodorant on, you smell"? After a while you're like ...

Parent 6:

100%.

Parent 3:

But if it's your peers saying, "Dude, you freaking stink," you're liable to take that more. You're like, "Man, I was totally embarrassed. I'm going to put deodorant and I'm going to brush my teeth." You know what the mask has done? It's hidden bad hygiene and enabled it to be okay.

Moderator 1:

That's really interesting. They're missing all that normal, typical peer feedback way, which it's ... The natural way to learn these social lessons that they're really missing now. We're actually going to end it here. But I have to say this has been an amazing group. I feel the support and love. It's been really great hearing from you guys and really helpful for us to just learn more in-depth, hear your experiences. [inaudible 01:15:20], I don't know if you want to say anything to close us out.

Administrator:

Just thank you guys so much for just all the information that you gave us today. Especially all the stuff that's in the chat. You're also the first group that's actually utilized the chat, gave more information to the conversation. So we thank you for every single bit of information that you guys have given us today. And just the camaraderie in the community. We're just finding that a lot of times with the focus groups, we're hearing a lot of the same themes being repeated amongst parents. I hope you guys are just in agreeance that your experiences, even though they have differences, a lot of our parents are going through the same things with their kids. So we thank you for that because it helps us with the research that we're trying to do.

Then just the information that we're gathering will also be used for the town hall meeting that we'll be having between either May or June. So we just thank you guys for that. In regards to compensation, you should get it no later than Monday. You might even get it in the next couple of minutes just depending on if our administrator is able to send it out. But if you have any questions or concerns or don't receive it by Monday, please feel free to reach me out. Reach out to me via email or through my number, which is on the bottom of the multiple emails that I've sent you guys over the past couple of days. So once again, thank you guys so much.

Parent 5:

Thank you. For me, this was therapy. Meeting you [crosstalk 01:16:47].

Administrator:

Thank you so much.

Parent 5:

It feels crazy, right? Take good care. God bless everyone. Bye-bye.

Moderator 1:

Thank you, everyone. Take care.

Parent 4:

Thank you.

Parent 5:

Bye.