



Zoom Detention Should Not Exist

By Educator Barnes – April 14, 2021

Last week, social media was ablaze due to a parent's frustration about a consequence her child received. Parent Uju Anya tweeted, "My child got sent to Zoom detention for not paying attention in Zoom 4th grade. Email said here's the link to access the room to serve detention. I swear I'm trying so hard to take this life seriously."

The parent went on to explain how the school's progressive discipline practices led to the detention. The nine-year-old fourth-grade child received multiple reminders. The next step

was parent contact. The final step was the detention. According to the parent, this mirrors the discipline progression for in-person learning. The problem in this situation is the punishment makes no sense for the offense.

A child is struggling to focus on Zoom, and the school's response was to have the student be on Zoom for a longer amount of time. Zoom fatigue is real, and if adults are having issues with this, surely children are, too. The mom went on to explain that her daughter, "frequently gets distracted, plays computer games, ignores the teacher, or just signs off Zoom." The student does not need more time on Zoom. Instead, the student and her mom need collaboration with the school.

The teacher, mom, and daughter need to meet together to come up with solutions instead of the teacher assigning detention. For example, during this meeting, the teacher could say she will send a notification to the parent if the daughter logs off. This lets the daughter know that her mom will know if she does this which will probably make it less likely for her to leave the Zoom meeting.

I could relate to the mom's frustration. My twin sons are also in fourth grade. They are also learning remotely. My sons have had incidents where they were not on Zoom when they were supposed to be or refused to participate in class even when called on directly. What their teacher did not do is assign them a Zoom detention. Instead, she sent a message in ParentSquare (a school communication app) or sent an email. Once my sons discovered they would get caught, they stopped the behavior.

Stopping the behavior does not always solve the problem. Additionally, I helped them with their issues. They told me they were tired of sitting in one place. I told them they could rotate their chairs back and forth to have some movement. I also allowed them to move away from their desks during independent work. They either work on the floor, sofa, dining room table, or their room. Last, I told them they had to advocate for themselves. If they need a break, I told them to tell their teacher in the chat, and then go take a brief one. Normally when they do this, they get a sip of water from the kitchen and return in a couple of minutes.

Working to meet students' needs should be educators' first priority. When students are punished without solving the problem, they end up in a cycle of the behavior repeating and more punishment being meted out. Hopefully, the attention to this Zoom detention will help this school eliminate this consequence for students.

