



## At-Home Learning Is Not All Bad

By Educator Barnes – May 17, 2020

The complaints about at-home learning during the coronavirus pandemic have been numerous and frequent from parents, educators, and students. This is not surprising because shifting unexpectedly to a new model without sufficient time to plan is bound to include some missteps. Typically schools take months or even years to plan for and then implement a new model or initiative. Although at-home learning has been frustrating and plagued with issues, some students are having success and living their best school life.

Let's get real. School before the pandemic was not working for all students. For some of these students, learning has ceased or continues not to be sufficient. For other students, this pandemic has been a welcome relief and has allowed students to thrive. I have witnessed this in my home. Although both of my sons have been on the honor roll each school year, the school has not always been their favorite place to be. The roles have reversed. My son who begged me to be his teacher and disliked school now loves it. My son who loved school and did not want me as a teacher is glad he does not have to return to his school building this year. When we watched the live broadcast of Governor Holcomb announcing school buildings would be closed for the remainder of the year, my son jumped up and shouted, "Yes!"

I cannot blame him. Every week during the school year has been bogged down with at least weekly communication about my son's behavior. My son is not perfect, but how does a child go years without discipline issues to having a discipline file pages long? The teacher choosing not to follow his 504 during part of the year, kicking him out of class, and not finding time to help him catch up on work he missed while out of class are some of the reasons my husband and I believe my son is happy he does not have to return to his third grade classroom. Although there are Zoom office hours and Flipgrid opportunities to connect with classmates and his teacher, he flat out told us he did not want to talk to his teacher on Zoom. He asked if he had to keep doing Flipgrid. We said no since it is not required. Now, he can focus on learning.

The number one improvement is that he knows he is important. One incident my son had was changing a sentence on the teacher's wall. She wrote, "You are important." He changed that to say, "You are not important." When the teacher made the focus on his act of defacing the wall, we pushed back and said her time would be better spent figuring out why he feels this way. At home, he is safe and loved, and he knows this. My son is not alone in feeling unimportant at school. School was not a safe and loving place for all students. Educator Rita Pierson says it best in her Ted Talk. "Every child deserves a champion, an adult who will never give up on them, who understands the power of connection, and insists that they become the best that they can possibly be." When children don't believe someone is fighting for them to succeed, the school building can be a toxic and damaging place for them to enter each day. It is hard for students to learn when they feel like this.

Another benefit of at-home learning is having more time. Many school districts shifted to fewer days of school per week for at-home learning. This allows students to use the off day as downtime or as an opportunity to stretch out learning. School buildings have strict schedules, and not adhering to the schedule is frowned upon. If you don't believe me ask any teacher

how he or she felt when transitioning a class to a location but was delayed because another class was behind schedule. This rigidity does not work for all students.

There is barely any time for activities like recess. Even recess is not guaranteed because some school leaders still allow teachers to take recess away. Parents of boys, raise your hand or hands if you feel me. There is nothing more pleasing than sending your boys outside to run around, jump, and play for at least an hour. Yes, girls benefit too, but I'm only a parent of boys. Some days, I wonder if my sons are secretly eating jumping beans because all they want to do is jump and run around...anything that is the opposite of sitting still.

Being rushed is gone. They don't have to finish math during a certain block of time. They can do a little, take a break, and then finish. This has alleviated much of the frustration my son had about school. Every week he would come home and say he did not have enough time to finish a task. Now, he has ample time.

Last, parents can be more involved in their children's learning when they are learning solely at home. Before the pandemic, parents' focus was mostly on making sure their children completed homework and did well on quizzes and tests. Many parents don't know the content their children are actually learning or the curriculum the school is using. While at home, the parent can watch the teacher teach live and view all the assignments that are posted on the school's learning management system. Most schools have provided mandatory assignments and optional assignments. This has given parents the autonomy to choose some of the work their children complete and add assignments and activities they want their children to complete. For example, [gardening](#) was already part of our lives, but now gardening is now part of our at-home learning experience. It is no longer the activity we rush to do after a long day at work or at school.

My children have also worked on cursive writing and typing skills daily, Monday-Friday. The power to customize their day has made our children extremely happy.

It is not clear what school will be like in the fall, but what is clear at-home learning has not been a horrible experience for everyone. There are aspects that need to be considered when we return to our previous brick and mortar education. At the top of my list, I want one hour of recess. That will probably not happen, but I bet students would learn more...isn't that the point of school?