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## CRITICAL ESSAYS

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### EDUCATING POST COVID-19: MOVING ON FROM PANDEMIC PEDAGOGY

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#### **Abstract**

*This paper presents findings from interviews undertaken following the second period of national lockdown in England during the COVID-19 pandemic. The interviews present one parent's, one teacher's and two parent-teachers' experiences of working with young people with specific learning difficulties (disabilities) throughout COVID-19 lockdown-periods in England. Focusing on how interviewees navigated the seemingly conflicting prioritization of mental health/well-being and academic attainment, this paper presents how points of tension (habitus clashes) arose due to differing approaches and understanding of emergency remote teaching. Exploration of differing priorities and values led to different practices where habitus clashes occurred, and families and educators acted to mediate those differences is undertaken and subsequent positive developments highlighted in practice. The positive strategies uncovered in this study are then linked to strategies with wider applications as part of development of inclusive settings. Strategies suggested are grounded in inclusion and the importance of all voices being adequately considered in implementation of support strategies for young people with SEND.*

**Key Words:** Pedagogy, inclusion, SpLD, specific learning difficulty, specific learning disability, dyslexia, SEN.



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## INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic of 2020 and 2021 necessitated wholesale change in delivery, access and resourcing of education globally, at all levels. Local Authorities in England shifted delivery from classrooms to remotely over the course of one March weekend (Coronavirus Act, 2020), with teachers making fundamental changes to delivery of learning all while lacking time and training to fully consider effects of changes in pedagogy for learners and their families (Ross, 2022). Universities and school districts globally updated courses, policies, practices and procedures, with staff working from home, learning delivered online and via other media where necessary (Gould, 2020; Zawadka et al., 2021), also with little time and capacity to fully consider how implementation of remote learning may affect curriculum accessibility. It is important to note that in the context of remote learning, various terminologies were applied to the way of working imposed on stakeholders because of COVID-19 and the associated changes to teaching and learning. Subsequent to lockdowns, learning looked very different in different school-based settings, depending on many factors. 'Home-schooling' and 'remote learning' are terms often used in literature relating to COVID-19. However, such use does not always reflect the specific and temporal nature of the teaching/learning delivery that took place as a direct result of COVID-19. As such for the purposes of this paper and to reflect the temporality and specificity of the strategies and delivery that took place during 2020-2021, this paper will refer to 'emergency remote teaching,' which has been defined as a "temporary teaching solution to an emergent problem" (Misirli & Ergulec, 2021), when discussing teaching during the initial lockdown periods.

In England, changes were made to statutory frameworks relating to provision for young people with special educational needs and/or disability (SEND) with an Education, Health and Care plan (EHCP), because of COVID-19 lockdowns and school closures (Coronavirus Act, 2020). The legal requirement for provision detailed in EHCPs was removed and replaced with a temporary measure that meant that Local Authorities (LA) were only required to use "reasonable endeavors to discharge made, in part, to buffer schools and LAs against the risks of adverse legal action, where they could not meet provision as detailed in students' EHCPs. On the ground, this meant that young people's provision was not always delivered appropriately and many young people with EHCPs were left without much-needed support (Webster et al., 2022). Given that young people with statutory provision did not have access to their legally defined provision and support in schools, it is unsurprising that research undertaken as part of an earlier phase of this project, found that the needs of young people with SEND who did not have statutorily proscribed provision were regularly not met through the instruction they received via remote learning (Ross, 2022).

This study is a continuation of work undertaken during the Summer of 2020, which analyzed the experiences of educators, parents and parent-educators through the different lockdowns in England and traces their experiences of supporting young people with specific learning difficulties through that journey. Specifically, this paper presents analysis of interviews, undertaken in spring-summer 2021, which explored the following:

- Parents'/educators' sense-making and conceptualization of remote learning, and support strategies which empower/ undermine their children's engagement with learning, looking through lockdowns and beyond with consideration of priorities and values associated with their roles.
- How differences in expectations and practice relating to remote learning were mediated and addressed.
- Strategies for learning implemented during COVID-19 lockdowns and their potential for positive application in a post COVID-19 pedagogy.

## EDUCATION DURING COVID-19

In this section, structures which developed because of COVID-19 are discussed and their implications for education are outlined. The focus of the section is the English context but literature relating to work in other contexts is also drawn on to provide insight into stakeholders' experiences within education globally.



### **COVID-19: SpLD and Legal Frameworks in an English Setting**

The Children and Families Act 2014 brought in substantial changes to the framework surrounding provision for young people with SEND. The previous system saw provision to support young people differentiated according to the type/complexity of need, and associated support required. However, the system of SEND provision as operationalised within current legislative frameworks does not differentiate young people's needs by level or complexity, where general, rather than statutory, provision is in place. However, where young people cannot access education without specialist provision, they may have an EHCP, which details the input needed to help them access the curriculum appropriately. It is important to note that although the incidence of specific learning difficulties (SpLD) such as dyslexia or dyscalculia, is estimated as up to ten percent of the population (Butterworth & Kovas, 2013), only 3.8% of EHCPs highlight specific learning difficulties as a specific area of need (DfE, 2022). A higher proportion of young people with non-statutory provision have SpLD as their principal area of need (DfE, 2022). Given that the legal requirements for supporting those with an EHCP were relaxed during the 2020-2021 academic years, and the provision outlined in those EHCPs was often not delivered (Ross, 2022; Webster et al., 2022), it is unsurprising that the needs of young people without statutory provision were also frequently overlooked within remote-learning delivery. Despite policy stipulating the importance of families' and young people's views being considered in the design and implementation of support interventions (this remained unchanged during COVID), parents and young people often reported that they were not engaged in decision making processes during COVID-19 (Ross, 2022; Webster et al., 2022).

### **Expectations: Remote Learning during COVID**

During remote learning and initial lockdowns relating to COVID-19 in March 2020 and onwards, the conceptualization of remote learning was relatively unclear. Young people's, families' and teachers' experiences of it varied greatly (Minkos & Gelbar, 2021). A key factor connected to delivery of emergency remote teaching linked to the demographics of a setting and young people's access to devices, technology and the internet (Greenway & Eaton-Thomas, 2020). This was reflected in school-based implementation of learning during the initial lockdown phase with some schools delivering remotely online (Goldberg et al., 2021; Kaiper-Marquez et al., 2020; Misirli & Ergulec, 2021) and others providing work on paper, where digital infrastructure was lacking (Goldberg et al., 2021; Tremmel et al., 2020).

In an English context, there were many families without resources to access and engage with online teaching (Baker et al., 2020). During the initial lockdown period in Spring 2020, this was unproblematic as there were no formal expectations of emergency remote teaching. However, as the likelihood of further lockdown periods increased, the Department for Education released guidelines detailing expectations that schools set remote work to last between 3 and 5 hours daily. This detailed the expectation of live (either synchronous or asynchronous) input from teachers (Carr, 2021). It is important to note that the primary sources which included this guidance appear to have been removed from central government internet repositories and archival versions were not available for checking.

As was noted by (Baker et al., 2020), many families did not have access to sufficient or appropriate resources for their children to be able to access learning in this way, thus increasing the disadvantage experienced by those young people, some of whom already experience substantial barriers to learning. To counter this, Central Government devised a scheme to provide young people with ICT equipment via their school where they did not have it (UK Government, 2022). However, many schools could not secure sufficient equipment, particularly as live lessons were implemented towards the end of initial lockdowns (Staufenberg, 2021). It is clear from discourse relating to 'emergency remote teaching', that its conceptualization by Central Government evolved throughout lockdowns, moving towards a model, which relied on 'digital remote education' (Ofsted, 2021b), whereby learning and teaching largely took place online using ICT. On paper, the government had acted to ensure that all learners could access devices but this was not always the case. Some families were still unable to fully engage with learning due to lack of resources despite assurances that they would have access to appropriate technology (Baker et al. 2020). Access to resources impacted on expectations of remote learning across families and schools (this is discussed in more detail below).

### **Navigating Mismatched Expectations and Priorities**

Here the expectations and conceptualisations of remote learning are addressed, and potential clashes highlighted. This contextualises educators' and teachers' experiences in this study.



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Work undertaken on the dynamics of expectations and navigation of remote learning during COVID-19 has largely found that mothers bore the brunt of closures to childcare settings, schools and lack of access to other informal caregiving arrangements (Clark et al., 2021; Craig & Churchill, 2021; Petts et al., 2021). Largely, mothers were expected to maintain their role as 'mother', whilst concurrently 'teaching' their children at home *and* working in paid employment. What teaching should 'look like' was unclear for families in the initial lockdown period (Greenway & Eaton-Thomas, 2020; Middleton & Kay, 2021; Ross, 2022). This was echoed by teachers and educators; Kim and Asbury (2020) found that teachers were wholly unprepared for remote learning and how to navigate lockdown provision for children, particularly those with SEND. They found that mis-matched expectations were often addressed and mediated well through positive relationships, dialogue and personalized support. The central tenet in addressing those clashes within literature surveyed was dialogue, and relational cohesion and collaboration between educators and families, whether clashes of expectation arose in delivery medium (paper/ICT) (Middleton & Kay, 2021), lack of non-statutory provision for young people with Specific Learning Difficulties/dyslexia (Greenway & Eaton-Thomas, 2020; Ross, 2022), or the challenges teachers experienced with emergency remote teaching and its conceptualization (Kim & Asbury, 2020; Ross, 2022).

#### COMMON DISCURSIVE THEMES AROUND COVID-19

In this section a brief overview is given of common themes arising in work relating to COVID-19. These themes arose internationally, and in diverse settings, and continue to resonate within discussions relating to attainment, progress and provision (Webster et al., 2022; Weingarten, 2021). Given that themes of mental health and well-being, and access to ICT are common themes in governmental outputs (Ofsted, 2021b, 2021a) both during and looking beyond COVID-19, consideration of how they were prioritized, valued and supported within emergency remote teaching, and subsequently is important to underpin pragmatic recommendations moving forwards.

#### **Mental Health and Well-Being**

The mental health impact of COVID-19 on many groups of people is not fully understood, but substantial work has already been undertaken into the experiences of teachers/educators, parents and young people. It is documented that parents of young people with SEND experience greater stress levels than other parents (Asbury et al., 2021). The effects of COVID on parents' mental health and well-being are widely documented as adverse and disproportionately affecting women, and parents whose children have SEND (Clark et al., 2021; Goldberg et al., 2021; Greenway & Eaton-Thomas, 2020; Petts et al., 2021). Young people's mental health overall was adversely affected by COVID-19, particularly where they experience barriers to learning (Asbury et al., 2021). This effect has been so pronounced for some young people that researchers have argued that the number of mental health professionals in schools should increase to support young people as 'normal' teaching resumes (Ross, 2022; Weisbrot & Ryst, 2020).

Prioritization of young people's mental health may manifest differently for different stakeholders. For example, Bhamani et al (2020) suggested that parents keeping to a strict routine with their children may be helpful for supporting well-being whereas Ross (2022) found that parents/carers valued flexibility to support both their children's mental health and well-being. Asbury et al (2021) noted that choice and personalization of learning were key elements of supporting families' wellbeing, which echoes findings from Minkos and Gelbar (2021), who suggest that flexibility and a trauma-informed approach are key to supporting young people's well-being in schools.

#### **Resources and Technology**

An area of substantial challenge for schools and young people during COVID-19 was access to resources and appropriate ICT. Research undertaken by Central Government in England noted that the digital divide meant that access to learning was problematic for young people during COVID-19 (Baker et al., 2020). Gaps in attainment between young people with SEND and other students were found to have increased during lockdowns (Webster et al., 2022) and lack of access to technology and specialist interventions/resources were implicated in this. Moving forwards, educators and parents have argued the importance of sufficient access to appropriate ICT and specialist interventions. Relaxations of duties relating to statutory provision under the Coronavirus Act 2020 ceased at the end of July 2020, which was expected to help meet young people's needs as they transition back to school (Ofsted, 2021a), and beyond. However, young people's needs were not always supported adequately and lack of access to technology continued to be problematic for those trying to access learning (Minkos & Gelbar, 2021; Ofsted, 2021b; Ross, 2022). Despite being prioritised on paper within education discourse, where learners did not have appropriate access to ICT, they often experienced barriers to learning remotely (Staufenberg, 2021; UK Government, 2022).



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Subsequent clashes (paper versus electronic delivery) thus had to be mediated through negotiation and updated expectations, which addressed families'/carers' challenges but also created space for educators to fulfil their professional responsibilities.

#### THEORISING THE SOCIAL WORLD: VALUES, EXPECTATIONS AND ADDRESSING THE CLASHES

##### **Values, Expectations and Clashes**

As has been noted above, the usual ways of working, delivery and engagement with education were wholly upended by COVID-19 and the subsequent lockdowns. Expectations, roles, and both formal and informal structures were changed by the process, evolving as COVID-19 progressed. Formal changes in structures took place in social contexts such as health, law and politics, as well as education, with changes in each context affecting policy, practice and experiences of other contexts. As such, a social model was necessary with capacity to capture those dynamic effects across social settings, whilst simultaneously being able to capture understanding of individuals' sense-making and actions. COVID-19 highlighted the interconnected and intersectional nature of social contexts, and the ripple effects across those social contexts: when changes take place in one there are also impacts on others.

To explore and fully consider cross-context/field structures and changes, habitus clash is a useful concept. Based upon Bourdieu's 'dialectical confrontation' (Bourdieu, 2002), which was operationalised by Ingram (Ingram, 2011), the concept of habitus clash was developed to "explain the time and space within which habituses, practices and values from different (and sometimes opposing) fields intersect" (Ross et al., 2021). This takes place when a social agent experiences discomfort arising from different expectations (habitus) within fields intersecting and impacting on them concurrently (Ross et al., 2021). The actor must consider and make sense of their clash experiences. They must then discern how, if at all, they will embody those different systems within their own habitus and practice. As noted by (Ross, 2022), the habitus clash mirrors the impact of snooker balls in the exploration of Newton's law of Conservation of Momentum:

"... they are repelled instantly or may move together with a change of direction and speed – so also social actors upon experiencing a 'habitus clash' may change their direction, their views and the way that they interact with others implicated in the clash."

In the context of COVID-19 remote learning, as we have noted above there were substantial differences between how teachers/educators and families/carers understood it should be delivered. The priorities of families and educators also differed during COVID-19, which did cause some challenges for delivery of learning and smooth communication between the parties (Bhamani et al., 2020; Ross, 2022). However, challenges in delivery of remote learning and clashes in values/habitus could be addressed through positive interactions and relationship building (Kim & Asbury, 2020). This study explores the expectations of families/carers and educators in addressing the needs of young people with dyslexia/specific learning difficulties during COVID-19, how those expectations differed and how the subsequent value/habitus clashes were pragmatically addressed so that young people were appropriately supported.

This capacity and framework underpins analysis of conceptualisation, values and priorities linked to COVID-19 emergency remote learning, mediation of habitus clashes linked to different priorities/strategies and moving forward with an updated, shared understanding of remote learning.

#### METHOD

##### **Research Aims**

This paper links to data gathered in Summer 2020, where an online survey was run for parents/carers and teachers/educators to discuss their experiences of lockdown teaching and learning, and supporting young people with specific learning difficulties (Ross, 2022). This phase of study aims to gain a deeper understanding of those experiences, how teaching and learning evolved through lockdowns and the return to in-person teaching. Specifically, this paper presents analysis of interviews, undertaken in spring-summer 2021, which explored the following:

- Parents'/teachers' sense-making and conceptualization of remote learning, and support strategies which empower/undermine their children's engagement with learning, looking through lockdowns and beyond with consideration of priorities and values associated with their roles
- How differences in expectations and practice relating to remote learning were mediated and addressed



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- Strategies for learning implemented during COVID-19 lockdowns and their potential for positive application in a post COVID-19 pedagogy.

### **Pre-Interview Survey Participation**

The interviews analysed in this paper form part of a wider project which explored stakeholders' experience of remote learning through COVID-19 via an online survey. Full analysis of the survey results can be found in Ross (2021; 2022). The methodology was limited somewhat at the time due to COVID-19 related lockdown restrictions; the survey was open between April and June 2020, when restrictions were largely still in place. As such online research was necessary. The small-scale survey was in the form of a semi-structured interview and a self-completion questionnaire as described in Bryman (2012). It was constructed in MS Forms and disseminated via social media, and the researcher's professional and personal networks. The survey contained open-ended questions as well as Likert-Scale responses and closed questions.

The survey had 123 responses of whom 42 were parents/carers of children with SEND and the remaining 76 were educators. There were relatively few responses to the survey at the time, likely due to the demands placed on families because of COVID-19. It is unlikely that families whose children had SEND could use what little capacity they had to complete further online 'work'. Even where specific audiences are targeted for purposive sampling, there are often high non-response rates (Bryman, 2012).

On completing the form for the initial survey, participants were asked if they were willing to be contacted to take part in further research relating to the topic. From the initial 123 responses, 34 individuals consented to be contacted further in relation to the research.

### **Interview Participants and Data Construction**

All work in this study was undertaken with full consideration of BERA ethical guidelines (BERA, 2018) and the Teachers' Standards for England (DfE, 2021), as the researcher was employed as a teacher during this project. Participants from this survey were drawn from those who participated in the first part of the project. They had given consent to take part in interviews and further research, as part of their responses to part one (as described above and in Ross (2022).

Table 1- consenting participants

	State-funded School	Other setting	TOTAL
Educators	10	2	12
Parents	12	5	17
Parent-Educators	3	2	5
TOTAL	25	9	34

The 34 individuals (see table 1), who had consented to be contacted to participate in interviews following their participation in the initial stages of this project, were all contacted via their preferred medium of phone or email. The contact made summarized the nature of this element of the research, and time commitments implicated in undertaking an interview. Data handling was detailed. A 'participant information sheet' as per guidelines (BERA, 2018; Bryman, 2012) was also supplied, so that participants who chose to participate in further study gave informed consent. The participants who had responded positively to participate in interviews were then selected to be those working in state-funded settings or whose children attended state-funded settings. This was because this is the type of setting that most young people in the UK attend and where most teachers are employed; only 7 percent of children in the UK are educated privately (The Sutton Trust & Social Mobility Commission, 2019). Thus, the



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interviewees' experiences provide insight into the experiences shared by individuals in state-funded, albeit limited by the small-scale nature of the project. Interviews were organized with 4 women; one other woman did respond but it was not possible to organize a mutually convenient time to hold the interview.

Interviews took place during April and May 2021. Prior to interviews taking place, a telephone conversation or email exchange took place to address queries or worries. It was a time for the interviewer and participant to build a rapport, in line with Bryman's (2012) recommendations for interview practice. An interview schedule was devised and had been discussed with participants during pre-interview discussions so that they were aware of what would be covered during their interview. Full details of the participants and their interviews are in table 2; they are all known by pseudonyms and all identifying information has been removed from any quoted responses.

Table 2- participant information

Name	Position	Role	Additional Information	Interview Duration
Anne	Educator	SpLD Intervention Teacher	Worked across various schools, delivering remote and in-person learning during and post COVID-19 lockdowns  Worked to support students with SpLD	56 mins
Carrie	Parent	Full-time worker and Mum	Worked full time at home during lockdowns  Husband was also at home  Daughter in year 12, studying A Levels and found art was very challenging.	54 mins
Amy	Parent-Educator	Full-time Maths teacher/ Assistant Head Teacher and Mum	Was at home with Husband during lockdowns, both of them working full time in education  Mum to two primary-school aged daughters who were at home during first national lockdown and in school during the second national lockdown	47 mins
Julie	Parent Educator	Part-Time Teaching Assistant and Mum	Worked remotely and in-person supporting students with SpLD in intervention groups.  Her daughter in Y6 (primary school) during initial national lockdown and then in Y7 (secondary school) during second phase.  Julie's daughter had accompanied Julie to work during initial lockdowns.	65 mins (in person)

A semi-structured program was followed to ensure that topics were covered consistently across interviews, but which allowed flexibly to explore individual's different experiences of emergency remote teaching as per Bryman (2012). Topics covered in interviews included the following:

- Work Practices
- Roles
- Interactions
- Tech/remote learning
- Developments in how remote learning was delivered





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- Live lessons and experiences of them
- Challenges across roles as parent/educator
- Children's/Young people's needs
- Children's/Young people's experiences of technology

Three interviews were undertaken remotely, using Zoom and one interview was undertaken in person. The Zoom interviews were recorded. The in-person interview was audio-recorded using a mobile phone. Audio and video files were separated, with audio files being used for analysis purposes to maintain participant confidentiality. All files were password protected where possible, identifying features removed and they are kept on password protected ICT equipment, in line with data protection regulations (Data Protection Act, 2018)

### **Data and Processing Analysis**

Interviews lasted for between 47 minutes (remote) and 65 minutes (in person), as detailed above. They were all transcribed verbatim, without timestamps. Following initial transcription of interviews, they were all then re-played whilst the transcription was read and checked. Where mistakes had been made in initial transcription, they were corrected. Identifying information was also removed from transcripts to maintain participants' anonymity. All participants were supplied with a copy of their transcript and were given the opportunity to comment on its content as part of data triangulation and validation (see Bryman, 2012, p. 391).

Interview transcripts were then read again, and during this process, an initial coding framework was constructed through open coding of data with full consideration of the research questions, in line with Yates' recommendations (Yates, 2004). Interviews were then re-read and the coding framework refined to reflect the emergent themes whilst also reflecting on habitus clashes and where they took place. Updated coding was then applied to transcripts. Emergent themes were noted at this point to inform later and further analysis. All transcripts were then read once more and coding checked. Coding reports for each were then printed out and further analysed highlighting common themes and connecting those themes to areas of tension and habitus clash. The data were then structured so that different experiences and progressions of emergency remote teaching could be presented clearly and related to the different roles inhabited by individuals during COVID-19.

### **RESULTS**

The findings from analysis of these interviews are presented according to the role inhabited by the participants during COVID-19 remote education to reflect their different lived-experiences. While there is a small number of interviews presented here, the cases are both revelatory and exemplifying, as per Bryman (2012). They give insight into a previously inaccessible phenomenon (COVID-19 and remote education during a pandemic), whilst concurrently describing experiences which were shared with many others in their respective demographics. Phrasing in quotations is as spoken but where edits have been made or inserted, this is indicated by square brackets.

#### **PRIORITIES AND EXPERIENCES IN COVID-19 REMOTE TEACHING**

As has been noted above, parents and educators sometimes held different priorities in their conceptualization of emergency remote teaching. Here the conceptualization of 'emergency remote teaching' (Misirli & Ergulec, 2021), and associated priorities held by parents, teachers and parent-teachers are presented. The focus is on areas where expectations/priorities did not align, resulting in habitus clashes (Ross et al., 2021). This underpins pragmatic steps taken to mediate these clashes, with a view to developing and improving provision for young people with dyslexia/specific learning difficulties post COVID-19 and onwards.

#### ***Parents***

Anxiety and mental-health challenges were, for Carrie, inextricably linked to her view of remote learning as experienced by her daughter, "It [remote learning] made her really, really anxious because... it was sort of a challenge to keep up... But it was, I think her biggest criticism was the delivery... It was just really kind of just talking at them and not really explaining stuff." Her daughter's experience of remote learning, where no live, spoken interaction took place between teachers and students, led Carrie to view it as as having "no sort of interaction. And they're [students] are just listening really." During the initial phases of lockdown Carrie found that her daughter's mental health suffered because of how remote teaching was delivered. Her daughter was, "almost tutoring herself," and found engaging with learning and her peers very challenging "because... they're not being nice to her." The





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isolation from her peers that Carrie's daughter experienced, "directly contributed to this challenging experience, due to her being "not at school... not seeing any of her friends".

Carrie felt that there was no personalization or differentiation in delivery which meant that her daughter's needs were not met. She "had to keep contacting them [her daughter's school]" about changes in provision and personalized support. However, this only happened after she "had contact with them quite a few times and kicked up a bit of a fuss about it". The lack of concessions for Carrie's daughter's dyslexia/dyspraxia was unsurprising, given the relaxation of requirements to deliver support for students with statutory provision. Carrie's daughter had no EHCP so provision for her was not statutory. The expectation from educators that young people would use 'chat functions' led to difficulties for her daughter in keeping pace with the curriculum due to her dyslexia. Pace of learning expected by educators appeared to clash with Carrie's hopes for her daughter to be able to "keep up". Her daughter's learning and understanding were important to Carrie. However, when this proved challenging, her daughter's mental health and the importance of personalized provision took center-stage.

As external frameworks for delivery and subsequent school strategies developed during lockdown, Carrie found that the "second stage was a lot better and they sort of embraced it a bit more... we have to be fair to them in that respect. But I think it took them a long time to kind of go, right. OK. This is what we need to do." Personalization of lesson delivery and differentiated approaches facilitated better curricular access for her daughter. The Dyslexia Voices' group in school provided support and encouragement for students, including Carrie's daughter. Mental health was centralized in school provision, which aligned better with Carrie's priorities for her daughter's journey with remote education. Carrie felt that the school refocused its priorities.

Carrie's focus remained her daughter's mental health and, related to this, her ability to engage actively and meaningfully with remote learning. Initial school delivery (where pace of teaching was unrelenting) did not chime with Carrie's priorities. However, as lockdowns progressed, Carrie felt that the school did refocus on mental health and personalized provision. Key to note here is that access to equipment and ICT resources were not highlighted by Carrie as an area of difficulty for her family. For other families, access to resources was problematic (see Baker et al, 2021; Ross, 2021; 2022).

### ***Teachers***

Anne's implementation and conceptualization of remote learning differed from other teachers in that she was working as a specialist dyslexia/SpLD teacher in small groups or 1:1, whereas other teachers/educators were working with full classes. She found that there was no formal definition or working conceptualization of remote teaching in her school. She stated that she "trained herself. Completely... I've. In my role, I've had no training. There's been no formalized training, and as regards Zoom, I've sorted it out myself." This also applied to class teachers in her context, who had also "informally trained each other".

Anne described her experiences as a small-group teacher positively. For Anne, technology became the 'default' method for delivery in emergency remote teaching. This meant the challenges some of her students experienced vis-à-vis handwriting were bypassed. Anne noted that for one student this was particularly successful because, "No one was even mentioning handwriting... it was enabling him to spell check it, you know? It just, it just sparked everything for him." Anne's conceptualization of emergency remote teaching as online meant that her whole practice was focused on improving her delivery via online learning platforms (she used Microsoft Teams). Her practice remained 'online' for the duration of COVID-19 lockdowns. However, her priorities and delivery did evolve. She undertook self-directed CPD to develop her skills and make changes to her own lessons so that "work I [she] prepare is put on to Teams... And part of the behind putting it on Teams is... so I can still set them work to do when I'm not there". Anne ensured that even if she was not online, communication between her and students was maintained.

While ensuring high standards of lesson delivery and accessible learning were priorities for Anne during lockdowns, she did find that social-emotional support became more central to her practice in remote teaching. Some students, "confided in [her] via zoom" and parents were "asking [her] advice of 'how do I keep my child motivated?'" This centralization of relationships/emotional support led to well-being and mental health featuring in her practice as lockdowns progressed, and beyond.

Anne noted that there were some changes in her school made because of her practice and strategic use of technology with students. Following lockdown, the school "bought new laptops for these kids [in her groups] and



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so this group would give us... access to Teams". This removed substantial barriers to learning for her students. She felt that these institutional changes were because "people are starting to realize ... these children can produce better work if we provide them with some support."

Anne did not describe having challenges with parents in her setting and felt overall that she was able to adapt her lesson delivery as lockdowns progressed. Anne did feel that where there were areas of tension, such as student well-being or motivation, she could address those tensions through dialogue, which led to shared understanding of what was needed to support children. Parents sought guidance on this from her and Anne felt confident in working with families, having "come a long, long way" in her lesson delivery from very teacher-talk-led to more student-centered approach.

### ***Parent-Teachers***

Amy commented that conceptualization and implementation of emergency remote teaching largely depended on individual members of staff in her school, and was wholly related to their confidence in using ICT. As "someone that's quite technologically savvy," she was, "prerecording lessons which were then being posted on the VLE". However, Amy commented that some colleagues were "setting tasks pretty much ... just be a paragraph with, 'this is what I want you do to today'". She noted that there was, "very little teacher input", particularly during the initial Spring-Summer 2020 lockdown. Amy felt that for some students, accessing learning was subsequently challenging, particularly with finding "instant chat really tricky." For Amy, lesson delivery that was multi-sensory was a key-element of remote learning so that students with dyslexia (and other difficulties) could access as much as possible. Amy's priorities within implementation of emergency remote teaching (as a teacher) underpin her view that interaction needed to be built into its delivery. This was so that she could mirror classroom practice as much as possible where, "every so often, I will go over and say, 'is there anything you need help with?'" to her students with specific learning difficulties.

As a teacher, Amy noted that that changes to priorities and implementation of remote learning did take place as lockdowns progressed, commenting that,

"by the time we came to the most recent lockdown, the expectation was then that there was some live interaction on a weekly basis with every class. So it might be that it was just one live lesson or you might have had maybe 15 minutes one lesson, 15 minutes another lesson."

For Amy, real-time interaction was already a priority to ensure that learning was accessible for students. This linked to her prioritizing students' wellbeing alongside their parents. Amy noted that as well as parents' worries and concerns around learning, young people's mental health was an area of substantial concern. She commented she "made it clear to one of [their] deputy heads the other day that we need a full-time mental health nurse in school. That is the bare minimum of what we need", given the challenges that young people with SpLD experienced during lockdown. The needs of young people and their parents framed the nature of interactions between teachers/educators and families.

Amy is a parent to two primary-school-aged children and found that this substantially impacted on her conceptualization of emergency remote teaching. Expectations in lesson delivery were very problematic for Amy; as a professional she had to support young people. However, this impacted on her capacity to prioritize her own children's needs, which caused her substantial upset. Via dialogue with their school, expectations did change and relax somewhat during lockdowns in Spring/Summer 2020. She felt that a substantial element of challenge that she experienced was due to her "working day shifting completely, whereby "we [her family] would do the majority of [schoolwork] in the mornings". She noted that as a family, despite understanding the importance of a broad education, they focused on maths and literacy rather than completing all work set by her children's school. Emergency remote teaching became, for Amy, a balancing act professionally and familywise, with mental-health, well-being and core subjects as priorities rather than academic progress.

It was clear to Julie that in her workplace, "nobody knew what it [emergency remote teaching] was meant to look like]. Julie felt that her workplace prioritized wellbeing and engagement, rather than academic outcomes. Echoing Amy's focus on well-being and real-time communication with students and their families, Julie's initial priorities and implementation of emergency remote learning focused on supporting students' wellbeing. The responses of her workplace wholly reflected this for Julie in that, the school would ".... try and keep in touch with our most vulnerable families." Similarly, to Carrie, Julie noted that choice and flexibility of activities were key in maximizing students'



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outcomes, engagement and well-being in her role as a professional but also as a parent. Julie's workplace, "made sure that everybody had access. For a couple of our families that didn't have anything, no wireless. They couldn't, you know do anything. They had paper packs and would collect them each week," which exemplified the prioritization of access to resources and flexibility of approach in her place of work

While flexibility of approach and where possible, personalization of support *were* priorities in her workplace, Julie did note that non-statutory interventions were not maintained during the initial lockdown. However, during the second national lockdown, "partway through [lockdown], we started with some interventions and things as well.". This was done to support children's learning and to maintain their links to the school. Due to these interactions, Julie found that some students, who had previously not been motivated to read in school, wanted to participate in some small group sessions, "...his friend was doing this in lockdown when he went, 'Can I come to reading club?,' and I went, 'Of course you can'".

Julie found in her daughter's primary school setting in spring 2020 lockdowns, it "was a dream because we played," and contact from the school allowed for choice as to how families engaged with learning, prioritizing well-being alongside learning. Choice meant that Julie's daughter remained engaged in learning during the first lockdown. However, Julie's experiences as a parent during second lockdown were very challenging, and differed from her experiences as a professional. Julie's daughter had moved from primary school to secondary school between lockdowns in Spring 2020 and January 2021. Julie noted that her daughter often noticed "my class teacher doing all this lovely stuff and you know, ... [her teacher] spent so long explaining stuff that you'd have like five minutes to do the actual work". Her daughter became increasingly frustrated because she had interactions with other schools, due to Julie's professional role. Watching her daughter's experiences of remote teaching during the second phase of lockdowns in England was very difficult for Julie because, "you know, for a child that has grown up having lots of respect for teachers... loving school, not learning. You know she's got very disillusioned... it broke my heart." For Julie's daughter, and subsequently Julie, her negative interactions with schooling and learning during lockdown were very challenging and affected her overall engagement with school. Her daughter's wellbeing and engagement were closely linked and where Julie's daughter was unable to engage effectively in learning, her well-being suffered.

#### MANAGING HABITUS-CLASHES

In this section, the different habitus-clashes linked to differing priorities and implementation of emergency remote learning are discussed and strategies to address those clashes are drawn from interviews. As common themes in interviews and general discourse relating to COVID-19, access to resources and student well-being/mental health are the areas of focus here.

#### **Student Well-being/Mental Health**

During the initial lockdown, Carrie felt that her daughter's mental health and well-being were not considered fully by her school and, as was noted above, she, "had to keep contacting them [the school]", to secure changes in provision. Carrie felt that "she had to kick up quite a bit of fuss about it" and reported that her daughter, "said ... we should be praised for our resilience and surviving this situation. And yes we should be getting supported when we come out of this in terms of our emotional state". Carrie felt that she and her daughter's priorities did not align with the school and that to counter this, to create shared habitus and values rather than clashes, Carrie had to engage in forceful dialogue with the school. This did link to some positive developments in her daughter's school such as the founding of a 'Dyslexia Voices' group in school to provide support and encouragement for young people with dyslexia.

Amy noted that her interactions with parents during lockdown periods forge positive relationships and understood their priorities. She stated that, "it's opened us up to a whole world of parents and telling us their problems as well. That's a whole other issue". However, Amy did highlight the benefits of this: tutors and other staff members had the capacity and time to connect with families where this might not have otherwise been possible.

Anne felt that relationships were key to positive interactions with parents. However, even where she did have a previous working relationship with families, as lockdowns progressed, Anne did find that "parents were getting tired of it [lockdown]" and that "there were some parents sort of asking me my advice of how do I keep my child motivated". The interactions that she experienced were in support of both students' and parents' well-being over time. She did this through changes to her lesson plans and delivery to make things accessible as was needed at the time of discussion with families.



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### **Accessing Learning: Resources and ICT**

Carrie's daughter's dyslexia and dyspraxia were not considered in remote delivery; she found it very challenging to keep up with learning and could not access resources such as instant chat due to her needs. This impacted Carrie's daughter's ability to keep up with learning, despite the family having adequate access to equipment. Carrie reported awareness of structural changes taking place in teacher training via a "friend who works at one of the big universities... and she's actually said that they're thinking that they need to do some sort of blended learning rather than how they were doing it before". She felt that this would help improve accessibility of learning for young people.

The need for contact between schools and families to secure changes in provision for young people so that learning was accessible was highlighted by Julie, who noted that families were contacted, and even when online participation was expected in the second national lockdown, paper-based materials were supplied to families who needed it. This was following dialogue between the school and those families, some of whom were hard to reach, to ensure that priorities and values, embodied in a shared vision for provision were met.

### **Strategies Remaining Post-COVID**

Anne noticed substantial changes in her interactions with a particular student while she was working with him. Her interactions and understanding of this student's experiences of technology in remote teaching underpinned changes in her school. Anne's interactions with other teachers included providing training in use of technology with students, to support their professional development. Some of the strategies she implemented through remote learning were continued as students returned to school. In particular, the use of assistive technology, continued use of MS Teams for small-group interventions and online discussions with families/parents. Anne commented that as schools transitioned back to 'in-person' instruction, some of her small-group work continued remotely and/or using ICT. This was partly in respect of Anne's peripatetic role which meant she crossed bubbles, and also reflected the need for continuity for children as they returned to school post lockdowns. To support the school in developing their practice, Anne was also "asked to do some staff training... about the use of Teams" focused on supporting both children and reduction of teacher workload.

Julie did note, that despite the high importance placed on academic outcomes, her professional setting did place a strong emphasis on 'making them [students] feel loved when they come back'. This largely meant that parents were happy with provision and relationships between the school and those parents were generally positive, according to Julie. She also noted that these same students were keen on continuing their sessions with her following lockdown. One student was very keen to continue and wanted to read with her every day. Julie's interventions and small group activities have continued on return to in-person teaching. Julie commented that, "maths club... that we did once a week in lockdown and now we do twice a week". Julie she does note that she has had some challenges in implementing these changes, due to her role in the school as a teaching assistant, rather than a teacher: she does not have a laptop, and is not included in teacher training or meetings. This has not changed following return to in-person teaching.

Amy feels that moving on from COVID-19, robust mental health support for young people is vital. She feels that those who have "got specific learning or processing difficulties et cetera" have challenges in their mental health which are "compounded on top [of their needs]. That has just meant academics have just stopped". She believes that supporting young people's mental health is vital to underpin their future progress. She was somewhat disappointed that this was unlikely to continue into post COVID-19 schooling due to lack of sufficient resources and time. However, she did discuss increased pastoral support for families with members of her school senior leadership team.



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## DISCUSSION

In this section of the paper, the above findings are discussed in detail and grounded in literature. The nature of value and/or habitus clashes between families and educators is discussed and literature drawn upon to contextualize those differences.

### **Shared Goals via Different Pathways**

#### *Accessibility and Delivery*

Anne could prioritize students in her lessons developing her practice as lockdowns progressed. Due to the nature of her role, Anne could personalize learning for her students and was able to use technology effectively where this was helpful for them. Shared values and habitus are key in minimizing the risk of habitus clash (Ross et al., 2021). Dialogue and shared values helped Anne to navigate waning student (and parental) engagement and reduced progress, which appeared to avert potential habitus clashes. However, her capacity to undertake this, particularly during initial lockdowns was not commonplace.

The nebulous, unclear nature of emergency remote teaching (Greenway & Eaton-Thomas, 2020; Minkos & Gelbar, 2021) - particularly during the initial phases of lockdowns - has been echoed in findings from this study. The lack of clarity surrounding emergency remote teaching was captured by Carrie, where her daughter's teachers were "just kind of talking at them." The lack of clarity around *how* remote learning should be delivered and what it *should* look like filtered through to schools and families alike with different organizations enacting it differently. Although initially expectations for Carrie were unclear, as lockdowns progressed, her daughter's school delivered lessons that were more accessible for her daughter.

Even within one secondary school, Amy noted that as, "someone that's quite technologically savvy", who spent substantial time creating multi-sensory and personalized lessons, other staff were just writing "a paragraph with, 'this is what I want you to do today'". In these settings, staff members delivered learning and engaged with their students differently, which reflected their different values and practices. For Amy, who was au fait with technology, multi-sensory learning was center stage whereas for others, written input was their preferred strategy. As noted by Amy however, the mode of delivery (at least in the first instance) adopted by educators was not always wholly student focused. This particularly impacted students with dyslexia and specific learning difficulties, with her noting that students were unable to engage with chat functions. Carrie's daughter had also experienced this, which echoes work undertaken by Ross (2021) and Petretto et al (2021). Students with dyslexia were unsurprisingly found to have difficulties accessing wholly written lesson delivery in this study.

Julie noted that in her workplace "nobody knew what it was meant to look like", which allowed her workplace to prioritize families' engagement with school and student well-being. This was also true of her daughter's primary school; Julie could choose fun activities to do with her daughter during initial lockdowns. The priority here was student-wellbeing, and during later lockdowns, academic expectations were brought in, congruent with changes in governmental guidelines (Carr, 2021). Families were also supported with paper resources or electronic materials as needed; there was flexibility of approach which facilitated positive interactions and shared values with families in her professional setting.

Accessibility and delivery of the curriculum were often linked to educator capacity and skillset, rather than student need in the initial phases of lockdowns. Educators' focus was ensuring that curricula were 'accessible' remotely, which largely meant online (Gould, 2020; Zawadka et al., 2021). However, as per the Coronavirus Act 2020, removal of obligations to meet statutory provision requirements, meant other students with SEND were unlikely to have differentiated teaching materials. This was largely the experiences of participants here. Where academic progress was prioritized, families and educators noted that students with SEND often could not access learning. Carrie and Amy linked these challenges in accessing learning to learners' wellbeing suffering, echoing work from Asbury et al (2021) and Skipp et al (2021). However, schools in the initial lockdown could not readily address this. Even Julie's workplace could not implement interventions and support for students with any level of SEND during the first lockdown, which meant that students could not always access learning fully.



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### **Encapsulating the Clashes**

As noted above, common themes arising in this study were wellbeing/mental health, which echoes much other work undertaken (Clark et al., 2021; Goldberg et al., 2021; Webster et al., 2022). There appeared to be little debate around the notion that young people's mental health was adversely affected by COVID 19 (Asbury et al., 2021). However, strategies and priorities in addressing that do appear to differ, with some suggesting that routine is useful for supporting young people (Bhamani et al., 2020) while others suggest that flexibility of approach is vital (Asbury et al., 2021; Minkos & Gelbar, 2021; Ross, 2022). In this study parents and parent-educators did prioritize their children's well-being, but they were also cognizant of the need to support their children's academic outcomes. However, they approached this differently. These different approaches did lead to some points of tension (habitus clashes), which were subsequently addressed to allow families and educators to move forwards together.

Although educators and parents did prioritize engagement with learning and maintaining pace with others, their underpinning motivation differed for different roles. Here Carrie and Amy's focus was on student need when considering the delivery of emergency remote teaching. When Carrie's daughter's needs appeared unconsidered, there was a detrimental effect on her mental health, as she subsequently could not access learning effectively. Much work has noted that students found engagement with remote learning very challenging during COVID-19 and that for students with SEND, these gaps were amplified (Webster et al., 2022). It is likely that the experiences described by Carrie, Amy (in her capacity as maths teacher when considering students with dyslexia) and Julie (in her role as teaching assistant in charge of small groups), are not isolated as they do echo the experiences of others: young people with SEND and specific learning difficulties particularly struggled to access learning (Ofsted, 2021a; Ross, 2022). This is likely in part due to delivery strategies which were written, as noted Julie and Amy. However, that delivery of teaching and expectations surrounding it were nebulous in initial lockdowns led to educators being unsure of how to approach emergency remote teaching. This lack of clarity was then exacerbated by the removal of legal protection for young people with statutory needs (Coronavirus Act 2020). Without support, as was noted here, young people's learning suffered and subsequently they were not able to access the curriculum.

Where learning was not accessible and young people, who were already experiencing challenges, could not access learning and/or disengaged with learning, their progress was impacted, as was the progress of all learners with SEND (Webster et al., 2022). Due to lack of personalized provision in initial lockdowns the impact on students' learning was substantial and their mental health suffered. Educators sought to engage students with learning, realizing subsequently that lack of personalization and interaction in delivery of emergency remote teaching adversely impacted on engagement. This then was connected to deterioration in student wellbeing. Parents' and parent-educators' prioritizing of mental health led them to engage with educators and schools more widely to facilitate personalized provision and active engagement with families as part of development of common values and subsequently shared habitus.

### **Contact and Mediation of Clashes**

The 2015 Special Educational Needs Code of Practice (DfE & DfH, 2015) outlines the importance of dialogue and meaningful participation of all stakeholders in relation to provision for young people with SEND. Given that the needs of young people with dyslexia/SpLD are largely expected to be met in the classroom through high-quality, inclusive teaching, it is unsurprising that removal of the obligation to provide statutory support led to non-delivery of other support during initial lockdowns. COVID 19 enforced change in work practices globally, impacting all elements of society and altering educator's practice almost overnight (Gould, 2020; Zawadka et al., 2021) and family dynamics were equally impacted (Clark et al., 2021; Craig & Churchill, 2021; Petts et al., 2021).

Teachers and families could not engage with each other as previously and their priorities shifted as the pandemic took hold. Different approaches to support mental health and access to the curriculum led to habitus clashes, where families had to have "contact with them [school] quite a few times and kicked up a bit of a fuss" about personalized support and provision. The habitus clashes arising from differing priorities were evident in families and educators discussing provision, with families having to advocate for young people. However, families and educators here also noted that compromises were reached between families and educators, "so also social actors upon experiencing a 'habitus clash' may change their direction, their views and the way that they interact with others implicated in the clash" (Ross, 2022).

In this study, direction changes were reached through parents and educators engaging in dialogue; all stakeholders tended to prefer real-time interactions where possible. This echoes findings from Ross (2022) and Clarke and Done





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(2021), who note that engagement with stakeholders is key to developing and implementing support for young people with SEND. This in turn echoes the Code of Practice (DfE and DfH, 2015); dialogue and high-quality, inclusive teaching with appropriate resourcing is key to supporting young people with dyslexia and specific learning difficulties.

### **Moving on from Pandemic Pedagogy: Practical Recommendations**

In this section strategies suggested and implemented in schools, which were discussed in the wider analysis of this paper are briefly summarised. They are not discussed in detail here; the purpose of this section is to delineate these recommendations and as part of the analysis undertaken here, ground them in robust evidence, as discussed above.

- Dialogue and flexibility between educators are vital to ensure that expectations of each party are clear and that a shared vision is developed in supporting young people moving forward. This must be supported through adequate funding/resourcing; mainstream class teachers do not have capacity to do this in their daily roles.
- Young people with dyslexia/specific learning difficulties must be supported appropriately in the classroom and where possible, they should have access to robust interventions and personalized learning via small groups/1:1 provision.
- Without mental health support, young people will find it very challenging to meaningfully engage in learning. Mental health provision in and for schools to support young people is currently inadequate and should be prioritized in funding and provision. Schools need to have access to a broad range of mental health professionals such as ELSAs, counsellors and therapists who have sufficient capacity to support young people appropriately.
- The nature of 'assessment' in schools should be evaluated and the 'soft skills' needed in daily life should be incorporated into pupils' outcomes. This links to adequate consideration of mental health for young people. Holistic (to include social) support for young people should be fully incorporated into school structures for assessment and progress monitoring.
- Teachers' and educators' mental health suffered during lockdowns. They should be supported by adequate provision of access to mental health support.
- Teacher training needs to reflect the digital world that young people operate in; frameworks which consider training in hybrid teaching and learning should be considered, as should training around SEND provision.
- Schools should be supported to share good practice and flexibility of provision should be centralized into policy and practice to incorporate the possibility of:
  - Remote learning for young people who find it challenging to access 'mainstream' learning
  - Teaching students were they 'are' academically rather than were they 'should be' age-wise
  - Flexi-schooling more widely
  - Use of ICT where students prefer with understanding that some students need access to assistive technology to help them access learning e.g. Readers, word processors etc.
- Schools need to have sufficient resources so that staff have time and capacity to contact parents/carers; relationships are key in supporting young people. Without sufficient contact, building positive bridges between home and school is not possible.

### **CONCLUSION**

While this study is a small-scale study, the findings provide useful insight into the experiences of discrete groups of people during the COVID-19 pandemic. As noted above, the interviews here provide revelatory and exemplifying evidence of these individuals' experiences of an otherwise inaccessible phenomenon. That the views held by participants echoed those of other groups, as detailed in the studies outlined here, shows the transferability of the findings to wider educational settings and demonstrates the importance of educators and institutions considering the practical recommendations above. While they may not be applicable in all settings, engaging with the recommendations and thus, engaging stakeholders will help them to develop setting-appropriate responses for their students.





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This study highlights the importance of the values of the Code of Practice (DfE and DfH, 2015): the engagement with stakeholders but *how* families and young people can meaningfully engage with education settings to develop and implement provision remains challenging. During COVID-19, schools developed innovative strategies to work with families. Further study into how successful these strategies were should be undertaken to help equip schools to foster positive relationships with families, which have proved so important during the pandemic. The prioritization of mental health/well-being concurrently with academic progress may sometimes appear to be contradictory, but as noted here by all participants, they must both be considered and supported adequately so that learners can make holistic progress.

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