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# Parents as Teachers During COVID-19

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## Abstract

Following U.S. school closures in March 2020 due to the Coronavirus ("COVID-19") pandemic, parents have had to play substantially larger roles in their children's education than previously. Little is known about the resulting home learning environment during COVID-19. Attendees of this poster will learn what distance learning practices parents have engaged in during COVID-19 and how such practices have varied. Such information may provide implications for future research, practice, and educational reform.

## Introduction

- Due to the recent Coronavirus pandemic, schools in the United States had closed by April 2020.
- Parents were required to play a substantially larger direct role in their children's education than they had been prior to COVID-19. However, we know little about the home learning environment during COVID-19.
- Such knowledge is critical for several reasons:
  - We need information about what occurred during COVID-19 to help educators assist families moving forward.
  - Distance learning may become more prevalent in the future even after COVID-19 (Bush, 2020).
- Although the role of parents in their children's education has long been considered important, and although we know quite a lot about what parents do at home to facilitate their children's learning (e.g., Serpell et al., 2005), we expect that the demands of distance learning differ from "business as usual."

### Research Questions:

- What types of activities are parents engaging in to assist their children (across ages) with distance learning?
- Are there significant age-related differences in the frequencies in which parents report assisting their children with specific activities during distance learning?
- Is there a relation between engaging in distance learning and parent-reported stress?
- Is there an association between parent concerns related to distance learning and type of distance learning activities parents report completing?

## Methods

### Sample:

- 361 parents of children <18 years currently living with them:
  - 78% (n = 281) reported that their children were engaging in distance learning
- # of parents per age group:
  - <5 years only = 30%; 6-11 years only = 20%; 12-17 years only = 17%; multiple age groups = 33%

## Methods

Table 1. Descriptives

Variable	Entire Sample Mean (SD) or %	Parents Engaging in Distance Learning Mean (SD) or %
Mothers	90%	91%
Race – White	87%	88%
Ethnicity – Hispanic	6%	7%
Average Age of Parent (Years)	41 (6.20)	42 (5.90)
Annual Income ≥ \$100k	81%	84%
Highest Level of Parent Education ≥ Bachelor's Degree	96%	95%

### Measures and Procedures:

- These data come from a larger study. For this poster, parents were asked how many children they have and the ages of their children.
- Parents also were asked to describe the types of home-learning activities they engaged in with their children using an open-ended question. Responses were reliably coded into six categories: teaching; monitoring; providing technological support (IT); finding learning materials and/or resources; providing emotional encouragement/motivation/support; and communicating with teachers.
- Parents also were asked to report their level of stress related to COVID and to supporting their children during distance learning.

### Select Parent Responses When Asked: What are you doing to assist each of your children with distance learning?:



- 19% of parents spontaneously mentioned difficulties they or their children (and therefore they) were having with aspects of distance learning.

## Results

### Data Analysis:

- Following descriptive analyses (Table 1),  $\chi^2$  and logistical regressions analyses were conducted.
- Parent age, parent gender, and parent race/ethnicity were included as covariates.

### Findings:

**Research Question 1: What types of activities are parents engaging in to assist their children (across ages) with distance learning?**

Table 2. Percentage of Parent-Reported Engagement During Distance Learning

Type of Activity	% of Parents Who Reported Engaging in This Activity (n = 237*)
Teaching	65
Monitoring	63
IT	46
Resources	10
Emotional Support	10
Communication	9

Note. \* 237 parents reported what activities they did with their children.

- Highest** percentage of parents reported monitoring, teaching and IT.
- Lowest** percentage of parents reported providing emotional encouragement/motivation, communicating with teachers, and finding learning materials and/or resources.

**Research Question 2: Are there significant age-related differences in the frequencies in which parents report assisting their children with specific activities during distance learning?**

Table 3. Percentage of Parent-Reported Engagement During Distance Learning by Age of Child

Type of Activity	% of Parents Who Reported Engaging in This Activity By Age of Child		
	< 5 years	6 to 11 years	12 to 17 years
Teaching	48	65	49
Monitoring	37	64	67
IT	25	49	33
Resources	8	8	6
Emotional Support	3	8	13
Communication	1	8	12

- <5 years: monitoring = teaching > IT [ $\chi^2$  (df = 2, N= 237) = 10.40,  $p$  = .006].
- 6-11 years: monitoring = teaching > IT [ $\chi^2$  (df = 2, N= 237) = 10.91,  $p$  = .004].
- 12 -17 years: monitoring > teaching > IT [ $\chi^2$  (df = 2, N= 237) = 17.37,  $p$  = .0002].

## Results

**Research Question 3: Is there a relation between engaging in distance learning and parent-reported stress?**

- Parents who reported engaging in distance learning were over two times more likely to report being stressed due to COVID than parents not engaging in distance learning. ( $OR$  = 2.02; 95% CI[1.06, 3.85];  $p$  = .033)
- Significantly greater proportion of parents of 6 to 11 year olds (69%) reported concern about supporting their children during distance learning as compared to the other two age groups (<5 years = 54%; 12-17 years = 57%). [ $\chi^2$  (df = 2, N= 357) = 9.38,  $p$  = .009].

**Research Question 4: Is there an association between parent concerns related to distance learning and type of distance learning activities parents report completing?**

- Regardless of age of child, there was no significant association ( $p$  > .10) between the type of distance learning activity and whether parents reported concern about supporting their children in distance learning.

## Discussion and Implications

- Parents most frequently reported supporting their children in distance learning by engaging in teaching, monitoring, and IT.
- Parents who reported engaging in distance learning were over two times more likely to report being stressed due to COVID than parents not engaging in distance learning.
- Future research directions and practical implications:
  - Investigate not only which activities parents are engaging in during distance learning but also how often they engage in each activity.
  - Continue to explore how parents are supporting their students' educational programming and the relation to parent stress over time given COVID-19 continues to be a problem.
  - Help support future educational programming if post-COVID there is increased use of technology at home and/or changes in expectations for parent involvement at home.

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