

## **Parent-educators' explorations of learning and role tensions during and 'after' Covid-19**

**Anitra Goriss-Hunter, Peter Sellings, Amy Darby Walker, Amy Claughton, Catherine Oxworth, Deborah Robertson and Katrina Griffiths**

*Federation University Australia, Australia*

This paper investigates the insights that we, as parent-educators gained from our children's learning experiences throughout the Covid-19 pandemic and how this impacted our approaches to learning and teaching. All authors are teacher education academics working at a regional Australian university. The rapid and extensive changes in our personal and professional circumstances provided an opportunity for us to critically examine the ways in which we promoted learning for our children and our students. Our reflections on these investigations form the basis of this article. To explore these issues we drew on a method involving narrative inquiry and the Indigenous concept of yarning that we call collaborative narrative inquiry and the theoretical framework of Antonovsky's salutogenic approach. Key findings of the research demonstrated tensions between the roles of parent and educator with a growing focus on the former and an increasing emphasis on health and well-being. These issues impacted the ways in which parent-educators facilitated learning for all students.

### **Introduction**

This paper investigates the insights that we, as parent-educators gained from our children's learning experiences throughout the Covid-19 pandemic and how this impacted our approaches to learning and teaching. The authors all work in teacher education at a regional Australian university and we developed a method combining narrative inquiry and Indigenous 'yarning' (Barlo et al., 2020) in a deliberate move towards reconciliation. We also drew on Antonovsky's (1979, 1996) salutogenic approach. This combined framework underpinned and enabled our collaborative research practices, respectful work as non-Indigenous allies, and the acknowledgement of a common positive health-oriented approach within the group. To investigate our children's learning experiences during Covid-19 and the resultant impact on our teaching and parenting, we drew on a series of written and verbal narratives, observations and transcripts of our yarns in the mobilisation of a collaborative narrative inquiry method.

We began our study with stories from our unique position of parent-educators. These different but connected positions inform each other so that in the educator position we might leverage our understanding of children/adolescents to teach university students from an enabling perspective and in the parent role, we might employ teaching approaches to facilitate our children's engagement with learning. Situating this story within collaborative narrative inquiry foundations allows for individual stories and experiences to inform our critical dialogue about learning and teaching. This permits us to explore the tensions between the professional and the private spheres, and mine the complexities inherent in professional and personal identities.

Reflecting on living, teaching, and learning through a pandemic allows us to explore the knowledge and understandings gained through our experiences. Even though the whole Covid-19 situation is far from over, papers have been published that speak to the disruption caused by the pandemic and how this provides an opportunity to critically investigate our approaches to learning and teaching, discarding those that have exhausted their usefulness and moving forward with dynamic, democratic and perhaps new pedagogies and practices (Darling-Hammond & Hyler, 2020).

Common themes that emerged from our stories focus on health and well-being and the tensions experienced between the roles of parent and educator. As these themes were key concerns in the narratives, the authors decided that they should be explored more fully in this paper.

## **Literature review**

### **Parent-educators**

Those who inhabit the dual space of parent-educator identify with a unique position where two separate but interrelated identities co-exist. This research is diverse with a broad concentration in the discipline areas of education and health. It is a growing field, especially after the experiences during the height of the pandemic (2020-2021) when parent-educators often facilitated the learning of their children and their students. In this domain, there has historically been a focus on parent education regarding caring for children and teenagers (Nolan, 2020). Current literature still tends to examine health issues in a diversity of areas including parent-educators as facilitators for programs concerning teenage smoking (Herawati et al., 2019); palliative care (Snaman, et al., 2018); and health management (Carroll et al., 2018). Technology is often implicated in these programs where using Internet-based search technology (Morrison, 2022) or other digital technologies has become a standard feature of contemporary learning activities. Articles call for parents to support teachers in their efforts to educate children (Yulianti et al., 2022) or to extend teacher-led initiatives into the home, especially in early childhood education (James & Aspden 2022). Articles in this field also give voice to advocacy for learners who feel that they do not fit into mainstream schooling systems (Haley & Allsopp, 2019) and express the uniqueness of the 'dual role' of parent-educator (Bomgardner & Accardo, 2022).

Increasingly, parent-educator literature is focusing on their awareness of balancing personal and professional roles as well as health and well-being (Kell, 2016; Kourtrouba et al., 2016). From this shift, Kell (2016) and Kourtrouba et al. (2016) among other researchers report an increase in the use of innovative teaching approaches that foster positive outcomes for teachers and learners. During the pandemic, research by Kim et al. (2021) highlighted the importance of the social emotional learning of their children and students. The researchers' understanding of teaching the whole child allowed them to identify the lack of attention to this aspect of their children's remote learning experiences. It was clear that the demands of remote learning had added to an already busy workload and there was "little space for teachers and parents to discuss social emotional learning at

parent-teacher conferences.” (Kim et al., 2021, p. 7). The contribution of this article to the field of parent-educator research spans the diverse range of studies in education and health areas and it also introduces discussion from higher education educators.

As parent-educators with children who range from pre-schoolers to those completing secondary school, the authors of this article focused on capturing the lived experience of teaching in professional and personal capacities throughout the pandemic. This unique perspective seeks to address a gap in the current literature concerning parent-teachers where the writing tends to foreground one of the roles – for example, a parent who also happens to be a teacher. For us, the dual roles of parent and educator are equally weighted and inform each other. In addition, we teach and research in the higher education sector, unlike the focus on primary and lower-secondary schools in the literature. Being mindful of the continual digitisation of university curriculum (Zaripova et al., 2021) and the rapidly shifting demands of teaching throughout the pandemic (Garcia-Morales et al., 2021), we wanted to investigate the enablers and barriers that impacted on our teaching and parenting. Reflecting on our yarns and narratives and drawing on Antonovsky’s (1979, 1996) salutogenic approach, the authors were able to identify and investigate what we had learned from our pandemic experiences.

#### *Remote learning*

As part of the pandemic restrictions, face-to-face learning opportunities in schools, universities and other education settings in Australia were required to move to online delivery. In accordance with this shift to online learning, teachers, educators and academics were required to develop teaching/learning materials in a short time frame and then facilitate learning activities in an entirely online environment. While this rapid shift to online learning was required by official government responses to the pandemic, the extremely short time frame for change does not fit with current research (Bond, 2019) that claims e-learning is most effective when there is a gradual development of digital skills for both students and teachers. Current research suggests that conditions resulting from the Covid-19 restrictions emphasise existing inequities for young people (Anders et al., 2022) and demonstrate that social support was important for students (Yu & Zhou, 2022).

#### *Student well-being and the relational school*

The importance of relationships for students within families (Verrastro et al., 2020) and in school environments (Hickey et al., 2022) cannot be underestimated. Relational schooling prioritises the development of relationships within the school community (Hickey et al., 2022; Quinn et al., 2021) – that is, connections between students, peers, and teachers. Carlisle et al. (2019) reported that young people prioritise and value friendships and relationships. This approach recognises the importance of developing children’s social, emotional and intellectual development and aims to create environments where students feel safe and connected (Hickey et al., 2022; Quinn et al., 2021). Sahlberg et al. (2023) argued that to improve learning outcomes for all students, a move is necessary from an academic focus to one on health and well-being where schools become multi-opportunity communities that promote welfare and life-long learning.

Research has shown that the teacher-student relationship is extremely important in ensuring that students feel a sense of belonging in their schools (Scales et al., 2020). It was also found that teachers had a vital role in helping to develop and create meaningful peer relationships through guidance and support (Coyle et al., 2022). The importance of these peer relationships is significant, with research showing that they have a positive effect on self-esteem, motivation, academic performance, personal development, and a sense of belonging (Martin & Collie, 2019).

#### *Student health and well-being*

Research demonstrates that different aspects of health including physical, social, emotional, mental and spiritual dimensions can impact on the well-being of students (Cottrell et al., 2002; Coyle et al., 2022). Health is typically defined in the literature as being multidimensional and requiring a degree of depth and balance among diverse elements, including physical, emotional, intellectual, social and spiritual constituents of life (Cottrell et al., 2002). Although schools and tertiary institutions are potentially some of the most influential avenues to promote health and well-being to students, they are complex environments with an already crowded curriculum and competing responsibilities to a range of stakeholders (Hoare et al., 2017). A growing body of literature on student health and well-being is examining a variety of issues that impact on the ability of schools and tertiary institutions to cater for the needs of diverse student cohorts in this area. Inclusive approaches, outdoor education, school sport programs and the use of flexible learning spaces are all the subjects of investigation concerning the development of student well-being (Kariippanon, 2018; Lindsay et al., 2022, Pietsch et al., 2022). Whether implied or the focus of the article, a thread that pervades much of this literature constructs mental and physical health as fundamental to student achievement, as well as social and mental well-being at school and in post-schooling environments.

## **Materials and methods**

### **Collaborative narrative inquiry**

To explore our experiences of remote schooling and online teaching we combined frameworks to record and analyse our experiences and the relationships at the core of these encounters. First, we drew on a combination of narrative inquiry and yarning to give voice to our experiences and form a method we are calling a collaborative narrative inquiry. Then, we mobilised Antonovsky's (1979, 1996) notion of salutogenesis as a lens through which we could examine our general approaches to health and well-being. Our stories and yarns held our truths and with the concept of salutogenesis, provided a framework which allowed us to examine and reflect on the learning we derived from experiences of learning and teaching throughout the pandemic.

#### *Narrative inquiry*

Employing the method of narrative inquiry enabled the authors to develop greater understanding about the kinds of responses that people might make in situations (Riley & Hawe, 2005). Applying narrative inquiry to our yarns and reflections allowed us to record and examine our lived experiences before, during and after periods of remote teaching

and online learning. Explorations of these narratives enabled the analysis of data concerning a range of perspectives that might encourage more in-depth learning regarding social and cultural issues. To gather information and examine these expanded understandings, we employed yarning.

#### *Yarning*

The authors do not identify as First Nations people. We have not been invited to yarn in the context of this research project. However, one of the authors has begun teaching an Indigenous Studies unit and has been invited to take part in a yarning circle, observing that there were numerous similarities in how we were conducting our research and the process of yarning. As a result of this observation, the authors would like to respectfully acknowledge these strong connections as we continue to be inspired and influenced by Indigenous ways of knowing in our research and teaching. As we move forwards with our reconciliation undertakings, we eschew appropriation and look forward to learning more about Indigenous knowledge and perspectives.

So, in an act of intended reconciliation (Barlo et al., 2020; Brigden et al., 2020) we employed the process of Australian Indigenous people's yarning (Geia et al., 2013). Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have traditionally used yarning where participants sit in circles to share stories, discuss, talk and educate (University of Newcastle, 2023). The aims of yarning are to create spaces for people to learn to listen and talk without judgement; facilitate open communication; investigate conflicts; and share stories (Reconciliation NSW, 2023). Speakers are identified by holding a 'talking piece' which could be any object that fits into a hand such as a rock or shell. This method has gained significant recognition as a research method used globally (Geia et al., 2013). Yarning has also been adapted to the online environment throughout Covid-19 (Riley et al., 2022). The yarning process is democratic, respectful and empathetic, enabling authentic connections to be made between researchers and the stories they tell to assist with achieving strong understandings of different perspectives and contexts (Bennett et al., 2021; Bridgen et al., 2020).

#### *Collaboration and narrative inquiry*

Narrative inquiry and yarning are linked with our reflective practices as educators (Huber et al., 2013), coupled with observations of our own children's experiences in online classrooms. As parent-educators, we had privileged positions to observe how the curriculum was negotiated between our children and their teachers (Huber et al., 2013). From the position of allies, we came to understand and value the connection between the narratives we related to each other and the democratic and caring ways that we re-visited and analysed these stories. We came to realise that we were combining narrative inquiry and yarning in a method suited to the personalised way that we approached our research.

The authors collected data from 2020 to 2021 for our collaborative narrative inquiry by gathering yarns, stories, reflective writing, observations, our children's schoolwork and learning resources from teachers. The reflective writing and yarns provided vivid recounts with rich examples of experiences, enabling a snapshot of the dynamics and context of parent-teacher involvement in remote learning and online teaching. Using story and yarns,

we were able to filter, shape and reform our experiences (Riley & Hawe, 2005). Direct quotes from our narratives have been used in this article and research participants have been allocated a number. For example, quotes might be attributed to P2 or P3.

To explore the data, written reflections were invited in response to writing prompts. These prompts were written as exploratory questions designed to document our observations of our children's home and remote schooling experiences. The written reflections were then shared within the group where they were analysed in online meetings using inductive data analysis. This process involved the authors, initially identifying themes, then meeting online as a group to discuss these threads. After much discussion and re-reading narratives, the authors agreed upon common themes and coded them using key concepts within the data. This use of thematic coding assisted in identifying themes and preventing analytical bias. As a result of this method, four main themes were identified and examined. These common themes focused on our initial position as educator rather than parent; stressors or barriers to learning; responses to these challenges using a salutogenic approach; and a shift to privileging the parent disposition in the parent-educator role.

#### *Antonovsky's salutogenic approach*

In opposition to a reactive concept of health as pathology, the authors viewed health and well-being in a holistic sense with a salutogenic (Antonovsky, 1979, 1996) mindset, perceiving it to be an asset that needs to be maintained in all facets of our life; physically, socially, mentally, emotionally and spiritually. Consistent with World Health Organisation (2023) principles, 'health' can be perceived as a concept beyond a simplistic notion of personal wellness to one that encapsulates sociocultural dimensions, where health is developed within a relationship between the individual and their surroundings (Eriksson & Lindström, 2010). This conception draws on Antonovsky's (1979, 1996) salutogenic approach to health which avoids conceptualising well-being in terms of personal deficit, focusing instead on the resources that an individual may possess and draw on to make sense of their life situation, providing meaningful and coherent life experiences and thus develop their health. These resources are described as diverse individual and sociocultural factors, including physical, material, cognitive, emotional, attitudinal, relational and sociocultural resources which help us avoid and dissolve the stressors of our present life situations through a sense of coherence (Antonovsky, 1979). Stressors are not focused only in the form of bodily reactions, but also in the sociocultural challenges and demands of daily living. The sources of health resources are always contextual and relative to, for example, gender, social class or ethnicity, while the relative importance of any one resource is always dependent on the historical and sociocultural context we presently inhabit (Antonovsky, 1979, 1996). Generally, individuals have used the salutogenic approach to understand and explore coping and health (Landsverk & Kane, 1998).

One of the main advantages of drawing on Antonovsky's, (1979, 1996) notion of salutogenesis is that this theory supports the view that individuals can act agentically to change situations. Salutogenesis proposes that individuals can make choices concerning the maintenance and/or enhancement of their health and draw on their own resources which is integral in adapting to all stressful situations such as Covid-19 circumstances. As

a result of grappling with government responses to the waves of Covid-19 where people needed to isolate and remain in their homes, the authors perceived that the adoption of a salutogenic approach (Antonovsky, 1979, 1996) assisted with the promotion of health and the management of undesirable outcomes and stressors (Botvin, et al, 1995). For the authors, approaching health care and well-being through a salutogenic lens allowed parents and children to maintain these elements while managing relationships, work and learning in isolation due to the Covid-19 situation.

### *Ethics*

Ethics approval was gained through the university Human Research Ethics Committee (approval number B22-008). Participants were advised that they would indicate consent by joining in with the yarning and reflective writing and that they were able to withdraw from the research project at any time.

## **Results and discussion**

Four main themes were identified in our yarning and reflective writing. The first theme concerned the ways in which our initial response to government lockdowns, remote and online learning was to be fearful of the unknown and our default position was to foreground the educator role. The second theme involved the structural stressors or barriers involved in teaching and parenting throughout lockdown and online learning. In response to these stressors, the third theme revealed the authors' agentic responses to our circumstances using a salutogenic lens. As a result of our learning from events involved with the third theme, we experienced a shift in primary roles from the default position of educator to that of parent-oriented educator in the fourth theme. Our stories that constructed the final theme supported the notion that learning can only occur when the overall well-being of the individual is addressed.

### **Default educator role**

With government lockdowns imposed for various periods, universities and schools conducted business in different ways and this led to the feeling that our parent-educator roles needed to be clearly separated to maintain previous standards of behaviour. As a result of this demarcation, we felt that we needed to behave in terms of either the professional identity of an educator or the personal role of parent. This initial sharp delineation of roles placed mounting pressures on us, impacting our work/life balance, the way we communicated with schools, our educator positions and our roles as parents. Adapting to these structural tensions early within the first year of lockdowns was tinged with fear of the unknown and a sense of 'just getting by.' Our agency or individual action was inhibited by our reactionary state, often without specific intention or unintended consequences. For example, one author stated that "Balancing supporting my children whilst also teaching in the online space made it difficult for me to support their learning" (P3). Another author commented:

Our children were forced to engage in the online space for schooling and this carried through to their social life in lockdown/s. As a teacher I understood why this had to

happen but as a parent I was also concerned that our children's social and emotional development would be impacted (P3).

The authors also identified a tendency to assume a default position of educator when interacting with our children as we attempted to negotiate our way through remote learning environments. However, this default position was not always the most effective approach.

An early lesson was learned: my child's perception of what was to transpire during online learning and mine were not in synch... (P5)

The more I organised work schedules, timetables and offered study tips and assistance... the more he withdrew... (P7)

These comments emphasise the authors' recognition that even though we all acknowledged the importance of the role of parent, initially we tended to revert to the 'educator' role in situations where our children's learning was supposed to be foregrounded. From a salutogenic analysis of environmental and individual determinants of health and the ways in which we were impacted by our COVID circumstances, we came to realise that to work effectively with our children we needed to ensure that our roles of 'parent' and 'educator' were blended with the former being foregrounded.

### **Structural stressors**

The pandemic played a significant role in disrupting work/life balance, as our workplace and children's schools scrambled to adjust to ever-changing lockdown rules. Authors commented that it was difficult to maintain our usual working hours as we had other responsibilities that involved members of our household. One author stated that "I have found it impossible to have any sense of regular work hours as I have tried to address the needs of my children" (P5). Another author opined "Six lockdowns later I have learnt to triage homelife and work every day ... There are no longer clear boundaries between work and homelife" (P6). These reflections show that working from home meant a general blurring of boundaries between parent and educator roles for the authors where maintaining a salutogenic balance was extremely difficult.

Several authors also discussed time management as a stressor due to competing roles and the expectations of the authors' own children as well as the students we were educating as part of our employment. One author wrote: "Sometimes due to expectations of both work and school, it is difficult to give both your child and your employment the attention that they both need" (P7). Other comments highlighted authors' feelings of inadequacy suggesting that we felt that either children or employment might be missing out. For example: "I live with constant guilt about whether I am spending too much time on the computer or whether I am not marking as quickly as usual" (P6) and "I believe my children may need and want help but also due to my teaching load at university know I am not available when they need that instant answer or discussion on a topic to assist them in their class" (P3).



These feelings of inadequacy in both work and homelife led to dissatisfaction with oneself as one author commented:

It was not always easy for me to navigate the tasks for my child while attending to two younger children at home along with my work and study ... As a teacher (or a parent), it's hard not to take on guilt for what was left undone, or what was not done very well.  
(P4)

Using a salutogenic lens, another issue identified by authors as a structural stressor was the impact on communication between home and school. Schools did not seek feedback concerning the success (or otherwise) about remote schooling and the authors felt that we would happily provide information about what was and was not working. This stressor also appeared to have the potential to confuse parents and/or students about school requirements.

As a parent I have been astounded at the lack of communication with the parents ... The school has not asked for any feedback as to what is working and what is not with their remote teaching and learning practices (P6).

The communication for parents, at times, has been confusing as the school tends to send out too many pieces of information, or other times, forgets to update or provide instructions for the important aspects of a specific task (P2).

These comments show that the authors felt that we could give feedback that might assist the school to develop the best possible online learning for students.

Structural stressors also impacted the authors' relationships and connections with our own children. This impact was compounded due to the juggling of multiple roles of parent, educator and university lecturer. The authors clearly identified the importance of the parent role and our relationships with our children.

As a parent, I wanted to keep a positive relationship and not be too overbearing or pushy... (P4)

My role as a parent was to support my children...(P1)

Parents needed to preserve relationships with their children and not to emphasise becoming their 'teachers' (P4)

The authors drew on a salutogenic approach (Antonovsky, 1979, 1996) to identify and discuss structural barriers such as pressure on mental health, school systems not supporting neurodivergent children, and teachers, academics and students being forced to engage with technology.

Employing a salutogenic lens, the authors worked towards mitigating the risk factors that negatively impacted on us and drew more on our resources to enable greater expressions of agentic control over decisions throughout the pandemic. The authors became more adept at managing the tensions, adopting new routines for family and work as well as

developing new classroom practices to suit the changing times and needs of our children, especially in terms of their learning. Throughout the pandemic we developed a salutogenic-focused ability to cope and manage. This is illustrated in the decision we made to employ a series of coping strategies to prioritise health and well-being in our families, which entailed a move from the default position of educator to parent. Our coping mechanisms aligned with Antonovsky's (1996) salutogenic approach, so that instead of focusing on a deficit conception of the structural impediments working against us, we became active agents, adopting mindful practices and well-being approaches to support our families, students and ourselves. Our use of a salutogenic approach is further described in the next section.

### **Agentic responses using a salutogenic lens**

Inhabiting the space of both parents and educators during Covid-19 presented varied challenges for us, which over time, we were able to respond to in more thoughtful, considerate ways and not just react to situations. At the nexus of parent and educator roles, we were in a privileged position to observe how school closures placed strain on teachers and caused some confusion while parents struggled with attempting to assist their children with schoolwork (UNESCO, 2022). We could both observe and experience these challenges, resulting in our reflective attempt to employ a salutogenic approach, related to a focus on well-being and to direct attention to the "positive pole of the continuum of health" (Olney & Kiss, 2021, p. 2). Mobilising a salutogenic approach, we aimed to uphold professional responsibilities as educators teaching our university students while also assisting our children with their learning. To do this, we foregrounded the relationships we have within our families (Verrastro, et al., 2020) and the relational aspects of being an educator (Hickey et al., 2022).

As educators ourselves, we managed our desire for high expectations by using a salutogenic approach to working with our children, leveraging our knowledge of our children as learners, working relationally and encouraging them to engage with their schoolwork. Ensuring that there was a fundamental focus on health and well-being to promote learner engagement, we attempted to create multi-opportunity environments (Sahlberg et al., 2023) where our children could explore different ways of demonstrating their learning.

This entailed taking creative liberties at times, modifying work to encourage our children's participation. In this way, we aligned with educators finding ways to "cope" (Burke, 2021, p.1) through the pandemic, while supporting those around them. Through various situations we shared in our yarning, there was a focus on supporting our children's well-being while they progressed through the work, and at times this meant modifying the work so that they would be willing to complete it. One author noted that there was a need "to explore each task with my child and find a way to connect them to learning ... to be very creative in finding ways to make tasks interesting" (P5). Another author revealed: "I spent my time developing activities based around my interpretation of my son's interests, as well as trying to get some input from him" (P7). In this salutogenic space, where learning and health can be linked (Olney & Kiss, 2021), authors confronted the ways in

which our children did not fit into mainstream schooling systems and the organisational difficulties that constantly occurred:

My child's restlessness, appetite for arguing, aversion to writing, and delight in constant movement positioned him outside the conventional classroom (P1).

Examples of problems with the work given include a long task sheet that has not been carefully checked to ensure that the links provided work or that the questions/problems asked can be solved (P4).

My role as a parent was to support my children but as a professional I was frustrated at the constant negotiations I felt forced into (P5)

While wanting to support our children's teachers to promote learning (Yulianti et al., 2022), refraining from critiquing some of the interactions with our children and the kinds of work assigned was an issue. Mobilising our resources including both professional elements of the educator role and personal aspects of empathy and care in the parent role, enabled the authors to move beyond any judgments made to working out ways for our children to engage with learning activities. Telling our stories and further discussion in our yarning became personal and professional resources for us. These relational resources enabled us to share the issues we keenly felt on this topic and to channel our energies into reframing schoolwork so that our children could complete the assigned tasks.

From our experiences, the authors recognised the serious impact that remote schooling and online teaching was having on the health and well-being of our children, students and ourselves. In line with current literature, we acknowledged the importance of health and well-being and balancing our parent and educator roles (Kell, 2016; Kourtrouba et al., 2016). Employing a salutogenic lens, we took purposeful steps to address these issues by employing our resources.

The wellbeing and mental health of everybody has to be prioritised and this looks different for different people (P3).

I felt concerned about the children's mental health as this was such a huge disruption to their lives, their development and their identities... (P1).

My priority was on maintaining mental health and school 'readiness'... (P6).

A salutogenic approach is evident in the way that we attempted to honour the needs of our children and ourselves. The importance of foregrounding the social and emotional well-being of our children is well-supported in current research (Kim et al., 2021).

At times this salutogenic concentration on well-being and mental health was seen to be more important than the completion of schoolwork. This echoed throughout the participant responses, not only in how we managed our own children's interaction with school learning tasks but also with how we engaged with our students:

There should not be a “one size fits all” approach to remote teaching and learning. I have adapted a more open approach to the way in which I have been teaching my university courses this semester ... I provide multiple options for activities and engagement (P5).

The salutogenic approach was reflected in our teaching as we emphasised encouragement and found ways of promoting connection online with our students. An author stated that a key learning for them was “The importance of truly knowing your students, not misreading them, working with them with creative and strategic patience and determinedly working towards co-designed goals” (P1).

Ultimately, these challenges encouraged us to adopt a more reflective approach to our teaching, enabling us to improve our practices through meaningful regular interactions with our students.

### **Shift from educator role to parent role**

From collaborative explorations of our narratives and yarning, we could track a progression from a general focus on our roles as educators to a foregrounding of our parent identity. Originally, the authors privileged our educator identities in response to the stressors and issues that developed due to the lockdowns, but this changed as we mobilised a salutogenic approach which enabled the adoption of agentic behaviours in response to the often structural barriers encountered. Our fostering of agentic responses to structural issues was facilitated by drawing on our resources as parents and professional academics:

My priority was on maintaining mental health ... While it appeared that the school recognised this importance, there was a big push to complete academic work. I looked for ways in which my child could complete the assigned learning task in whatever mode they found relevant to build curiosity and encourage learning (P1).

There were some creative or problem-solving challenges brought delighted smiles and stories from the children. My role as a parent was to support my children and as a professional I tended to tailor learning tasks to my child (P5).

These comments described parent-educators drawing on both personal and professional elements of our dual role to act agentially in supporting our children’s learning needs rather than complying with a conventional delivery of schoolwork that assumes ‘one size fits all’. While the two elements of the dual role of parent-educator were employed in these examples, we reverted to the position of parent while drawing on elements of the professional educator. This shift from a default educator position to foregrounding the parent role was predicated on our experiences of remote schooling, whereby our children’s health and well-being were vitally important to enable their engagement with learning.

The authors’ move from professional mode to a parental well-being focus through a salutogenic orientation, drew on different resources to promote the mental and physical

health (Antonovsky, 1996) of our children and, thus encourage learning rather than the completion of schoolwork that we felt, at times, did not engage our diverse learners. For example:

The isolation of home allowed our family to begin to understand how important being proactive with health, fostering good relationships and being physically active ... education with purpose ... We had to develop and use each other's resources to 'adapt' (P3).

We went back to the grass roots of gardening and playing card games and building our relationships with each other (P1).

The need for some type of reorientation of their own expectations and experiences seemed to be consistent among our children and families, which indicated a desire to find meaning and purpose in simple and straightforward aspects of life. For instance, one author stated that: "Almost every morning I have gone for a walk along a nearby creek. I enjoy the connection with the land and the birdlife and always feel more refreshed to start the day" (P7). Another author commented that "My children in the 2021 lockdown decided to get out a 4000 piece jigsaw and this was completed by all of us ... This gave us all something to focus on other than the depressing news that was being beamed onto our TV screens" (P3).

## **Conclusion**

Throughout the pandemic when we all seemed to be struggling to find some truths and practices that enabled our learning and teaching, remote schooling and online learning were catalysts for our examination of our unique roles as parent-educators. From our yarning and written reflections, the stories we told revealed four main narratives. The first theme showed that we initially embraced the default position of educator, especially when assisting our children with remote schooling. Second, the stressors in parenting and teaching during lockdowns created tensions and barriers concerning our professional and personal roles of educator and parent. Third, our reactions to these stressors and barriers employed a salutogenic approach which encouraged agentic responses. From this claiming of agency in the fourth theme, the authors experienced a move from an emphasis on the educator role to a focus on that of the parent as one of the key learnings for us was that health and well-being is fundamental to our children's ability to 'cope' with life and their readiness to learn. These relational shifts and learnings are the insights that the authors are taking with us to inform both professional and personal elements of our unique parent-educator role.

## **Declarations**

The authors did not receive support from any organisation for the submitted work. The authors have no conflicts of interest to declare that are relevant to the content of this article.

## References

- Anders, J., Macmillan, L., Sturgis, P. & Wyness, G. (2022). Inequalities in late adolescents' educational experiences and wellbeing during the Covid-19 pandemic. *Oxford Review of Education*, online first. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03054985.2022.2124964>
- Antonovsky, A. (1979). *Health, stress, and coping*. San Francisco and London: Jossey-Bass Publishers.
- Antonovsky, A. (1996). The salutogenic model as a theory to guide health promotion. *Health Promotion International*, 11(1), 11-18. <https://doi.org/10.1093/heapro/11.1.11>
- Barlo, S., Boyd, W. E., Pelizzon, A. & Wilson, S. (2020). Yarning as protected space: Principles and protocols. *AlterNative: An International Journal of Indigenous Peoples*, 16(2), 90-98. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1177180120917480>
- Bennett, R., Uink, B. & Van den Berg, C. (2021). Educating Rita at the cultural interface: exploring intersections between race and gender in the experiences of Australian Aboriginal women at university. *Diaspora, Indigenious, and Minority Education*, 15(2), 84-98. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15595692.2020.1815699>
- Bomgardner, E. M. & Accardo, A. L. (2022). Dual roles: Experiences of special educators who are mothers of a child with a disability. *Journal of Child and Family Studies*, 31(3), 866-880. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10826-022-02231-2>
- Bond, M. (2019). Flipped learning and parent engagement in secondary schools: A South Australian case study. *British Journal of Educational Technology*, 50(3), 1294-1319. <https://doi.org/10.1111/bjet.12765>
- Botvin, G. J., Baker, E., Dusenbury, L., Botvin, E. M. & Diaz, T. (1995). Long-term follow-up results of a randomized drug abuse prevention trial in a white middle-class population. *Journal of the American Medical Association*, 273(14), 1106-1112. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/7707598/>
- Brigden, C., Fricker, A., Johnson, R. & Chester, A. (2020). Speaking together: Reflections on reconciliation, yarning circles, and signature pedagogies. In T. McLaughlin, A. Chester, B. Kennedy & S. Young (Eds.), *Tertiary education in a time of change*. Springer. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-15-5883-2\\_11](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-15-5883-2_11)
- Burke, J. (2021). Learning, teaching and teacher education in a pandemic. *Journal of the World Federation of Associations for Teacher Education*, 4(1), 11-18. [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/351441503\\_Learning\\_teaching\\_and\\_teacher\\_education\\_in\\_a\\_pandemic](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/351441503_Learning_teaching_and_teacher_education_in_a_pandemic)
- Carroll, D., Kemner, A. & Schootman, M. (2018). Operationalizing population health management in practice. *Missouri Medicine*, 115(6), 533-536. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6312173/>
- Cottrell, R. R., Girvan, J. T. & McKenzie, J. F. (2002). *Principles and foundations of health promotion and education*, 2nd ed. San Francisco, CA: Benjamin Cummings. [8th ed.] <https://www.pearson.com/store/p/principles-and-foundations-of-health-promotion-and-education/P200000006920/9780136769002>
- Coyle, S., Weinreb, K. S., Davila, G. & Cuellar, M. (2022). Relationships matter: The protective role of teacher and peer support in understanding school climate for victimized youth. *Child & Youth Care Forum*, 51(1), 181-203. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10566-021-09620-6>

- Darling-Hammond, L. & Hyler, M. E. (2020). Preparing educators for the time of COVID ... and beyond. *European Journal of Teacher Education*, 43(4), 457-465.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/02619768.2020.1816961>
- Eriksson, M. & Lindström, B. (2010). *Bringing it all together: The salutogenic response to some of the most pertinent public health dilemmas*. In A. Morgan, M. Davies, M. & E. Ziglio (Eds.), *Health assets in a global context*. Springer. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4419-5921-8\\_18](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4419-5921-8_18)
- García-Morales, V. J., Garrido-Moreno, A. & Martín-Rojas, R. (2021). The transformation of higher education after the COVID disruption: Emerging challenges in an online learning scenario. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 12, article 616059.  
<https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.616059/full>
- Geia, L. K., Hayes, B. & Usher, K. (2013). Yarning/Aboriginal storytelling: Towards an understanding of an Indigenous perspective and its implications for research practice. *Contemporary Nurse*, 46(1), 13-17. <https://doi.org/10.5172/conu.2013.46.1.13>
- Haley, K. & Allsopp, D. (2019). Advocating for students with learning and behavior challenges: Insights from teachers who are also parents. *Preventing School Failure: Alternative Education for Children and Youth*, 63(1), 24-31.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/1045988X.2018.1469462>
- Herawati, L., Budiman, J. A., Hadi, C. & Khair, A., (2019). Parent educators for teenage smoking behavior. *International Journal of Adolescent Medicine and Health*, 31(3), article 0017. <https://doi.org/10.1515/ijamh-2017-0017>
- Hickey, A., Riddle, S., Robinson, J., Down, B., Hattam, R. & Wrench, A. (2022). Relational pedagogy and the policy failure of contemporary Australian schooling: Activist teaching and pedagogically driven reform. *Journal of Educational Administration and History*, 54(3), 291-305. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00220620.2021.1872508>
- Hoare, E., Bott, D. & Robinson, J. (2017). Learn it, Live it, Teach it, Embed it: Implementing a whole school approach to foster positive mental health and wellbeing through positive education. *International Journal of Wellbeing*, 7(3), 56-71.  
<https://doi.org/10.5502/ijw.v7i3.645>
- Huber, J., Caine, V., Huber, M. & Steeves, P. (2013). Narrative inquiry as pedagogy in education: The extraordinary potential of living, telling, retelling, and reliving stories of experience. *Review of Research in Education*, 37(1), 212-242.  
<https://doi.org/10.3102/0091732X12458885>
- James, E. & Aspden, K. (2022). The experiences of rural playcentre parents in providing parent-led early childhood education in New Zealand. *He Kupu [The Word]*, 7(2).  
<https://www.hekupu.ac.nz/article/experiences-rural-playcentre-parents-providing-parent-led-early-childhood-education-new>
- Kariippanon, K. E., Cliff, D. P., Lancaster, S. L., Okely, A. D. & Parrish, A. (2018). Perceived interplay between flexible learning spaces and teaching, learning and student wellbeing. *Learning Environments Research*, 21(3), 301-320.  
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10984-017-9254-9>
- Kell, E. L. (2016). *Shifting identities: A mixed-methods study of the experiences of teachers who are also parents*. Doctoral thesis, Middlesex University, UK.  
<https://eprints.mdx.ac.uk/20805/>
- Kim, J., Wee, S. J. & Meacham, S. (2021). What is missing in our teacher education practices: A collaborative self-study of teacher educators with children during the

- Covid-19 pandemic. *Studying Teacher Education*, 17(1), 22-37.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/17425964.2021.1895102>
- Koutrouba, K., Kalantzaki, E. & Christopoulos, I. (2016). When teachers become parents: Parenthood influence on Greek teachers' professional lives. *European Journal of Social Sciences Education and Research*, 3(3), 20-30.
- Landsverk, S. S. & Kane, C. F. (1998). Antonovsky's sense of coherence: Theoretical basis of psychoeducation in schizophrenia. *Issues in Mental Health Nursing*, 19(5), 419-431.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/016128498248872>
- Lindsay, B. L., Bernier, E., Boman, J. & Boyce, M. A. (2022). Understanding the connection between student wellbeing and teaching and learning at a Canadian research university: A qualitative student perspective. *Pedagogy in Health Promotion*, 9(1), 5-16. <https://doi.org/10.1177/23733799221089578>
- Martin, A. J. & Collie, R. J. (2019). Teacher-student relationships and students' engagement in high school: Does the number of negative and positive relationships with teachers matter? *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 111(5), 861-876.  
<https://doi.org/10.1037/edu0000317>
- Morrison, R. (2022). 'Google speak': The discursive practices of search in home-education. *Dialogic Pedagogy*, 10, DT82-DT106. <https://doi.org/10.5195/dpj.2022.387>
- Nolan, M. L. (2020). Effective parent educators: Skills and relationships. Ch. 3, pp. 21-33 in *Parent education for the critical 1000 days*. Routledge.  
<https://www.routledge.com/Parent-Education-for-the-Critical-1000-Days/Nolan/p/book/9780367445409>
- Olney, R. & Kiss, E. (2021). The application of salutogenesis to teaching and learning – A systematic review. *Developments in Health Sciences*, 4(3), 58-68.  
<https://doi.org/10.1556/2066.2021.00035>
- Pietsch, S., Linder, S. & Jansen, P. (2022). Well-being and its relationship with sports and physical activity of students during the coronavirus pandemic. *German Journal of Exercise and Sport Research*, 52, 50-57. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12662-021-00750-6>
- Quinn, K., Mollet, N. & Dawson, F. (2021). The compassionate schools framework: Exploring a values-driven, hope-filled, relational approach with school leaders. *Educational & Child Psychology*, 38(1), 24-36.  
<https://doi.org/10.53841/bpsecp.2021.38.1.24>
- Reconciliation NSW (2023). *Yarning circle*. [not found 5 July 2023]  
<https://www.schoolsreconciliationchallenge.org.au/activities/yarning-circle/>
- Riley, T. & Hawe, P. (2005). Researching practice: The methodological case for narrative inquiry. *Health Education Research*, 20(2), 226-236. <https://doi.org/10.1093/her/cyg122>
- Riley, T., Meston, T., Ballangarry, J., McCormack, B. A. & Low-Choy, S. (2022). From yarning circles to Zoom: Navigating sensitive issues within indigenous education in an online space. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, online first.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2022.2127501>
- Sahlberg, P., Goldfeld, S., Quach, J., Senior, C. & Sinclair, C. (2023). *Reinventing Australian schools for the better wellbeing, health and learning of every child*. Melbourne: Murdoch Children's Research Institute. <https://doi.org/10.25374/MCRI.22766825.v2>
- Scales, P. C., Pekel, K., Sethi, J., Chamberlain, R. & Van Boekel, M. (2020). Academic year changes in student-teacher developmental relationships and their linkage to middle and



- high school students' motivation: A mixed methods study. *The Journal of Early Adolescence*, 40(4), 499-536. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0272431619858414>
- Snaman, J. M., Kaye, E. C., Spraker-Perlman, H., Levine, D., Clark, L., Wilcox, R., Barnett, B., Sykes, A., Lu, Z., Cunningham, M. J. & Baker, J. N. (2018). Incorporating bereaved parents as faculty facilitators and educators in teaching principles of palliative and end-of-life care. *American Journal of Hospice and Palliative Medicine*, 35(12), 1518-1525. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1049909118786875>
- UNESCO (2022). *The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on education: International evidence from the Responses to Educational Disruption Survey (REDS)*. <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000380398>
- University of Newcastle (Australia) (2023). *Yarning circle*. <https://www.newcastle.edu.au/campus-life/central-coast/ourimbah/spaces-and-places/yarning-circle>
- Verrastro, V., Ritella, G., Saladino, V., Pistella, J., Baiocco, R. & Fontanesi, L. (2020). Personal and family correlates to happiness amongst Italian children and pre-adolescents. *International Journal of Emotional Education*, 12(1), 48-64. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1251781.pdf>
- World Health Organisation (2023). *Health and well-being*. <https://www.who.int/data/gho/data/major-themes/health-and-well-being>
- Yu, H. & Zhou, J. (2022). Social support and online self-regulated learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Asia Pacific Journal of Education*, online first <https://doi.org/10.1080/02188791.2022.2122021>
- Yulianti, K., Denessen, E., Droop, M. & Veerman, G. (2022). School efforts to promote parental involvement: The contributions of school leaders and teachers. *Educational Studies*, 48(1), 98-113. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03055698.2020.1740978>
- Zaripova, D. A., Zakhirova, N. N. & Makhmudov, A. A. (2021). Digitization of education and the role of teachers and students in this process. *International Journal of Philosophical Studies and Social Sciences*, 1(2), 196-202. <https://ijpsss.iscience.uz/index.php/ijpsss/article/view/59>

**Dr Anitra Goriss-Hunter** (corresponding author) is the Director of Learning and Teaching, Institute of Education, Arts and Community at Federation University Australia. Her research and teaching focuses on the development of inclusive teaching approaches; ways to improve female participation in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) education; and women's career progression in higher education. ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9423-3283>  
Email: [a.goriss-hunter@federation.edu.au](mailto:a.goriss-hunter@federation.edu.au)

**Dr Peter Sellings** is a senior lecturer in mathematics education at Federation University Australia. Peter's teaching focuses on engaging learners to develop a deep understanding of mathematical content knowledge and contemporary pedagogy content knowledge. His research interests include supporting university learners in mathematics, learner engagement, assessment, and school and university partnerships. ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5042-3445>  
Email: [p.sellings@federation.edu.au](mailto:p.sellings@federation.edu.au)

**Dr Amy Darby Walker** is a lecturer in the Master of Teaching program in the Institute of Education, Arts and Community at Federation University. Her courses focus on facilitating pre-service teachers' development of their teaching skills. Amy's research interests include student aspirations and pre-service teacher education.

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9740-2089>

Email: [a.walker@federation.edu.au](mailto:a.walker@federation.edu.au)

**Dr Amy Cloughton** researched in the field of disability studies in education, with interests in the area of inclusion, inclusive education, play and disability. She explores the connections between disability studies and childhood studies to explore the social constructs around play, learning, disability and childhood. Affiliation: Institute of Education, Arts and Community, Federation University Australia.

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1271-9800>

Email: [a.cloughton@federation.edu.au](mailto:a.cloughton@federation.edu.au)

**Dr Catherine Oxworth** is a lecturer and researcher in the Institute of Education, Arts and Community at Federation University Australia. Catherine has had extensive experience in education for more than 25 years. Catherine investigates issues of social justice that consider the complexities of identity, gender and feminism, post-colonialism, culture and creativity.

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1999-9101>

Email: [c.oxworth@federation.edu.au](mailto:c.oxworth@federation.edu.au)

**Mrs Deborah Robertson** is an experienced teacher and academic evidenced by her employment in a range of secondary schools and tertiary education settings over the past 28 years. Deborah explores issues around diversity and inclusive education which has resulted in conference presentations and publications in teacher education based journals. Affiliation: Institute of Education, Arts and Community, Federation University Australia.

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7132-5975>

Email: [d.robertson@federation.edu.au](mailto:d.robertson@federation.edu.au)

**Mrs Katrina Griffiths** is an experienced teacher and academic evidenced by her employment in a range of secondary schools and tertiary education settings over the past 25 years. Katrina has completed her Master of Education by Research and is co-authoring publications on teacher education, pedagogy and assessment. Affiliation: Institute of Education, Arts and Community, Federation University Australia.

Email: [katrina.griffiths@federation.edu.au](mailto:katrina.griffiths@federation.edu.au)

**Please cite as:** Goriss-Hunter, A., Sellings, P., Walker, A. D., Cloughton, A., Oxworth, C., Robertson, D. & Griffiths, K. (2023). Parent-educators' explorations of learning and role tensions during and 'after' Covid-19. *Issues in Educational Research*, 33(3), 974-991. <http://www.iier.org.au/iier33/goriss-hunter.pdf>