

Effects of Remote Learning on Students with Autism



Emily Mottern & Dr. Berger

PSY 498A: Applied Projects
Department of Psychological Sciences

Background

My capstone research is based on my personal experiences with Victory Academy, extensive background research, and findings from my interviews. In high school, I spent time as a Peer Mentor at Victory Academy which involved me being a role model and friend to a classroom of 6 students that I grew to bond and connect with. I have used my personal experiences and connections to shape my capstone project in a way that is meaningful to me.

Throughout my undergraduate career (and even prior) I have always had an interest in clinical counseling– which is how I got my position as a Peer Mentor. These last four years have given me plenty of insight on why I am so interested in helping individuals which is why I wanted to go back to one of the communities that helped shape me into who I am today for my senior capstone.

When considering what to do with my degree, I have always known that I wanted to go to graduate school for clinical counseling. At Victory Academy I was able to see firsthand the team that is behind each student. This has made me realize the importance a counseling role can have on a child and is something that I want to pursue professionally.

Victory Academy is a year-round K–12 school in Wilsonville, OR for children with autism founded by Tricia Hasbrook and Thea Schreiber as they could not find a school with the appropriate needs for their sons with autism. Their school has grown from 8 students in 2009 to 80 students in 2017 in their newly finished building. Victory's values emphasize fostering meaningful relationships, lifelong learning, and independence as they ensure that all students are given equal opportunities.

Project Question

How has remote learning impacted children with autism?

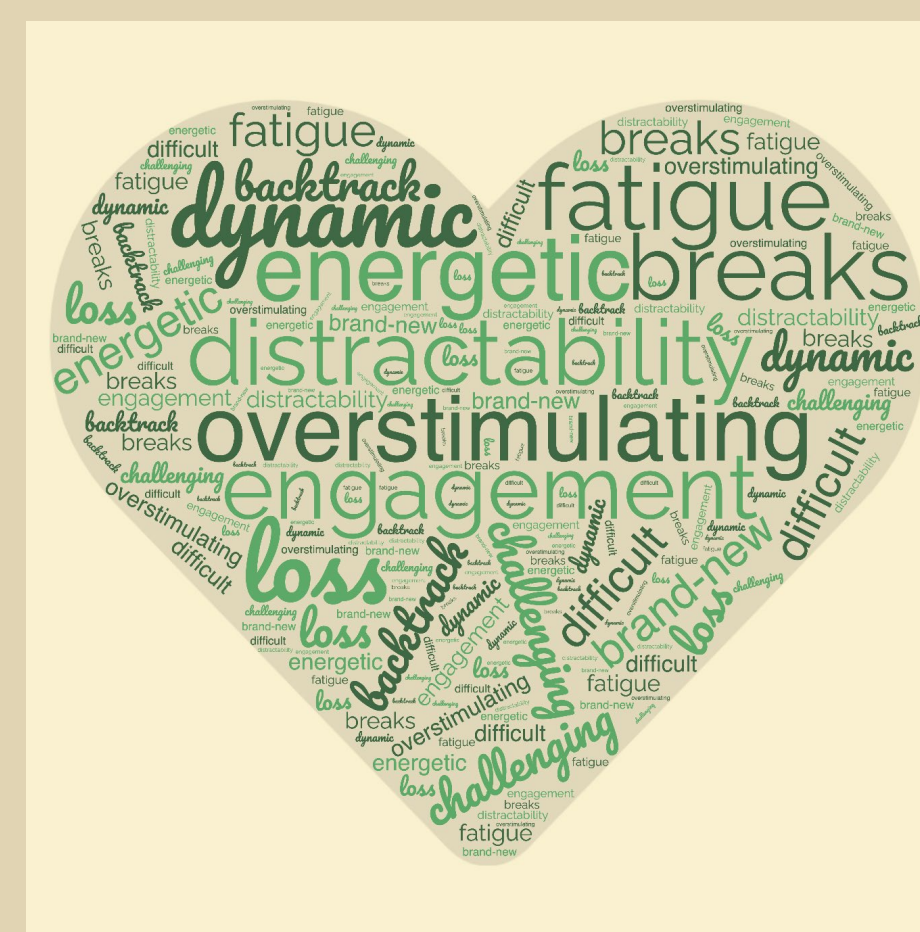
What has their support system noticed?

Methods

Data was collected from faculty at Victory Academy via 15–minute interviews with open–ended questions. The interview questions were approved by UP's Institutional Review Board (IRB). The interview questions aimed to understand the challenges that their students experienced during their 3 months of remote learning.

The sample consisted of 4 faculty members from Victory Academy.

Results



Common themes found within my research.

Main Findings

- Overall lack of engagement on Zoom
- High levels of distractibility and Zoom fatigue
- Students feeling like they missed out on key events (prom, etc.)
- Students seem to be happy and relaxed to be back in school
- Very excited and energetic when they first returned to school
 - For most students it was their first time seeing their friends
 - Needed to re-adjust to their school routine
- Education is continuing similarly to how it was pre-pandemic

Discussion

Faculty at Victory Academy were teaching remotely from March 2020–July 2020, but some teachers taught hybrid after July 2020 as they had some students who were more comfortable learning from home.

The main themes in my research included an overall lack of engagement– as told by every faculty member I interviewed. At first, students were excited by remote learning, but the novelty of it wore off quickly which also led to high levels of distractibility and Zoom fatigue.

Upon returning to school, it was reported that students were very excited and energetic. This was also the first time for most students that they got to see their friends. Faculty also reported that it took a little while for students to re-adjust to their school routine after not having as much structure in their day during remote learning. Finally, education is continuing similarly to how it would have pre-pandemic. It was also indicated that the amount of backtracking on content varied by classroom.

References

- Victory Academy. (n.d.). Retrieved March 25, 2022, from <https://www.victoryacademy.org/>
- *Autism speaks*. Autism Speaks. (n.d.). Retrieved March 25, 2022, from <https://www.autismspeaks.org/>
- Hodges, H., Fealko, C., & Soares, N. (2020). Autism spectrum disorder: definition, epidemiology, causes, and clinical evaluation. *Translational pediatrics*, 9(Suppl 1), S55–S65. <https://doi.org/10.21037/tp.2019.09.09>
- Oregonian/OregonLive, A. W. | T. (2015, August 28). *Moms expand victory academy to help more kids with autism*. oregonlive. Retrieved March 25, 2022, from https://www.oregonlive.com/education/2015/08/victory_academy_autism_school.html