



The Covid Pivot: Impact Of Remote Learning On Child Development

By Connie Izquierdo

The first week of March, students of the Northshore, had a lot on their minds. Midterms, papers and projects. Travel plans with their families for spring break within weeks. Perhaps even anticipation for the home stretch of the semester, commencement and ah yes, summer.

They were busy going about their usual lives in the usual way.

They didn't anticipate that having lunch with their classmates would be the last time they would be sitting chatting with them. Or that it would be the last time they would be running around on the playground with their best friend. Or that they would be painting on canvas in Art class for the last time.

They were busy students at this point in the school year. Many had heard that there was a novel virus making its way around the world. But none could have anticipated the impact it would have academically, emotionally or socially.

On Friday, March 13, Governor J.B. Pritzker announced a state of emergency as had the president of the United States. Northshore school districts announced the suspension of in-person classes temporarily for a two week period.

As information spread around the globe about the new virus, COVID-19, school administrators acted swiftly to keep students, faculty and staff safe.

Some teachers had little or no experience teaching on-line and worked hard to understand the technologies available to them and how to best use them. Teachers quickly adapted to new technologies and pedagogies, rethinking courses, lessons, and requirements. But trying to figure out how to create the kind of community where students engage in active learning poses a challenge when you're not face-to-face.

As K-12 public schools in the US have transitioned to remote learning amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, students were coping with the devastated impacts of the Coronavirus on families, schools, and communities. It is only natural, district leaders have concluded that such a massive disruption to student's daily routines will take a toll on their academic learning.¹ Whenever schools return, researchers say the likely result is a generation of students forced to play catch-up, perhaps for years to come. Most vulnerable are those who are always the most vulnerable: homeless children, those living in deep poverty and students with disabilities.³

While some students adapted to distance learning, others struggled to find quiet spaces to study, lacked a consistent routine or daily schedule, lacked reliable Internet access or cared for younger siblings during the day while their parents work from home.¹

Learning has been stunted and administrators and teachers alike are planning steps to help children catch up.

"Most kids overall didn't benefit as much from the on-line learning. Those academic skills didn't stick with them. We see kids in the hallways, in the classroom and at lunch and we as teachers are consistently providing non-verbal cues to them in order to further their learning. This cannot be duplicated over Zoom," said Ms. Torf, Speech and Language Pathologist at Cove School in Northbrook.

"I have a problem with my attention and found myself looking down at my phone every few minutes while I was on Zoom. I had an even harder time with remote learning due to the multiple distractions like other kids playing on their phones, walking around during the lesson or laying in their beds," said Lauren Ashley, Sophomore at Delaware Technical College.

New research shows 95% of teens have access to a smartphone; 45% are on-line 'almost constantly'.² Children diagnosed with Attention Deficit Disorder and Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder or other learning disabilities have even a greater challenge with remote learning. As we live in these uncertain times, the impact of remote learning amongst children is profound. We are all holding our breath that our kids will be back in the classroom this fall.

Ms. Izquierdo holds a Masters Degree in Speech & Language Pathology from St. Louis University. She is an educational consultant for both public and private schools on Chicago's Northshore. In addition, she has a private practice in downtown Wilmette servicing children ages birth -18 years of age as well as adults. For more information contact Ms. Izquierdo at admin@interactivesspeechassociates.com

References: 1. The Washington Post, April 13, 2020: Millions of public school students will suffer from school closures, education leaders have concluded 2. The GeekWire, June 1, 2018: New Research 95% of teens have access to a smartphone; 45% on-line constantly 3. The Washington Post, March 20, 2020: For parents trying to replicate school for children with disabilities a confounding task



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