Moderator 1:

(silence)

Moderator 1:

[inaudible 00:02:46]

Moderator 1:

Hi everyone. Welcome. Hi Parent 1, Parent 2, Parent 3. We're just going to wait for a couple more people to join.

Parent 2:

Good afternoon.

Parent 1:

Hi.

Moderator 1:

(silence)

Moderator 1:

[inaudible 00:03:43]

Moderator 1:

(silence)

Moderator 1:

[inaudible 00:03:43].

Moderator 1:

Hi [Administrator 00:03:43], we're just waiting for everyone to join.

Administrator:

Awesome.

Administrator:

(silence)

Administrator:

So, Moderator 1, I just sent the link to one other parent who will be joining us. So, she'll probably come on in the next minute or two.

Moderator 1:

Okay. Great. I think that Moderator 2 is joining also, so...

Moderator 1:

(silence)

Moderator 1:

[inaudible 00:05:22]

Parent 4:

Hi.

Moderator 1:

Hi Moderator 2.

Moderator 2:

[inaudible 00:05:27].

Moderator 1:

Hi Parent 4.

Parent 4:

Hi.

Moderator 1:

Thank you everyone for joining, it looks like we're all on. So, thanks so much for taking out some time to have this focus group today. So, the purpose of the group is really just to get some more information [crosstalk 00:05:50] about different family's experiences during COVID-19 as it relates to technology. I know you all filled out our crisis survey. So, this is really meant to go more in depth and get some qualitative information.

Moderator 1:

So, I was thinking we could start by just going around and introducing ourselves. Maybe say the ages of your kids, and then if you would like to share a recommendation of a TV show or a movie that you have really enjoyed over the pandemic, feel free to do that as well.

Moderator 1:

So, I can start. My name is Moderator 1. I'm the clinical training and assessment manager for the Harlem team of HDN. And one show that I started watching recently, which I'm a little bit late to is Ozark. It's a little bit intense, so I know that's not what everyone is in the mood for these days, but it is excellent and I highly recommend it. Moderator 2?

Moderator 2:

Hi, I'm Moderator 2. I'm the project director for Healthy Brain Network. I'm joining today's session. A good show... My daughter is 13, tomorrow actually [crosstalk 00:07:15] and then I have two boys [inaudible 00:07:16] and seven. I don't know, I started watching this show called Good Girls a while ago, and there's a new season on and it's airing each week. It's about three seemingly innocent suburban housewives who somehow get involved in money laundering and bank heists.

Moderator 1:

I second that recommendation. It's a great show. Parent 5, you want to go next?

Parent 5:

Sure. Hi. My name is Parent 5. I have three kids, 17, 13 and nine, all boys. A good show that I started watching over the pandemic is called The Repair Shop, and if you want to see a show about nothing except things being fixed, it's a good show.

Moderator 1:

Thank you. Parent 1?

Parent 1:

Hi everyone. My name is Parent 1, I have two boys, a 8-year-old and almost 3-year-old. I think the most recent show that I personally watched with no children around was Schitt's Creek, which was amazing and helped me get through all these difficult times lately. I was a little bit late to the party, I started watching it maybe a month or two ago, but I could not stop. Even if the work hours were late, I had to make sure I'll catch an episode before I go sleep. With the kids, well with the older kid, I think a few months ago we watched Floor Is Lava on Netflix, which was fun to watch as a family. Besides that, I think my son watches lots of Marvel type things with my husband, which I don't participate in.

Moderator 1:

Thanks Parent 1. Parent 3?

Parent 3:

Hi everybody. My name is Parent 3 and I have an 11-year-old daughter and an 8-year-old son. We don't watch television together at all, it's just for me. They Roblox with their friends and that's all they do. I've watched a couple of foreign things my friends have recommended, but I'd love to recommend a series, it's long but it's amazing, it's called Orphan Black. It's been around for a little while, it's produced by the BBC. It's sci-if and it's about cloning. It has five seasons. It's a real deep dive, but it's incredible and now it just won an Emmy. So I'll say Orphan Black, it's really great.

Moderator 1:

Okay. I've heard good things about it, but [inaudible 00:10:25].

Parent 3:

Yeah, you won't be-

Moderator 1:

Thank you. Parent 4?

Parent 4:

Hi, I'm Parent 4, I have a 15-year-old daughter and a 13-year-old son. One of the shows I recently just got into was Big Sky, it just started, it's a few episodes in. It's a new show, so far so good.

Moderator 1:

Okay. And then, Parent 2.

Moderator 1:

I think you're on mute. Are you there Parent 2?

Moderator 1:

Okay, I think I saw you come on before, maybe you stepped away for a minute. You're on mute. Oh, there you are.

Parent 2:

Oh, me?

Moderator 1:

Yeah.

Parent 2:

Oh, I'm sorry. I lost connection, I couldn't hear anyone. My name is Parent 2, I have a 17-year-old, he's actually my step-son and I have two 10-year-old boys and I have a 3-year-old girl. What shows have I been watching... I've been watching a few things, but most recently I've been binge watching 9-1-1, it's a drama about 911 operators and I guess the LAFD and LAPD, and all the things that they go through. I can't say why would I want to watch that, I don't know, especially during these times. I have no idea why I watch, but it's just interesting and I learn things from watching it. But yeah, and then with my children, they've been watching Fresh Prince of Bel-Air, I don't know if anyone's familiar with that-

Moderator 1:

Oh, of course, that's why I bet people are still watching that.

Parent 2:

[crosstalk 00:12:42] series. Yes. My 10-year-olds, they love it. A certain time of the day, we all as a family will watch it. We actually finished that and now they're watching a show called Fresh Off the Boat. It's a newer show on ABC. Yeah, so those are the things we've been watching.

Moderator 1:

Thanks Parent 2.

Parent 2:

Thank you.

Moderator 1:

Okay, one thing that we really want to emphasize is that we know that everyone is having some very common experiences between each other, and then also everyone is having their own unique experiences. So we really just want to hear from everyone and if somebody thinks one way about something, we really encourage you to speak up about your own individual experience. We thought that a good way to start might be if everyone could just grab a paper and pencil and try to write down three positive ways that technology has impacted you since the start of the pandemic, and two or three negative ways that technology has impacted you since the start of the pandemic. And then we'll talk about it.

Parent 5:

Us personally, or about our children?

Moderator 1:

Both, but more focused on your children I guess.

Moderator 1:

(silence)

Moderator 1:

I'm going to give you another minute, but as you're writing, I also want you to then circle whichever group has had a bigger impact. So, has the positive aspects of technology had a bigger impact on your kids, or has the negative aspects of technology had a bigger impact on your kids?

Moderator 1:

(silence)

Moderator 1:

You can just look up when you're done.

Moderator 1:

Okay, by a show of hands, who felt that the positive impacts have had a bigger overall effect? Anyone?

Moderator 1:

Okay, and then, who felt that the negative impacts have been more clear. Okay, I'm seeing all the hands... Parent 2, I can't see what you're doing. Did you feel like the positive or negative effects of technology have had a bigger impact?

Parent 2:

Oh, I thought you seen my hand, I know it was an option to raise your hand, but the negative.

Moderator 1:

Okay, okay. So it seems like this whole group feels that way, so let's delve a little bit deeper into that over the next hour or so and hear some details. So Moderator 2, do you want to start with the...

Moderator 2:

Sure. So just starting to think through some of the impact of technology, can we talk a little bit about how your child used technology prior to the pandemic for school purposes. You can say whether it was beneficial, they didn't use it at all, you had concerns, it was a problem.

Parent 2:

You said before the pandemic?

Moderator 2:

Yeah, prior.

Parent 2:

Prior, okay so are you calling on anyone specific or can we just answer?

Moderator 2:

You can just go ahead, start us off.

Parent 2:

Oh okay. Well, they didn't use it as much. I mean, the teachers would assign some reading or math assignments on I ready and from time to time some homework. But yeah, that was about it. I would monitor how much time they were on Roblox and other things to entertain themselves, but it was easier control them back then because they didn't have to go on as much. I mean, that's what it was.

Moderator 2:

Okay.

Parent 3:

I would say the same thing. My daughter was in fifth grade, we would have a couple in Newsela projects, half an hour of homework. But we were in the playground, neighborhood friends, after school projects, after school swimming. A little bit of tablet on the weekends, but there was no internet access and there was no YouTube in my life, there was no Roblox, there was no gaming. So, a very different world.

Parent 5:

I have a similar experience to Parent 3. My high schooler had a lot of his homework that he had to type and word process... I don't know if that's the right word, into Docs, but it wasn't a huge amount. It wasn't doing research, it wasn't hours and hours. My elementary school guy, he didn't have any homework on the computer at all. And my middle schooler had very little, like type this one thing or something like that. It was very little on the computer. And for myself, in terms of my family, I lock the video games so that there was very little access to video games during the week.

Parent 5:

And then on the weekends there was an hour or something like that, it wasn't that much. There was no YouTube watching, like now YouTube consumes our life. My kids didn't even know how to use the features on our TV, the smart features, they didn't know they could access YouTube on it or anything like that. So it was very controlled and very little. I also had my children in a lot of afterschool activities. My older son was in an orchestra, he also was in a band, theater groups, there was a lot of afterschool activity. A lot of playing outside, a lot of going to the park and all that stuff. Yeah, so...

Moderator 1:

So, so far, pretty limited use of technology before, for school purposes. Parent 1 and Parent 4?

Parent 4:

I can go. My kids probably had more... It sounds like they did more online than, so far, the rest of them. But my daughter in high school definitely had almost all of her homework... Not all of it because she was assigned in school, but she definitely was on doing homework, I feel like, a good amount. Nothing like now, but definitely was using it. My middle schooler also, but not as much. They both did play games or use Instagram, my daughter was really into Instagram, not as much anymore but definitely games. Now it's just like a free-for-all. I mean, they're in their rooms with the door shut, I have no idea what they're doing all day. I just know that they're doing their homework, getting good grades. I think they're on electronics the entire day.

Moderator 1:

Yeah, we'll definitely get more into that. Parent 1, was...

Parent 1:

Yeah, so I have a similar experience with my eight-year-old. Pre-pandemic he was still in second grade so the use of computers was very limited. Maybe once a week he would type, words of the week was one of the options I picked to do. That was his only interaction with computer. Of course he had devices to play on, and he would go to his father's house every other weekend and he would be more exposed there to computers. But still he was busy. He was busy during the week, there was school, there was getting to school, getting from school, that's a trip in itself.

Parent 1:

There was hockey, we had TaeKwonDo, he was very busy. Even then it didn't seem like enough, it didn't seem like we were doing enough but he was certainly a lot busier than now. And he did get to play, mostly probably on the weekends, and again, weekends were also pretty packed. So I don't know how he had time, but he did play, not a lot. And of course we were able to control it, it was an item you had to earn and if you didn't do well then you don't get to play. So it was a tool we could use as incentive during the week. So now that's all out the window, it's all available right there all day long. And getting him away from the computer now is a project in itself every day.

Moderator 1:

Thanks Parent 1.

Moderator 2:

Okay. If you can walk me through a little bit how your use of technology changed through the pandemic when they had to start using it more for school or what your situation was for your child.

Parent 1:

I can say for my eight-year-old, because again, we went from not really knowing how to use a computer or how to type, to transition really smoothly, I mean if you can call that a benefit, we transitioned really quickly. He was typing away, quickly was able to navigate where to go to sign into a Google classroom. So, that was impressive in the beginning, how quickly they were able to adapt to that. So yes... I'm sorry, can you repeat the question?

Moderator 2:

How the technology has changed during the pandemic, school purposes and whether it's beneficial or problematic.

Parent 1:

Right, exactly, it seems beneficial because it is an important part of your life as you grow older in high school clearly, and in middle school as Parent 4 said, there's some use of computer. So at first it seemed like a good thing, and I'm sure it is a good thing, it's just, like I said, it's just become overwhelming use of technology because they sit in front of it all day. And another thing, this use of YouTube, because I understand teachers post some things that you can look up on YouTube, so you can't block YouTube because it'll be used as a tool for one of those classes they have.

Parent 1:

But YouTube is just this bottomless hole of... I can't even begin, it's just so bad. And transition from looking at your Google classroom or your Google meet and here's YouTube, it's just so easy. And we were not always there, we still have jobs and other things to do, can't just sit on top of them. So this accessibility of technology that has this type of content, like YouTube, that's not beneficial for kids, that's been problematic, to say the least.

Moderator 1:

Thanks Parent 1, so I saw a few of you agreeing with Parent 1 on some of those points. Anyone else have anything to add about-

Parent 5:

I can go.

Moderator 1:

Yeah, thanks Parent 5.

Parent 5:

So for us, we only had a desktop and a laptop, which was more than sufficient pre-pandemic. And then everybody needed a device, all of a sudden everybody needed a device Needed to be on at basically the same times so we got one device from school, we bought a laptop, we found an old laptop. It was like the gathering of devices. And then teaching... My nine-year-old, teaching him how to use it, he really hadn't used computers in that way. And so teaching him how to use it. My middle son is prone to migraines and so being on the screen caused migraines and so that caused some aversion because he didn't want to be on.

Parent 5:

The schedules were kind of crazy, like all over the place. And the truth is that it's hard because my 17-year-old, who knew how to do all these things just kind of stayed in his room for months. And it was just... I feel bad saying it, but he was kind of left to his own devices. He wasn't a big social media guy, he has no social media still, but when the only way to communicate with his peers became to use... What is it? Discord, and all these other things, that became the only way to communicate with people. And then it almost, I feel like... Like Parent 1 said, it's like this black hole that sucks you in.

Parent 5:

And then there was also no schedule. Because we have some special needs in our family, my schedule is really tight with my kids and so the little guys we go to bed at 8:30 and then 9:00 and then the older one was in bed by 10:00 and there was a lot of structure, and literally it was like a bomb hit it. People were going to bed at 1:00 in the morning, it was just totally... It felt chaotic and out of control, and it felt like the technology sputtered for a little bit as we gt devices figured out how to get everybody on and then it was this black hole that sucked you in. And then everybody was on for hours and hours and hours and hours and hours, and it felt out of control.

Moderator 1:

Yeah, so it sounds like it really messed with... There was probably a lot of factors that mess with the structure, but the technology really contributed to that. [00:29:36], Parent 4, Parent 2?

Parent 3:

Sure, when lock down happened my then first grader, the school did a great job pivoting to remote quite quickly. They used seesaw as a platform. I did get two laptops from the DOE because we have a lot of tech but it's all very old and kind of fragile and I'm like, they're going to wreck it all. Nothings insured. We're self-employed and I could just see the whole business being wiped out so we did take a DOE iPads which was a lifesaver. But also, again, we got to one point where the computer teacher did that YouTube... We were not on the YouTube and she sent one link and they figured out, "Oh, I can get to YouTube from this link."

Parent 3:

And then it was like a bomb went off, they figured it out, they figured out workarounds and it was like Pandora's box. I was trying to figure out how to block... I was on the phone with the DOE, I was on the phone with a parent coordinator, I was calling the principal, like, "How can I block YouTube without..." I was putting timer things, it was driving me crazy, and it was downhill from there. I finally figured out my son, by banging on it so much he's actually broken the screen so whatever controls I put in, he could bang on it and it would just do whatever he wanted. A month later I exchange the iPad but I nearly ripped my own hair out over this YouTube. Yeah, the addiction sunk in over those first five months of lockdown of screens and YouTube and just that misery sucking.

Moderator 1:

Parent 4, what is your experience been like with using technology for education?

Parent 4:

Like I said, both my kids are on it all day. They're fully remote, both of them. Neither one of them has a full schedule so I hear my son... Because my desk is right next to his room, and I'm hearing him at like 10:00 in the morning, profanities on a game with his friend. And I'm like, I don't understand, it's a school day. Well, they don't have school, it's in between a break. So it's definitely made our day... Especially since I'm working right next to him, very difficult to try and do my job and be next to him. But it's their lives, they're in their rooms, if it's not school then it's playing games. My son plays a lot of games with his friends, my daughter doesn't but then she'll be on the YouTube also a lot, TickTock, whatever, and I kind of don't see them a lot during the day. Thankfully they do okay so I don't ask... I used to be a more involved and now I'm not really involved. Now it's a free for all.

Moderator 1:

It's interesting, now that they're home that you feel less involved than before.

Parent 4:

Yeah, I don't feel like there's even much to be involved. They don't have much, especially my middle Schooler, has nothing to do so there isn't even much for me to ask him.

Moderator 2:

Do any of you think that you'll have challenges with your children returning to school full-time?

Parent 4:

Absolutely. If you want, I can finish that. Actually I'm having problems now because my sons school said... We requested, they didn't say it, but depending on the size of the class you might be able to go in one more day. You can only go one day a week now. And I was able to get him in two days. And the fit that I got, screaming at me for five days until that day came, it was horrible. About how [inaudible 00:33:53] the worst, making him go in for two days instead of just one, so I can only imagine what's going to happen next year.

Parent 2:

I'm sorry. My sons, they actually go to school five days out of the week. Initially we were blended and I had the same issues, the same issues with just constantly on YouTube, and constantly playing Roblox. When they were supposed to do their work I would go in and I would see them clicking out of the YouTube window. We received two laptops from the DOE as well, but before it was kind of limited because we had a desktop and we had a laptop. So before they had to take turns going on the computer if they were allowed to. They went on the computer but it was mainly on the weekends because they did play Roblox but not as often.

Parent 2:

But after everything shut down I didn't have much entertainment to do besides television or talking with your friends or Roblox or Discord or whatever. Yeah, it just consumed a lot of their time. My daughter, who is three, I couldn't send her to the babysitter anymore, so she was home with me while I was working from home so I would have to force her to look at YouTube too, or watch the television. So I kind of really felt bad because I had to do that so I try to always turn on something educational, like Sesame Street. But then she started telling me what she wanted to watch after a while, Nick Jr. or Netflix, so that became a problem.

Parent 2:

But even after my son started going back to school five days out of the week it still became a problem, technology, because right after they do their homework they will go on YouTube or they go on Roblox or something. I don't know what they're doing in the back. I have to tell them to go in the back because when they come home from school I still have to work so it still became a problem even though they're back in school five days out of the week. So yeah, and they still have some assignments on the computer, like homework assignments on the computer. Yeah, even if they go back to school I feel like it still would be a problem if you're having issues now with them remotely. So yeah, that's my experience.

Moderator 1:

Thanks Parent 2, so yeah I'd like to hear from other people what challenges you anticipate for returning to school.

Parent 5:

For me, the months that I tried to work from home with my three kids was nearly impossible, like I'm sure many other people. So out of desperation, in September we decided to put my middle schooler in a private school, so he has been going five days a week with some interruptions when they close school, but there hasn't been that many. Today, I guess I got word from the elementary school that they're moving to a five day week model, I guess in two weeks. But my son has been going for two days a week since October with the school closings and stuff. But he is happy to go. He's looking forward to go. And my high schooler has also been going blended, it's interesting because sometimes...

Parent 5:

Yes, I am. This is exactly what happened all throughout the pandemic.

Moderator 1:

Exhibit A.

Parent 5:

And my high schooler, I think it's interesting because even if he's the only one, which has happened several times, he goes when he supposed to go. I was like, "You're going to keep going?" And he's like, "Yeah, I'm going to go." And I'm like, "Okay." So I personally don't anticipate any issues. He's graduating, I think that's also part of it, because I think they missed out on their whole senior year and everything that they were looking forward to so just being able to go and see teachers and stuff like that, he I think wants that connection with people. So when he supposed to go, which is kind of like one day a week, maybe sometimes two days a week, they have this weird schedule that I still can't figure out, he's been going, he goes. So with my kids, they have bought into going back to school.

Moderator 1:

Anything else anyone is anticipating about the transition back to going in person?

Parent 4:

I could go next.

Moderator 1:

Go ahead.

Parent 4:

My son has been on a 2-3 day week model since January. Before that it was 1-2 days a week I think. But between all the quarantines and the school closures because of those two case rules that they had we were in quarantine all the time until... Hopefully going forward it will be better, but we were in school barely, mostly all remote because of all that. But we've gone a few times for sure. My son, he's on the spectrum so he has all these social/emotional issues that usually prevent him from being able to get along with children. All prior to the school year... We did start a new school this year, so in September we went to a new school that we've attended this year, which was a group of 7-8 kids, when he was in person because of the cohorts. So maybe that has to do with an overall positive experience for him on the days that he did go in person, compared to the prior years when he was one of 32 with all these issues that he had that we didn't even address until this year.

Parent 4:

And as a matter fact we just actually got placed in the NES program so hopefully next year he will... Even though it was a difficult decision to make because we just started a new school this year, new school next year, but I understand it would benefit him and sort of tailored to the exact issues that he has. But in terms of him going back in person, it has been an overall positive experience, he is not protesting or anything. He was able to even make some friends even though they're social distancing with masks on and everything. So I was surprised and happy about that.

Parent 4:

Hopefully that will continue, but again, he will go to this program in September, he'll be in a smaller class size. Because I think the 32 kids that we've always had was overwhelming for him and he couldn't get along with anyone and it was just daily calls from school and nobody really ever addressed the issues that he had. It was always just like, he's that kid, type of thing. All the tears that were cried by me. So yeah, so I think... He actually even said the other day, "Oh yes, I'm going..." Because I remind him advance to prepare him that tomorrow is in person. He said, "Oh yeah, I'll have something else to do than to play Roblox.

Moderator 1:

Exactly. Yeah, it sounds like the transition back may be different because he's going to be in a different setting that's hopefully more geared towards him.

Parent 4:

Exactly. So I think this is actually one of the silver linings for me with the pandemic, is kids that have issues, sort of like some of our children, when there's a big class size and one teacher and all that, they may not have a good experience I may not want to go back there. But so far, in our case, I think due to the smaller class size, due to having a little more, I guess, personal attention from the teacher who is able to expand herself for the seven kids, it was overall good. It was actually better than the years before.

Moderator 1:

Interesting. So I'm just going to move on to a different question before we focus more on gaming. So as we're going back to school I'm just curious to hear from people, are there any aspects of the changes in the use of technology that you would like to see continue as we go back? Any positive parts you would like to see continue, or are there parts that you're really hoping would end as we go back?

Parent 4:

Sorry, I was...

Moderator 1:

Yeah, Parent 3, and then Parent 4, yeah.

Parent 3:

The Google Classrooms, since my daughter has very little executive functioning, she has social anxiety and ADHD, just being able to use the chat function since she'll never raise her hand and she'll never ask for help. Using Google Classroom to directly reach out to the teacher and use the chat function has been fantastic. And then when she goes in blended she has more direct contact with the teacher. She goes in twice or three times a week with her cohort. So I like the Google Classroom set up for her as a sixth grader. Also, the smaller cohorts have been great. It's going to be, just to answer the other question, odd when it goes back to 32 kids. But I love that she can send a quick message, she gets a quick response back, and so that communication has really helped her a lot as an introvert and having those issues.

Moderator 1:

Yeah, that's an interesting point. So, that's something that would be a nice aspect to continue because it seems like it's drawn her out of her shell. Parent 4, did you want to say something you'd like to see continue or end?

Parent 4:

Yeah, same thing with Google Classroom. It's probably recent, in the past month or two maybe, that we get a daily update at the end of the day for my middle schooler. I at least see what he's doing, which is probably more than what I ever got from him or the school, definitely from the school, before. So, that's nice to at least get a daily rundown of... It might only be a sentence or two each, but it's at least Something. So, that's nice. And I also like that they do get immediate responses basically from teachers if they have questions on homework or questions... Whatever it might be, but everyone is pretty receptive to responding in a quick time period.

Moderator 1:

Okay.

Parent 1:

I can just-

Moderator 1:

Yeah.

Parent 1:

So my son, Google Classroom, it was not a good experience because he would not put his camera on, he would just hide behind his camera. He would not participate. He did not reach out in the G chat message or whatever. So that part has not been working out for us very well. However, someone had an idea that I overheard, and so I found a tutor, just another teacher from another school who does tutoring. And so the ability to have tutoring at your fingertips without having to commute or travel, or go and wait and sit there in the car has been... And not just that, but the ability to one on one connects like this.

Parent 1:

So the one teacher, who is... and not in a very formal way like his teacher, in a less formal way. So that's been amazing. So the feedback that I get from his two tutors that he has... And we haven't been doing it for a long time, maybe a month or so, maybe over a month, has been been great. Overall very positive. So I'm very happy because he did need help in ELA and math and was complete lack of participation in his Google Classroom. I didn't even know what he knew and what he learned any more this past year. So the one on one ability without having to go anywhere, get dressed, drive, so that was a great deal and I hope that will stay. And I hope it will stay because, why not? There's a demand and there's a supply, I think that would be one good takeaway, some remote learning options.

Moderator 1:

Yeah, that's great. Parent 2, anything to add before we move into the next portion?

Parent 2:

The only thing I probably would miss about using technology is the communication with the schools and the teachers. It was easier to communicate–

Moderator 1:

You feel like that's improved?

Parent 2:

Yes, having direct contact with the teachers and the schools ,instead of the school sending a bunch of print outs with the children in folders, that became overwhelming, all the paper. The teachers, they were able to reach out to me immediately. I mean, not that they weren't doing that before, but I think it became easier to do because it just became that platform that everyone was using. I believe my school, they use Class Dojo as a way to communicate. I think the platform that they used for the students in the school work was iLearn and I didn't really like it so I'm kind of glad...

Parent 2:

I mean, now that they're going to school five days a week they don't need to use that. I think only the children who are remote use it, but I didn't really like it, it wasn't intuitive and I wasn't able to view the assignments, both of their assignments to make sure that they did it. And then some things they were able to do online, but somethings they had to print out, so it was kind of all over the place. So yeah, the only thing I would appreciate that they continue doing is using it as a way to communicate with the parents, that's all.

Moderator 1:

Okay, and Parent 5, we'll definitely add your comment to our notes, thank you. Okay, let's, for the last 10 or 15 minutes, just move into talking a little bit about gaming specifically. I'd like to hear from you guys, what was your child's gaming use before the pandemic, did you see it as beneficial? Did you have concerns before? And then, how has that gaming use changed since the pandemic started, any benefits? Do you have concerns or problems? So I open it up to whoever wants to start.

Parent 4:

I can go.

Moderator 1:

Thanks, Parent 4.

Parent 4:

My daughter never did gaming before. I mean, years ago she did Minecraft, but not anything recently. She does other stuff online and is on there a lot, but as far as gaming, no. My son, the only positive thing I guess about it is we don't fight about it as much. I used to have to... It's not necessarily positive, it's kind of contradictory, but I don't even tell him to get off anymore. It used to be a fight because I used to have to tell him to get off, now we don't... So the fighting has actually gone down. The flip side of that is he's just on so much more. The language has got worse on the game and I'm constantly having to stop it. But he also has gotten a little closer with some of his friends that he can't see anymore because they're online talking. And the moms and I will say, "Did you hear they did this," if there's a problem. I mean, he's definitely playing more, but he played a lot beforehand too, not like this.

Moderator 1:

Right, but it's an interesting point you made about it not being a point of contention anymore because you're just-

Parent 4:

It was at the beginning. At the beginning of all of this, it was. Then after I realized that there's nothing else for him to do... I mean, at one point he had a broken ankle so he couldn't even play his sports, even take a walk. Then I'm like, what am I going to... Unless I'm prepared to sit there and entertain him or teach him myself, which I can't when I'm working, I have no choice.

Moderator 1:

Yeah.

Parent 1:

I can go next.

Moderator 1:

Yeah.

Parent 1:

As I mentioned, we did not play a lot, certainly some of these video that involve multiplayer or whatever, when they have to chat with each other and they can do it together. We didn't have any exposure to that. I can't again, he was seven years old, he's eight now, so maybe it was just a little early. But this year it just blossomed, if it's the right word, he's playing a lot. I think some of it, again, may be my fault because it's a good babysitter. If you're trying to get through your work, we all have jobs, demanding jobs, it's easier to... instead of just standing there trying to control his gaming, you're just, "Okay, he's busy and I'm going to get my work done." So I think it lasted for a while and I think I just kind of gave into that convenience. Just because it truly... I also had to get my job done. Do you know?

Moderator 1:

Yeah.

Parent 1:

So I think I gave into that and I just kind of let it go until I realized it's 12:00 and just out of control, so I decided to regain some control successfully. I was able to separate his computer from gaming computer. So that works out, so far so good. I limited it, so he plays a little bit less. But in terms of positive, I also would echo what Parent 4 said, that he was able to connect a little bit more with his friends. And again, as I mentioned, he does have issues with social life, he has trouble making friends and doesn't use appropriate language with friends so sometimes they don't want to be friends with him, those type of things. While they play all these video games and they're pursuing the same goal, whatever that goal is in a game, and he was able to connect with them and speak to them, something we may not even have had, had we not been sitting at home without being able to [inaudible 00:53:56].

Moderator 1:

It sounds like it's going through different waves for you sort of.

Parent 1:

Yes.

Moderator 1:

Yeah. Anyone else?

Parent 2:

Well, for me the gaming, I was able to control it a little more before the pandemic, but now I noticed that it's starting getting out of control. Once I noticed that they were sneaking to go on Roblox and YouTube instead of doing their work. And then once I seen that it was... I would say it was just affecting their attention and they weren't focused so when I would punish them and say, "Well, now you can't go on Roblox," they would get really upset, they would cry. It was like it was the end of the world for them. I think at one point I changed their password so they can't logon unless I log on for them.

Parent 2:

But they learned that if they never log off, if they were to just leave it, they can just open the page back up. So I didn't realize that that was happening. I'm like, "Wait, how are you on Roblox? Oh, you never logged off." So on Sunday evenings I have to make sure I've logged them off. Because I would let them play after they did their work, but they weren't really doing that great in school so then I just said no more Roblox during the week. Yeah, so I try to control it but it's still hard because then they still have YouTube that they watch and it's just...

Parent 2:

But I guess one positive outcome is the fact that they were communicating with their friends, with their cousin who lives far away, or whatever. They have a better social life. Because before they wouldn't talk to anybody but now they communicate, they keep in touch. But now it's just regaining the control back and getting them to understand that there's a time and place for everything and you shouldn't allow these things to consume your time. It's frustrating for me after a while. I'm like, "Wait, you guys have been on the computer all day. No. You guys, no, it's time to give this a break." Then they'll get upset and it's an argument. So yeah, that's it for me.

Moderator 1:

Okay. Okay, thank you Parent 2. Yeah, Parent 5?

Parent 5:

I can say that initially with my high schooler I felt like he got almost depressed. He was a very good academic student, he had some social issues but academically he was doing very well, a 90-something average. And he started failing all his classes. He wasn't attending, he wasn't going, he was in bed all day. I would talk to him and I was the one that said, "Well, why don't you try maybe connecting with your friends?" Because he didn't have social media so I was like, "Why don't you try connecting with your friends? Maybe play a game with them or send them a message and see how they're doing." That helped, to connect, but then the connection is all now on this...

Parent 5:

I don't even know, he plays Minecraft I think. Then it was like two hours, and four hours, and six hours, and eight hours, and 10 hours, and 12 hours, 14 hours, or 16 hours. It was crazy. And so much so, I took the boys to Florida, we drove to Florida over the summer to see my brother and even at my brother's house, his cousins were here there and he had the pool and stuff like that and he would spend 10 hours, 12 hours, 14 hours a day stuck in a room. And he would get upset if I would say, "No, we're going to go out. We're going to take a walk. Or let's go swimming." It just became... And still it's very hard to get a handle on it at 17. It's very, very hard, I feel, to get a handle on it. I'm like, "You need to go to bed." Even last night, it was 1:00 in the morning and I go, "You're going to go to school tomorrow, you should go to bed."

Parent 5:

And it's like, am I going to rip his laptop out of his room and we're going to fight? I don't want to do that, I tried to do that a couple of times and it just wasn't worth it to me. I just say to him, "Look, you are becoming a young adult. You're going to have to make decisions for yourself. This isn't life, you can't game for 16 hours a day." So with my younger ones it also feels out of control, but it feels the most out of control with my 17-year-old because he's like six feet tall, he has–

Moderator 1:

Right, and I can imagine it's harder to regulate it with him and to have-

Parent 5:

Yeah, when he was younger I used to look at his phone and monitor and all this kind of stuff but now it's very hard to know the line and it's very hard to... He had social issues very similar to what Parent 1 was talking about. And now he has these friends, these online friends. He's never had a crew and now he has this crew and they all want to play with him and, "Matthew, are you coming on?" So yeah, it's–

Moderator 1:

Okay, all right, thank you Parent 5. We're coming to the end, we have a few minutes left, Parent 3 I'd like to hear your experiences, both before and during with gaming, benefits, concerns. And then we'll probably end.

Parent 3:

Okay, with gaming, very similar to everybody here. It was a little bit of a problem the summer before. We go up north, up to Maine where my mom grew up, and if you turn on the TV the first two channels are French. So I said, "Sorry, the TV speaks French." And that's it, it's never gone further than that. So I've managed up to this point to keep them off. We've got an old VCR that plays movies. I've been able to keep them off tablets for all this time. And now, with the pandemic, I had a concussion last year and it was like, all bets are off. They were just on devices and they were using the phone, they were FaceTime-ing their friends on the devices.

Parent 3:

And now we're at the point where my son says all the friends have moved away, we're in downtown Manhattan and all the friends have left so my son says, "I have no friends." Calls up a friend and then he'll be on for three hours, or four, five, or six, seven. My daughter has made an alternative account, I just found out, and she's trolling on Roblox. She's 11, [inaudible 01:01:54], people who are dating, and she will troll them. So that's something to be proud of for me. It's just a nightmare. So now I'm looking at software that I can block the whole thing down. I've put a padlock on where our desktop computer is, on the door, and she'll hide the lock. I'm like, "Where is the padlock?" And I've thrown all the devices in, or I'll rip the router out of the wall. I mean, it's gotten very ugly and I scream an awful lot. So yeah, it's not pretty.

Moderator 1:

Yeah, so I'm hearing very similar themes from everyone about the challenges, especially with gaming. So that really brings us to the end, so thank you so much for taking out some time to really give us some details of your experiences. This is really helpful for our research. Administrator, are you available to come on for a minute, just to say hi and to talk about next steps?

Administrator:

Hi everyone, so just like Moderator 1 reiterated so much for taking the time out to participate in our focus group today. The information that you guys gave us is really helpful in what we're trying to just [crosstalk 01:03:28]-

Parent 4:

I can't hear you.

Administrator:

... the pandemic so we really appreciate that. If you're not compensated by end of day tomorrow, you should get it by Friday. So the latest will be Friday and it will come through email. If you have any questions or concerns you can just email me back at any of the multiple emails that I've sent you guys. Or you can give me a call at my number, it's at the bottom of those multiple emails that I sent you guys as well.

Moderator 1:

Okay, so I guess we're done.

Parent 1:

Thank you. Thanks everyone.

Moderator 2:

Thank you.

Parent 3:

Thank you.

Moderator 1:

Thank you have a good afternoon everyone. Bye.

Parent 2:

Bye.

Moderator 1:

Hey, Moderator 2.

Moderator 2:

Hey.

Moderator 1:

[inaudible 01:04:22]. So, yeah, there's always going to be the talkers.

Moderator 2:

[inaudible 01:04:26] the bell.

Moderator 1:

Your comment about Parent 5 was great. I could see... So, what do you think of dividing and conquering the rest, because I can't sit and listen to this for three hours in a row-

Moderator 2:

Three hours a day. [crosstalk 01:04:48].

Moderator 1:

As much fun as it is to hear people go on endlessly and not answer our questions. So would you be game for just splitting them up or-

Moderator 2:

Yeah.

Moderator 1:

At the beginning of the day and figure out which ones–

Moderator 2:

Yeah, why don't we just touch base each day and see what we have.

Moderator 1:

Okay.

Moderator 2:

Like tomorrow, we have a 2:00 and 3:30 again.

Moderator 1:

I'm good to do either of those, whichever one works.

Moderator 2:

I think tomorrow I'll do the 2:00.

Moderator 1:

Okay.

Moderator 2:

And then Monday... We'll just figure it out every day.

Moderator 1:

Okay, yeah, sounds good.

Moderator 2:

[inaudible 01:05:34].

Moderator 1:

Yeah, oh my God. Oh wait, how was Arizona?

Moderator 2:

It was great, it was really a lot of fun.

Moderator 1:

Okay, good. Did your sister have a good time? Was it like-

Moderator 2:

We did, we had a great time. It's totally weird because there are zero COVID rules there.

Moderator 1:

Really? That is weird.

Moderator 2:

They've reopened as though nothing is wrong.

Moderator 1:

It's like the opposite of California, I can see why it made sense to go there.

Moderator 2:

It's weird too... We stayed at a hotel... We drove up to the Grand Canyon one day–

Moderator 1:

Oh, I was going to ask you if you ended up going up because I know... Yeah.

Moderator 2:

And then one day we stayed in central Phoenix. There was a bar just down the street from our hotel, and we went, and it was packed, and there was a dance floor, and no one had masks. We open the door and we're like, oh, I thought it was going to be like in New York where do you have to sit at a table with just the three of us and a mask on. I was like, what is happening in here, you're all going to die of COVID.

Moderator 1:

But if you're on vacation, I'd rather do vacation that way and have the option to be free a little bit.

Moderator 2:

It was just funny to see, it felt very funny to see. You know?

Moderator 1:

Yeah. It's shocking to your system kind of.

Moderator 2:

Yeah, we've all gotten so used to one way, seeing it you're like, "What is happening here"?

Moderator 1:

Okay, well I'm glad it was nice and you guys were actually able to go away with her that's really-

Moderator 2:

[crosstalk 01:07:07] She was very happy we came.

Moderator 1:

Good.

Moderator 2:

The flights were fine, they were packed though.

Moderator 1:

Right. They're not doing anything to-

Moderator 2:

There wasn't one empty seat on either-

Moderator 1:

Wow. I guess people are back to flying.

Moderator 2:

They really are.

Moderator 1:

[crosstalk 01:07:24]. Oh, I am very into Good Girls also. I just came onto it a month ago and brought myself fully up to speed and I am–

Moderator 2:

I know, and now I have to wait for each episode to come out.

Moderator 1:

I know, I know. I watched it all so quickly, I should've spaced it out.

Moderator 2:

I love Christina Hendricks.

Moderator 1:

Oh my God, she's awesome. I love the younger sister.

Moderator 2:

Oh Ann Veal?

Moderator 1:

From Arrested Development, God, [crosstalk 01:07:51].

Moderator 2:

Who?

Moderator 1:

Egg, egg, right.

Moderator 2:

[crosstalk 01:07:58] That was the most disgusting... My kids happen to have seen that episode with me, Cara is always joking that she's going to eat an egg and squirt bits of mayonnaise in her mouth. That's why he calls her egg.

Moderator 1:

Right.

Moderator 2:

It makes me die of laughter every time someone says that.

Moderator 1:

Oh my God, yeah. But she's like a whole different character on this, yeah.

Moderator 2:

Totally different.

Moderator 1:

I know, but awesome also.

Moderator 2:

Yeah, I just want to know what happens.

Moderator 1:

I know, I know. I don't know if they'll have another season after this. I feel like–

Moderator 2:

[crosstalk 01:08:34].

Moderator 1:

I could watch them do anything, they're all great. [crosstalk 01:08:39] Parks and Rec person, because this is also Donna from Parks and Rec, who I loved.

Moderator 2:

[inaudible 01:08:44].

Moderator 1:

She was an amazing character on Parks and Rec, the black one.

Moderator 2:

Oh, Retta?

Moderator 1:

Yeah, they're all great. All right Moderator 2-

Moderator 2:

All right.

Moderator 1:

Talk to you tomorrow.

Moderator 2:

Have a good one. Bye.

Moderator 1:

Welcome back.