

Article

The Challenges of Parents and Teachers on Virtual Instruction to Preschoolers with Special Educational Needs

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Abstract: This study examines the experiences and challenges faced by parents and teachers of children with special needs during the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly in the context of remote learning. The research highlights the significance of resource management for families, including financial stability and access to technology, as well as the impact of these factors on the ability to support children's education. Parents found themselves in dual roles, balancing work and caregiving responsibilities, while teachers had to quickly adapt to virtual instruction, often with limited training and resources. Collaboration between parents and teachers emerged as a critical element in supporting students with special needs during remote learning, with communication and flexible approaches playing a key role in bridging the gap between home and school. Despite the challenges, the study reveals the resilience and determination of both parents and teachers in navigating the unique demands of remote education during a global crisis.

Keywords: Covid-19 pandemic, remote learning, parents' experiences, virtual instruction

Introduction

The prevailing consensus is that providing education to children, especially those with special needs, through face-to-face instruction within a structured classroom setting is highly beneficial in facilitating knowledge acquisition (Maroukakis et al., 2023). For instance, the inclusion of both teachers and peers inside a physical classroom environment facilitates individualized interactions, prompt feedback, and socialization, all of which play a vital role in fostering the comprehensive growth of students (Farmer et al., 2019; Bolourian et al., 2021). However, the global COVID-19 epidemic has demonstrated that unplanned events have the potential to greatly disrupt the



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uninterrupted flow of conventional classroom-based teaching (Sangster et al., 2020). In exceptional circumstances, it is imperative for the educational environment to undergo necessary adjustments in order to facilitate uninterrupted learning (Reimeers & Schleicher, 2020). The process of adaptation frequently entails a shift towards virtual or online learning, wherein technology serves as the intermediary between educators and learners, giving rise to a distinct array of difficulties and possibilities (Bandyopadhyay et al., 2021). Although traditional face to face instruction is widely regarded as the most effective method of education, the ongoing pandemic has highlighted the importance of adaptable, robust, and inventive teaching and learning strategies.

Moreover, the COVID-19 pandemic had a profound impact on K-12 education, forcing many institutions to shift to virtual or online learning starting in the 2019-2020 academic year (Awad, 2022). The rapid spread of the infectious virus led to worldwide disruptions in people's lives, including education and this resulted in the necessity to transition from traditional classrooms to remote teaching or virtual instruction (Mahaye, 2022). Teachers, students, including those with disabilities, and parents had to adapt to this new educational landscape. In addition, virtual instruction became the primary mode of teaching during the global lockdown (Bozkurt et al., 2020). Teachers underwent training to use various technology platforms and applications to meet the demands of e-learning across all grade levels (Mathew et al., 2019). This technological proficiency was crucial for effective teaching. However, some parents faced challenges in adapting to the use of gadgets and technology, which affected their ability to support their children's online learning (Bazimaziki, 2020).

In certain urban districts special education teachers faced particular challenges in adjusting to virtual instruction (Ault et al., 2020). Nevertheless, all students, including those with special needs, were provided with the necessary tools and support for virtual learning and this shift has changed the way education is delivered worldwide (Basham et al., 2020). However, the lack of a structured classroom environment at home posed challenges for students, with some attending virtual classes solely for attendance purposes (Gares et al., 2020). Many parents struggled to provide adequate support for their children's online learning, especially when they were also working from home or were primary caregivers. Additionally, a significant number of young people lacked access to the necessary computers and internet connectivity for remote learning (Rahiem, 2020).

Various stakeholders faced diverse experiences and challenges during virtual instruction, including technical issues, platform usage, time-consuming lesson preparations, and difficulties in guiding parents through the process (Shraim & Crompton, 2020). Educators found technical difficulties to be a persistent challenge, along with issues related to parent frustration, attendance, and malfunctioning

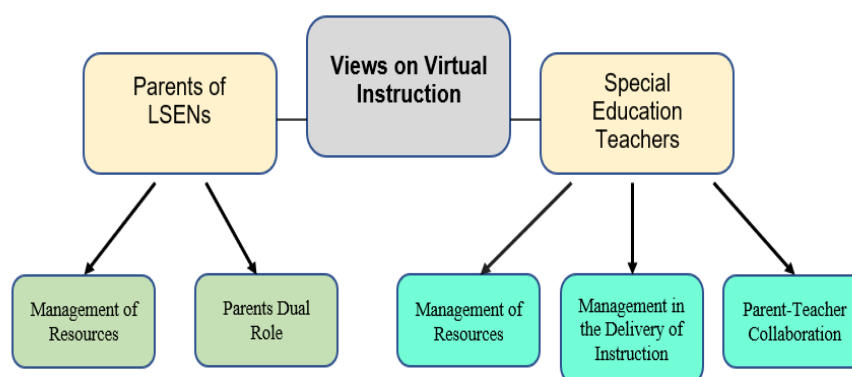
devices (Aboud, 2021). Moreover, collaboration through virtual meetings and phone discussions after school hours proved beneficial in achieving curriculum goals and educators shared strategies, online resources, and materials to support students with special needs (Muller et al., 2021).

Support service providers played a crucial role in delivering services through virtual sessions, addressing students' goals and objectives. Speech pathologists and occupational therapists participated in virtual classes to provide speech and fine motor activities. These providers collaborated with special education and general education teachers, as well as parents, to develop activities that could be implemented at home. Parents were also given the option to pick up pre-cut communication symbols and other materials from the school for home use. In light of these circumstances, this study aimed to explore the challenges faced by parents and teachers during virtual instruction for students with special needs. The hope is that the findings will help address the encountered problems and improve the implementation of virtual instruction, not only during pandemics but also in emergency situations like COVID-19.

Methodology

This study used the phenomenological approach. It focused on studying phenomena that have a great impact on individuals' experiences. The information gathered in this approach was through discussions, conversations, interviews with open-ended questions, participants' observation, and representing it from the perspective of research participants (Elsie, 2022). Qualitative research that focuses on people's individual life experiences and how they've affected them is known as phenomenological research. This kind of research pinpoints a particular phenomenon in a person's life and the way that person sees the circumstance. It can also be used to examine patterns in how a group of people behaves. The foundation of empirical research is philosophy, education, and psychology.

Results and Discussion



Parents' Views

Theme 1: Management of Resources

Life checking during the pandemic was a factor considered during the pandemic to make sure that the family had the things that they needed in order to survive the pandemic and at the same time not to compromise the learnings their children should get during that time. Although many people found the lockdown difficult, there were some parents who were able to make it through. The wellbeing of the family's breadwinner was a crucial issue to consider. Two of the parents stated that:

Financially, not bad, because I have a stable job. When it comes to the education of my son, it is hard if my son has questions about certain topics. I need to excuse myself from my own online class to assist my son's educational needs. P1

I am a government employee and I worked from home so it was not really a problem for me. I was able to adjust to the needs of my son, who has autism. P6

At first, parents were eager to help their children, after realizing what lies ahead in the family when it comes to financial aspects, things had changed. Parents were immersed in the situation that they became the teacher of their children, and being a teacher is not an easy job. They encountered problems with virtual instructions on how to mirror the activities instructed by the teacher to do at home, considering that the students with special needs needed a lot of assistance to be able to access the virtual instruction and the added platforms used on a daily basis.

Life was hard because I started working but I have kids that I needed to assist. Before I just sent my child to school when they came back in the afternoon, everything was okay. Problem with technology and internet connection. I have to do a double job. P3

There were parents who got laid off from their jobs and at the same time pressured by the new education system, which was the virtual instruction that took a lot of time from the parents who struggled to earn a living. The parents stated that:

It was not easy, I got laid off from work and I have 2 kids to feed. My boyfriend is working but not enough to support the family. P4

It's challenging financially because I lost my job due to the pandemic our store closed. It's also really tough in the education of my kids. I have three kids who need to assist in their virtual classes. They have a lot of homework that needs to be done. P5

Difficult financially. Money is tight and our jobs are not secure. I had to quit my other job so I can be home with my children during the pandemic/ with online learning. P13

Very difficult. We lost our jobs. We found "survival jobs" with odd hours. We do not have a permanent home during the pandemic. P14

On the other hand, there were parents who were financially stable, but they couldn't deny the fear they faced for their family and for themselves, especially those who worked in the medical field. They also struggled on how to face the challenges of virtual instruction, especially to those families who have kids with severe mental challenges and/ or with multiple disabilities. Parents stated that:

Work and family life are difficult and stressful. You worry about your family getting the virus. You worry about your child not learning enough during online classes. P2

My wife and I worked in the medical field. At first, it was hard due to schedules, but eventually, we were able to fix our schedules. We took turns attending to the needs of our children during virtual instruction. Financially, it was okay, just the fear of getting the virus and spreading it at home. P7

I have a job and my husband as well. We both worked as educational assistants at different schools. Financially, we were okay. Worried about the spreading of the virus. P11

Stressful. We worry about getting sick and we also worry about not getting enough jobs/ money during the pandemic. We worry about where we will leave our kids while we work. P15

For some parents, working from home was beneficial. They were able to balance their work and distance learning. They organized things and have a support system from home. Also, it was easy, especially for those parents who have technical skills. During the pandemic crisis, some people had the chance to spend time with their families. One of the parents stated that:

It wasn't bad. I am a teacher and somehow the Lockdown favored me for having more time spent with my family, especially with my daughter who has autism and Tourette syndrome. I receive my salary every month, and I can assist my children virtually. P10

Technology was the most important tool during virtual instruction. The parents were provided with iPads or Chromebooks so that they could attend the distance learning classes on a daily basis. But the issues arise like technical difficulties for the parents who were not trained to do the job. One of the parents stated that:

At first, it was hard during the pandemic. I needed to work, and my son who has multiple disabilities needed me for virtual instruction. It was chaos. It was a tough conversation with the sped teacher and sped coordinator. I needed to deal with the technology and iPad for virtual instruction, which I was not trained for. P12

The pandemic and lockdown brought chaos, especially to single parents. It didn't work well because of the disabilities of the children. Two single parents stated that:

I am a single mom and I have 2 kids. It was hard for me because I was the only one working. During the pandemic, I did not know what to do to help my daughter with autism, because I needed to go to work. And I have a second job to make ends meet. P8

Being a single mom, I was worried because I thought I would be laid off from my work. But, I didn't and I was given the opportunity to work from home. It was hard even when I was working at home due to the nature of my job dealing with customers. It was non-stop attending to calls. And I have a son who has down syndrome who needed my help during virtual instruction. P9

Many working parents were not able to attend to the needs of their children during virtual instruction. It brought emotional distress to parents who tried to cope up to the needs of their children with special needs. Dividing time between work and as a home teacher was a challenging circumstance that cannot be avoided, choosing work over the educational needs of the children.

Theme 2: Parents' dual role

At the time of the pandemic parents were on top of the educational needs of their children. They made sure that they provide and contribute to the needs of their children. The parents worked to earn for living and at the same time assisted their kids during virtual instruction. The parents stated that:

As a parent, it was my responsibility to support the education of my son, but since I am working at the same time, it was tough. I just stayed online with the camera off. If the teacher calls my son that's the only time I on the camera, and there were times I just ignored when the teacher called my son. We were there for attendance purposes. P9

My other 2 children can do their own virtual activities, they were very independent, so I was paying attention to my daughter's needs. I can leave my class quickly, and assist my daughter and I multi-tasked so that I was always there for my daughter. Then, I talked to my daughter's teacher and asked what extra activities I could have to teach her at home. P10

At the time of the lockdown, parents find it hard to stay beside their children with special needs to be a mother and at the same time to be a teacher considering the nature of their job requiring reports on site.

It was difficult for the parents to manage the education needed by their children. One of the parents stated that:

I tried my best to be there during the school day to assist my child at home while attending the online class. But I cannot stay the whole duration due to work. Another family member stays with my child when I have to leave for work. P3

I was aware that it was my responsibility to help my son, who was unable to participate without help, that part I understood. But I needed to work to earn a living. Though I was working at home, my job demanded my time throughout the day. There were days, that I was able to assist my son but continuously. I needed to switch off the camera so that I could go on with my work. There were days that we were absent from class because I couldn't help it. If my boyfriend was on a day off, he could attend to our son. But honestly, my boyfriend is not very social so, he didn't want to be seen on camera, so he was somewhat hesitant to participate. P12

On the other hand, others find a way to sustain the virtual instruction due to the availability of the parents who worked from home. It was easy to access. There were a few issues that were solved easily. One of the parents stated that:

Since my son has special needs, I prepared two tables one for myself and one for him which I connect side by side so that if my son encounters a problem, I can easily assist him. But the fact that I have my own online class is hard because as I said, I need to excuse myself to pay attention to his needs. P1

Parents who are educators were privileged during virtual instruction since the parent can easily excuse herself from her class and was able to assist her son in the other class. The parent can easily access the other platforms used due to the rapport that she has with the teacher.

Time management was a key factor in order for the parents to be able to assist their children during virtual instruction. Proper scheduling and routines for parents helped to assist their children with the virtual instruction. Parents stated that:

Time management. I need to wake up early and prepare my children for their online classes. But it is still really tough because the 3 of them need assistance during the course. P5

My child has special needs that require a lot of attention. I am a working mom with 2 more kids that I need to feed. I need to divide my time to pay attention to my child who has special needs. I was struggling during that time. My partner was also working. P3

Support from the members of the family worked during the virtual instruction. It benefited the parents when their schedules did not fit

with the school days. Parents statements regarding support getting from the members of the family.

I tried my best to be there during the school day to assist my child at home while attending the online class. But I cannot stay the whole duration due to work. Another family member stays with my child when I have to leave for work. P2

I find it hard to assist my children during virtual instruction because I had other things to do. I asked the help of my mom to help my children, especially the one with special needs. P4

It was hard, especially because the virtual instruction schedule started at 8 am, and I needed to leave at 8 in the morning as well. I asked my sister to look after them when I was out and promised that I would fix my schedule for the afternoon shift. P8

Parent who had no choice but to bring her child to work for no support from home. The English learners struggled a lot trying to understand the instruction or interpreting the notes from the teachers. Other bilingual parents got support from home, but it was challenged due to language barriers. Parents stated that they:

Sometimes I bring my child (with her school device) to work in the laundry shop. Sometimes I drop her off at my relative's house before I go to work. He has a disability and it was hard for me. Nobody will look after him sometimes at home. I cannot assist my child because I have work. It was a struggle, especially since I only speak Spanish. P14

Sometimes I help my child with a disability when I am off from work. Most of the time she is left with her grandma who only speak Spanish. P15

I ask the teacher (thru a family member who translates) for help thru Class Dojo and phone. It was not easy because I am not familiar with online learning and I do not speak good english. I am just lucky that I have another child in the upper grades who can translate for me and help me with Google classroom and zoom. It was not easy because I had to be with my (Kindergarten, who has autism) child most of the time to assist during virtual class. P13

Parents who worked from home made it easy to be a parent and be a teacher at home. They had time and a flexible schedule that made everything easy for them during the pandemic. Here's what the parents stated:

I worked from home, and I was working next to my son during virtual instruction. I was able to assist my son and at the same time, I managed my work. P6

As a father, I make sure that my daughter attended the class daily and on time. I helped her the best I could. I go with the flow. I gave her prompting and redirected her when she was out of her seat. I studied the other platforms that were used. I communicated well with the teacher to be more effective, likewise my wife. P7

It wasn't a big issue since my husband and I took turns to assist our son during virtual instruction. My schedule was on early school and my husband was on late school. We could assist him with his responses by communicating them with the teacher since he is non-verbal. We helped him with his arts and crafts, google classroom assignments, and getting familiar with his picture symbols.

P11

Teachers' views

This portion provides the discussion on the teachers' lives during the pandemic, coping with the abrupt changes in the delivery of the instruction, and preparation and collaboration with the parents. Based on the interview, the following themes emerged: 1) Management of Resources; 2) Management in the delivery of instruction; and 3) Parent-teachers' collaboration.

Theme 1: Management of resources

Teachers' roles during the pandemic were very crucial to learning. The teachers' well-being and experiences are essential in delivering the best education for the students. The knowledge and efforts of the teachers were truly cannot be replaced by technology.

Young & Donovan, (2020) expressed that teachers have discovered that imparting knowledge in a classroom setting and imparting knowledge online are not only something unique but also difficult.

There were teachers who felt that lockdown and virtual instruction was not hard for them since they were earning and at the same time, they spent much time with their family. And since teaching is a stable job, they continuously receive their salary. Some teachers stated that:

No issues financially because I have a stable job. T1

Life was good during the pandemic, I'm still employed. I had a salary and continued teaching online and I got stimulus from the government and food stamps from the government. I saved a lot of money during the pandemic. T2

Life was good, getting paid while working at home. Taking everything slowly. No need for gas money. T3

I had the chance to see my family more frequently. T11

Though it was not bad financially due to stable jobs. The spreading of the virus made the teachers fear for their lives and for their families.

Life wasn't bad. Just scared of the spreading of the virus. T10

It wasn't hard financially, but I was overwhelmed with a lot of things that happened around us during the pandemic. T12

Not easy at all. Personally, I was so stressed because I have to deal with many issues, including fear of getting the virus. At work, there were many ongoing changes that we had to adapt to even without prior training. T14

There was a teacher who was financially stable but unfortunately unhappy with the abrupt transition from in person to virtual instruction. She commented that

“financially I’m fine because my husband and I have work. Both of us worked from home that time. The hardest part was the quick transition from physical classroom to virtual instruction”. T8

There was a teacher who did not take the news on the spreading of the virus seriously, she thought it would just pass after weeks. She stated that,

“It was a huge surprise for me because I thought at first that the schools would just be locked down for a couple of weeks to a month. I wasn’t serious about this covid-19. Then, here’s the news of the deaths. Then, it alarmed me because my husband works in the medical field. I was afraid that he might catch the virus and spread it to us. It was scary most of the time, though we are financially okay”. T9

There were teachers who were impacted by the pandemic emotionally. Teachers faced hardships and stress brought by the distressed family members, mental health, and the demands of being a teacher - requirements and mandates.

It was depressing. The abrupt change made me feel exhausted. The preparation and application of the platforms was overwhelming. T5

Very challenging. I want to quit during the pandemic. T13 Very hard. Financially we were hit. My other family members lost their regular jobs. Working as a teacher was very demanding of your time and energy. It was also very frustrating. Many of the instructions and “supports” given by the school district were not easy to follow. The email to get help was very busy. T15

Technology challenges became an issue for struggling teachers, especially at the beginning of virtual instruction. There were teachers who find it hard to cope with the new trend in teaching and learning. On top of that, some teachers were also assigned to distribute the gadgets and were responsible for giving training to parents on how to access the links and other online resources. One of the teachers stated that:

It was chaotic, not much knowledge of technology. Gadget distribution to the students was late and most of the parents needed training to be able to join the daily virtual instruction. T4

There were teachers who were not technology inclined during the virtual teaching. Gadgets were available but there were teachers who

couldn't cope with the abrupt change from in-person to virtual. Another issue for the teachers was, there wasn't enough time to attend training that the teachers needed to understand how to teach online. Also, some teachers haven't received proper training on how to use the technology to the platforms to effectively use them to enhance lessons and instruction. Use of technology is challenging and it requires a lot of training.

During virtual instruction, one of the challenges of the teachers was the lack of support from the parents. It was not that the parents did not want to support their children but the fact that they needed to provide for the family. They needed the help of the family members in order for their children to attend the virtual instruction.

It was hard, since the parents were working to put food on the table. Layoffs were here and there and some of the parents of my students were not exempted from this dilemma. They were struggling financially and at the same time struggling on how to support their children with disabilities. There were parents who utilized their own mom or dad to assist their child, a good help as well. T6

As a teacher, it's tough because some of the students cannot attend because no one will assist them. Most of them were always absent or missed class. To help the parents, I'm the one who is adjusting the schedule to serve those students who can't attend. T7

Theme 2: Management in the Delivery of Instruction

During the lockdown, it was totally virtual instruction without any option. The abrupt change had brought a lot of issues and stress to the teachers not only in America but also around the world. The lives of the teachers weren't easy in delivering the virtual instruction. The platforms were taking a lot of time in terms of materials preparation. The teachers stated that:

It's tough. Because I need to extend the time to create instructional materials or differentiate the materials according to the needs of my students. T7

Preparation was hard because my class is self-contained and I have to prepare for 7 subjects. It took a lot of time and energy and sleepless nights. But, days flew by and things got better and better. When it comes to collaboration with the parents, I emailed them the instructions, and I referred them to the tech person in case it was hard for them to use the platform. I emailed the parents. I flashed in the google slides some announcements during breaks. T11

Not easy, overwhelmed with a lot of requirements in special education, especially the documentation part. T12

Collaboration with colleagues and training virtually became a trend during the lockdown. Sharing platforms and resources and a step-by-step guide for the teachers to be able to teach effectively during a pandemic. Working together as a team was the most effective way to support the educational needs of each student in preschool. Brainstorming and offering solutions to issues made it easier for the teachers to teach during the lockdown.

My colleagues helped me a lot, especially the young ones because they are good in technology. I am not good with technology so I depend on them. I did a lot of research and practice, so that's how I managed. T2

The changes were so stressful because, training after training, collaboration after collaboration. But through the help of my colleagues, team work, youtube, and other resources, I was able to manage the changes brought by the pandemic. T8

Shockman (2020) said that he and his coworkers have been experimenting with innovative ideas to assist their pupils and families. Teletherapy is a viable option for some services, such speech therapy. In other instances, they've organized conference calls with therapists, instructors, and experts to provide parents with tips and techniques that might be effective at home. They have provided some real-time education, but they also attempt to be accommodating to the needs of the families.

I attended trainings and self-study. Collaborate with my colleagues and specialists. Though it was hard, using it on a daily basis became easier as days went by. T9

I attended different trainings, personal research, asked help from colleagues, made use of youtube, and read blogs. T6

Gradually I got used to the use of the technology and facilitated the virtual instruction comfortably. Attended training and collaboration with colleagues. T4

I had to learn how to use the apps that were needed for the virtual instruction. I attended different training and professional development to be able to grasp the new trends in technology for virtual instruction. Collaboration with colleagues, personal research, and self-taught ideas for more effective online instruction. T5

Technology was important in teaching and learning. It makes it easier for the teachers to share knowledge with one another. It offers tools and applications that are accessible and easy to use for students with

special needs. Technology is a learning tool that produces educational outcomes for all.

Theme 3: Parent-teachers' Collaboration

In order for the virtual instruction to be successful during the pandemic, preparation and collaboration were important to make sure that the parents were beside their children to provide assistance and be the advocates virtually. Family collaboration is still important, but in this situation, it results in the complete exclusion of some students, especially the younger students and those with severe disabilities who are unable to manage the online activities on their own. (Parmigiani, D. et. al., 2020),

The use of application tools during instruction helped to view the participation of the students by the teachers online. The parents were also given the option to pick up materials that can be used at home. One of the teachers stated what tool she used which was helpful during virtual instruction. One of the parents' commented that,

"I used boom learning. it is interactive learning in which I can view the responses of my students. For those non-verbal students, they can point to the right response, and the parents can find out if the child selected the right one. Then sent materials via email or pick up, if the parents are capable of printing the materials, like pre-cut items and manipulatives". T1

The preparation of the materials for virtual instruction was time-consuming and frustrating for some teachers. But since it was mandated, teachers tried hard to comply with those requirements.

The preparation of instructional materials online was time-consuming. I did research and inquiries on how to make things easier, like the google slides, inserts, and selection of videos. T12

Preparation was ough and time-consuming. Sometimes very frustrating because when you have planned a lesson already for one week, then suddenly there are new directives from administration, you have to redo your plans again. Many parents of special ed students were combative and frustrated with virtual learning. All I can do is listen to them, let them know the expectations If they do it. great. But you cannot force them or their students to follow everything. T14

In the peparation of the google slides it took hours to finish, incorporating animations and videos. Gave training to the paras so that they would be helpful during the virtual instruction. Sending emails to the parents for some instructions on how to follow through the platforms. Providing trainings to the parents after school. T9

Collaboration with parents is an important factor in engaging students with special needs during virtual instruction. It is important to have effective communication with parents to answer questions and give updates on a daily basis. Using platforms that are convenient for parents is a great way to access information and messages. Guiding and giving support through step-by-step to the parents helped to ease daily stress and struggles. Some teachers stated that:

I gave the parents links to access the platforms that we were using aside from the virtual instruction daily. Sending material through emails or by picking up on scheduled time. T3

It was a requirement to have a google classroom and I posted all the materials and I gave step-by-step instructions to the parents. It's just the preparation of the slides lesson which was taking a lot of time. I communicated with the parents regularly. At the end of the day, remind the parents to just send me an email for some questions and issues - it did work. T10

Those parents who cannot cope up, I trained them step-by-step after school. I sent an email with the step-by-step instructions on how to join the zoom link and access the google assignments. Communicate with the parents by phone call, emails, or text messages. T8

At the beginning, everybody was struggling, through support from one another and the parents wanting their children to attend the virtual instruction, things got better. There were parents as well who gave up easily and commented that it's not working and learning is not possible. But through encouragement and giving them one-on-one training or support they were able to manage the virtual instruction. T5

The first thing that a teacher builds is communicating with the parents. Open communication between parents and teachers is very important and crucial since they are the people that the teachers will be working with to help the progress of the students, especially those with special needs. Communication is a strong force for the success of the students.

Open communication with the parents through text messaging, after school meetings, emails, classdojo, or by phone. Extended my time till night answering parents' questions. When it comes to preparation of materials, it was frustrating because it took a lot of time. T15

The parents' support was crucial in the implementation of virtual instruction. But the parents were concerned about everyday life concerning financial obligations. Their days were divided between their work and helping their special needs children during virtual instruction. The work of parents never stopped, so it was difficult for

them to support the educational needs of their children. In addition to that, parents were not teachers to teach one or two children at home. Some teachers commented that:

It was not easy. Many parents of special ed students do not want virtual learning because they have to assist their child for the whole duration of the virtual class. Many parents have to work and ask another family member to help their child. At times this does not work very well, especially if the family member is an older sibling who also has to attend school virtually. Parents complain a lot for things you do not have control (e.g. they do not have a regular internet connection). T13

It was hard since the parents were working to put food on the table. Layoffs were here and there and some of the parents of my students were not exempted from this dilemma. They were struggling financially and at the same time struggling on how to support their children with disabilities. There were parents who utilized their own mom or dad to assist their child, a good help as well. T6

It's not so easy, because parents were so busy and most of the time, they don't have time to collaborate with me. I kept on reaching them via email or calling them but they seldom called me back. T7

There were parents who tried to support their children but it was not feasible since they were struggling due to their work. Extended family members stepped up during the virtual instruction, and that was a good solution to solve some of the issues during virtual instruction. Mostly, grandparents were the ones who helped during virtual instruction. They may not know technology, but they were available to help to make things worked out.

Teacher 2 stated that, *"she collaborated and communicated through calls, emails, and classdojo, and talking points. Preparation was tough and took a lot of time"*. Using different platforms made it easy for an open communication between teachers and parents. It was an easy access and smooth exchanging of information. Prepared a required platform to be used and accessible to parents helped to improve communication. Teacher 10 stated that, *"it was a requirement to have a google classroom and I posted all the materials and I gave step-by-step instructions to the parents. It's just the preparation of the slides lesson which was taking a lot of time. I communicated with the parents regularly. At the end of the day, remind the parents to just send me an email for some questions and issues - it did work"*.

Teachers can educate parents about a student's accomplishments and good work through regular communication. The parent will already be acquainted with the teacher if a child starts to struggle in a particular

topic or displays behavioral issues, which makes parent-teacher collaboration easier.

Teacher 11 comment was, “it took a lot of time and energy and sleepless nights for virtual instructional materials. But days flew by and things got better and better. When it comes to collaboration with the parents, I emailed them the instructions, and I referred them to the tech person in case it was hard for them to use the platform. I emailed the parents. I flashed in the google slides some announcements during breaks”.

Teacher 4 stated that, “she collaborated and communicated through calls, emails, and classdojo, and talking points. Preparation was tough and took a lot of time”.

One of the stressors for teachers was preparation of the materials online, taking a lot of time and energy just to be ready for the next day. Reviewing videos took a lot of time just making sure that those videos were appropriate for inserts. Announcements posted online and emailed parents as a way of communication.

Conclusion

The COVID-19 pandemic posed new and difficult problems for families and educators, especially those who work with children who have special needs. How well families managed their resources, like as money, technology, and social networks, was a major factor in how they fared during the pandemic. Parents had to serve as primary caregivers, teachers, and breadwinners, sometimes while dealing with limited resources and technological hurdles. In contrast, educators faced the challenge of quickly adjusting to the online classroom, with various degrees of success and stress. Students with special needs can benefit greatly from virtual teaching when parents and instructors work together to meet their requirements. This is especially true when it comes to bridging the gap between home and school. Despite the obstacles, many parents and teachers showed perseverance and determination in navigating the unfamiliar landscape of remote education, demonstrating the value of flexibility and teamwork in trying circumstances.

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