Chapter 4
Online Tutoring Advances in the Post-Pandemic World

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ABSTRACT

Tutoring has always had an important role in the education of children. After COVID-19 interrupted the education system and as schools closed and learning moved online, the landscape of education changed. Not only were there short-term changes in education, but major changes occurred in how we utilized the online environment for learning. Tutoring also took on a different look as virtual tutoring became the only option as social distancing took hold. As we have emerged from the COVID era, online tutoring has only increased in popularity. With more children behind learning targets and online learning offering numerous advantages, online tutoring demand has skyrocketed. This chapter takes a careful look at how we got to this point for online tutoring and explores what it looks like in more detail. Finally, for those looking to better understand online tutoring, this chapter provides a clear starting point.

INTRODUCTION

Recently a parent of a child who was struggling in school asked me to tutor them in math using one of the online platforms as the learning environment. As I began to what amounted to a once a week, one hour math sessions, I quickly became frustrated with my ability to effectively work with the student. For the first month, every week we spent the majority of the hour troubleshooting technology. The parent explained

that they didn't have enough money to upgrade to better service, so this would have to do. Thus, we had consistent internet problems, as well as audio problems, and in the fourth week, their laptop charger broke. As we moved into the second month of tutoring, I recognized that programs like Nearpod, Classkick, and Desmos were great resources, but they were inaccessible and or unusable in this situation. Thus, I began reverting to worksheets where I would try to review material with the student in the most engaging way possible. After the second month, the parent informed me that they couldn't afford to continue the sessions and that they didn't see much progress and our time ended. As I reflect back on this experience, I wonder what I could have done differently. If the technology was better, would the tutoring have been more effective? Would face-to-face tutoring have been better? Was the inability to afford or attain reliable internet and a computer further inhibited other children from lower socioeconomic households? It is with those questions in mind that I began to attempt to better understand the history of tutoring and examine where we currently stand in the tutoring landscape.

The landscape of the education profession has undergone significant changes in the past decade as technological innovations and changes influenced by COVID-19 have increased the use and application of different forms of online learning. This chapter will explore the impact that the acceptance and increased use of technology-infused learning has had on the utility of formal tutoring in the post-pandemic world. The profile of tutoring had remained relatively constant for decades as parents who had children struggling in school sought out and hired tutors through colleges, schools, friends, and colleagues. However, advances in communication tools have allowed reliable online tutoring to become a mainstream way to support struggling students, those who need specific learning supports, testing preparation, as well as those who are looking to get ahead. While the recent movement has most of the tutoring utilizing online modalities, we must consider how this has impacted both student learning and student access. Through this chapter, I will explore the changes that have occurred in tutoring and examine the impact and future of this becoming a widespread opportunity to support all students.

BRIEF HISTORY OF TUTORING

Although the origination of tutoring has deep historical roots even older than when Socrates tutored Aristotle, we will limit the history of tutoring to the 20th and 21st centuries. One of the most widely studied and observed uses of tutoring has taken place at colleges to support special groups of students such as athletes who often missed classes due to events or those who were unprepared for the rigors of college. There are inconsistent findings on the exact level of effectiveness of early

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