

**NAVIGATING SCHOOL REMOTELY:
EXAMINING THE LEARNING BELIEFS AND INVOLVEMENT ACTIONS OF
PARENTS OF STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL EDUCATION NEEDS DURING COVID-19**

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Abstract

The transition to at-home learning during the COVID-19 lockdowns across Canada was challenging for many students, particularly those with special education needs (SEN). Parents faced various challenges and adopted multiple roles in supporting their children with SEN. While research exploring the experiences of families of children with SEN during COVID has begun to emerge, much is unknown about the involvement of parents during school closures. The current study analyzes interviews with 14 Canadian parents of children with SEN, exploring their experiences with virtual learning. The study is framed by the Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler model of Parent Involvement, which theorizes the ‘why’ of parent involvement beginning with motivational and life context variables and moving to higher levels such as student self-efficacy and, ultimately, to student achievement. Specifically, in this study, I explored a) how parents of children with special education needs viewed and enacted their role in at-home learning during the first COVID-19 lockdown, b) how parents’ beliefs about learning were reflected in the ways in which they were involved in their children's at-home learning, and c) how, if at all, did parents’ beliefs about their child’s learning shift throughout the COVID-19 lockdown? Thematic analyses of the interview data identified three main themes: a) *Common Involvement Actions: What Do We Need to Do to Make This Happen?* b) *Factors and Contexts That Influence Involvement* and c) *How Involvement Actions and Experience Influence Learning Beliefs*. *Many similarities are noted between the current findings and those emerging studies exploring parent experiences in various countries during the first COVID-19 school closures. Several unique aspects also emerge, particularly the learning-specific beliefs of parents concerning at-home learning. Results are considered in relation to the Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler model, which was relevant in many respects but limiting in its linear, hierarchical progression. A more cyclical, ongoing and dynamic relationship between parent and contextual variables is suggested.*

Overview of Topic

The COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent lockdowns created an educational climate where remote learning was no longer simply an option among many but rather a critical necessity. The Ontario Ministry of Education defines remote learning as classes taught at a distance rather than in a conventional classroom setting (PPM 2020a,164).

The expeditious transition to remote learning reduced the time available for educators to develop and adapt lesson plans suitable for remote delivery, making the shift demanding for students, parents, and teachers alike. As education is mandated provincially in Canada, each province outlined their own approach to navigating the switch to remote delivery and supporting students and their families. Similarly, school boards within the provinces varied in their approaches to remote learning during COVID-19 (Gallagher-Mackay et al., 2021). As a result, students' experiences across the country also changed significantly (Statistics Canada, 2021; Whitley et al., 2021). Though not streamlined in their approaches to remote learning, many schools offered a mix of synchronous and asynchronous learning options. Synchronous learning options happen live in real time and may include video or voice communication, allowing students to connect live with educators and staff. Asynchronous options might involve pre-recorded lessons or tasks to be completed independently and printed materials delivered to or picked up by families from the school.

While the transition to online learning was difficult for most, it was especially significant for students with special education needs (SEN) as they already face social and academic barriers at school (Lipkin & Crepeau-Hobson, 2022). Students with SEN require academic, physical, social or emotional support for their learning success (Hutchinson & Specht, 2021). Students with SEN typically include those with disabilities (e.g., physical disabilities, behaviour disabilities, communication disabilities) as well as those undiagnosed who require support or services to access school materials and the curriculum. The term SEN has been chosen for the current study for its broad definition, which is widely recognized by families and ensures that participants with various needs are reflected. What students with SEN have in common is the potential need for some type and degree of support and services beyond those required for typically developing students (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2017).

Students with SEN complete high school at far lower rates than non-SEN peers and often take longer to achieve learning goals, which negatively impacts their academic

outcomes and career aspirations (Canadian Human Rights Commission, 2017; Whitley et al., 2021). As a result, appropriate programming, including accommodations, are essential tools for ensuring students are provided the support necessary for their success. Accommodations, including assistive technology, access to an educational assistant (EA), additional time on assignments, or breaks from learning, provide students with SEN with essential tools that support learning (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2017). These tools help to reduce or remove learning barriers for students and establish a more equitable learning experience. In Ontario, as in most other provinces, students with SEN may receive an Individual Education Plan (IEP) that outlines goals the student is working towards as well as the various accommodations they require to be supported in school, any modifications (changes to grade level expectations), alternative programs (e.g., social skills group) and/or services (e.g. speech-language pathologist). Those formally identified as having an ‘exceptionality’ within the Ontario education system must have an IEP (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2017).

The variation in at-home learning experiences during COVID-19 school closures, along with the added difficulties of providing appropriate support for students with SEN, meant that the role of parents in facilitating learning varied across each family (Lipkin & Crepeau-Hobson, 2023; Whitley et al., 2021). Research examining the participation of parents in their child’s learning (in conventional, in-person settings) shows that parental involvement has an impact on students’ success, behaviour and engagement (Đurišić & Bunijevac, 2017; Fishman & Nickerson, 2015; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995; Li et al., 2019). How parents think about learning and understand their children's educational experiences influences if and how learning is prioritized (Fishman & Nickerson, 2015; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995). However, existing research has focused primarily on in-school learning, the teacher-parent relationship, and the impact of specific types of parent participation on student success within a classroom context (Harris & Robinson, 2016). There is a gap in research that considers parents’ conceptualization or understanding of learning and how these influence remote at-home learning practices where parents must take on a much more direct role. COVID-19 and the switch to remote learning provided a unique opportunity to examine parents’ experiences supporting their child(ren) with SEN while learning from home. As a result, this study aims to examine parental involvement and how students with SEN were supported while learning remotely.

Findings from this research will add to a growing body of research on parental involvement,

remote learning, and the experiences of students with SEN. Ultimately, this research intends to provide a comprehensive understanding of the experiences of parents of students with SEN in remote-learning settings and, in doing so, contribute to strategies to improve the learning experiences of students with SEN in remote learning environments.

Literature Review

The existing literature on remote learning recognizes that while online learning allows for adequate accommodation for some, it also creates unprecedented challenges for others, specifically students with SEN (Basham et al., 2015; Cavanaugh et al., 2013; Fichten et al., 2009; Frederick et al., 2020; Hashey & Stahl, 2014). Research into students' experiences with SEN using remote learning platforms before COVID-19 indicates that these students experience additional barriers to accessing class material (Fichten et al., 2009; Kocdar & Bozkurt, 2022). As identified in Fichten et al.'s (2009) study on the e-learning problems students with disabilities experienced while completing online courses, the most common issues reported included technical difficulties with assistive technologies, websites that were not accessible for students with specific disabilities such as visual or hearing impairments, poor use of technology by professors, and students lack of knowledge of technology. While many of the issues reported are also experienced by non-disabled students, students with disabilities may experience compounding difficulties as they rely on additional assistive devices and require educators to be knowledgeable about how to incorporate these technologies into online learning platforms effectively. Some students with SEN require additional time on exams, captioned video material, and access to specific adaptive technologies commonly provided by the school when learning in person. However, Fichten noted that many of these students report that these accommodations (and others) were not offered in every remote class or required pre-existing technological knowledge that they lacked. Although this study is quite dated, and advances in online learning for students with SEN may have improved, challenges continue to be identified, many of which came to light during the COVID-19 pandemic (Enders & Kostewicz, 2022).

Remote Learning During COVID-19

Research on online learning throughout the COVID-19 pandemic found that students experienced challenges with the switch to remote learning and acquiring access to reliable technology devices (i.e., laptops, headphones) and effective WIFI connections (Kocdar & Bozkurt, 2022; Whitley et al., 2021). Similarly, many students and their families reported

dissatisfaction with the accommodations offered and their inability to access learning accommodations from home (Whitley et al., 2021; Yazcayir & Gurgur, 2021). As educators reported that they had little time to prepare for the unexpected switch to remote learning, they were left without access to essential devices or materials required to create an effective, inclusive classroom (Parmigiani et al., 2020). As a result, many parents reported feeling as though the learning resources their children received were not tailored to their child's needs or abilities and this generated concern about the quality of the work they were given (Greenway et al., 2020; Shaw & Shaw, 2021). For online learning and integrating new technologies into class lessons to work effectively, educators require professional development opportunities that detail how to transition lessons onto remote platforms properly (Ames et al., 2020). When educators do not have access to these opportunities and are unprepared to teach online, parents often take on the additional commitment of searching for appropriate resources to supplement their child's learning (Alharthi, 2022). For many parents, the unexpected addition of at-home learning while balancing other impact aspects of life, such as their occupational demands or other childcare requirements, can result in additional commitments during an already uncertain and stressful time. As a result, recent studies examining the effect of remote learning on the well-being of students during COVID-19 have indicated that students with SEN and their families are at greater risk for experiencing mental health difficulties and anxiety (Ashbury et al., 2020; Greenway & Eaton, Thomas, 2020; Yazcayir & Gurgur, 2021).

Recommendations for Supporting Students with SEN

When questioned about the experience of teaching remotely during the lockdowns, educators in Italy reported that the most effective strategies for creating an inclusive classroom require a balance between interactive methods (i.e., opportunities for individual support and close relationships between teachers and students) and cooperative methods (i.e., working closely in groups, participating in class discussions) (Parmigiani et al., 2020). This balance can help ensure that students with SEN feel part of the classroom community while receiving individual support when necessary (Parmigiani et al., 2020). However, if students cannot access important class material or if participation in the larger class community is not inclusive, these students miss out on meaningful learning and social connections.

Several studies have examined the best ways to support students with SEN in virtual learning (Kocdar & Bozkurt, 2022; Ontario Ministry of Education, 2021). For example, the

Ontario Ministry of Education (2021) released a guide to remote learning for students with special education needs that outlines the best ways for parents, educators and school staff to support students learning online. The guide states that effective remote learning practices include the collaborative involvement of multiple stakeholders throughout the design and delivery of course materials. Stakeholders may include school board administrators, program specialists, school staff, educators, educational assistants, family members and community professionals. The guide also outlines the importance of ensuring students and educators have access to the necessary resources, tools, devices and connections needed for learning remotely, access to the technological literacy required for using virtual materials and access to the critical thinking skills needed to understand how technology and distance learning shape the learning experience.

Similarly, among common recommendations for increasing accessibility in the classroom for a large range of students' needs are Universal Design for Learning (UDL) practices, differentiation and tiered levels of support (Kocdar & Bozkurt, 2022; Learning for All, 2013; Ontario Ministry of Education, 2021). Using a UDL approach, educators consider all students' strengths and needs while preparing lessons to offer flexibility and choice for their students (CAST, 2021; Learning for All, 2013). Lessons designed with UDL in mind have clearly defined expectations, offer multiple forms of delivery (auditory, written, visual) and encourage student choice, allowing learning to be tailored to individual students (CAST, 2021; Learning for All, 2013). Similarly, differentiated instruction refers to tailoring teaching approaches to the strengths and needs of individual students (Learning for All, 2013). Differentiating learning means altering the delivery of instruction for students (i.e., allowing students to listen to information rather than read it or providing levelled texts that match students reading abilities), providing options for learning environments (i.e., creating quiet spaces for students to work or allowing students to choose the seating that they find most comfortable) and allowing for multiple forms of presentation for assigned work (i.e., providing students with options for how they demonstrate their learning such as with writing assignments or spoken presentations) (Algozzine & Anderson, 2010; Learning For All, 2013). Similarly, tiered approaches to supporting students involve assessing student progress and success and tailoring learning supports for students' specific strengths and needs (Learning for All, 2013). The tier 1 approach involves providing universal programming that can benefit all students; the tier 2 approach involves providing targeted support and tools for some students, and the tier 3 approach involves providing additional

specific support for a smaller, select group of students that require more learning assistance (Learning for All, 2013). Utilizing UDL, differentiation, and tiered approaches allows educators to promote inclusivity by ensuring students' learning is individualized to their interests, strengths and needs.

Educators must have access to the tools, resources, and professional learning opportunities necessary to support their implementation of UDL, DI and tiered approaches. Similarly, educators should be provided with the support necessary to make the transition to online learning platforms less complicated. One example of an effective resource created with educators and pre-service educators in mind is the *Learning to Teach Online* website created by education scholars Hagerman and Kellam (2020). The website provides educators free modules and learning resources to support their remote teaching practices. The website's modules include an equity and accessibility section geared towards helping educators improve their online inclusion and UDL implementation.

In addition to educators requiring the necessary knowledge and resources to provide adequate support for students with SEN, parents' involvement in their child's learning also affects student outcomes.

Parental Involvement

Research examining parents' involvement in their children's learning shows that parent's participation has an impact on students' behaviour, engagement, and educational outcomes (Đurišić & Bunijevac, 2017; Fishman & Nickerson, 2015; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995; Li et al., 2019). This research has demonstrated the value of parental involvement in its various forms, including involvement in at-home learning activities such as helping with homework, participation in at-school activities such as attending parent-teacher conferences or volunteering at education events and even the benefits of general parental interest in student learning.

In one seminal study, Fan and Chen (2001) reviewed twenty-five empirical studies on parental involvement and its impact on student achievement to determine if parental involvement was genuinely associated with higher positive student outcomes when the definitions for parental involvement and student achievement were clearly defined. They found that the large variety in definitions for parental involvement across studies made it difficult to determine which if any, parental actions impacted student achievement. Their work outlined five broad dimensions of parental involvement that encompass key parental behaviours or actions that were shown to

influence student academic outcomes, including educational expectations/aspirations for children, communication with children about school-related matters, parental supervision/home structure related to school matters, parental participation in school activities, and other/general parental involvement behaviours. The results of this analysis showed that parental involvement is positively related to students' academic outcomes. However, they note that some parental involvement activities may have a more significant impact than others. For example, they found that parental supervision of children at home had the weakest relationship with students' academic achievements, while parents' aspirations and expectations for children's education achievements had the strongest relationship with student academic achievements. In summary, Fan and Chen's research demonstrated the importance of viewing parental involvement as multifaceted, highlighting that not all forms of parental involvement will impact students' educational outcomes. Research conducted in the twenty years since the Fan and Chen study confirms that parental involvement, namely, parents' interactions with their child's school, child's invitations for their parent's help or support and parent's active participation in their child's school activities positively impacts student attendance, achievement, and improved behaviour (Cepada & Grepon, 2020; Hill & Tyson, 2009; Lara & Saracostti, 2019)

Building on the parental involvement literature, scholars Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995, 1997, 2005) recognized that research examining parental involvement focused primarily on the impact of three factors: the socio-demographic variables of parents, parental attitudes, and factors related to individual schools such as teacher behaviours. However, there was a notable gap in the literature that considered why parents become involved in their child's education, what forms this involvement takes, and how these involvement actions can impact the educational outcomes of students. In order to address this research gap, Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995) developed a model for parental involvement (figure 1, pg. 14) that examined why parents become involved, what involvement actions they choose, the different ways in which parents support their child's learning, the importance of student perceptions of these involvement efforts, and how these factors benefit student learning outcomes. Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's model uniquely considers the motivational factors that influence parental participation and has been frequently used to consider what roles these factors play in parental involvement globally within a variety of contexts (e.g., across different cultures, within the context of the COVID-19 pandemic and among parents of children with disabilities).

Despite a variety of research studies demonstrating the potential for the positive effects of parental involvement on children's learning, it should be noted that there are instances in which parental involvement can have a negative impact on students. An example of a possible adverse effect of parental involvement is the transfer of math anxiety from parents to children. One study (Maloney et al., 2015) found that when parents with math anxiety provided at-home math homework support for their children, their children learned less math throughout the year and presented with more math anxiety themselves. In contrast, when parents with math anxiety did not provide frequent math support, their children's math achievement and levels of math anxiety were not impacted by their parents. Recent reviews (Barger et al., 2019; Boonk et al., 2018) have found mixed results concerning parent involvement in homework specifically, with several studies reporting negative associations with academic achievement. In part, this phenomenon was explained by researchers as reflective of the greater need for homework and homework assistance among students who are struggling at school – student needs then elicited the involvement. Even within the homework-specific literature, parent involvement that supported autonomy rather than monitoring or controlling tended to positively affect student motivation and achievement (e.g., Dumont et al., 2014; Gonida & Cortina, 2014).

Application of Parental Involvement Theories During COVID-19

While extensive research has been conducted on parent involvement and its association with student motivation and achievement, the appearance of COVID-19 and resulting responses by education systems significantly impacted the home learning context. In 2022, Alharthi examined parental involvement during COVID-19 through remote learning in Saudi Arabia. Alharthi sought to build on the Hoover-Dempsey model with consideration as to how external pressures, such as mandatory at-home learning, impact parental involvement. Alharthi's findings showed that parents, particularly mothers, valued their children's education and involvement in their children's learning from an early age. As a result, mandatory remote learning did not significantly change parents' choices to be involved. Alharthi found that rather than parents' choices to be involved being influenced by mandatory at-home learning, their involvement was more significantly influenced by their self-perceived skills and knowledge (as reflected in the Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995) model level 1). The parents interviewed suggested that their level of involvement increased when courses moved online and that their involvement was related to how prepared their school was for the switch to remote learning. When schools were

unprepared for remote learning, parents had to supplement this lack of preparation by finding their own online learning activities.

In a similar study, Knopik et al. (2021) examined parental involvement in remote learning during COVID-19 in Poland, focusing specifically on the different ways parents approached remote learning and how parents perceived the barriers and benefits of remote learning. Using a two-step cluster analysis for the three methods of support (assistance, motivating support, and intervention), Knopick outlined three categories of prominent approaches to involvement. Knopick's study found that most parents could be described as "committed teachers" who were significantly involved in their child's learning at home. The "committed teacher" parents spent time involved in both direct school support (i.e., explaining education topics to their children) as well as providing technical assistance for their children (i.e., supporting children in their use of technology and managing online calendars). The next largest classification of involved parents identified were "committed teacher-intervener" parents who devoted more time to supporting their children's remote learning and sometimes performed school tasks for their children. The smallest classification of parents was the "autonomy supporting coaches" who were less involved in supporting remote learning directly and instead emphasized the importance of learning independence. While the parents that demonstrated the "autonomy-supporting coach" approach were less likely to help with specific learning tasks, they did provide their children with emotional support throughout the process. Knopick suggests that the role parents assume while supporting their children in remote learning is an indicator of the parents' general perspective of education and its role in the development of their children. Knopick states that these variations in parents' approaches to supporting their children are connected to the significantly different parental views on the benefits of remote learning. For parents who adopted the autonomy-supporting approach, their views on remote education reflected a belief that remote learning was an important opportunity for children to develop independence, while parents who used other approaches focused more on the difficulties associated with remote learning. For the parents who assumed the committed teacher and the committed teacher-intervener approaches, their focus seemed to be on ensuring the regularity of educational activities in which their children's educational endeavours were monitored and controlled. However, Knopick suggested that low-controlled learning environments can benefit students' self-efficacy skills and improve students' internal motivation, both of which can

support learning outcomes. Knopick highlights a variety of potential factors that could influence the role parents take in their approach to supporting their children remotely. They suggest that parents' perceptions of the child's potential, perception of their child's level of independence, the stress related to remote-learning or concern for their child's wellbeing and the amount of work assigned by the teacher all likely played a role in the ways parents were involved.

In a third study conducted in Korea, So et al. (2022) also examined parental involvement in home-based learning during COVID-19. So et al.'s research focused on parental warmth and parental control to explore how these parenting styles impacted their involvement strategies. Parental warmth refers to how parents create a supportive environment that is responsive to their child's needs (So et al., 2022). In contrast, parental control refers to how parents monitor their children and, in relation to remote learning, how they oversee internet usage and establish rules for at-home learning activities (So et al., 2022). Considering parental warmth and control, So et al. outlined four parenting styles relevant to at-home learning. The four styles are permissive (high warmth, low control), laissez-faire (low warmth, low control), authoritative (high warmth, high control), and authoritarian (low warmth, high control). Parents' combination of warmth and control impacts how they support their children with remote learning and restrict the usage of digital technologies (So et al., 2022). Reflecting on the Hoover Dempsey and Sandler model, So et al. present a two-step model for parental involvement where the first level considers parents' motivations for involvement, parents' life contexts that impact involvement and parents' attitudes about digital technologies, their competency with using them and their warmth/control over their use. The second level of the model focuses on four types of parental involvement behaviours: instruction, emotion, material support (technological and spatial), and management. As established in the original Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler model (1995) and Alharthi's (2022) examination of parental involvement in Saudi Arabia, So et al. found that parents' self-efficacy and perceived knowledge skills significantly influence their involvement behaviours. They found that parents with strong self-efficacy beliefs about supporting their children demonstrated more involvement behaviours. They also found that parents' role construction (how they view involvement as part of their role as parents) and parents' perceptions of their time and energy did not influence involvement behaviours. Interestingly, they found that parents' warmth behaviours were a significant factor in their involvement; parents who demonstrated high warmth were

significantly more involved and showed more “presence and support” when their children used digital devices.

Despite the extensive research on parental involvement and the growing research on parental involvement in remote learning, fewer studies consider parental involvement in families of children with SEN. Among the notable projects, scholars Fishman and Nickerson (2014) examined the role of parental involvement in the education of students with SEN, examining how parental involvement choices were predicted by the motivational variables in Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler’s model. They found that unlike the parents described in the Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler model, parents of children with SEN are less involved at home when they perceive their child’s school environment as welcoming. Fishman and Nickerson suggest that this may be explained by parents feeling as though the school is taking sufficient care of their child and that their involvement is not needed. Similarly, they theorize that parents believe that if the school is not in contact with them, their involvement is not required to supplement their child’s learning. It should be noted that Fishman and Nickerson’s examination fails to acknowledge the instances in which parents intentionally choose to be less involved with school at home for their child’s wellbeing. Fishman and Nickerson suggest that it is important that students are encouraged to ask for help from their parents. They state that it is important that these invitations for participation come directly from the child with SEN and that schools should support these students with their self-advocacy practices. They also found that parents of students with SEN may choose to participate in school-based and home-based activities regardless of their perceived time and energy. Fishman and Nickerson also briefly note that the at-school participation of parents of students with SEN may include additional activities such as directly advocating for their child’s needs, seeking updates about their child’s learning experiences and ensuring that their child is effectively supported.

Parental Involvement, COVID-19 and SEN

It is important to note that for many parents, socio-economic status likely impacted their ability to be involved in their children’s learning during COVID-19. Research examining the role of parents’ socio-economic status in relation to their ability to support their child’s learning at home demonstrated that occupational status, level of education and family income impacted the quality and amount of home educational support (Treviño et al., 2021). Parents with low socio-economic status experienced additional barriers during COVID-19, including difficulty accessing

resources, economic hardship, and limited time and energy available to spend on school-related activities. Similarly, parents' priorities during this time were likely impacted by COVID-19 as well. For example, some parents may have felt that their child's social/emotional needs during this uncertain time took priority over schoolwork. Likewise, parents may have had to prioritize other at-home demands such as work responsibilities, childcare duties and housekeeping tasks.

Research has shown that because parents of elementary-aged children with SEN are usually required to take a more active role in their child's learning, this can result in more parent-child conflicts (Touloupis, 2021). Touloupis' study focused on children with learning disabilities and showed that parent-child conflicts often are the result of parents exerting control over their children's learning and using a demanding presence to monitor student homework rather than more beneficial forms of support, such as providing consistent learning guidance. It is important that parents are provided with guidelines and recommendations for supporting their children so that they can ensure they are using strategies that promote learning success. Research examining parents' involvement in their child with SEN's learning during COVID-19 can help establish these suggestions and support the reflection of what services did and did not work best during remote learning. One example of similar recommendations is the Ontario Ministry of Education's Guidebook for Remote Learning (2021), which considers the experiences of families of students with SEN during COVID-19 and outlines recommendations for parents to help improve their children's remote learning experiences. The guidebook recommendations include communicating clearly and regularly with the school to ensure expectations are clear and needs are being met, build knowledge and understanding of special education in order to understand the rights of students with SEN and the processes involved in receiving support, prepare and organize for virtual learning so that students have support in accessing class materials and staying on top of work, promote student advocacy, self-efficacy and self-regulation to ensure that students know that they have access to school support when needed and plan for teaching, assessing and programming by making it clear with the school what the child's need and limits are with regards to learning from home.

Reflecting on the experiences of supporting their children with SEN through remote learning, families' experiences varied depending on the support offered by their children's learning institutions (Whitley et al., 2021). Largely, families reported on the flaws in the emergency remote learning system that left them with additional at-home responsibilities and

failed expectations. Many families reported the difficulties associated with the added responsibilities of supplementing learning and accommodations while managing other at-home tasks (Oppermann et al., 2021; Vatou, 2022; Whitley et al., 2021). Many parents reported a lack of confidence in their abilities to support their child's learning needs from home during the lockdowns (Oppermann et al., 2022; Vatou, 2022; Whitley et al., 2021). As school-provided support varied, the tools and resources accessible to families to support their children were inconsistent across institutions. This variation in school approaches was significant, and in instances where schools offered parents greater social-emotional support, more parents reported feeling more confident in their abilities to assist their children. The uncertainty during the lockdowns and the unprecedented nature of the switch to remote learning meant that the emotional support schools offered likely had a more significant impact (Whitley et al., 2021). Similarly, in instances where parents had increased self-efficacy beliefs and intact social support systems, they reported experiencing less stress (Oppermann et al., 2021). Correlated with this report of less stress, these parents reported engaging in more home-learning activities with their children (Oppermann et al., 2021). As a result, parents' self-efficacy beliefs and access to social support systems during the COVID-19 lockdowns impacted their involvement and engagement in their child's learning (Oppermann et al., 2021).

In summary, research into virtual learning for students with disabilities has demonstrated the need for established resources and guides to better support students engaging in remote learning, aid educators that are creating remote lessons, provide accommodations and assist parents who are helping their children during the remote learning experiences. If not adequately supported or accommodated, remote learning can create additional barriers for students with SEN, and this may increase the time and effort required by parents to supplement learning resources (Alharthi, 2021; Fichten et al., 2009; Kocdar & Bozkurt, 2022). Parental involvement is an important aspect of student learning as, in some forms, it can increase student engagement and positive educational outcomes (Fishman & Nickerson, 2015; Đurišić & Bunijevac, 2017; Li et al., 2019; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995). Parental involvement is particularly important for students with SEN as they may require additional supervision, resources, or support for their success (Fishman & Nickerson, 2014). Importantly, scholars Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995) created a model for parental involvement that examined why parents become involved, how parents become involved and how this involvement impacts student learning. Hoover-

Dempsey and Sandler's model has since been used to assess and discuss parental involvement actions across various contexts, including during COVID-19 and involvement with students with SEN (1995). Research examining parental involvement during COVID-19 demonstrates the benefits of active, effective parental participation (Alharthi, 2022; Knopik et al., 2021; So et al., 2022). However, it should be noted that warm, supportive parental involvement was found to be particularly beneficial during remote learning during the pandemic lockdowns (So et al., 2022; Touloupis, 2021). It is important that parents are provided with guidelines for supporting their children and that both learning institutions and parents create a positive working relationship to ensure student's needs are being met.

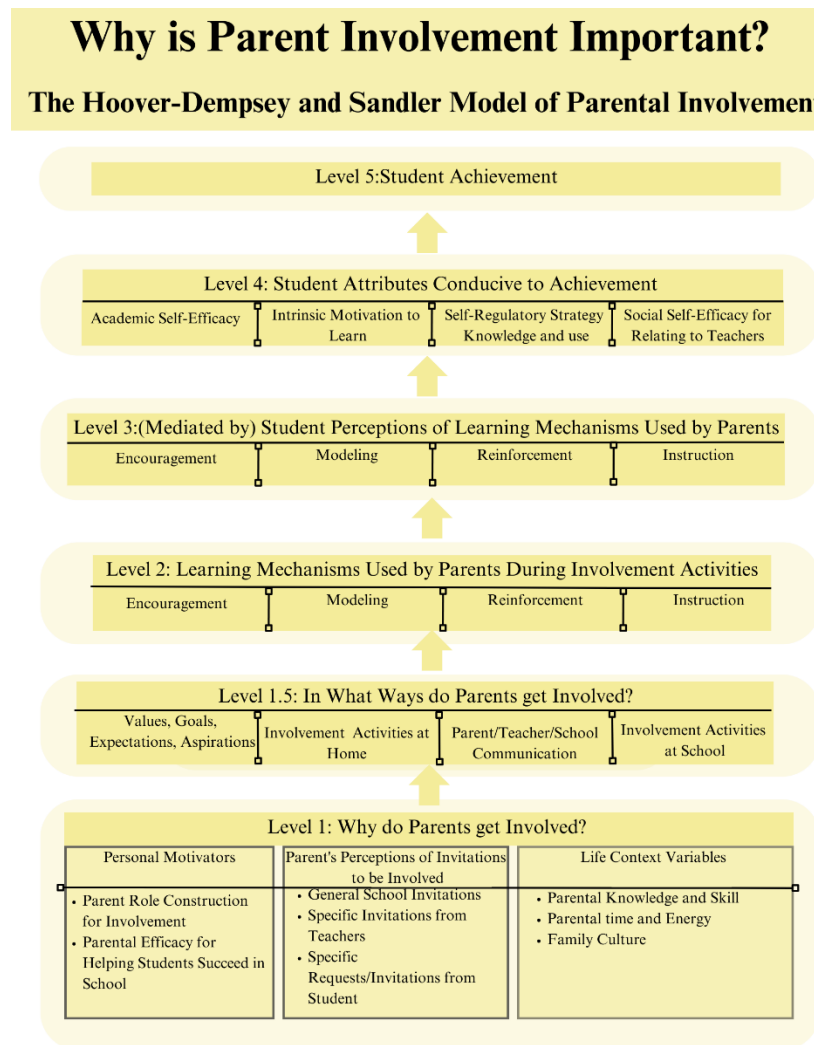
The research on parental involvement has focused primarily on in-school learning, the teacher-parent relationship, and the positive impact of specific types of parent participation on student success within a classroom context (Harris & Robinson, 2016). However, there is a gap in research that considers parents' conceptualization or understanding of learning and how these influence remote at-home learning practices. Similarly, little research has considered the experiences of parental involvement during at-home learning from the perspectives of parents of children with SEN. COVID-19 and the switch to remote learning provided a unique opportunity to examine parental involvement during remote learning and how parents viewed their role in supporting their child(ren) with SEN.

Theoretical Framework

The Hoover Dempsey and Sandler (1995) Model of the parental involvement process has been selected as the theoretical framework of this research for its unique ability to consider multiple aspects of parental participation decisions and actions. Building on the understanding that parental involvement has been shown to benefit children's learning, Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995) examined why parents become involved in their children's learning and how parental involvement positively affects their educational outcomes. The model presents the parental involvement process in 5 levels, which capture why parents become involved, when involved, how they choose to be involved, and how this involvement makes a difference.

Figure 1

Hoover Dempsey and Sandler Model of the Parental Involvement Process



(Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler, 1995, 1997, 2005).

Level 1: Why do Parents become Involved?

The first level of Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler’s (1995) model examines why parents become involved in their children’s learning. Level 1 has three subcategories: personal motivators, parents’ perceptions of invitations to be involved and life context variables (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 2005).

The first subcategory of level 1, personal motivators, includes parental role construction for involvement and parental efficacy for helping students succeed in school. Parental role construction refers to how parents understand their role as parents and whether or not they believe participating in their child’s learning is part of their responsibility. Parental efficacy

refers to parents' belief that they have the necessary skills and opportunities to be actively involved. Strong self-efficacy beliefs support parents in their ability to work through learning challenges with their children. Parents build self-efficacy in various ways, including positive previous involvement experiences, seeing how other parents have been successfully involved, being persuaded by others to be involved, and knowing that the child's well-being or potential for success is at stake.

The second major subcategory of the first level is parents' perceptions of invitations to be involved, which refers to parents' sense that there are opportunities to be involved and that their participation is needed. Invitations for involvement are represented in three primary forms: general school invitations, invitations from the teacher and specific invitations from the child. General invitations refer to the belief that the school environment is welcoming and that the school climate allows for parental participation. Direct teacher invitations for parental involvement make it clear that parents are encouraged to get involved and how this can be achieved. Invitations from the child are instances in which the child seeks support from their parents either explicitly, such as asking for homework help, or implicitly, such as the parents recognizing that their child is having difficulty.

The third principal subcategory of the first level is life context variables, which refer to the broader contexts of parents' lives that impact their ability to participate in their child's learning, such as parental knowledge and skills, parents' perceptions of their available time and energy and family culture. Parental knowledge and skills refer to parents' perceived ability to support their children and how this impacts how they get involved. For example, parents will choose to help with math homework if they believe they have strong math skills. Parent's perceptions of their time and energy refers to whether or not parents feel they have the time and energy to be involved as they balance other life demands (family, work, personal). Family culture refers to the cultural background that parents have that may influence their decisions to be involved, such as whether or not they believe engagement with children's learning should be limited. Similarly, Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler note that "language barriers, limited understanding of school expectations and policies and clashes between family values or priorities and mainstream U.S. values" can impact parental involvement (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, pg., 116, 2005).

Level 1.5: In what ways do Parents get Involved?

Level 1.5 considers the four primary forms of parental involvement: values, goals, expectations, aspirations, involvement activities at home, parent/teacher/school communication and involvement activities at school (Walker et al., 2010). The first category refers to parents' direct communication with their children about their values, goals, expectations and aspirations related to their child's learning and education, which shapes students' educational values (Walker et al., 2010). The second category, involvement in activities at home, refers to participation outside of the school setting, such as providing support with homework, discussing school and making connections between school learning and students' broader interests (Walker et al., 2010). The third category, parent/teacher/school communication, refers to how effective communication and positive relationships between the family and the school support students' academic outcomes (Walker et al., 2010). The fourth category, involvement in activities at school, highlights how parental involvement will look differently for each family and will be impacted by the individual family contexts. As a result, certain school-based activities are not always accessible to every family (Walker et al., 2010).

Level 2: Learning Mechanisms Used by Parents During Involvement Activities

The second level of the Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler model of parental involvement is the four learning mechanisms parents use during involvement activities: encouragement, modelling, reinforcement and instructions (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 2005). Encouragement refers to parents' clear, positive support for their child's learning and educational interests. Modelling suggests that parents can influence their children's learning outcomes by modelling positive school-focused behaviours and attitudes, demonstrating that education is important (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995, 2005). Reinforcement suggests that parents can influence children's learning outcomes by reinforcing specific positive school behaviours, such as showing interest in the child's learning or praising/rewarding the child for engaging in learning activities that encourage these behaviours. Instruction refers to two practices: direct, close-ended instruction, such as commands, requests for correct answers or solving problems the "right way," and direct, open-ended instruction, such as asking questions, encouraging children to explain their thinking and encouraging them to think outside the box. Close-ended instruction promotes factual learning but does not encourage the child toward higher levels of cognitive complexity in the same way that open-ended instruction does. Parental involvement in either form of instruction is likely to promote students' academic success and learning.

Level 3: Mediated by Student Perceptions of Learning Mechanisms Used by Parents

The third level of the Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler model of parental involvement is how the mechanisms for learning that parents use (as outlined in level 2) are perceived by students. Children's perceptions of the learning mechanisms their parents use impact how these mechanisms influence students' behaviours and attitudes about learning (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995, 2005). It is important that children recognize their parents' efforts and see their involvement as meaningful.

Level 4: Student Attributes Conducive to Achievement

The fourth level of the Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler model of parental involvement is student attributes conducive to achievement, which highlights four attributes (beliefs and behaviours) that promote positive educational outcomes and success when embodied by the student (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 2005). The first attribute is academic self-efficacy, which refers to students' beliefs about their ability to complete schoolwork successfully. Students with strong self-efficacy beliefs are more likely to engage in learning opportunities and perform better on these tasks. The second attribute is intrinsic motivation to learn, which refers to students' interest in learning for the sake of learning rather than being motivated by a desired end goal, such as a specific grade or academic achievement. The third attribute is self-regulatory strategies, which refer to a broad series of behaviours and actions that students demonstrate that promote learning success. Examples of self-regulatory strategies outlined by Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler are goal setting, self-assessing, reflecting on the success of their learning goals and strategies and active engagement in learning. The fourth attribute is social self-efficacy for relating to teachers and refers to students' ability to recognize that their engagement and interactions with teachers will result in positive learning outcomes. Students with strong social self-efficacy with teachers have the ability to know how and when to ask for help, how to effectively communicate their needs and how to work well within the classroom community. Developing and demonstrating all four outlined attributes promotes students' learning achievement and supports their development of skills that will support their learning throughout life.

Level 5: Student Achievement

The fifth level of the parental involvement model is the intended cumulative goal of parental involvement and the effective use of the previous four levels, student achievement

(Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1995, 1997, 2005). Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler maintain that parental involvement (as outlined in each level of the model), combined with other contextual factors (demographic factors, school efficacy teaching technique, etc.), will influence students' learning outcomes.

Relevance to the Current Study

The results of the thematic analysis will be discussed in reference to the Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995, 1997, 2005) model of parental involvement. The Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler model will support the interpretation of results and will be reflected in the discussion of the implications of the research findings. The Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler model was selected for its unique capacity to capture both why parents choose to become involved and what forms this involvement takes, which is an integral aspect of examining families' experiences learning online as parental involvement became more salient. While the Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler model does not specifically consider families' experiences with children with SEN, my analysis and discussion will. Reflecting on the experiences of children with SEN while learning online, my research contributes to the large body of literature that considers the Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler model within a variety of contexts. It is important to note that the data from the current study is reflective of parental experiences and parents' understanding and interpretations of their children's experiences. As a result, levels 3 and 4 from the Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler model, which focuses on the children's perspectives of their parent's involvement and the learning attributes for success, cannot effectively be assessed through parental observations. Similarly, since data collection occurred while online learning was still underway, the parental interviews could not consider the child's overall academic outcomes, as highlighted in level 5 of the model. As a result, levels 1, 1.5 and 2 of the Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler model will be the levels referenced in the discussion of the research findings.

It is important to note that the Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler framework is limited in its scope and recognition of the various dimensions of parents' choices and ability to be involved in their child's learning. While the framework highlights three main categories of why parents choose to be involved, there are many reasons and considerations parents make when engaging in their child's educational activities.

The Current Study

There is a gap in research that considers parents' conceptualization or understanding of learning and how these influence at-home learning practices during a time of crisis. Similarly, there is a gap in the literature that examines the impact of at-home learning and parental involvement for students with SEN. While the existing research on remote learning and its impact on students with SENs focuses mainly on the challenges associated with remote delivery and the need for comprehensive solutions, research examining the individual lived experiences of these students and their families is only just beginning to emerge (Ashbury et al., 2020; Basham et al., 2015; Parmigiani et al., 2020). Addressing the research gaps related to parents' conceptualizations of their children's learning during COVID-19 lockdowns and highlighting the experiences of families of children with SEN supports the development of strategies to improve accessibility and adds to the overall understanding of lived experiences of families during COVID-19. My research aims to deepen the emerging literature on remote learning and address the research gap related to parent involvement by considering the following questions:

Thinking specifically of parents of children with SEN,

1. How did parents of children with special education needs view and enact their role in at-home learning during the first COVID-19 lockdown in their region?
2. How were parents' beliefs about learning reflected in the ways in which they were involved in their children's at-home learning?
3. How, if at all, did parents' beliefs about their child's learning shift throughout the COVID-19 lockdown?

It is important to note that the word 'learning' is chosen here to reflect a broad range of experiences where children are taking in new forms of information. This definition is meant to recognize instances in which the 'learning' occurring at home is not directly related to schoolwork but rather encompasses alternative knowledge and skill-building opportunities as well as the cultivation of existing skills. Examples of alternative learning opportunities that might have occurred during this time include learning to bake, learning to play well with siblings or by oneself and learning digital literacies.

My research aims to understand better how parents' thinking about learning related to how learning occurred within the home during the first COVID-19 lockdown.

Methodology

A thematic analysis using secondary data analysis was selected for this study for its ability to illuminate a nuanced understanding of participants' lived experiences. The use of qualitative methodologies in this study allows for the exploration of parents' experiences while considering the contextual factors (i.e., children's needs, family dynamics, school-offered resources and support) within which their individual perspectives are situated (Leko et al., 2021). Notably, as my study considers the experiences of families of students with special educational needs, using a qualitative methodology allows for the participants' voices to be centred and ensures that they are able to share and highlight the aspects of at-home learning that they deem most significant.

In the spring of 2020, a team of researchers, of which I am a member, conducted a mixed-methods study to examine parents' experience assisting their children in remote emergency at-home learning. The study's goal was to hear from parents directly about their experiences with students with SEN studying at home. The study included 36 semi-structured interviews with Canadian parents of students with disabilities, exploring their experiences with remote learning. An ethical review from the Research Ethics Board at the University of Ottawa was obtained before the study began. The interviews comprised the qualitative aspect of a larger mixed-methods study.

Recruitment

Participants were recruited and interviewed during the Spring and Summer of 2020 when provinces began initial lockdowns and schools transitioned to at-home learning. Participants of the interviews were eligible for participation if they were a parent/guardian of a child or adolescent enrolled in a school (e.g., not normally homeschooled) with a special education need. Recruitment of possible participants was conducted through paid Facebook and Instagram ads posted on the social media pages of research team members and through provincial advocacy organizations. Using multiple platforms and methods for recruiting increased the visibility of the project and helped to reach a larger audience of potential participants. The ads specified that parents/guardians of children with special education needs are eligible if their child 'receives special education services and/or has a formal identification or diagnosis and/or has an individual education, program or behaviour plan.' Parents/guardians who were interested in participating replied to the ads via email or participated in the survey portion of the mixed methods research

project. Once completed, survey participants had an opportunity to indicate their interest in a follow-up interview.

Participants

As previously mentioned, 36 parents/guardians took part in an interview. Of the 36 interviews, 14 have been selected to be analyzed. The 14 transcripts were selected as they focused on the experiences of parents of children in grades 1-6. I have excluded interviews with parents of children in kindergarten, middle school and high school, as the child's grade level impacts parental involvement. Various research has demonstrated that students in elementary grades rely on parental guidance and supervision more than secondary grades (e.g., Wei et al., 2019). However, the effect of parent involvement in homework on achievement has also been found to increase in secondary grades as homework becomes more frequent and tightly related to achievement (e.g., Nunez et al., 2015). Given the varied findings, I decided to select the interviews with parents of children in grades 1-6 to allow for homogeneity of experience in the large sample of available data.

Of the 14 participants selected, 12 were mothers, one was a father, and one was a family member with full custody. Participation in the interviews was open to parents across Canada. However, most participants (11) were from Ontario, with the other 3 participants being from Manitoba, Nova Scotia and British Columbia. Most of the children with special education needs were in Grades 4-6 (69%), with the remaining 31% in Grades 1-3. The parents reported various special educational needs, including intellectual disabilities, attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder, dyslexia, autism spectrum disorder, and cerebral palsy.

Figure 2

Participant Demographics

Pseudonym	Relationship	Child Grade	Child SEN	Location
Cathy	Mother	6	Developmental Disability/No formal	Ontario
Jen	Family member	6/4	Learning disability, mild intellectual disability, genetic components	Ontario
Amy	Mother	4	ASD, ADHD, microcephaly, developmental disability (moderate)	Ontario

Pseudonym	Relationship	Child Grade	Child SEN	Location
Cindy	Mother	6	Down syndrome, low vision, heart and lung problems,	BC
Lisa	Mother	5	FASD, ASD, dyslexia, ADHD	Ontario
Kim	Mother	1	ADHD, sensory processing challenges, sensory seeking behaviours, motor planning challenges, emotionally and socially behind	Manitoba
Andrea	Mother	2	Mowat-Wilson syndrome	Ontario
Nicole	Mother	5	ADHD/Dyslexia	Ontario
Laura	Mother	4	Dyslexia	Ontario
Mary	Mother	2	Stutter + (social) anxiety; ADHD + ASD; Speech delay + fine/gross motor delays	Ontario
Steve	Father	6	Specific learning disability, reading and writing	Nova Scotia
Julia	Mother	6	ASD moderate-severe, intellectual disability severe-profound	Ontario
Erin	Mother	5	Severe epilepsy; chromosomal abnormality	Ontario
Ann	Mother	1	Difficulties related to phonetics, reading and writing	Ontario

Interviews

The interviews were semi-structured and focused on both the experiences of the children specifically as well as the experience of the family more generally with COVID-19 school closures and remote learning. The interviews were conducted by a team of researchers at the University of Ottawa. The interviewers encouraged parents to broadly reflect on their children's educational experiences and to specifically consider their experiences during COVID-19 and the school closures. Interviewers followed four main prompts (Appendix A) that guided participants in sharing demographic information, information about their child(ren) with SEN, their current remote-learning circumstances and their overall reflections on the remote-learning experience.

Each main prompt included 3-7 sample questions, though the loose structure of the interviews allowed participants to share their experiences openly, encouraging various topics to be discussed. The interviews were conducted remotely via Zoom or by telephone. All of the interviews were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim. The interviews lasted between 31 minutes and 1 hour and 30 minutes, with an average of 55 minutes. The semi-structured nature of the interviews allowed for the variation in interview length as participants were encouraged to speak about their experiences more broadly without a strict set of questions; this resulted in some parents speaking more at length about their experience. Verbatim transcripts were returned to the participants by e-mail for member checking. Participants were given two weeks to make any changes. None of the participants requested that changes be made.

Data Analysis

I drew from the rich interview data to conduct a thematic analysis, using both inductive and deductive coding to identify common and unique themes emerging from the participants' experiences (Nowell et al., 2017) within the three research questions considered as a whole. In addition to deriving codes from my data, I also set out to analyze my data with an awareness of and consideration for the Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler framework for parental involvement. The Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler framework is considered along with the results of my analysis in the discussion section of my research. I deployed trustworthy coding standards for all interviews. I followed the six steps for conducting a thematic analysis as described by Braun and Clarke (2006). I began by familiarizing myself with the data through an initial read-through of the interview transcripts. This initial read-through allowed me to immerse myself in the data and take note of any initial observations. Once I completed the initial read-through, I revisited the transcripts and began organizing the data and generating codes of information that I considered potentially significant. I examined relationships between the codes and developed themes that reflected repeated or significant information from the data. These themes were then reviewed to ensure they reflected the data, and I merged themes that overlapped. Themes were clearly defined and named to reflect their content. I establish trustworthiness with honest reporting of findings and demonstrate validity by ensuring my measures of concepts are clear and the same for all transcripts. I also establish trustworthiness by using direct quotes from the transcripts to demonstrate the themes that emerged during my analysis. I establish credibility through peer debriefing with my supervisor, transferability by providing thick descriptions and using direct

quotes from participants and dependability by recording clear descriptions of the research process (Nowell et al., 2017).

Analysis Process

I coded each transcript for segments of data that were relevant to or captured something interesting about the research questions. Similarly, I also coded the documents with consideration of the Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler framework for parental involvement. I did not have pre-set codes prior to this coding process but rather initial ideas of possible subjects that were likely to emerge, and I developed and modified codes as I worked through the analysis of the transcripts. Following completing step 1 (familiarizing myself with the data), I developed initial ideas of codes, such as specific involvement actions that frequently emerged or the impact of these actions. I worked through each transcript separately, coding each segment of text that I deemed relevant to address my research question related to the Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler framework or for its frequency in appearing among various transcripts. I used NVIVO software for the coding, which allowed me to highlight sections of text, assign a code to the sections and then review all the quotes associated with those codes. Overall, 87 initial codes emerged across the 14 transcripts. My codes ranged from single references to the most used code, “involvement-advocacy,” which was referenced 70 times across 12 of the 14 transcripts. The codes and references reflected in each significant theme and subtheme of the findings are reflected in Appendix C. My codes captured various parents’ experiences with the specific involvement actions parents took, the contexts that impacted parents’ involvement and the outcomes of these involvement experiences. Following my development of the 87 codes, I began reviewing each code’s significance and relation to the other codes to begin developing themes. During this early process, I drew various diagrams to visualize how the data and themes connected (see Appendix B). Through this visualization process, I was able to highlight a variety of themes and subthemes.

Results

During my thematic analysis, I constructed three main themes from the data. Within each theme, I also constructed sub-themes representing nuanced dimensions of the top-level theme. The three main themes and related subthemes are listed and then described below as well, and the codes used to represent each theme are in Appendix C:

1. Common involvement actions
 - Advocacy

- Time and Energy: What it takes to provide support.
 - Utilizing Outside Sources
2. Factors and contexts that influence involvement
 - Life Contexts
 - Access to Resources
 - Access to Support
 - How Experience Shapes Experience
 3. How involvement actions and experience influence learning beliefs
 - Thinking About Others
 - Reflecting on Learning
 - Moving Forward

Theme One: Common Involvement Actions

The first theme, *Common Involvement Actions*, captures the three most commonly referenced forms of involvement that parents enacted during their experiences with at-home learning: a) advocacy, b) time and energy: what it takes to provide support and c) utilizing outside resources. While parents were likely involved in multiple ways, the *Common Involvement Actions* theme examines the actions parents spoke about most and the actions that required the most attention and active involvement and summarize them into three subthemes. These sub-themes are intertwined in many ways for example, parental advocacy is also captured in *time, energy and individualized support* since advocacy is an involvement action that requires significant and persistent focus from parents.

Advocacy

The first subtheme, *advocacy*, refers to the notable instances in which parents either explicitly mentioned their advocacy or discussed instances of speaking up for their child's needs by sharing their questions, comments, and concerns with the school. For many parents, advocacy was used prior to the pandemic as well as during the at-home learning experiences. Advocacy was the most referenced code (referenced 70 times across 12 of the 14 transcripts) as parents spoke about the various times in which they needed to advocate for their child (prior to at-home learning, during at-home learning and the transition back to in-person learning) and how they often had to advocate in a variety of settings with different collaborators (doctors, teachers, educational staff, administrators).

Participant Jen spoke about the process of advocating for their child's right to an education by saying, "and I always advocated...like, yes, she has a disability. She has a few disabilities and challenges, but she needs to be educated. It always aggravated me that she wasn't really being educated." Similarly, another parent, Julia, spoke about the importance of being an advocate for their non-vocal child by sharing,

I'm sure that if my son would like express himself more, I would want to take much more of a backseat. Right? But, like, when you have non-vocal kids, I think parents of non-vocal kids are actually the loudest parents in the room.

For this parent they recognize their role as an advocate as vital to having their child's needs met and their experience heard. It was clear to the parent participants that advocacy was an important aspect of their involvement. Parents could share how their previous experience with advocating for their child's needs resulted in fundamental beneficial changes for their child. For one parent, their advocacy meant that their child's needs were being met in ways that their peers' needs were not. Jen went on to share their pride in their accomplished advocacy.

So I'm going to say this, like, I'm not trying to toot my own horn here at all... these girls get, during regular class, way better attention than a lot, and it's because of the hardcore advocacy and fighting that we've done.

However, not every instance of advocacy was successful. Multiple (5) participants shared their more negative experiences where educational administration disagreed with their requests or demands for change, making advocating more difficult. The advocacy pushback code was used to identify instances where parents had to put in additional effort to convince stakeholders of their advocacy efforts, and many parents shared experiences where they felt their advocacy was not adequately considered. "Advocacy pushback was referenced 20 times across five transcripts. For some families, these experiences of demanding advocacy resulted in them describing a more forward, or in some instances, combative approach to advocating for their child. Participant Mary shared their experience with pushing for their child's needs by sharing, "And yeah, I caused a bit of a stink about that, too. I called up the school board and laid in on them." Similarly, another parent, Laura, spoke about their experience demanding support, explaining,

Yeah, but that's as of, like, the blood, sweat and tears at home. Not because they volunteered, not because they were concerned about my child's progress, or lack thereof, it was because I had to come out with daggers and emails.

This forward and often combative approach to advocacy is supported by parents' confidence in knowing what is best for their child. Eight of the parents spoke about how their confidence in advocating for their child's needs grew during at-home learning as they became increasingly aware of how their child's needs were best met and the strategies that worked best to support their learning. Notably, one parent, Erin, described the significant progress their child made during at-home learning,

He can learn anything as long as we stick to it every single day. And so that's what I've been doing. So, we made up task baskets. He's got a box for each subject.

Erin's experience with their child's progress with learning at home encouraged them to advocate for their child by organizing more 'task baskets' for the transition to in-person learning. Erin saw how these prepared task baskets, which included home-made handouts and course material, supported their child's learning, and they knew that this approach would benefit them in-person and, as a result, championed this technique with their child's teacher explaining, "and I said, look, if you give him the task basket, and you tell him that this is what he needs to be working on until it is complete. He'll finish it."

Similarly, Laura shared how the virtual aspect of at-home learning increased their confidence with advocacy, stating,

Another silver lining, I guess, of the pandemic is that it's really empowered me to correspond electronically with the school. In the past, you know, they've always kind of insisted on doing it in their paper notebooks. But now, with a pandemic, the teachers have been forced to give out their email addresses. And so when they sent the paper consultation form home in September to ask me for my input on her IEP, I took the questions and promptly wrote them in an email and sent my answers electronically.

While most (12 of the 14) parents identified advocacy as a primary involvement action, they also spoke about how it required their ongoing effort and recognized that this effort was essential to ensuring their child with SEN was being accommodated and supported in their learning.

Time and Energy: What it Takes to Provide Support

The second subtheme, *time, energy, and individual support*, refers to instances in which parents provided help with school assignments, homework, course scheduling and attendance and the organization or prioritization of learning materials and the time and energy they used to be involved in these ways. Time refers to both the time parents spent working with their child (e.g., the amount of time spent looking for resources or sitting in on student's classes) as well as the other commitments that were balanced or sacrificed during this time (e.g., giving up work hours to focus on child's learning). Energy refers to the physical, cognitive, and emotional energy used during at-home learning. For many families, providing one-on-one support for children meant taking on additional tasks during an already complex and uncertain time. Twelve of the 14 participants shared that their involvement required significant time and energy.

As previously mentioned, advocating was one example of involvement that required significant time and energy from parents. Parents who spoke about their role as advocates also often shared how onerous this task could be, especially when they faced rejection or what they felt was an unnecessary delay. In reference to their experience advocating and struggling to have their child's needs met, Laura shared, "I guess to a certain extent, I'm proud of it. But I'm also angry. I'm angry at the number of hours and time and emails and conversations that I had to have to make that happen." Similarly, Laura spoke about the difficulty ensuring appropriate accommodations were in place for their child and the additional work it took to ensure their child received what was outlined in their IEP.

And every time I would send them an email, they would ask to have a phone call to discuss, and I would take the phone call. I would then summarize what we had talked about and write back to them, but it's been hours upon hours of fighting to get her the appropriate accommodations and to make sure that things were implemented properly.

In addition to advocating for their children, many parents (8 of the 14) spoke about how when at-home learning began, they took on the additional role of being their child's educator and how this conflicted with their full-time working schedule. For some families (5 of the 14), to support their child through at-home learning, they had to sacrifice other tasks, such as work responsibilities and alter their full-time work schedules to accommodate their new roles. Cathy and Kim spoke about needing to change or cut back their working hours.

We've struggled because I'm working more than ever, and my husband's had to stop working. Pretty much he's had to, and it's taken us this long, and he still has work so far. He's trying to ramp down his work so that he can become a teacher.

I did manage to reorganize my schedule. And that's the other thing, I just, I finally said to my supervisor, I said, I cannot do this anymore. I'm working 12-hour days, almost seven days a week.

It was extremely challenging. Like, my husband is extremely busy with his work. He routinely works early mornings, evenings, you know, as in constant all-day meetings. So, between trying to keep the kids quiet so that he can get through his meetings and I was also working, I was fortunate that I wasn't very busy with my job, and by about May, I just cut back to part-time hours.

However, cutting back working hours was not an option for every family, and instead, these families had to continue to try and balance multiple demands, which took a toll. Jen spoke about the difficulty overseeing their child's learning while completing other tasks, saying, "I know they need to be watched literally, from the moment they start to work to the end. I can't do it all the time, and they know it, and they'll take advantage of it." Similarly, Mary shared how they prioritized their child's learning over their own needs, "It was a lot of work, and a lot of that earlier time is just a blur now because there wasn't sleeping, not relaxing."

For some families (referenced in 6 of the 14 transcripts), their personal circumstances allowed them to be involved in specific ways that might not have been accessible to every family. For Lisa's family, this meant creating new daily activities, such as allotting time for 40 minutes of math work, which they referred to as "daily math." Mary even discussed exceeding schoolwork expectations.

The teachers were saying that the kids needed to get an hour's worth of work done a day. Which was, again, because of my situation; I was saying the kids were doing more than that, significantly more than that. My oldest one was doing probably four or five hours a day.

However, involvement was sometimes less of a choice and more of a necessity for parents to meet their child's needs. Three parents spoke about needing to work beside their children in

order for them to stay on task and be available to provide their children with support when required. Amy shared their experience.

What I do with her when she's doing her work is I sit beside her. And I'm right there; she needs a question, and I can see exactly what it is. Whereas if I get up and walk away, she says, "Mommy, I'm stuck." I can't answer her directly. I have to go back and kind of look at what she was doing and figure out where she, you know, tripped up.

Being involved in their child's learning took a personal toll on parents and the additional stress this put on them and their families. One participant spoke about the added work of involvement and the strain this can create, saying, "She loves reading books; she can read books. I mean, it got to a point where we were exhausted from reading books to her." Similarly, another parent noted, "she needs constant attention, which is exhausting and draining." Additionally, four parents spoke about the strain of balancing multiple platforms; Ann stated,

Google Classroom super easy to use, but I find it doesn't tell you if they post something new. So, I have to remember to go on there and check, which my kids are always getting mad at me because I don't do that enough. I will admit that I forgot.

Providing children with curated support required, in some cases, extraordinary time and energy from parents and, for many, placed additional pressure on the at-home learning environment.

Utilizing Outside Resources

The third subtheme, *utilizing outside resources*, refers to instances in which parents sought out and used learning resources and accommodations other than those offered by the school. For some parents, using outside resources included paying for tutors, subscriptions to learning resources and finding material online.

Parents shared a variety of reasons for accessing different resources. Many families (11 of the 14) spoke about how they felt they needed to access supplementary resources to either add to or replace the school-provided work. During the early parts of the initial lockdowns, some families had to find resources because their schools had not yet provided any work for their children. One parent, Cathy, shared, "I basically started looking around myself for what we could do that would be decent material for her because the school had never managed to produce any." In other cases, parents sought additional support because the work provided was too challenging for their child and did not address their child's learning needs. Lisa spoke about the difficulty of

working with their child without knowing how to accommodate them, saying, “That’s when I called the O.G. tutor and said I need help because he’d meltdown on me and shutting down and freaking out.” For these families, accessing these outside resources helped to improve their child’s at-home learning experience. Similarly, Erin shared their experience receiving work that was inaccessible to their child and how they began creating their own work that was submitted to the teacher to supplement this.

And it meant nothing to him because it was so much. It was photocopied black and white. And the photocopies weren’t the clearest at times. And so, to him, it was just crap. Like he really didn’t enjoy it. And getting him to do it, he’s not a writer anyway. So, I was like, you guys, I can’t do this. This is not specified to him. So, I just stopped doing them. And I just told this teacher that we were going to do our own version. And we sent back our steps every two weeks on our own.

Supplementing insufficient materials was not the only reason parents sought out resources. Instead, two families accessed external resources as lockdowns began before schools offered work. Amy and Cathy shared,

So, the minute we stopped, I just reached out to some of my homeschooling friends and said, okay, you know (child’s name), ...what program is best for her? So I bought a program immediately. I bought two programs, actually one that was the one that I used with my son.

And so, we did that we went online, we went to a program that I had known about already for some time called Readtopia. Readtopia was offering free modules. So, we downloaded it all

Some parents (7 of the 14) spoke about how they had already been accessing outside resources, and when at-home learning began, they looked to these services to provide learning support in ways that some schools were not yet equipped to do. Laura spoke about the resources they had set up, stating,

So, we do private tutoring at home. And at the very beginning of the pandemic, the tutoring lessons were put on hold. But the private company was within a week or two; they were up on Zoom online tutoring. And it turns out that tutoring online is just as

effective, if not maybe more. So, the tutors can do all these really fun online learning games with the students; it's interactive, and it's multi-sensory.

Accessing additional resources was a common involvement action that many parents were familiar with as they had already been using tutors and online programs prior to at-home learning to support their children with SEN.

It should be noted that the ability to access additional resources was not accessible for every family, and in many cases, the additional resources utilized were purchased. The accessibility of additional resources used to supplement inadequate work will be discussed in sub-themes reflected in the second and third major themes.

Each of the involvement actions was impacted by various contexts and circumstances that either impeded or influenced parents' involvement; these contexts are highlighted in the sub-themes of theme two.

Theme Two: Factors and Contexts that Influence Involvement

The second main theme, *Factors and Contexts That Influence Involvement*, refers to the different variables that relate to parents' involvement experiences. The second theme reflects the most frequent variables that emerged through thematic analysis that either facilitate or impede parents' ability to be involved and the forms their involvement took. Parents' ability to be involved in any or all of the three ways described (advocacy, accessing outside resources, time and energy: what it takes to provide support) was greatly impacted by a variety of factors. These factors were either experienced by all participants, such as the context of the pandemic or were specific to individual families. Since the context of the crisis (the pandemic) was experienced by all participants, the following subthemes focus on the individual contexts, though these individual factors were also affected by the pandemic and lockdowns. The individual factors are divided into four sub-themes: a) life contexts, b) access to resources, c) access to support and d) how experience shapes experience.

Life Contexts

The first subtheme, *life contexts*, refers to the variety in the individual families' lives that shaped their experience with at-home learning. This subtheme also captures how parents' response to external pressure and self-perception of efficacy during at-home learning impacted their experience. The COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent lockdowns impacted every parent's involvement and every family's experience with at-home learning differently.

As previously mentioned, one of the most significant life contexts that differed among families was the balance of work responsibilities. Though participants were not explicitly asked about their work circumstances, almost all chose to share how the pandemic and at-home learning impacted their employment. The various work circumstances included those who worked from home, essential workers who worked outside the home and those who were not working during the lockdown. The different work circumstances impacted parents' available time and energy to be involved in their child's at-home learning. As examined in the first theme, *involvement actions*, many families (8 of the 14) discussed having difficulty balancing both work responsibilities and their child's learning needs. For some families, this meant reducing work tasks. In other cases, the difficulty balancing all demands meant families reduced at-home learning expectations. Ann shared, "I'm trying to work. I have two jobs. And so, I gave up; I think we lasted a week. And then we just gave up on that. There was no way that it was going to happen." Similarly, Ann talked about their experience trying to attend both work meetings and be present for their child's classes.

The challenge was just like trying to keep up with it. And every time that they would have, like, a live class, inevitably, I would have a meeting scheduled. And so, she just wasn't able to attend. And she's just, like, just a little bit too little to be able to do that on her own, without me being there to help with using the technology and staying on task. So, she did most of it kind of on her own.

The variety in work demands significantly changed what parental involvement looked like for each family and, as a result, what their child's involvement in virtual learning looked like.

Another important life variable that impacted families' at-home learning experiences was how many adults were available to support the learning process. Differences in family structures, multi-guardian homes, single-parent homes, and the adults' individual responsibilities impacted virtual learning experiences. Nicole shared how they were able to split the at-home learning responsibilities with their partner, stating,

Yeah, there were lots of tears; I'm not gonna lie like that was- it was hard, it was really, really hard. My husband focused on working on math with him. And I worked on English, and we sort of did the best we could.

Having multiple adults able to work on a variety of topics provided some families with more opportunities for balance with work demands. However, this also meant that both parents were balancing work duties with their child's learning needs, which not every job could accommodate.

Along with the impact of family dynamics, the number of children learning from home, their age and their needs greatly affected families' experiences with at-home learning. Six parents spoke about the difficulty of supporting multiple children from different grades, classes and ability levels. Andrea, Laura and Mary all shared,

And for me, like outside of (child's name), one of the biggest challenges is people saying, well, just ask your older kids to help. Honestly, to me, that's the biggest challenge is, you know, it could be anything. It could be, oh, yeah, just have to have the older girls help out with house chores. But what people don't realize is that these kids are doing more than normal kids are doing as it is.

Um, so and then trying to support both kids. Like, it wasn't just one; I had my son as well. You know, and if you just leave them on their own, even though they're a little bit older, I mean, A) they start to fight, B) What kid is going to choose doing their schoolwork over watching YouTube? And how are you supposed to control that when they're on, they have to be on the computer to do their work? They need supervision, right?

So, it's been good for that. But the problem with all of the kids having teachers from different schools is that all of their schedules are different.

For these families, trying to meet the needs of multiple children played a significant role in how they reflected on their at-home learning experience and their ability to balance other life responsibilities.

Another important variable that impacted families' experiences was parents' self-efficacy in supporting their children with SEN. Julia spoke about having high self-efficacy and confidence in their abilities, "Like, I've had breakthroughs with my kid where he is doing things he never did before. But that's just because I had the time and, like, I have a specialized skill set." However, in contrast, many parents (9 of the 14) shared their difficulty with supporting their children because of their lack of self-confidence in their teaching and accommodating

abilities. Jen, Lisa, and Erin echoed similar sentiments such as “I’m not the teacher here,” “Parents don’t have the resources, and they also don’t have the education base to be teachers, so I feel like that’s a recipe for disaster,” “teachers are trained to better support, I’m not a teacher, I can’t, I can’t. I’m not trained to think of the best ways to support him in those ways” and “when he started coming home, I panicked. Because I was like, well, what am I going to do with him? Because they have a special program there for him and know what they are doing.” It was clear that many of the parents worried about their ability to support their child’s needs from home, and they recognized that their child had previously been receiving specialized support from professionals with specific expertise to modify, accommodate and evaluate work.

Parents also spoke about varying degrees of pressure they felt to provide their children with adequate support from home and continue their learning without losing significant progress. Parents shared their distress over working with their child for years to build learning skills and learning confidence that was impacted by the switch to remote learning. Specifically, Jen, Amy and Lisa shared,

Yeah, and it was really aggravating for me all these years of work just for COVID-19 to happen, and the consistency just went out the window. So that’s horrible, too. That’s like building an empire of hard work, and then all your work is done because with children like this if you’re inconsistent for a short period of time, you need to restart.

With the bottom-line fear of whatever I do, I don’t want to lose this placement because it works. We worked so hard to get it. So, whatever I do always has that in the back of my mind.

But the child had, like, zero academic progress in three years. I don’t want to say zero, but it’s pretty close. He actually regressed badly... he left the private school at the end of grade two. He was doing his best when he did Grade 1 and even in kindergarten. So when I heard that schools could be closed for two weeks after March Break, I thought, oh, no.

The additional pressure families of students with SEN felt to not lose the progress that had been built over several years, as well as not lose access to highly coveted school placements, had

impacts on parents' involvement with at-home learning and perspectives on their priorities at the time.

One of the most significant variables reflected in multiple themes throughout my analysis is the family's socioeconomic status. Parents' ability to work from home or take time away from work and access additional tools and resources that cost money impacted their experience working with their children from home. As previously highlighted, families that could afford to do so often accessed additional resources such as tutors and online programs that helped to supplement insufficient school-provided course work or add to children's learning support. Six of the families spoke specifically about feeling privileged to have access to the financial means to purchase additional materials, while others shared the additional strain this caused. Jen mentioned incurring additional costs, stating, "I mean, the money we're saving in terms of our daycare is being offset by lots of other costs as well." Similarly, Mary also shared their experience with purchasing additional resources despite it causing potential financial strain.

I focused on everything that I could; I picked her up a Momo weighted frog; I have been nonstop all year trying to find different adaptations and accommodations to make it work. But it's hard because I'm not working. So, the money is coming out of my imaginary pocket of money that I have somewhere. I don't exactly know where, but I'll pay for it later.

Families' abilities to access needed resources impacted both the child's access to learning and accommodation materials as well as the stress families were experiencing.

Different life variables and contexts meant families all experienced at-home learning differently. Some families had life contexts that may have impacted their involvement ability in positive ways, while other families might have been impacted more negatively, but largely, families experienced both ups and downs across multiple contexts.

Access to Resources

The second subtheme, *access to resources*, refers to families' access to learning materials, tools, and accommodations and how they felt about the learning resources provided by their child's learning institution.

As previously mentioned, families' ability to access resources, especially resources that cost money, significantly impacted their experiences with at-home learning both academically as well as their broader experience working from home with their child. In addition to families

having the financial means to access specific resources, they also needed to be aware of what resources to access that would help support their child's learning or accommodate their needs. Many parents named specific programs that they purchased or accessed and liked. However, not every family was aware of the available websites or programs. Laura spoke about not knowing what resources the school offered until they hired a consultant.

The consultant that we hired and paid for, she informed us and...when I talk about the journey, you know, like, as a parent, you don't necessarily know that these tools are available to you. And sometimes it can take a long time to figure out, and I mean, looking back in retrospect, as an outsider, it might seem like, Oh, of course, like you should have known about that. But how would you know, you know what I mean?

The consultant informed the family of resources accessible through their child's school that they had not previously heard of or considered. It should also be noted that likely not all families are aware of consultant services either, making it difficult to access the information they are unaware of. Instead, a few families (2) reached out to other people (their child's teacher, friends with homeschooling experience) to inquire about what additional resources might be beneficial during at-home learning.

For some families, their access to resources was a result of these resources being set up prior to the switch to at-home learning. Laura and Amy shared,

And I mean, with (the child's name), the top priority actually was her private tutoring because I feel that that was the only real intervention that she was getting that was going to help her move forward...

And I, like I, had relationships with all the teachers. So, they gave me everything they were working on, like all of the worksheets, because they weren't going to use them for the next three weeks. So, they gave me everything. I always worked with her.

In addition to families having difficulty knowing what resources to utilize or access, some families also experienced additional barriers due to their lack of or difficulty accessing the necessary technology for virtual learning. Mary spoke about this experience.

I bought them Chromebooks because the school only gave us one. They knew I had three kids, but the school gave us one Chromebook to use. So I was rotating with three kids,

trying to get them into all of their classes with one Chromebook. So, now I have Chromebooks for all of them.

Six of the families that did have access to technology spoke about recognizing how privileged they were. Jen stated specifically,

Again, we are a family with great privilege. And we have, you know, full internet accessibility 24 hours a day, no issues with connections or anything like that.

It is a common theme within parents' interviews that they recognize that they are uniquely privileged to be able to not only access virtual learning but also that they have the means to access additional resources to support their child.

Access to Support

The third subtheme, *access to support*, refers to families' ability to obtain both respite care for parents as well as educational and social/emotional support for their children. The theme of access to support addresses ways in which parents' ability to access different types of support impacted their at-home learning experiences.

One recurring theme that parents raised was the significance of having support personnel who knew how to attend to their child's specific needs and the difference this makes in their child's learning experience. Mary spoke about the positive impact of having a teacher willing to work with their child to accommodate their needs.

So, presenting isn't really something that works for her. So, she was allowed to submit things in writing. So, when she did a project, she could just type it out and then submit it. So, her teacher, her first teacher, was fantastic with us. But I think that the first teacher is probably a lot more aware of what's going on with her than any of the new teachers.

Similarly, another parent, Nicole, also spoke to the importance of having an educational assistant equipped to support their child's specific needs.

So, like, fast forward to today, there's an EA in the classroom who seems to really specifically know how to support a child who has dyslexia, to motivate him to pinpoint exactly his areas of need and target those kinds of behaviours specifically.

In contrast, not every family had access to a positive support team and instead reported losing out on the support that their child had been receiving prior to at-home learning. Despite having access to sufficient support at the beginning of the new year, Nicole's family spoke about how the change in available services when the transition to online learning occurred was so

significant that it impacted their decision not to continue at-home learning when in-person learning became available.

So, I would say like in that March to June time, his EA and his IEP were not followed at all. There were lots of things that he really struggled with, that he had support for through tech and, through training and through one-on-one support that he did not get, but I'm not sure how feasible that would be online. And it's one of the reasons that we actually, again, one of the reasons that he's in that physical building now; he's just about to walk in the door.

Losing access to support their child received during in-person learning greatly shaped how the parents reflected on their child's experience learning from home. In addition to losing the support they previously had access to, families reported the increased difficulty of finding available professionals with the necessary skill set to provide either learning or respite care. Andrea stated, "It's impossible to find workers." Lisa also echoed a similar experience, sharing, "I have very wealthy cousins willing to pay anything for tutoring, private school, anything like that, but we can't find anybody to keep him." Since many families were in a similar situation, finding available support during the lockdowns was exceedingly difficult.

Similarly, parents also had challenges finding adequate support for themselves. Nicole spoke to the reality of prioritizing their child's needs over their own sharing, "Typically, as I think moms/parents do, we take care of- try to take care of everybody else first." The context of at-home learning made it difficult for parents to balance their own needs with the needs of their children, and for many, accessing support for their children was prioritized. Jen stated,

And being isolated from my co-workers and from the support system as well. And educating two special needs children at the same time, and my husband works night shifts, so he was not able during the day to support me.

The lack of available services for parents added strain on the overall at-home learning experience, where parents took on multiple additional roles in their attempt to ensure their child's academic and emotional needs were being met.

It should also be noted that another significant factor that emerged in three interviews was the lack of access to support services in French programs. Mary and Ann spoke about the availability of support in French programs sharing,

She gets nothing. In the French Immersion program, they don't have access to any of the services available in the regular schooling.

And I had a really hard time with the lack of support the French immersion received through (the school board), which is basically none.

These parents shared that they could not access support or resources when their child was enrolled in a French-focused program, and for many families, this meant switching their child into a primarily English stream.

In contrast to the parents who had difficulty finding services, some parents spoke about how seeking services prior to the lockdown allowed them to access support that would have been difficult to find during at-home learning. These parents shared that they were able to access care prior to the official start of at-home learning and that this proactive response benefited their ability to access needed aid. Andrea shared,

And if I didn't have those two girls who were students, and if I wasn't one of those parents that was lucky enough to have it set up during the March Break, because I had that instinct. Like because my gut ...if I didn't have that instinct, I would have been in a lot of trouble. I mean, everything would have shut down for us. There is no way.

It is clear that parents' ability to access support services for their child or themselves during at-home learning shaped their experience and impacted how they reflected on their time working with their children from home.

How Experience Shapes Experience

The fourth subtheme, *How Experience Shapes Experience*, refers to parents' beliefs about their child and their child's learning, which included their understanding of their child's previous educational experiences, their learning strengths, weaknesses and needs and how these shaped how they approached at-home learning.

Eleven parents shared how their well-developed understanding of their child's learning capacities and preferences allowed them to focus on the material they felt was most important and, in many cases, pause their learning in some subjects. Multiple families discussed prioritizing math and literacy subjects over second language courses or arts-based subjects. Steve shared,

And then, in March, when they shut the schools down, well, I guess they went into March Break for us here, so during March Break, I said to my wife, I think we should just focus on numeracy and literacy, and we'll teach the boys because the schools were a few weeks behind, they didn't get rolling until late March. So, that's what we did: we focused on literacy and numeracy, and we created a sort of daily routine.

Knowing their children well and the type of content they will respond to made creating at-home learning material easier for families. Three parents shared their techniques for utilizing topics their child was interested in to engage their child in their learning. Ann spoke about their approach, stating,

But realizing, you know, perhaps if I link this to something that they're interested in, then maybe it will kind of enhance the learning a little bit. So you know, when I'm doing math with my kid, it's all like Lego Star Wars figures. So, he's like adding and subtracting the number of figures that it will take to, you know, defeat Darth Vader or whatever. But he's learning at the moment. He's doing these things. And now he loves math. And I think that is helpful.

Similarly, the ultimate priority for most families was ensuring that some learning was taking place at home, whether that was focused on the school curriculum, the subjects they felt were most important or social and emotional growth. Nicole spoke about this experience,

And so then when they slowly started to implement the, the online learning, before they implemented it, we'd already sort of put some things in place for him, like having him watch a documentary that was for kids, and then we would create questions, and he would answer them and things like that, to keep him like learning something, you know, or not even, we didn't even really care about what the content was.

It is important to note that for almost all families, the concept of "learning" was broadened to include a large range of experiences where children were taking in new forms of information and growing. For some families, learning included developing new positive social behaviours, learning math implicitly through baking together or discussing current events to promote social studies topics.

Theme three: Experience Influencing Beliefs

The third main theme, *Experience Influencing Beliefs*, refers to how parents' experiences being involved in their child's learning shaped or influenced their more general learning beliefs.

Parents' time spent supporting their children through virtual learning influenced their beliefs in three notable ways: it influenced how they thought about the experiences of other families, what they viewed as success during the lockdown for their children and their main takeaways for moving forward.

Thinking about Others

The first subtheme, *thinking about others*, refers to how parents' experiences supporting their children online influenced how they considered and spoke about others, both other families with children with SEN as well as teachers. Many parents (9 of the 14) spoke about their own experiences while considering how the experiences of others might have been made easier or more difficult by different circumstances.

While speaking about their own specific experiences, parents began to think more generally about the experiences of families with students with SEN and the challenges they face. One of the most commonly referenced challenges was the financial burden of supporting children from home. Parents were aware of the benefits of accessing alternate resources and also aware of the barriers this creates for some families. Speaking about a specific "gold standard" program their child accessed, Laura shared, "he has been enrolled in that since June, this past June, and continues to do so. It's quite expensive and certainly would not be an answer for most folks." Many parents shared similar reflections. Specifically, Mary, Andrea, Steve a

I spent a lot of money to put all these supports together. And not everybody can do that. Not everybody. I've been doing this for years. So, I have a lot of stuff here, like the indoor trampolines and things, but not all parents doing home learning have that. So, what are those parents doing? Or even in an apartment building?

So, to find somebody who can sort of do everything kind of, well, it's not easy for families, and you know, without paying like \$100 an hour for somebody who's only going to come for an hour and give you guidelines on how to do this and set you up. Right, like workers like that. They're either very expensive, or they're very hard to find workers. So, I think if you talk to a lot of families, one of the biggest struggles is finding workers.

Well, and that's sort of what has driven me because all the little, although I'm doing okay, now, financially and everything. I did grow up in public housing. I think that the elementary school I went to, and I know not one of those children, one of those parents will ever question the system and ever reach out for help, they can afford to get a site that doesn't, you know, they just don't have the means to do it. And for any kind of remedial program, the ones that are based at least in the so-called science of reading, they're at least \$50 an hour. So, it's just not happening.

Steve and Andrea went on to also share,

And you think, like, we have jobs where we can work from home, maybe those folks, if they're lucky enough to have a job, they have to be at work, maybe they don't have sick time. Maybe they don't have a laptop. There's a whole host of issues around the equity of it all, and it's just heart-wrenching, even before COVID, but, during and afterwards, you're like, boy, these folks just continuously fall behind.

So that's what I mean by luck. So, right now, we're looking for people to come help us on a weekend. And it's impossible to find workers. So, a lot of families, even if they want to be strategic, they can't be because they don't have access to the workers.

In addition to considering the financial strain of accessing support, parents also spoke about their privilege of having access to technology and technical services. Nicole shared,

We are very privileged to be able to have a lot of tech to support whatever it is that he needed to participate in that virtual learning.

Parents recognized that having access to technology positively impacted their ability to support their child while learning from home and ensuring that their child could access the course materials offered by the school.

As parents considered their own challenges, they reflected broadly on the experiences of other families, particularly those facing additional barriers to supporting their children.

Reflecting on Learning

The second subtheme, *reflecting on learning*, refers to how parents' experiences shaped their overall beliefs about learning and what they considered successful learning during at-home learning during reflection.

Although parents spoke at length about the difficulties and challenges associated with at-home learning, they also reported on how working with their children benefited them. Reflected in the code “pandemic pro,” which was recorded in 8 of the transcripts, parents shared how their time working from home included a variety of positive experiences. Erin reflected,

I was shocked. Because, you know, people were complaining about being home, and I was like, oh my god, I’m learning so much about my kid. That I wouldn’t have known because I had every single day with him.

For this parent, the ability to work from home allowed them to learn more about their child and how to better meet their needs, which can then be applied to their future learning experiences both at home and in person. Parents’ understanding of their child’s previous learning experiences, learning interests and needs influenced how they approached at-home learning and the types of learning they engaged in and encouraged. These experiences then have the capacity to shape how parents approach their child’s learning moving forward.

Through the experience of supporting their child at home, some parents become more in tune with their child’s needs and develop positive ways to respond to them. One parent spoke about recognizing the strain of online learning and being proactive in supporting their child. Amy shared, “watching her do school and being present. If I see her starting to yawn, Hey, why don’t we take a 15-minute recess, and I put my timer on, and we go outside and we play for 15 minutes.” Being present with their child allowed this parent to develop new strategies to support regulation.

In addition to becoming more aware of their child’s needs and adjusting strategies to promote learning effectively, numerous parents (8) also spoke about adapting their expectations for at-home learning. In many cases, parents changed their expectations for what at-home learning meant for their family, and this was often done intentionally to reduce stress on both the parents and the child. Nicole and Julia both reflected,

He is getting the information that he needs to get by, so we've just sort of lowered our standards of what our expectations were academically this year and focused on sort of like that psychosocial aspect of things.

And to be honest, asynchronous is sometimes better because it gives your family more flexibility. You can go take a walk in the middle of the day if the kids need a break; you can take some time to teach them cooking and whatever.

For these eight families, the shift in expectations regarding what they considered progress and learning during this time had a lot to do with the social-emotional well-being of their child. For some families, this meant broadening what it meant to be “learning” during this time. Cindy and Nicole spoke to this, saying,

My husband and I decided that what we wanted from school is her to be happy. We don’t want her self-esteem squashed, her creativity, you know? We want self-expression, all those kinds of things. So more so than the academics because, I mean, she is a lifelong learner, and when she wants to learn something, she’s just like any child.

They did a great job of putting some resources in place for him, and we worked really hard on helping himself regulate his behavior, which was sort of the focus. And so, there was less of an academic focus at that time.

One of the most significant examples of this recognition of social and emotional growth is reflected when Amy spoke about the changes she saw in her child while at home.

Yeah. It’s like, I have seen this little girl use her imagination that we have worked so hard on. I see this little girl saying, “Mommy, I’m going to go up for quiet time.” And happily playing in her room for two hours. I had never seen that side before. Wow. I have seen her plan a wedding for Mario and Peach in her head. And so I went up to her room, and one of her Luigi stuffies had his hat off, and I’m like, ” Oh, why don’t you take his hat off?” I wasn’t upset or anything. She’s like, “Well, he has to look good.” And I’m like, “Well, why does he have to look good?” “For the wedding.” “Well, whose wedding?” “Mario and Peach.” So we reenacted the whole wedding. We had everybody zoom in from our families. We, you know, made decorations, we got dressed up.

The same parent goes on to say,

Something she would have never done... She does not... Like, as much as I try, trying to get her to use her imagination has been...it’s... It’s been so challenging, so challenging, and so to see this, like, I can only attribute it to the fact that I’m meeting her every need.

And so, therefore, she feels the safety to leave me. To have that space to use her imagination.

For this parent, the success of at-home learning moves beyond academic success as their child grows in ways that had not been seen previously. Six other parents shared similar stories of seeing growth, both academically and socially, that had been absent before. For some families, the time at home and the change in environment towards online learning provided their children with new opportunities for development. Mary, Amy, Nicole and Erin shared,

And, because she's behind the computer, she's a lot more competent comfortable talking to people. So, she's developed amazing friendships. This has been the most fantastic thing I've ever experienced in my life with her. I've seen her come out of her shell so much. It's been amazing.

So I texted the teacher; I'm like, has she had any exposure to multiplication? Because I don't see it in her IEP. And she's like, No, why? And I'm like because she's picking this up quite quickly.

So it was a really great opportunity for us to see the kinds of things that motivate him and the kinds of things that don't because we are obviously not in the classroom when they're in person. So, it gave us a fantastic bird's eye view of what works for him and what does not. And then we've been able to relay that to the teachers this year, so they can apply those things to motivate him.

He is reading now. We don't watch any TV unless the subtitles are on. And he reads the subtitles to us. And we're just, like, shocked because he couldn't do that before the pandemic.

For these families, reflecting on their time during at-home learning, they are able to share significant personal achievements that their child was making and the positive impact this had on the outlook of their experience. It was clear that what parents report as learning success goes far beyond their child meeting specific curriculum goals that might have been set out in the classroom.

Moving Forward

Along with reflecting on the experiences of other families in similar or less fortunate situations and reflecting on the growth children made during at-home learning, parents also shared their reflections on the impact this time had on their family and their perspectives *moving forward*. Specifically, parents discussed how their time spent supporting their child with at-home learning would likely shape how they view their child's future educational experiences and how this changes how they plan for their child's future support. Ann reflected,

And also just with her, spending more time and realizing what her needs really are and thinking more long term and future planning, because you know, she would spend so much time at school, that I wouldn't necessarily have seven days a week/24-hour caregiving for her like she would be cared for at school. It's allowed me to kind of, I guess, maybe come to terms with what the future will be like and what I need to start planning now to make sure that it's successful for her. Which I think sucks in some ways, but it's a really good thing for me to start thinking about.

Ann continued to say,

You know, when I first brought him home, I had 25,000 dollars for his education fund because I thought he was going to be an engineer one day. This was before I really knew what was happening, and then I realized as time went on, "Okay, let go of that." It's just going to be college. I'm a teacher, right, so we're big on post-secondary. Then I really saw, okay, I need him to be kind to people. That's what I need him to do. To be kind. Contribute to goodness, the greater good in the world.

Amy and Nicole shared,

I am hoping for non-mandatory returns. My goal is that as long as...as long as it's not mandatory to send her back, I'm keeping her home. And it's not out of fear of her getting the virus. It's out of the learning environment being complete one-on-one.

I think that it probably did have an effect of making us all feel closer to each other. Because we understood how to better support him and where the gaps were, you know, we really had a better understanding of where the gaps were, and like thinking towards the future, how we could let the school know what we might have to do in the future? And what the path of you knows the next few years might look like.

Thinking specifically about the takeaways that educational institutions could have regarding families' experiences learning from home, Ann shared,

And I hope in the future if this were to ever happen again, we would place a high value of importance on thinking about the impact it would have on our kiddos and thinking about their futures, too. And especially for kids with different learning needs, because you know, it's already hard enough in person for them and then when you just kind of shift and make this expectation, but, they'll keep up like I think it just puts too much pressure on them as little people. So that's all I guess for the teachers. I just hope that we don't kind of forget about how important our kids' education is. And the fact that it does need to be valued and better funded and better supported, and allow teachers to get creative because they think, you know, there's been some really amazing things that teachers have done during this to support kids' learning. And I would love that to continue for them to be able to teach in kind of more creative out of the, box ways to kind of reach students.

For families supporting their children, particularly those with SEN during the first lockdowns, the educational climate was unprecedented and new for every family. This novel experience allowed schools and families to consider alternate forms of learning and support for their children and how they could be better supported moving forward. Stakeholders and educational leaders must look towards these experiences and lessons to consider how at-home and in-person learning can be improved for students with SEN.

Discussion

This study examined how parents were involved in their children's at-home learning and how these involvement actions related to parents' learning beliefs. Specifically, my research considered the experiences of parents of children with SEN learning at home during the first (Spring 2020) COVID-19 lockdowns. My research considered the following three questions: 1) How did parents of children with special education needs view and enact their role in at-home learning during the first COVID-19 lockdown? 2) How were parents' beliefs about learning reflected in the ways in which they were involved in their children's at-home learning?, and 3) How, if at all, did parents' beliefs about their child's learning shift throughout the COVID-19 lockdown?

Analysis of rich interview data from 14 parents resulted in the identification of three main themes. The first main theme, *Common Involvement Actions: What Do We Need to Do to Make*

This Happen? Highlights the most common ways parents were involved in their child's learning. The data suggests that parents' three most common forms of involvement were advocating for their child's needs, spending time and energy providing them with individualized support and looking for outside resources to either add to or supplement school-provided work. The second main theme, *Factors and Contexts That Influence Involvement*, showcases the various circumstances that influence parents' ability to be involved and the ways in which they choose to be involved. The analysis of the transcripts identified four primary influential factors, which included *life contexts* such as a family's socio-economic status, the number of children in the home and parents' work demands. The second factor is the family's *access to resources*, which includes families' ability to find, afford and utilize alternate resources to either supplement, enhance or augment schoolwork. The third factor, *access to support*, considers parents' ability to access various kinds of support, including both learning and emotional support for themselves and their child with SEN. The fourth factor, *how experience shapes experience*, recognizes how parents' beliefs about their child's learning and their child's needs impact their involvement choices. The third main theme, *How Involvement Actions and Experience Influence Learning Beliefs*, emphasizes how parents' experiences being involved in their child's learning affected their broader belief about other families in similar circumstances, the school system in general and their plans for moving forward from at-home learning. The analysis of the data presented three primary sub-themes that reflect parents' broader beliefs and include *thinking about others*, which captures how parents' experiences impacted how they thought about and spoke about other families experiencing at-home learning; *reflection on learning*, which considers how parents reflected on the experience of being involved in at-home learning and what they saw as success or setbacks and *moving forward* which reviews what parents main takeaways from their experience is and what they plan to do to support their child in the future.

Considering the aims of my research, my research questions, and the relevant literature, I will discuss each research question in relation to the broader literature and the Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler framework.

Question 1: How Did Parents of Children with Special Education Needs View and Enact Their Role in At-Home Learning During the First Covid-19 Lockdown?

Preliminary research examining the involvement of parents in their child's learning has demonstrated that parental role construction, whether or not parents see school involvement as

part of their job as parents, as well as parents perceived available time and energy, impacts their choice to be involved (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 2005). However, it is important to note that research examining the experiences specifically of families with children with SEN has suggested that although these parents report higher levels of involvement when they perceive greater availability of time and energy, they may also participate in home-based activities regardless of these perceptions, seeing their role as advocates for their child's needs as essential (Fishman & Nickerson, 2015). It has also been established that parents of children with SEN are often required to take on a more active role in their child's learning, such as advocating for their child and overseeing that their child's needs are being met (Fishman & Nickerson, 2015).

In keeping with these previous findings, the current study suggests that parents of children with SEN supporting their children at home viewed their role as vital facilitators of their child's learning, required to ensure that their child's needs were being met. The theme, *common involvement actions: What do we need to do to make this happen?* Highlighted the most common forms of parental involvement, and many families shared that they engaged in these involvement actions despite the difficulties in doing so (advocacy pushback, lack of access to resources, loss of support for their child or themselves). The parent participants saw their involvement as necessary, and as a result, they persisted despite these challenges. Similarly, the theme, *factors and contexts that influence involvement*, which highlighted various contexts that impacted parents' abilities to be involved in their children's learning, also demonstrates how many parents' desire to assist their children often outweighed their own needs (continuing to support their children despite a lack of access to respite care, prioritizing their child's learning over work demands).

As summarized in previous studies, parents of children with SEN often enact their role of supporting their children from home through advocacy efforts (Fishman & Nickerson, 2015). The findings from this study similarly reflect that advocacy was one of the most common forms of involvement parents engaged in. Almost all the parent participants spoke about advocating for their child and expressed that this process was necessary for ensuring their child's needs were met. For parents of students with disabilities, advocacy can be necessary to ensure student's needs are being met and their learning is appropriately accommodated. In some instances, parental advocacy can be as fundamental as seeking equal opportunities for their child, and this was demonstrated through the parents who spoke about advocating for their child's most basic

learning needs, such as having their IEP requirements met, having course work appropriately scaled to their abilities and advocating for children that are non-verbal.

Parents also enacted their involvement role through their utilization of additional resources. Previous research has established that during COVID-19, parents' dissatisfaction with virtual learning materials provided by their child's school impacted their experience supporting their child from home (Alharthi, 2022; Kocdar & Bozkurt, 2022; Whitley et al., 2021). The current study extends these findings to include that one of the most significant ways parents' experiences were impacted was by the additional time, energy, and, in many instances, money that was spent supplementing these resources.

In summary, parents enacted their involvement during at-home learning through their advocacy efforts, use of alternate resources, and the time and energy spent supporting their child. Parents viewed their role during at-home learning as vital and demonstrated this through their perseverance to support their children despite the various challenges that arose while doing so. Although participants did not explicitly describe their involvement as part of their role as parents, they did share how they endured virtual learning and took on these new roles as educational supporters as though it was an obvious expectation. It is important to recognize that an aspect of why parents became involved as they did is because many parents shared their concerns with the support their child had been receiving, and thus, they viewed involvement as not just an aspect of being a parent but more specifically an aspect of being a parent of a child with SEN.

Question 2: How Were Parents' Beliefs About Learning Reflected in the Ways in Which They Were Involved in Their Children's At-Home Learning?

Parents' beliefs about learning were reflected through their involvement choices. Primarily, the type of learning parents prioritized, how parents defined learning and how parents reflected on the resources provided to their child demonstrated their beliefs about learning. It is clear, as mentioned throughout the discussion of the first research question, that participants valued their child's learning, and this was established through the time, effort, and money parents put into searching for resources that reflected their child's learning strengths and needs as well as the time they put into advocating for their child's education.

As reflected in the established literature, studies on how best to support students with SEN include the importance of the collaboration of multiple stakeholders as well as the use of

UDL and DI practices, which have been shown to benefit diverse learners (CAST, 2021; Learning for All, 2013; Ontario Ministry of Education, 2021). The current study's findings demonstrate that parents learning beliefs align with these recommendations for supporting students with SEN, as many parents shared their desire for a more collaborative, supportive approach to their child's at-home learning with resources that better utilized UDL and DI practices to ensure content is both challenging and within their child's capabilities. Highlighted in the *access to resources* and *access to support* subthemes, many parents shared that they felt as though they were balancing multiple expectations on their own and as though critical support services were lacking or missing entirely. The parents who felt they were well supported by either a teacher or private educational assistant shared the significant difference this made in their experience. However, as reflected in the findings, most parents had difficulty accessing support and felt that the school-provided resources were insufficient and, as a result, did not reflect the recommendations for supporting students with SEN. Many parents shared that the onus for accommodating and modifying learning materials was placed on them rather than work being appropriately differentiated or having multiple options available. This dissatisfaction with school-provided resources is well documented in similar studies examining families' experiences during COVID-19 (Whitley et al., 2021; Yazcayir & Gurgur, 2021).

Parents' beliefs about learning were also reflected in the type of schoolwork they prioritized. As shared in the *Experience Influencing Beliefs* theme, many families chose to focus on specific school subjects, demonstrating that they valued their child's learning enough to try and continue engaging in school, but they also recognized the possibility of burnout if they overextended their child's time. Parents' beliefs about needing to engage their children in interesting and valuable learning without overloading their children were clearly reflected in the instances where parents created their own at-home learning schedules. Parents' choice to find a balance between schoolwork and their child's well-being is well supported by previous studies that have illustrated that students with SEN and their families are at greater risk for experiencing mental health difficulties during at-home learning (Ashbury et al., 2020; Greenway et al., 2020; Yazcayir & Gurgur, 2021).

Parents' beliefs about what learning they prioritized and the role learning took in the home during COVID-19 were made evident in how they were involved in their child's learning and how they reflected on this involvement.

Question 3: How, If at All, Did Parents' Beliefs About Their Child's Learning Shift Throughout The COVID-19 Lockdown?

It is difficult to draw conclusions about parents' shifts in beliefs as they did not describe how their experiences specifically altered their beliefs. Instead, we can look at parents' reported changes in behaviour and consider how these may have resulted from changes in their beliefs. Specifically, many families discussed attempting to utilize school resources at the beginning of at-home learning only to see that the school-provided resources were insufficient, as described previously. Instead, as outlined in the Common Involvement Actions theme, parents began searching for and utilizing alternate resources and support networks. It could be suggested that this change in parents' approach to at-home learning may have been a result of a shift in their learning beliefs (believing that their child's learning can be adequately supported through the school to believing that they must supplement the learning to ensure it addresses their child's needs). However, it should be noted that some parents shared their dissatisfaction with their child's educational experience and accommodations prior to at-home learning, meaning their choice to supplement their child's learning resources was not the result of a shift in their beliefs. The shift in parents of children with SEN's beliefs about the system and whether or not it can adequately support their child has been well recorded (Ortiz et al., 2021). The findings from my study align with previous research that demonstrates that parents of students with SEN experience a shift, specifically a decline in their trust in their child's school's ability to support their learning needs online (Ortiz et al., 2021). As a result, parents in both my findings and Ortiz's had to begin supplementing resources for their children. Noted in Ortiz's research and reflected in my themes as well is the experience of parents wanting to share positive experiences of at-home learning, and while reflecting on this time, they think more critically about where the most effective resources came from and, in many cases, it was resources they had found or paid for.

Similarly, some parents' advocacy efforts shifted as they faced advocacy pushback and described a transition towards a more combative approach to advocacy. However, it cannot be concluded if this resulted in a shift in their beliefs about their child's learning. It should be noted that my findings regarding the shift in parents' approaches to advocacy have been reflected in previous research (Ryan & Quinlan, 2017). Previous studies have demonstrated that parents of children with SEN often have to adjust the advocacy efforts in increasingly complex and

sometimes more combative ways to ensure their child's needs are met (Ryan & Quinlan, 2017). While parents' changes in advocacy may not result in a shift in their beliefs about their child's learning, it possibly results in a change in their beliefs about how best to approach their child's learning institutions, what their child's needs are and how these needs should be met.

Another shift in parents' approaches to at-home learning is related to their expectations for the type of learning their child would engage with most or see the most success with during their at-home experiences. Most parents described approaching at-home learning from a school-based curriculum content focus at first, only to realize that at-home learning also provided ample opportunities for social and emotional learning. For some families, this realization resulted in a shift in focus of at-home learning or appreciation for the benefits of at-home learning as their child began making significant advancements in different learning domains. Most research examining families' experiences during at-home learning does not discuss this change in focus for families with SEN and how this time provided families with valuable behavioural and emotional progress.

Findings from the current study reflect a recurring theme across similar research conducted during COVID-19 and the impact of a family's socio-economic status on their ability to support their child and be involved in their child's learning during COVID-19. Previous studies have found that parents' occupational status, level of education and family income impacted the quality and amount of home educational support they could provide (Treviño et al., 2021). Similarly, reflected in my subtheme "life contexts," families' financial status, employment status, and ability to purchase additional resources impacted their child's at-home learning experiences. This also encouraged parents to discuss the impact on other families, reflected in the subtheme, *thinking about others*, where parents shared their reflections on how difficult at-home learning likely was on families in less fortunate circumstances. It should be noted that it is difficult to assess if these are shifts in parents' beliefs as parents do not explicitly describe these experiences as causing them to think about others, but rather, while sharing their own experiences, parents began reflecting on other families. It may be fair to suggest that parents' experiences with at-home learning broadened their understanding of the experiences of other families with children with SEN and fewer resources, which encouraged them to consider their privileges.

Although shifts in how parents approached at-home learning or what parents thought the

outcome of at-home learning might have been were made evident, it is difficult to assess if parents' experiences resulted in shifts in their overall learning beliefs.

Findings in Relation to the Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler Model

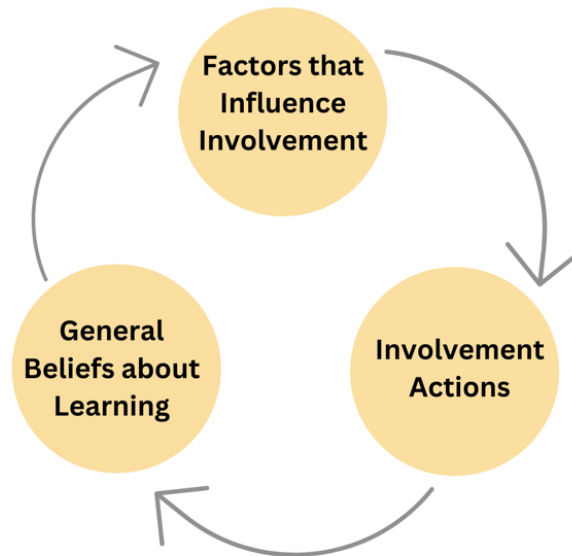
Many aspects of the current study's research findings reflect similar conclusions that the Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler model presents, including the influence of parental efficacy, parental knowledge, parent time and energy. However, various aspects of the research findings differ from their model both in the major themes reported as well as the relationship between these themes. Primarily, it should be noted that the differences in my research findings on parental involvement are likely a result of the context of the COVID-19 pandemic and at-home learning, which the Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler framework does not account for.

The first level of the Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler model focuses on the variety of involvement forms in the context of where parental involvement occurs, such as involvement within the home, involvement in the classroom and involvement in the larger school community. However, since my research focused specifically on at-home learning, parents did not discuss the different environments of their involvement, and instead, my significant findings regarding involvement focus primarily on specific involvement actions parents engaged in most often, including advocacy, dedicating time and energy to one-on-one support and searching for and utilizing outside resources to support their child. Similarly, the Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler framework presents how parents share their values, goals and expectations as an involvement form. However, in my findings, when parents spoke about their goals and expectations for their child's learning, it was regarding changes in their learning beliefs due to the unprecedented pandemic. When most parents spoke about their learning expectations for their child, it was through the context of their need to adjust goals to better align with their child's learning needs.

The second level of Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler's framework outlines parents' learning mechanisms during their involvement actions. These mechanisms include encouragement, modelling, reinforcement and instruction. While my findings did not highlight these specific actions, it should be noted that most parents spoke about using one or all of these mechanisms to support their child's learning, which was reflected in parents' time and energy spent providing one-on-one support. As previously mentioned, the data from my study is reflective of parental experiences and parents' understanding and interpretations of their children's experiences. As a result, levels 3 and 4 from the Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler model, which focuses on the

children's perspectives of their parent's involvement and the learning attributes for success, cannot effectively be assessed through parental observations. Similarly, since data collection occurred while online learning was ongoing, the parental interviews could not consider the child's overall academic outcomes, as highlighted in level 5 of the model and instead could only reflect what parents deemed as successful learning outcomes during their time spent at-home learning.

The main difference between the presentation of my research findings and the framework of the Hoover-Dempsey and Sander model is that Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler present a hierarchical model of parental involvement rather than presenting parental involvement as an ongoing process whereby each level relates to the others. In the Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler model, parents move through different levels of involvement, from factors that impact involvement decisions to the educational outcomes of involvement. In contrast, the findings from my research demonstrate that parents' involvement choices, the factors that influence these choices, and how parents' experiences being involved impacted their learning beliefs are all aspects of an ongoing process. Each major theme of my findings influences each other as the cycle of parental involvement continues through their child's ongoing learning process. A variety of factors impact parents' involvement actions; experiences with these actions then influence parents' broader learning beliefs, and these broad beliefs become a factor that influence future involvement action and their specific beliefs about their child's learning. As a result, the cycle of parental involvement continues. Figure 3 demonstrates the ongoing cycle of parental involvement reflected in my research findings.

Figure 3*The Cycle of Parental Involvement During Covid-19 At-Home Learning***Limitations**

While conducting my research, I noted a variety of limitations. The first limitation I noted was due to the nature of the study; the research participants were parents with the time, energy, and technology necessary to participate in a research study. As reflected in my themes, parents' involvement was significantly impacted by their abilities to access the necessary resources to be involved, and this is also true for the parents able to participate in the interviews. As a result, it is likely that a broader perspective of parents who lacked access to these resources (internet connection, technology, time available to meet virtually for an interview) is missing. Similarly, another limitation of my research participants is the primary focus on the perspective of mothers. Almost all participants of the initial 36 interviews were mothers of children with SEN. The focus on the mother's perspectives means my data does not consider how other family members (fathers, siblings) were involved in at-home learning and how they reported on their experiences.

Another limitation of my study was the use of secondary data. The interview questions did not focus on parental involvement specifically but rather at-home learning experiences more generally. Although parents spoke at length about their involvement, it would have been

beneficial to hear them reflect more directly on their involvement actions.

A final limitation of my study is that the research is cross-sectional rather than longitudinal. Data was collected during the Spring and Summer of 2020 and, as a result, only highlights a particular portion of at-home learning during the pandemic and does not reflect the experiences of families that continued learning from home. This is significant because some families and schools viewed the end of the spring semester of 2020 through the context of the crisis and, as a result, may not have participated in the same way had they been able to choose at-home learning and had been more prepared.

Future Research Recommendations

Considering the findings of my research as well as the limitations, my recommendations for future research include:

- 1) Examining parental involvement through students' perspectives (particularly those with SEN).
- 2) Examine parental involvement through the perspectives of teachers.
- 3) Examine how parents' experience supporting their children with at-home learning during the pandemic impacts their involvement moving forward.
- 4) Conduct a longitudinal study that examines parental involvement over time.
- 5) Examine how parents' involvement experiences shaped their learning beliefs and if any changes in their beliefs resulted in subsequent changes to their future involvement actions.

Conclusions and Implications

It is evident from the research findings and discussion that although families' experiences navigating at-home learning differed, they were connected by similar factors, including the most common forms of involvement, the contexts that impede or facilitate these involvement actions and how these experiences affected their general learning beliefs. Most parents were involved in their child's at-home learning through advocacy efforts, accessing supplementary resources and dedicating time and energy to providing them with one-on-one support. However, parents' engagement with these involvement actions was influenced by their life contexts, their ability to access resources, their ability to access needed support and their specific beliefs about their child and their child's needs. These contextual factors that impact involvement then influence parents' perspectives on at-home learning generally, the experiences of other families, what their

takeaways from their experiences were and what their thoughts moving forward are.

In presenting my research through this process, I provide an additional consideration for the Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler model that demonstrates the ways in which parents' involvement is an ongoing process rather than a hierarchical model where parents pass through levels only once.

Contributions to the Field of Education

Most educational institutions have transitioned back to in-person settings as our world transitions back to life before the pandemic. During this important time of transition, it is paramount that educational institutions look to students and their families to assess what we can learn from their experiences in online learning. In fact, research examining students' experiences with SEN in remote learning is becoming increasingly important as many schools across Canada have continued to offer remote learning options in light of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. As a result, it is crucial that school boards and educators look to students and families to gain a deeper understanding of how remote learning strategies and tools can be improved to better support students, particularly those with specialized needs and their parents. It is important that these systems look directly to students with SEN and their families as they provide a unique perspective on the realities of at-home learning and the improvements that must be made. My research aims to support these developments as I examine how parents of students with SEN thinking about learning impacts how learning occurs within the home and how this influences families' learning choices. Findings from this research will add to our limited understanding of how families and schools can best negotiate collaborative relationships in supporting the learning of students with SENs in remote as well as brick-and-mortar settings. This research also addresses the research gap regarding the ways in which parents view and understand their child's learning experiences and the influence this has on at-home learning practices. By examining the experiences of students identified with SEN and their parents, this research also contributes to the development of strategies to promote inclusivity in classrooms, increase accessibility, and improve remote learning and, ultimately, all learning for all students.

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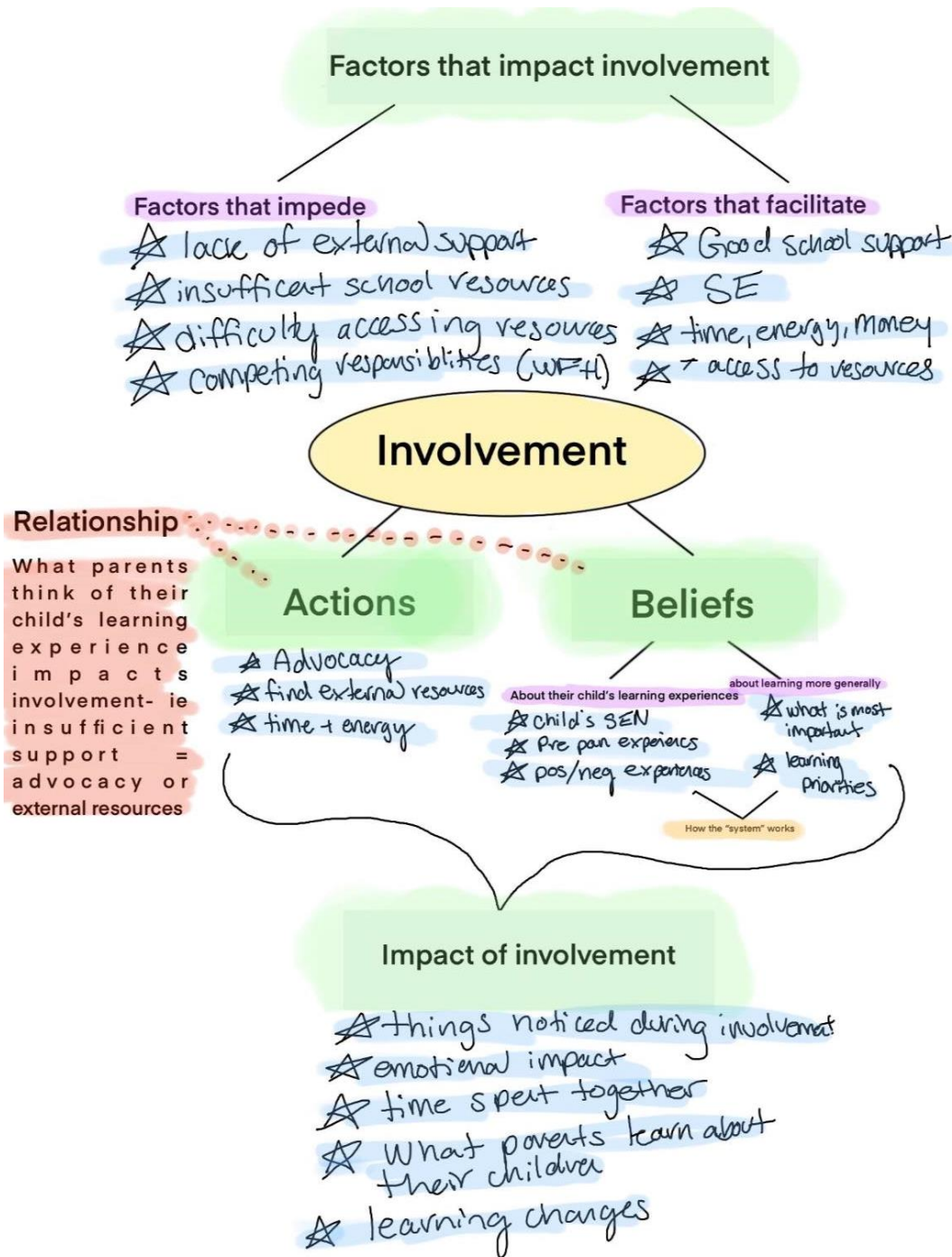
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Appendix A: Semi-Structured Interview Prompts

1. Can you tell us a bit about yourself?
 - What part of the country do you live in? (If not Canada, then what country?)
 - How many children & adults in the household?
 - Are people in your household working in/out of the home right now?
2. Can you tell us about your child(ren) with a special education need?
 - How old are they/in what grade?
 - What are their interests? What do they love and enjoy?
 - What was their education/school life like before the schools shut down? Did they enjoy school?
 - What were some of the strengths and areas of challenge they experienced at school?
 - Did they receive any kind of support, assistance or enrichment at school?
 - Can you tell me a bit about their relationships with teachers/school staff?
 - What about their relationships with peers?
3. Current situation
 - Are you engaging in online or distance learning with your child(ren)? Why/why not?
 - What kind of technology do you have available at home? Internet/devices?
 - What kinds of activities has the school provided, if any? Are these a good fit for your child?
 - What kinds of supports has the school provided
 - Academic/learning
 - Social/emotional
 - Do these fit your & your child's needs? What else would be helpful?
 - What kind of peer networks is your child engaged in if any?
 - How are you personally able to manage supporting your child at home? What supports have been helpful for you?
 - Have the school closures affected your relationship with your child at all? If so, in what ways?
- Overall assessment/reflection
 - What is the single most significant challenge you are experiencing in this time with regard to supporting your child with special education needs?
 - What resources or supports would help you with the particular challenges you are experiencing supporting your child with special education needs?
 - What resources or supports have you found to be the most helpful during this time supporting your child with special education needs?
 - What benefits or positive aspects, if any, have you noticed during this time supporting your child with special education needs?

Appendix B: Initial Diagram Draft



Appendix C: Codes and References Charts***Theme 1:******Sub-theme 1: Advocacy***

Code used:	# of transcripts the code is referenced in	Total # of references
Advocacy	12	70

Subtheme 2: Time and Energy: What it Takes to Provide Support

Codes used:	# of transcripts the code is referenced in	Total # of references
Time and energy	12	42
Work done during the pandemic	7	18
Taking work into their own hands	6	15
Doing what it takes	4	6
Hands-on help	1	2

Sub-theme 3: Searching for and utilizing outside resources

Codes used:	# of transcripts the code is referenced in	Total # of references
Using outside support	10	39
Thinking outside the box	2	2
Access to a resource	5	14

Theme 2:*Sub-theme 1: Life Contexts*

Codes used:	# of transcripts the code is referenced in	Total # of references
Incompatible work with AHL	8	15
Meeting the needs of multiple children	7	11
Low SE with involvement	9	16
Worry	11	21
Stress	5	13

Sub-theme 2: Access to Resources

Codes used:	# of transcripts the code is referenced in	Total # of references
Outside support	10	39
Involvement strategies	8	35
Access to a resource	5	15
School provided tools	4	6
Thinking outside the box	1	2
Research Knowledge	9	24
Sufficient pan work	3	4
School provided tools	2	3

Sub-theme 3: Access to support

Codes used:	# of transcripts the code is referenced in	Total # of references
Involvement- worry	11	21
Involvement- Stress	5	13
Teacher meeting needs	8	19
Teaching or learning difficulty	8	14

Codes used:	# of transcripts the code is referenced in	Total # of references
Insufficient support pre-pan	7	14
Lack of parental support	8	13
Loss or change in services	4	13
Needed support can't go virtual	7	13
Someone in their corner	4	8
Difficulty accessing support	5	8
Inaccessible solutions	3	5
Difficulties with needs being met	3	5
Lack of access in French	3	5

Sub-theme 4: How Experience Shapes Experience

Codes used:	# of transcripts the code is referenced in	Total # of references
Understanding child needs	11	44
Learning Priorities	12	36
Pre pan neg	12	27
Listening to child's needs	8	26
Advocacy push back	5	20
Parent expectations	7	15
Involvement importance	7	12
Extending school expectations	4	5

Theme 3:*Sub-theme 1: Thinking about Others*

Codes used to represent:	# of transcripts the code is referenced in	Total # of references
Recognize other families can't be involved in the same way	9	19
Involvement importance	7	12
Thinking of strain on teachers	3	5
Low se with involvement	9	16
Helping all students	2	2
Access to a resource	5	14

Sub-theme 2: Reflecting on Learning

Codes used to represent:	# of transcripts the code is referenced in	Total # of references
Learning beyond schoolwork	8	29
Learning or teaching difficulty	8	14
Pan brought positive change	6	11
Loss of progress	5	9
Pan work= pos impact at school	2	5
Pos school learning pan	2	2

Sub-theme 3: Moving Forward

Codes used to represent:	# of transcripts the code is referenced in	Total # of references
Pandemic Pro	9	25
Parent-child relationships	6	14
Learning something new about child	9	14

Codes used to represent:	# of transcripts the code is referenced in	Total # of references
Pan brought positive change	6	11
What would have been helpful	5	5
Pan work= pos impact at school	2	5
Need to get back to school	2	4
Highlight	3	3
Meaningful time together	2	2
