

Individual's efforts to sustain education during COVID-19 for Latina/o/x K-12 students

Authors: Pablo Pejlatowicz, JD, Graduate Research Assistant at the Latino Research Institute, LBJ School Public Affairs program candidate, The University of Texas at Austin; Marisol McDaniel DrPh, Postdoctoral research fellow, Latino Research Institute, Department of Mexican American and Latina/o studies, The University of Texas at Austin; Alejandra Gutierrez, Latino Research Institute, The University of Texas at Austin; Claire Harper, Latino Research Institute, The University of Texas at Austin.

INTRODUCTION. The switch to online education because of the COVID-19 pandemic led to parents of K-12 students adopting additional responsibilities of an educator. A 2020 study sample showed 41.1% of parents experienced a struggle in balancing employment needs, personal work and emotions with supporting their child's at-home learning (Garbe et al., 2020). K-12 teachers faced the challenge of having to adapt curriculum and work hours to support learning but also maintaining the engagement of students and parents. For Latina/o/x parents and teachers, there is an additional concern for quality of online education given the language barriers and the technological access barriers (U.S.G.A. Office, 2020).

PURPOSE. Assess the lived experiences of Latina/o/x parents and teachers of K-12 students during the COVID-19 pandemic.

METHODS. Thematic analysis of in-depth one-on-one interviews conducted with fifteen Latina/o/x individuals that either work in K-12 schools or are parents of children that attended K-12 schools during 2020. We extracted the participants' views rather than predefined views of the researchers.

RESULTS. Two themes emerged from the testimonies: increased responsibilities for parents and teachers, and barriers to technological access. The most salient subtopics for parents involved becoming in-house, technologically proficient teachers. In terms of teachers' experience, many teachers felt that students were falling through the cracks during distant learning due to unreliable internet access, and uncertain if parents could help their children. Digital access was salient in many of the interviews, from lacking Internet access to not having enough devices for the household members' simultaneous activities. Across all themes, parents and teachers were concerned about the students' engagement in their studies.

DISCUSSION. Our findings support promoting digital access for all families, in terms of training, devices and Internet access. Our findings also support adjusting the teachers' resources and requirements for online education, as they differ from in-person pedagogical needs.

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Background

The switch to online education because of the COVID-19 pandemic led to parents of K-12 students adopting additional responsibilities of an educator. A 2020 study sample showed 41.1% of parents experienced a struggle in balancing employment needs, personal work and emotions with supporting their child's at-home learning (Garbe et al., 2020). K-12 teachers faced the challenge of having to adapt curriculum and work hours to support learning but also maintaining the engagement of students and parents. K-12 educators experienced increased stress and workload from having to deliver curriculum virtually without a lack of prior training on utilizing online resources. Surveys collected by the American Education Panel show that 26% of the teachers sampled had moderate need for support with regards to adapting and delivering their curriculum online (Hamilton et al., 2020). This gap in training and delivery of educational material raises the question of the quality of education being provided during the COVID-19 pandemic. For Latina/o/x parents and teachers, language barriers and the technological access barriers pose another concern regarding the quality of education being received by K-12 students during the pandemic (U.S.G.A.O., 2020).

The purpose of the research study was to assess the educational experiences of Latina/o/x parents and teachers of K-12 students during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Voces of a Pandemic

Voces of a Pandemic is a collaboration between the Voces Oral History Center and other higher education institutions. More than 225 interviews are available in the project's YouTube channel. The research team analyzed those interviews in search of the topics that pertain to the Latina/o/x population amidst the pandemic.

Methods

Thematic analysis of in-depth one-on-one interviews conducted with fifteen Latina/o/x individuals that either work in K-12 schools or are parents of children that attended K-12 schools during 2020. We extracted the participants' views rather than predefined views of the researchers. We coded themes using NVivo 1 (2020) software.

Results

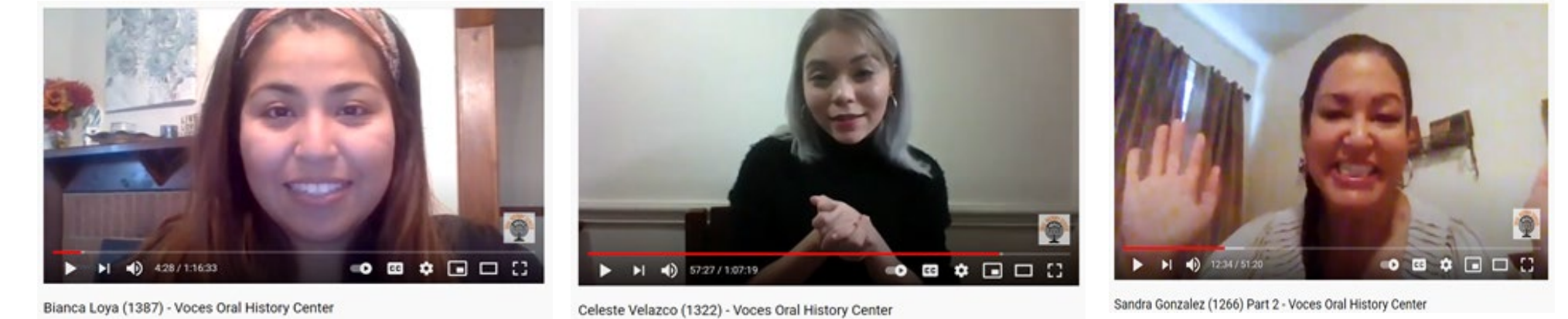
"And it's, it's been challenging. As a professional, it's been challenging as like, you know, me just as a person because I'm at school working late. I feel tired. I feel like, you know, this is a lot of work. And um then the fact that I'm a first-year teacher as well it's it gets overwhelming. Now, with those feelings, I'm not saying like, I don't like my job, or I hate it, but it's definitely been harder at times um to feel like okay, like, yes, I'm appreciated, yes um like, what I'm doing is, you know, good work." Bianca (Latina, teacher and parent)

"So, one of the challenges was contacting parents; that was the very first thing that we had to do. We had to reach out to our parents within our classroom to find out who had tech-- technology and who had who didn't. And then if they had technology, which many of them would say, 'yes, we have a tablet,' but then they didn't have internet service. So that was a challenge. And then we have the challenge of language difference, you know, barriers." Celeste (Latina, teacher)

"It was just always really tough for teachers because in the mariachi group that I'm in, the majority of the girls are teachers. ...So, they had to deal with being a teacher, online with their students and then they had to deal with being teachers of their own kids... So, I feel really bad for, if the parent, didn't have the support from their parents at home. I mean, if the kid doesn't have the support from the parents at home" Sandra (Latina, parent)

Results (continued)

Themes	Subcategories	Saliency
Increased Responsibilities		General (9 of 15)
	Parents as teachers	Typical (6 of 15)
	Teachers as navigators	Typical (7 of 15)
Barriers to Technology		Typical (8 of 15)
	Internet access	Typical (6 of 15)
	Insufficient # of devices	Variant (3 of 15)



Conclusion

Our findings support promoting digital access for all families in terms of training, devices, and Internet access. Our findings also support adjusting the teachers' resources and requirements for online education, as they differ from in-person pedagogical needs.

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