

# Schoolchildren of the COVID-19 Pandemic

IMPACT AND OPPORTUNITIES



Edited by Robert J. Ceglie,  
Dixie F. Abernathy and Amy W. Thornburg

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# Contents

List of Tables and Figures	vii
About the Authors	ix
Preface	xv
Acknowledgments	xviii
<b>Chapter 1 Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs Applied to Guide Teaching and Learning</b>	
<i>Helen Gross, Daniel A. Novey and Jessica L. Triskett</i>	1
<b>Chapter 2 Black Screen: Bridging the Social and Emotional Void</b>	
<i>Patrice D. Petroff and Stacey L. Bush</i>	21
<b>Chapter 3 Standing at a Crossroad: Re-imagining Social Emotional Learning Considering COVID-19</b>	
<i>Lisa M. Liberty</i>	39
<b>Chapter 4 COVID-19’s Impact on Teachers and the Teaching Profession</b>	
<i>Robert J. Ceglie, Ginger Black and Somer Saunders</i>	59
<b>Chapter 5 Homeschooling Black Students During the Pandemic</b>	
<i>Charity Anderson</i>	83
<b>Chapter 6 Teacher Perceptions on Parental Engagement During and After Pandemic Online Learning</b>	
<i>Amy Wooten Thornburg, David Maddock, Dixie Friend Abernathy and Daniel W. Eadens</i>	99

<b>Chapter 7 The Impact of COVID-19 on Schoolchildren in Pakistan: A Review of Literature</b> <i>Muzammal Ahmad Khan</i>	123
<b>Chapter 8 School Closures During COVID-19: Impact on Childhood Hunger and Opportunities for Long-term Solutions</b> <i>Jennifer J. Guerra and Debra Franco</i>	139
<b>Chapter 9 Special Education and the Children of COVID-19</b> <i>Gina Smith and Ann White</i>	153
<b>Chapter 10 Navigating the Pandemic Whiplash: Leading and Teaching Through Educational Challenges and Opportunities</b> <i>Emily S. Miles and Kellee J. Cole</i>	171
Index	193

# List of Tables and Figures

## Chapter 1

Fig. 1.	Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Applied to Help Students During the COVID-19 Crisis	4
Table 1.	Year-to-Year Total Meals Served at SHS	9
Table 2.	Cognia Climate-culture Survey and Results for Students	10
Table 3.	Cognia Climate-culture Survey and Results for Teachers and Staff	13

## Chapter 3

Fig. 1.	SE Outcome Measures	43
Fig. 2.	Components of S.A.F.E. SELs Programs	44
Fig. 3.	Framework of SEL	46
Fig. 4.	Topics in Adventure Program	51

## Chapter 5

Table 1.	Percent Distribution of Homeschool Students by Race/Ethnicity	89
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## Chapter 7

Table 1.	Reviewed Articles and Summary of the Findings	129
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## Chapter 9

Table 1.	Disability Categories	155
Table 2.	FAPE Considerations for District-wide Implementation of COVID Protocols	161
Table 3.	Considerations for Scheduling PreK Separate Setting Students for Hybrid SDI	163

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**David Maddock** is a Research and Evaluation Specialist for the School District of Osceola County, Florida. His research focuses on program evaluation and the effects of goal-setting and differentiation in education. His work centers on producing research for a district of 72,000 students and helping new researchers develop their datasets for research.

**Emily S. Miles** has been the Principal at Sterling Elementary in Charlotte, NC since July 2017. She began her education career in Charlotte Mecklenburg Schools in 2003 as a Teacher. She has held the positions of Literacy Facilitator, Dean of Students, and Assistant Principal. In 2013, she became a Principal and has been in this role for nine years. During the 2020–2021, she was selected as the Principal of the Year for Charlotte Mecklenburg Schools. She grew up in Syracuse, NY. She moved to NC to attend college and received her Bachelor's degree in Elementary Education from UNC Charlotte. She attended Queen's University where she earned her Masters of Education in K-12 Literacy and her Masters in School Administration. She earned her Doctorate in Educational Leadership from Wingate University. As a school leader, she is passionate about providing opportunities for students and teachers to experience joy and purpose in school. Her staff describe her as “zesty” and “a problem solver that makes things happen for kids and adults.” She enjoys reading, swimming, music, and spending time with her family.

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**Patrice D. Petroff** has dedicated her life to educating children and the teachers who play such a critical role in the lives of so many. It is her personal and professional agenda to create school cultures that provide exemplary learning experiences for all students. She is a Professor of Education at Queens University of Charlotte.

**Somer Saunders**, MEd, is the Recruiter and Student Support Specialist for the Cato School of Education at Queens University of Charlotte. Through her role, she recruits prospective students for the Cato graduate programs and she also serves as an Academic Advisor to all Cato graduate students. Prior to her time at the

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**Gina Smith**, Retired Assistant Superintendent for Exceptional Children, for the Charlotte Mecklenburg Schools (CMS), is also an Adjunct Professor for Queens University. She started her career with CMS as Speech Language Pathologist and served in that role for 14 years before moving into school and district level administration. As an Administrator in CMS, she was a Principal, Director, and Assistant Superintendent. With each new role in the district, she developed a strong passion for student outcomes and academic achievement for our students with disabilities. She continues to have an interest in equipping general education teachers and administrators to better meet the needs of all students but most especially those with disabilities.

**Amy Wooten Thornburg** is the Executive Director and Professor in the Cato School of Education. She is also the Coordinator of the elementary education program and oversees accreditation. She teaches literacy, social studies, and schooling in the context of poverty courses in the undergraduate and graduate programs and supervises student teachers. Prior to her time at the university, she worked as a Teacher with Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools. Her areas of expertise include student motivation, working with at-risk students, professional development, balanced literacy instruction, and teacher development and retention. She has been a presenter at many national and international conferences, and her work has been published in several journals and books. She is also the co-editor of three books.

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**Ann White** holds a Doctorate in Educational Leadership and has been a public-school educator since 1993, serving as a teacher, principal at both the elementary level and high school, and in multiple leadership roles at the district office. She currently serves as the Associate Superintendent of Student Services for Charlotte Mecklenburg Schools and has led the Exceptional Children's Department there since 2017. She has a variety of research interests, engaged most consistently on issues of equity, with her dissertation on the desegregation of Hickory Public Schools.

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# Preface

In the early months of 2020, the COVID-19 Coronavirus emerged as a life-changing event which would change the world as we knew it. While all facets of our lives have been altered, it is very likely that the education system will forever be changed. For two years, our children have been learning online, in a hybrid mode, or in schools where social distancing practices have become the norm. When the virus was first detected in the United States, all schools closed and halted traditional face-to-face instruction and quickly moved to some type of online learning. This left educators and children in unfamiliar positions as teachers quickly scrambled to learn how to teach classes online as a way to salvage the school year and to maintain some semblance of order in our education system. While the generation of “COVID Children” will always remain as a unique cohort, there is no doubt that the results and repercussions of this most unusual experience will have implications that are far-reaching and of consequence to all of us. In the United States, families and society are gradually returning to some semblance of normalcy, however, the short- and long-term impact of what we have just collectively experienced, and what this experience has meant to our children, is yet to be fully explored or realized. Data are beginning to come in which highlight how children were impacted by COVID-19, but more longitudinal research will be needed to examine what lasting effects this has had on our youth.

The primary aim of this book is to explore the many facets of how the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted children, families, and teachers across the world. While a major focus of this book is connected to academic learning, we also delve into the social and emotional impacts that are only now starting to be explored. The educational effects are likely to be numerous and substantial as reports are beginning to suggest that some children may be as far as two to three years behind where they should be. This has largely occurred because the current mode of instruction was not engaging enough as social connection has been compromised. And although online learning served as the best replacement for what occurred in our traditional classrooms, its effectiveness has been mixed at best. Teachers worked tirelessly to build engaging lessons, change teaching practices, care for children, monitor social distancing, learn how to apply new technology tools, and this underappreciated work has unfortunately led many to leave the profession.

The impact on our youth goes beyond the academic losses that may have occurred during the pandemic. Other areas of a child’s life such as family, physical health, and mental health are related to the social embeddedness which

typically occurs in schools and with extracurricular activities. However, most of these have been limited during the past two years. We explore some of the latest work that has begun to uncover the negative impact of these facets on a child's life. We explore ways that societies and schools can move forward to transition back to "life as normal" while also addressing new issues and needs that have emerged. Although much of what we have uncovered has negative connotations, these experiences have provided many lessons and recommendations which we share throughout this book.

*Schoolchildren of the COVID-19 Pandemic: Impact and Opportunities* consists of 10 chapters written by educators across the world. We asked these authors to share their experiences from the past few years and to articulate what lessons they learned. We believe that we have a rich collection of chapters which provide an insightful perspective on teaching and learning. Our authors include parents, graduate students, K-12 teachers and principals, and college faculty, all who have tackled the challenges that been thrust upon the education world.

Chapter 1, "Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Applied to Guide Teaching and Learning," begins our book with an exploration of the application of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs to the actions of teachers and administrators in a public school in North Carolina. In it, Helen Gross, Daniel A. Novoy, and Jessica L. Triskett share their data and findings for how the essential needs were met to support the children within their school. This work provides lessons that educators can use to ensure they are meeting all the needs of their students.

In "Black Screen: Bridging the Social and Emotional Void," Patrice D. Petroff and Stacey L. Bush tackle the issue of social emotional learning. Chapter 2 walks us through their work with a group of teachers and students who were especially affected by the pandemic. They aimed to study how COVID-19 impacted these individual's social and emotional welfare. They found that both teachers and students faced challenges during this period, and they offer suggestions for how to address these issues.

Our third chapter focused on social emotional learning, "Standing at a Crossroad: Re-imagining Social Emotional Learning Considering COVID-19," is authored by Lisa M. Liberty who investigates how this form of learning was often neglected during the pandemic. Chapter 3 argues that we have several models for how social emotional factors are influential to learning and Liberty offers suggestions on how to reinforce this in our schools for the betterment of our children.

Chapter 4 explores the impact that the COVID-19 pandemic had on teachers in the Southeast United States. In "COVID-19's Impact on Teachers and the Teaching Profession," Robert J. Ceglie, Ginger Black, and Somer Saunders explore the reports that there is an exodus from the teaching profession, leaving schools with unqualified teachers which puts our children at academic risk. In addition, they collaborate on a study that investigated the reasons that teachers have left the profession. They provide insight and suggestions to teacher preparation programs, district leaders, and local administrators to help retain and support teachers.

All children encountered some form of homeschooling in the past few years, but COVID-19 appears to have impacted different populations disproportionately. Charity Anderson authors Chapter 5, titled "Homeschooling Black

Students During the Pandemic” which investigates the impact of the pandemic on homeschooling patterns of Black children. In conclusion, she offers some implications of these recent trends on future education practices.

In Chapter 6, Amy Wooten Thornburg, David Maddock, Dixie Friend Abernathy, and Daniel W. Eadens explore the parental aspects of education. “Teacher Perceptions on Parental Engagement During and After Pandemic Online Learning” examines how teachers perceived parental involvement in their child’s education. This group surveyed teachers and sought an understanding of their belief of how parents’ involvement in education may have changed as a result of the pandemic.

Muzammal Ahmad Khan provides an international perspective in his study of the influence of COVID-19 on education in Pakistan. Chapter 7, “The Impact of COVID-19 on Schoolchildren in Pakistan: A Review of Literature,” investigates how children and families, particularly those from rural communities, were impacted by the pandemic. He found that the lack of reliable and consistent technology, along with family struggles with balancing work demands, negatively influenced the educational experiences of many children throughout their nation.

Jennifer J. Guerra and Debra Franco author Chapter 8 which focuses on the impact that COVID-19 had on our already difficult problem of food insecurity. In “School Closures During COVID-19: Impact on Childhood Hunger and Opportunities for Long-term Solutions” they describe a community partnership which supported food insecure families during the height of the pandemic. This work demonstrates the value of community partnerships, particularly during times of need.

We explore how special education students were impacted during the COVID-19 pandemic through Chapter 9 by Gina Smith and Ann White. “Special Education and the Children of COVID-19” provides an overview of special education services in the United States and then shares how these educator’s district handled serving students with special needs during the pandemic.

Our final chapter provides a firsthand account of how one school shifted the way that they conceptualized student success during the pandemic. In “Navigating the Pandemic Whiplash: Leading and Teaching Through Educational Challenges and Opportunities,” Emily S. Miles and Kellee J. Cole share their experiences and actions taken to support their children’s academic needs and family needs during the pandemic.

We hope that as you read these chapters, you can appreciate the challenges that have impacted children, families, and teachers during the past several years. Our authors have shared personal stories, small research studies, and literature reviews which illustrate the challenges we have had to overcome. Regardless of the struggles, we believe that these have created opportunities for us to learn and act to better the educational opportunities for current and future generations of learners.

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