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STRUGGLES, RESISTANCE, AND SOLIDARITY: IMMIGRANT FAMILIES' INTERACTIVE LEARNING DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

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STRUGGLES, RESISTANCE, AND SOLIDARITY:

IMMIGRANT FAMILIES' INTERACTIVE LEARNING DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

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Abstract

In 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated persistent educational inequities and added exponentially to the existing "education debt" (Ladson-Billings, 2006). Public schools' sudden shift to remote learning marginalized a large population of students, including young bilingual children from immigrant backgrounds. These students are among the most vulnerable when it comes to remote learning not only because of accessibility issues, but also because many of these students' families live in underserved and under-resourced communities that were negatively affected by the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic and persistent systemic racism (Fortuna *et al.*, 2020; Schmit *et al.*, 2020). Hence, there is an urgent need to understand pandemic-related experiences of immigrant families with young bilingual children and to respond with educational strategies that strive to mitigate the negative effects of this educational crisis. This dissertation study comprised of three papers addresses this need through a

collaborative project with 20 immigrant families with 42 young bilingual children and two community organizations from the Metro and Greater Boston Area.

Paper 1 used sequential mixed methods to provide an in-depth account of immigrant families' remote learning experiences and investigate structural barriers such as lack of support and oppressive practices that hindered the establishment of home-school connections during the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic. Paper 2 employed transformative mixed methods to document the development, implementation, and evaluation of a family engagement and remote learning program—the Home Connection. This program was firmly grounded in the equitable collaboration framework of family engagement to build a strong partnership with the family participants and to recognize the crucial roles of the families as co-designers, co-educators, co-researchers, and co-evaluators. Paper 3 is a practitioner inquiry reflecting on what I have learned as a teacher-researcher implementing culturally sustaining pedagogy to partner with immigrant families and teach young bilingual children from diverse backgrounds during pandemic remote learning.

Findings from this dissertation documenting the struggles, resistance, and solidarity of these immigrant families will help inform educators, administrators, and policymakers in their planning and delivering of learning experiences and family engagement initiatives that center on the motivation, needs, and assets of diverse students and their families.

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SECTION I. INTRODUCTION

Dissertation Structure & Research Questions

This 3-paper dissertation is organized into five sections:

Section I. Introduction

This section includes an overview of the social and educational contexts when and where the project emerged, my positionality, and my research responsibilities. It presents the structure of the dissertation and research questions. Finally, the section states the significance of the dissertation and its potential contributions to education research, policy, and practice.

Section II. In Struggle - A Year in Turmoil: Immigrant Families' Challenges and Struggle with Remote Learning During the Pandemic

This section includes the first paper, which is a sequential mixed methods study investigating how a diverse group of 20 immigrant families from the Metro and Greater Boston Areas perceived and made meaning of their pandemic-related experiences and their children's remote learning experiences provided by public schools. This study also examines the barriers hindering the establishment of meaningful and reciprocal home-school relationships during the pandemic school year of 2020-2021.

Research Questions

RQ1. What are the challenges that immigrant families with young bilingual children face during the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic?

RQ2. What are the barriers that prevent immigrant families from effectively engaging with their children's school-provided remote learning during the pandemic school year of 2020-2021?

Section III. In Resistance - Home Connection: Development, Implementation, and Evaluation of a Family Engagement and Home Learning Program During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Taking a transformative participatory approach, this paper explores how immigrant families, through close collaboration with the principal researcher and community organizers, engage and support other immigrant families within and across school districts in the Metro and Greater Boston Area. Guided by the equitable collaboration framework (Ishimaru, 2017), this action-oriented study documents the process through which 20 immigrant families and 42 young bilingual children contributed to and participated in a family engagement and home learning program called the Home Connection program. Moreover, all family and child participants were directly involved in the evaluation process to determine the usefulness and effectiveness of the Home Connection program.

Research Question

RQ. How do immigrant families and young bilingual children participate in, engage with, and evaluate the Home Connection program?

Section IV. In Solidarity - Building Culturally Sustaining Learning Spaces with Immigrant Families and Young Bilingual Children During Pandemic Remote Learning

The purpose of this study is to provide a critical reflection of my teaching practices as a multilingual immigrant early childhood educator who attempted to build partnerships with immigrant families during the COVID-19 pandemic. This partnership allowed me to collaborate with 20 immigrant families and 42 emergent bilingual children from the Metro and Greater Boston Area to design a remote learning and family engagement program called the Home Connection. Using culturally sustaining pedagogy to guide curriculum design, pedagogy, and family engagement, this paper presents what I have learned from teaching 42 young bilingual children from diverse backgrounds in the Home Connection program during pandemic remote learning.

Research Question

RQ. What have I learned from working with immigrant families and teaching young bilingual children from diverse backgrounds in the Home Connection program during pandemic remote learning?

Section VI. Conclusion

This final section discusses and connects the findings of all three papers and provides implications for practices.

Problem Statement

In 2020, the emergence of the novel COVID-19 virus caused a devastating effect on all segments of the population (World Health Organization, 2020). Most scholars agree that the COVID-19 pandemic is not only a public health crisis, but also has unleashed socioeconomic, political, and educational crises (McKee & Stuckler, 2020; Daniel, 2020). In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, 188 countries enacted school closures to mitigate the spread of the virus, affecting more than 1.7 billion children worldwide (Human Rights Watch, 2020). In the U.S. context, the crisis has revealed persistent inequities in educational experiences, opportunities, and resources (Masonbrick & Hurley, 2020). Adding exponentially to the existing "education debt" (Ladson-Billings, 2006), public schools' sudden shift to remote learning marginalized a large population of students, especially students of Color, students with disabilities, and English Language Learners (Doyle, 2020). Neglecting the vast differences in students' learning needs, conditions of home learning environments, availability of resources, and levels of family support and guidance that depended mostly on caregivers' working

arrangements, a majority of school districts bombarded families and students with online learning sessions, education apps, printable worksheets, and assignments (Gross & Opalka, 2020).

Even without the accessibility problem, young bilingual children from immigrant backgrounds are among the most vulnerable when it comes to remote learning. These students have different English proficiency levels, which lead to challenges in accessing English-dominant learning spaces through online technologies. Without specialized language assistance, young bilingual learners can hardly engage with online learning sessions and often struggle with assigned schoolwork. Moreover, young bilingual children need more guidance and support not only in developing early literacy skills in two or more languages, but also in operating technological devices and navigating remote learning tasks. Family co-participation in remote learning experiences becomes an essential component for the learning process. Unfortunately, immigrant families might not be able to offer help particularly in the absence of resources and adequate information needed to navigate learning expectations from teachers, schools, and districts. In addition, immigrant families and young children from underserved and under-resourced communities are negatively affected by the consequences of COVID-19 pandemic (Fortuna et al., 2020) and persistent systemic racism (Schmit et al., 2020). These families endure higher burdens of socioeconomic inequities in terms of food (Niles et al., 2020) and rent/housing insecurity (Morales et al., 2020). Most immigrant parents

disproportionally represent the essential low-wage workforce (e.g., janitors, grocery store workers, factory workers, childcare workers) whose jobs cannot be done from home and are vital for society and their families to function (Krieger, 2020). Problematically, these families are also at higher risk of the reduction of cutting work hours and even job loss (Hibel et al., 2021). Immigrant families also tend to live in multigenerational households that have limited living space in crowded neighborhoods which can lead to higher rates of COVID-19 cases and deaths (Cholera et al., 2020). Regarding mental health and wellbeing, immigrant families with young children are continuously exposed to multiple stressors and face numerous barriers for getting access to healthcare and education services (Fitzpatrick et al., 2020).

Without deliberate considerations of the diversity of students' and families' needs and particular situations during the pandemic, schools continue to operate with the "one-size-fits-all" model that reproduces and perpetuates cycles of oppression in relation to the intersectionality of race, ethnicity, class, immigrant status, and language. Consequently, marginalized populations like immigrant families with young bilingual children struggle to survive both the COVID-19 pandemic and the education system in isolation.

Hence, there is an urgent need to understand pandemic remote learning experiences of immigrant families with young bilingual children and to respond with educational strategies to mitigate the negative effects of the educational crisis on these

families. Taking a pragmatic stance, I designed this 3-paper dissertation1 with multiple purposes: (i) to provide an in-depth account of immigrant families' pandemic-related experiences and their children' remote learning experiences and investigate structural barriers that hinder the establishment of home-school connections during the first year of the pandemic (Paper 1); (ii) to address the specific needs of immigrant families and young bilingual children through the participatory design, implementation, and evaluation of an equity-focused family engagement and home learning program called the Home Connection (Paper 2); and (iii) to conduct a practitioner inquiry to reflect on what I, a teacher-researcher, have learned from implementing culturally sustaining pedagogy to partner with immigrant families and teach young bilingual children during pandemic remote learning (Paper 3).

Study Context, Positionality, and Research Responsibilities

In this section, I will follow Patel's guiding questions of Why Me? Why Now? and Why Here? to foreground the study context, and my positionality in relation to the communities I worked with, and my research responsibilities as a teacher-researcher (Patel, 2015).

[1] Approval granted by Boston College Institutional Review Board, IRB #20.266.01

Why Me?

As explained by Patel (2015), the purpose of this question is to “prompt a humble pause and reflection on the specifics of individuals’ experiences that make them appropriately able to craft, contribute, and even question knowledges” (p. 58). Taking that “humble pause”, I will reflect on what brought me into this research project in the first place and what made me ”appropriately able” to work on this project.

During the first few months of the pandemic, I was facing tremendous pressure caused by juggling multiple roles: a mother caring for two young children, a Vietnamese immigrant staying afar from family members, a doctoral student taking online courses, a teacher educator designing and adapting online courses for student teachers, and an education researcher going through an existential crisis. As the world crumbled and school systems collapsed, I had trouble seeing the immediate impact of my work and determining its relevance to the lives of the people in my communities. At the same time, I could see so clearly how the pandemic exacerbated social and educational inequities. For example, in my children’s school, a White-predominant public school in an extremely privileged neighborhood in the Greater Boston Area, wealthy families quickly formed learning pods and hired private tutors, some moved their families to beach houses to practice social distancing. It was indeed a phenomenon of pandemic “White flight” that left many empty seats in public schools (Fogarty, 2022). In the same school district, families of Color, most of whom were part of the METCO program - the program that

was ironically in place serving the main purpose of school desegregation - struggled to survive and to gain access to digital devices and remote learning space. I witnessed that even with all the available resources, this school district failed to provide student-centered, developmentally appropriate, and culturally/linguistically responsive online lessons, and did not meaningfully engage families nor prioritize community building and healing.

During this remote learning chaos, I was filled with rage and helplessness. To put it simply: reading about inequities is totally different from seeing inequities, and definitely far from experiencing them. I realized that my doctoral program had trained me to become an isolated and distant observer of social and educational phenomena but did not prepare me to deeply understand my responsibilities as an education researcher doing consequential work and being held accountable by the communities that I am part of and/or work with. This realization put me in a deep pause: I stopped all of my ongoing research projects and prioritized caring for my children, checking in with elders in my family, and reconnecting with community members who participated in my previous projects.

At that very moment, I was contacted by an immigrant Latinx mother named Camila whose children participated in my previous research project. As the hyper-visible and invisible minorities in this privileged community, we quickly formed a strong bond. Our children had multiple play dates and we had many social gatherings where we

shared our stories of immigration, tips of cooking, caregiving, and childrearing, and dreamed about our children's future being recognized as citizens in this country. Seeing me as an education expert, Camila sought my advice on finding learning activities suitable for her three bilingual children, who did not show any interests and did not engage well with school-provided remote learning. She was also worried that prolonged school closure and home confinement would have a negative impact on her children's mental health and wellbeing.

Camila reminded me that I was first and foremost an educator and that I was more useful being an educator in the pandemic. Responding to Camila's request and accepting her trust, I created a small collection of home-based activities for Camila's children. I talked to each of them to learn more about their interests to make the activities more engaging and meaningful to them. Working with Camila's children helped me focus on creating activities that were culturally and linguistically responsive and developmentally appropriate for young bilingual learners.

As the pandemic continued to rage and the number of COVID-19 cases escalated, I foresaw that in-person learning would not be possible in the school year of 2020-2021. Therefore, I decided to expand this small set of home-based activities into a 10-week integrated curriculum for PreK-3 levels and offered it as a free resource for immigrant families and for classroom teachers who work with immigrant families and multilingual children.

However, I quickly realized that ready-to-use materials could only solve a small part of the problem: the bigger questions rested in how these materials are taught, by whom, to whom, and in what context. To make remote learning interactive, relevant, and purposeful to young bilingual children, teachers need to establish meaningful relationships with students and families and apply developmentally appropriate and culturally/linguistically responsive pedagogical practices. As an early childhood educator and researcher, I have also learned that young children learn best through play-based and hands-on activities that involve object manipulation, creation, play-pretend, and movements (Copple & Bredekamp, 2009). Young bilingual children, in addition, need a lot of support to develop their languages while learning new content. Pandemic remote learning certainly added multiple layers of complexity such as learning mediated through screens, learning with caregivers, siblings, and other family members, and learning in home-based settings. Families, inevitably, should be co-designers and co-educators in this context.

Taking all these factors into consideration, I co-designed the first learning box with Camila's children and sent it to their family for evaluation and feedback. I taught the first lesson to all three children via Zoom using the learning box in June 2020 and the result was remarkable: the children were actively engaged and were excited to try all the activities in the learning box. Our session was interactive, collaborative, and

energizing – Camila's family wanted more of it and I wanted to work with more families to co-design more learning boxes.

For that reason, I started applying for research grants to get funding for this initiative. Fortunately, the first grant came through in July 2020 which enabled me to collaborate with 10 immigrant families and 15 young bilingual children to co-design, implement, and evaluate the Home Connection program in a pilot study. The second grant came through in October 2020 which allowed me to implement the program one more time with a second group of 10 immigrant families and 27 young bilingual children to test and refine the curriculum during the 2020-2021 pandemic school year. Looking back at this journey, I could see that the project emerged organically to respond to the demands of pandemic teaching, learning, and community organizing.

Why Me? Because I am an early childhood teacher. If I was not a teacher, I would not have been ready to be of service when Camila asked me to design learning activities for her children. Camila's invitation allowed me to reclaim my teacher identity and put my skills and knowledge into good use.

Why Me? Because I am an education researcher. If I was not trained as a researcher, I would not have been ready to write grant proposals and be eligible to apply for grants to fund this project. This project also planted hope in me and motivated me to see research from a different lens and see knowledge in ways that I had not been exposed to before. This project showed me that education research, teaching practice,

and community service are and should be interconnected. It showed me that human research is deeply relational. Without an invitation, I could not be *there*, and *being there* comes with responsibilities - the responsibilities of being a member of a group working collaboratively to sustain communal knowledge(s) and using the power of knowing to build and heal communities. In a way, this project has shaped my research persona.

Why Me? Because I am an immigrant mother. Like other immigrant mothers participating in this project, I was coping with a significantly heightened caregiving load during the pandemic. While care is my burden, care is also my power. And I see that power in all immigrant mothers and caregivers who I worked with. So, the real question should be Why Us? And the answer is because we care – since we dare to care deeply about children in our community, it gives us the courage to take action.

Why Now and Why Here?

In this section, I will use the questions of Why Now and Why Here to situate this project as connected to time and space, "geographically, chronologically (but not linearly), and spatially" (Patel, 2015, p. 61). This project took place in both Metro and Greater Boston Areas during the COVID-19 pandemic. It was the time when home quarantine, masking, and social distancing were strictly implemented, and COVID-19 vaccines were still under development in the US. Like other immigrants, Camila and I were tracking how the pandemic unfolded in both the US and our home countries, and

how that impacted our family members in both places. Most commercial flights to our home countries were canceled, restricted, and eventually suspended, which prevented us from being in the same space with the people we loved and to say our last goodbye to some. In other words, we were not only in lock-down but also in lock-out, both in space and in mourning. The pandemic forced us to witness and experience family loss and grief in a different way as we struggled to find our own space to mourn in the midst of chaos while being expected to carry on with our ongoing responsibilities as caregivers. Somehow it instilled a sense of urgency in us as we came to the realization that even within our limitations, we had to do something, and we had to do it now. And somehow by "doing it now", it allowed us to build a community of hope, to grieve slowly and collectively.

Considering that the project took place during the pandemic, I found it quite difficult to determine its entry and exit points. While writing this dissertation, I took Patel's advice of taking multiple "deep pauses" or "productive interruptions" (Patel, 2016, p. 1) mostly to determine when the project began, ended and if writing about it would be useful. I concluded that the project began when I received Camila's invitation to work with her children. The project, however, never ends—I have not exited "the field" and never ceased my relationships with the families I worked with during the project. I am always at their service when they need an education consultant, sometimes translator/interpreter, most of the time, an ally. After working with the second group of

families, Camila and I continued building partnerships with different organizations to raise funds and implement the project in different neighborhoods. The biggest change to the project is that I no longer hold a teacher role. As the project grows, I cannot keep up with working with all families and teaching all children by myself like I used to during the pandemic. For that reason, writing about the project is important to share my pedagogical approach, family engagement strategies, and most importantly, what I have learned as a teacher-researcher to get this seed project planted and growing as it is today.

This project was also situated in space, both segregated and connected. Both Camila and I were renting in one of the most wealthy and privileged neighborhoods in the Greater Boston Area, which was labeled the Green Zone or low-risk for COVID-19 spread. Most of the families we worked with were owning or renting in the Red Zone neighborhoods in the Metro Boston Area, or high-risk for COVID-19 spread. Unsurprisingly, color lining of COVID-19 infection zones clearly reflects racial segregation, housing, education, and healthcare inequities in the State of Massachusetts - low-risk areas are historically White spaces and high-risk areas are home to communities of Color, most of whom are Black and Latinx residents (Melnik & Raisz, 2020).

Camila and I had multiple discussions about how we ended up in a White space ourselves: we were part of privileged immigrant groups who speak English as an

additional language, have college degrees and white-collar jobs, and our family income allows us to afford rent in this place. Most importantly, we purposely choose to stay *here* because we want access to high-quality education for our children, translated into well-funded public schools, well-resourced public libraries, available arts and music lessons, and multiple outdoor spaces. Gaining access to a White space comes with a promise: upward mobility and the possibility of accumulating generational wealth. Gaining access to a White space also comes with a cost: cultural assimilation, language loss, and experience of daily microaggressions and discrimination. Our housing choices and our relationships to space certainly impacted the recruitment process and the implementation of this project.

To recruit the first group of families, Camila and I used our existing social connections and relied on the school communication channels of different school districts. Our middle-class status and the email method of communication certainly restricted us from reaching more immigrant families from low-income backgrounds, who arguably needed more support at that time. Eleven out of 20 families of the first group, similar to Camila and I, were middle-class immigrant families living in or approximately near our neighborhood and these families speak English as an additional language. The other nine immigrant families resided in the Red Zone neighborhoods and participated in the METCO program or learned about the program through social media.

When we recruited the second group of families for our project, we decided that we needed to be in the field and in person to reach immigrant families who were disconnected from school districts, and we could not reach via social connections and online recruitment. We collaborated with community partners living in Red Zone neighborhoods who had been working tirelessly to support immigrant families during the pandemic. Through community partners' recommendations, we made home visits to meet some immigrant families and present the sample learning boxes to them. These immigrant families were mostly essential workers living in multigenerational homes. Their living spaces were small apartments in crowded neighborhoods where social distancing was impossible and resources were scarce. The immigrant families had little connection with schools and their children, most of whom were emergent bilinguals, and struggled a lot with remote learning. They were happy to see the learning boxes with bilingual picture books and agreed to join the Home Connection program.

While working with the second group of families, we paid much more attention to the families' essential needs including food, rent, and access to healthcare services. Through Camila's connections and school districts' recommendations, we contacted immigrant-serving community organizations and collaborated with them to ensure that these needs were met before we started the online learning sessions with the children. Without the help of these community partners, we would not be able to assist the families in need and successfully engage the children in the Home Connection program.

We also quickly learned that families' locations and housing situations made it much harder to ship and deliver learning boxes and implement certain outdoor lessons, especially during wintertime. We decided to pack three learning boxes into one package and deliver them three times during home visits. During these visits, we offered detailed explanations about the bilingual picture books and the related learning activities, answered the families' questions, and addressed the families' concerns. Home visits helped us gain a much better understanding of the children's living and learning spaces and incorporate that knowledge into designing more suitable home-based learning activities.

Moving across neighborhoods, buildings, and family homes certainly forced me to critically think about space – space as racially and economically segregated, space as home, and space as a learning environment, both real and virtually real.

Significance of the Dissertation

Situated within the historical moments of the global pandemic, this 3-paper dissertation contributes to the knowledge base of a new educational phenomenon: pandemic remote learning. It recognizes the function of home-based learning as part of the educational ecosystem where the collective wealth of knowledge is co-constructed and exchanged. Taking a transformative, participatory, and action-oriented approach,

the research designs of all three papers prioritize the establishment of equitable and collaborative relationships between the teacher-researcher and the research partners - immigrant families, young bilingual children, and community organizations.

Moreover, this dissertation engaged family participants in the design and evaluation of a family engagement and home learning program. By documenting the benefits and limitations of the program, this dissertation provided a pandemic-responsive, cost-efficient solution that significantly improved remote learning experiences for young bilingual children. The program can also be extended to provide learning resources for immigrant families, enhance school readiness for young bilingual children, and strengthen home-school-community partnerships after the pandemic.

Lastly, the dissertation provides clear evidence of an approach and strategies that can help inform educators, school administrators, and policymakers for school re-entry, remote learning planning, and family engagement initiatives considering the diversity of families. It advocates for a more inclusive approach in education to meet the needs of all students and families during and after the pandemic.

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SECTION II. IN STRUGGLE

A Year in Turmoil: Immigrant Families' Challenges and Struggle with Remote Learning During the Pandemic

Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic revealed and exacerbated persistent inequities in educational experiences, opportunities, and resources. Public schools' sudden shift to remote learning further marginalized vulnerable populations of students, including young bilingual children from immigrant backgrounds. Hence, this sequential mixed methods study addressed this urgent need by investigating how a diverse group of 20 immigrant families from the Metro and Greater Boston Areas perceived and made meaning of their pandemic-related experiences and their children's remote learning experiences provided by public schools. This study also examined the barriers hindering the establishment of meaningful and reciprocal home-school relationships during the pandemic school year. In this study, 20 first-generation immigrant families with 42 young bilingual children were surveyed and interviewed. The findings revealed that the pandemic caused multiple challenges for these immigrant families including job loss and financial hardship, fear of COVID-19 infection, deaths of family members, heightened caregiving load, and concerns about their children's lack of learning opportunities and excessive screen time. The findings also confirmed these families' inequitable access to

remote learning including barriers such as the lack of access to electricity, internet, digital devices, technical support, and language services. Most immigrant families reported their children's struggle and disengagement with remote learning due to practices that were not developmentally appropriate, nor culturally and linguistically responsive. In addition, some families reported that practices such as racial and linguistic discrimination, digital suspension, and punishment enacted by school personnel had damaged the home-school relationships and led to these families' frustration and withdrawal. Without deliberate consideration of the diversity of students' and families' needs and situations, schools of the families in this sample continued to operate with the "one-size-fits-all" model that reproduced and perpetuated cycles of oppression in relation to the intersectionality of race, ethnicity, gender, class, immigrant status, and language.

Keywords: the COVID-19 pandemic, immigrant families, young bilingual children, remote learning

Introduction

The emergence of the novel COVID-19 virus in 2020 caused devastating effects on all segments of the global population. In the U.S. context, the crisis exacerbated persistent inequities in educational experiences, opportunities, and resources. Public schools' sudden shift to remote learning further marginalized vulnerable populations including students of Color, students from low-income backgrounds, students with disabilities, and English learners (García & Weiss, 2020). Neglecting the diversity of contexts and challenges faced by families and students, a majority of school districts bombarded families and students with online learning sessions, education apps, printable worksheets, and assignments during the pandemic school year (Gross & Opalka, 2020).

Even without the accessibility problem, young bilingual children from immigrant backgrounds are among the most vulnerable when it comes to remote learning. These students have different English proficiency levels, which lead to challenges in accessing and engaging in English-dominant learning spaces through online technologies (Sugarman & Lazarín, 2020). Research has shown that without specialized language assistance, young bilingual learners can hardly engage with online learning sessions and often struggle with assigned schoolwork (Workie *et al.*, 2022). Moreover, young bilingual children need more guidance and support not only in developing early literacy skills in two or more languages, but also in operating technological devices and

navigating remote learning tasks. Given the technology and language challenges, family co-participation in remote learning becomes essential for the learning process (Garbe et al., 2020). Unfortunately, immigrant families might not be able to offer help due to linguistic, sociocultural, and technological barriers, particularly in the absence of resources and adequate information needed to navigate learning expectations from teachers, schools, and districts (Sayer & Braun, 2020).

Hence, there is an urgent need to understand the challenges faced by immigrant families with young bilingual children during the COVID-19 pandemic in order to design better support systems for these families. This sequential mixed methods study addressed this urgent need by investigating how a diverse group of 20 immigrant families from the Metro and Greater Boston Areas perceived and made meaning of their pandemic-related experiences and their children's remote learning experiences provided by public schools. This study also examined the barriers hindering the establishment of meaningful and reciprocal home-school relationships during the pandemic school year. The following research questions framed the study:

RQ1. What are the challenges that immigrant families with young bilingual children face during the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic?

RQ2. What are the barriers that prevent immigrant families from effectively engaging with their children's school-provided remote learning during the pandemic school year of 2020-2021?

Literature Review

Traditional Family Engagement Practices in Public School Systems

Family engagement, traditionally referred to as parental involvement, has long been perceived as one of the key factors pivotal to student success and school improvement (Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Weiss et al., 2010; Dillon & Nixon, 2018). As a well-established field of research, family engagement studies have documented and demonstrated the association between the high levels of engagement with students' learning outcomes and high academic performance (Jeynes, 2005), students' self-efficacy and acquisition of motivation (Fan & Williams, 2009), positive classroom behaviors, and strong socioemotional skills (El Nokali et al., 2010). In the early school years, family engagement is even more essential as family members, especially primary caregivers, play a crucial role in fostering young children's acquisition of language skills, early literacy development, and social competence (Englund et al., 2004; Sénéchal & LeFevre, 2002; McWayne et al., 2004), which have all been found to have long-term effects on educational outcomes. While it might seem obvious to recognize the importance of family engagement and its significant impact on students' schooling experiences, public schools often fail to engage and foster meaningful relationships with families, especially nondominant families such as families of Color, immigrant families, and low-income families (Carreón et al., 2005).

Operating within the traditional and hegemonic view, school-centric practices limitedly frame family engagement as physical presence and mere participation in school-based activities (e.g., attending school-wide meetings and parent-teacher conferences, chaperoning field trips, volunteering at the library, etc.), fundraising events (e.g., donating baked goods for bake sales, buying gift baskets at school silent auctions, etc.), and homework assistance (Jeynes, 2010). These practices set up an uneven playing field in which families with greater sociocultural and economic capital (i.e., White, middle-class, nuclear families) are those most likely to be able to devote their time, resources, and labor to support school-based activities (Posey-Maddox, 2012). That leads to more recognition from school administrators and classroom teachers and, consequently, allows these families to have more power and influence on the decision-making process related to their children's schooling experiences.

Reframing Engagement with Immigrant Families: From Deficit-Based to Asset-Based Perspective

Research has shown that immigrant families, especially families from low-income backgrounds, are often perceived as uninvolved, troubled, or simply not valuing education nor adequately caring for their children (Noguera, 2001; Auerbach, 2007; Cooper, 2009). This deficit-based perspective has persisted in educational scholarship that functions as the backbone of many federally funded programs such as Head Start

and Early Head Start, parent education programs, family interventions, and school-based initiatives developed to assimilate immigrant families into mainstream schooling practices that are more aligned with White middle-class sociocultural values (Baquedano-López et al., 2013). The constant message coming from the deficit-based perspective is that the home learning environment of immigrant families is either non-existent or not enough and in need of remedies (Valdés, 1996; Goodwin et al., 2008). The danger of such discourse lies in its failures to recognize the sociocultural and linguistic knowledge of immigrant families and children, the complexities and nuances of their ways of life, and their social agencies. Moreover, it reduces systemic problems such as racism, sexism, classism, and linguicism to individual problems (Ladson-Billings, 2006; Gorski, 2011; Doucet & Adair, 2018) and fails to acknowledge the impact of discriminatory policies and practices that have caused unequal learning opportunities for young children from immigrant backgrounds (Doucet & Adair, 2018).

In contrast to the deficit-based approach, the asset-based approach recognizes immigrant families' capabilities, contributions, and efforts while embracing the knowledge base and expertise of these families. Asset-based family engagement research seeks to document "funds of knowledge" that constitute the richness of students' sociocultural and linguistic backgrounds (Moll et al., 1992) and centralizes different forms of knowledge that are vital to marginalized communities' lived experiences, but often ignored, poorly understood, and overwhelmingly undervalued by

the dominant culture and educational systems (Rodriguez, 2013). Recently, there are more studies providing counternarratives to push back on misrepresentations of immigrant families, especially Latinx families. These studies center Latinx families' cultural wealth of knowledge and show how these families navigate different forms of capital to support their children's schooling (Larrotta and Yamamura, 2011; Anzures Tapia et al., 2016; Guzmán et al, 2018; Grosso Richins et al., 2021).

Furthermore, this line of research shifts the focus from individual problems to institutions and social systems. Recognizing the contested space of engagement in public school systems, many studies have revealed the barriers and structures of inequities that marginalize and oppress immigrant families and children (Baker et al., 2016; Cureton, 2020; Barajas-López & Ishimaru, 2020). For example, one study of Latinx immigrant families in Southern California (Ramirez, 2003) emphasizes the lack of home-school communication and how the immigrant families were made responsible to initiate contact and to actively engage. The study also provides concrete evidence showing how classroom teachers often set lower expectations for immigrant students and had bias and discrimination towards the immigrant families on the bases of their socioeconomic status and education backgrounds. Similarly, researcher Ashley Cureton's study of Muslim refugee parents residing in Chicago (2020) highlighted how immigrant parents faced many barriers to get involved with their children's schools. A language barrier was the most frequently reported issue by these families. In addition, Muslim children's

negative experiences of being bullied and experiencing discrimination and the school's inadequate response to these incidents also caused the families' mistrust and disengagement from the school community.

Immigrant Families' Experiences with Remote Learning

In March 2020, to mitigate the spread of the coronavirus, school closures were enacted across all fifty US states and some territories. Using online technologies to facilitate home-based learning became the most feasible option during this time of turmoil. For that reason, a majority of public schools quickly transitioned to remote learning with little or no preparation (Nuñez et al., 2020). The pandemic has created an unexpected situation that requires schools to rely heavily on families to be the main facilitators of remote learning. Unfortunately, many families, especially low-income families living in under-resourced neighborhoods, did not have the basic infrastructure to operate online technologies needed for their children to attend online classes and complete learning tasks. The digital divide was brought to light when many reports revealed that the majority of low-income families did not have reliable access to the internet and working devices (Chandra et al., 2020; Lai & Widmar, 2021). This created tremendous obstacles for children of these families to participate in online learning sessions provided by school districts.

Moreover, remote learning requires significantly greater participation, guidance, and support from caregivers. Most caregivers from immigrant households are full-time workers who disproportionally represent the essential and low-wage workforce (e.g., janitors, grocery store workers, factory workers, childcare workers, etc.). Even though their jobs are vital for society and their families to function, many of these caregivers could not work from home increasing their risk of being exposed to and infected with the COVID-19 virus and making them unavailable to support their children's remote learning (Krieger, 2020).

Recent studies on immigrant families' experiences with the pandemic in general and remote learning in particular confirmed that many families felt underprepared, ill-informed, and overwhelmed with remote learning tasks (Cioè-Peña, 2021a; Chen et al., 2021; Hong et al., 2021). Although the changes in education have happened very quickly, there are a few studies documenting the hardships that families and children are experiencing, especially difficulties for immigrant populations. Immigrant families speaking languages other than English at home often found themselves navigating different online platforms without technical guidelines and support in their home languages. The lack of language support diminished immigrant families' chances to communicate their needs and receive adequate information from their children's schools. At the same time, some studies confirmed the negative impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on immigrant caregivers' stress levels mostly related to their children's

educational needs and the language barriers that they had to overcome (Hong et al., 2021). Several studies emphasized the importance of a social support system and the effectiveness of intervention programs catered towards the specific needs of immigrant families (Sugarman & Lazarín, 2020; Hong et al., 2021; Choi & Chiu, 2021).

Family Engagement During Remote Learning

During the pandemic school year, educators started recognizing the importance of home-school partnerships that are no longer a “nice-to-have” option but essential to students’ engagement with remote learning. While remote learning certainly posed many challenges for both teachers and caregivers, it also presented a unique opportunity for teachers and administrators to catch a glimpse of students’ home lives and establish a more dialogic and meaningful relationship with families (Soltero-González & Gillanders, 2021). However, very few school districts seized this opportunity to shift family engagement practices from strictly school-based to community-based and recognized the unique challenges that immigrant caregivers-home educators and bilingual students faced during this time (Sugarman & Lazarín, 2021). In this new context it was vital for schools to ensure clear communication and provide timely support for families in need, yet few school districts had the capacity to provide remote learning guidelines in different home languages and/or design personalized outreach to connect with immigrant families, especially families speaking low incidence languages (Sayer &

Braun, 2020). In addition, most school districts did not prioritize family engagement initiatives, instead centralizing traditional schooling practices in the remote learning model without sufficient teacher training (Choi & Chiu, 2021).

The Current Study

Situated within the literature of asset-based family engagement, this study acknowledges the existing asymmetric power relationships between public schools and immigrant families (Fennimore, 2017; Barajas-López & Ishimaru, 2020). Further, it recognizes how the problem of family disengagement has become even more severe during the pandemic. Thus, the study focuses on centralizing immigrant families' pandemic-related experiences and revealing the barriers to remote learning. It is important to acknowledge that purely documenting "pain" might feed into "damage-centered" research that depicts immigrant families as broken, shattered, and simply in need of remedies (Tuck, 2009). However, this study attempts to shift the perspective of framing "problems within communities" to "problems that are enacted upon communities" (Jackson et al., 2018, p. 112). Given that educational problems are rooted in unequal distribution of power and resources in American society, the current study adopts an intersectional lens to understand how multiple dimensions of oppressions such as poverty, racism, sexism, classism, linguicism, and xenophobia

hinder the establishment of equitable family engagement and the processes of learning and development of immigrant children and children of migrants.

Methods

This empirical study employed a sequential mixed-method design to gather various types of data (Creswell & Clark, 2017). The data collection process included two phases: (i) quantitative data were collected through the use of a family questionnaire, and (ii) qualitative data were collected through family interviews. The quantitative data and their subsequent analysis helped build family profiles and provided a general understanding of the research problem. The interview process was informed by findings from survey data and allowed for elaboration of families' perspectives as related to the research questions. In this study, priority was given to the qualitative approach because it focused on providing an in-depth account of immigrant families' remote learning experiences by prioritizing the families' own perspectives and embracing their voices.

Research Positionality

This study carries certain assumptions, beliefs, and biases centered around my multiple roles in the research site: researcher, educator, and immigrant mother. As a first-generation Vietnamese immigrant mother with two bilingual children, I shared the cultural and linguistic backgrounds with Vietnamese immigrant families who speak

different dialects and migrated from different regions of Vietnam. Racialized and identified as Asian American, I also had advantages in recruitment and collaboration with other Asian American families, most of whom speak English as an additional language. I was invited to work with Latinx immigrant families by a community organizer/immigrant mother who participated in my previous research project and became my research partner in this project. To collaborate with the Latinx families, especially the families who do not speak English as an additional language, I relied mostly on my research partner, language and cultural brokers within the families, and translation/interpretation apps. While my positionality as an immigrant mother certainly helped me develop relationships with the families, I never assumed that we shared a universal understanding of how the pandemic has impacted our family lives. Instead, I valued and respected each family's unique perspective and considered them as experts of their lived experiences.

Sample

To be eligible for the study, families needed to have: (i) main caregivers identified as first-generation immigrants, (ii) young bilingual children within the age range of 4 to 10 years old, and (ii) at least one child enrolled in public schools. Family participants were recruited through different channels: (i) community organizations, (ii) school districts' bilingual programs, and (iii) snowball sampling or family referral. In total, 25-

30 families were invited to participate in the study and families who agreed participated in all activities for data collection. Family participants were 20 first-generation immigrant families (39 caregivers and 42 young bilingual children) from six different school districts in the Metro and Greater Boston Areas.

Data Sources

Family Survey Questionnaire

At the beginning of the study, all main caregivers completed an online Qualtrics survey questionnaire of 50 questions, including open-ended and multiple-choice questions (4-point and 5-point Likert scale). The questionnaire was available in multiple languages: English, Spanish, and Vietnamese. The questions were organized into four sections: (i) Demographics (20 items), (ii) Language Practices (7 items), (ii) COVID-19 (7 items), and (iv) Remote Learning (16 items). The questionnaire was sent via email to 12 families who were able to read, write, and respond to an online web-based survey. For the remaining 8 families, the content of the questionnaire was orally explained and delivered by the principal investigator in Vietnamese (4 families) or by the family research partner and community organizers in Spanish (4 families).

Family Interview

All families who completed the survey, including both main caregivers and children, participated in 3 semi-structured interview sessions via different channels:

Zoom platform, phone, and face-to-face interview with social distancing practices during home visits. The interview data was collected throughout the pandemic school year from September 2020 to May 2021.

Data Analysis

Data collected through the family online survey questionnaires and in-person interviews were combined. Descriptive statistical analyses were run in Qualtrics to construct family profiles of those in the study. All interview data were transferred to MAXQDA for thematic coding analysis to investigate the research questions related to: (i) their pandemic-related experiences and (ii) perceived barriers to engage with remote learning.

The first cycle of coding was data-driven and focused on an inductive approach to capture participants' voices and perspectives. The analytical process involved careful reading of all interview transcripts several times and organizing families' answers into two big categories: (i) pandemic homelife and (ii) remote learning. From each transcript, recurring statements and phrases directly related to the research questions were highlighted, extracted from transcripts, and prescribed meanings (aka, codes). In the second cycle of coding, similar codes were clustered into themes and common themes across most transcripts were determined. After that, the researcher engaged in a

participants' check process by selecting four focal families and checking with them about the selected statements and interpretations of these statements to validate the findings.

Findings

Family Profiles

Family responses to the family survey questionnaire sections on demographics and Language Practices were used to create the family profiles (see Table 1). These profiles show the diversity of the sample and characteristics of the families including race/ethnicity, country of origin, home languages, number of children and their grade levels, families' occupations, education levels, household size, household arrangement, and family income.

There were 20 immigrant families with 42 bilingual children (age range: 4-10 years old) from six different public-school systems across the Metro and Greater Boston Areas. The family participants came from different countries of origin with a vast array of racial/ethnic, linguistic, educational, and socioeconomic backgrounds. There were eight Latinx families, two Afro-Latinx families, seven Asian families, and two mixed-race families. Home languages included Spanish, Portuguese, Vietnamese, Cape Verdean, Cantonese, Japanese, and English.

There were seven families with total household income below $50,000; children of these families also participated in free and reduced-lunch programs. Out of 11

families with income above $50,000, there were two families with income within the range of $50,000-74,999; seven families with income within the range of $75,000-$99,999; and two families with income above $100,000.

Household size ranged from 2 to 13 family members. There were nine families with more than five family members; 5 out of 9 were multi-generational families in which the children lived with parents, grandparent(s) and/or extended family members. On average, each family had two bilingual children. In most families, the children lived with both parents except for one single-parent family and one child living with the grandmother.

In terms of caregivers' education levels, 17 out of 20 families had one parent with bachelor's degree or above; three families had some formal education and/or high school diploma. As seen in Table 1, many of the families had higher levels of education than their occupations might indicate. Ten families worked in construction, food, and service industries and these jobs could not be done from home during the pandemic. Nine out of ten families earned less than $50,000 per year even with double income. In higher-income families with total household income equivalent to $50,000 and above, parents and caregivers had professional jobs in areas of education, engineering, accounting, and consultancy. These families had also been working remotely since the beginning of the pandemic.

Regarding housing arrangements, most families with total household income lower than $30,000 lived in limited housing space or crowded conditions (defined as more than two people per room). Nine families with income above $75,000 lived in single-family houses; 4 out of 9 were homeowners.

Table 1

Family Profiles

Families	Race/ Ethnicity	Country of Origin	Home Languages	No. of Children/ Grade Levels	Occupation (Mother/Father)	Education Levels (Mother/Father)	Household Size	Housing Arrangements	Family Income
Ngoc Nguyen**	Asian	Vietnam	Vietnamese	3 (K, 1st, 3rd)	Manicurist/ Driver	Highschool Diploma/ Bachelor's Degree	13	5-bedroom house	$10,000-19,999
Kamila Gutierrez**	Latinx	El Salvador	Spanish	2 (Pre-K, K)	Cleaner/ Construction Worker	Highschool Diploma/ Highschool Diploma	4	1 bedroom	$10,000-19,999
Maria Flor**	Latinx	El Salvador	Spanish	3 (1st, 3rd, 6th)	Babysitter/ Grocery Worker	Some formal education/ Highschool Diploma	6	3-bedroom apartment	$10,000-19,999
Carmen Dalo**	Latinx	Argentina	Spanish	1 (1st)	Cleaner/ Grocery Worker	Bachelor's Degree/ Bachelor's Degree	3	2-bedroom apartment	$20,000-29,999
Micaela Dafonte**	Latinx	Honduras	Spanish	2 (K, 2nd)	Homemaker/ Car Mechanic	Highschool Diploma/ Bachelor's Degree	4	2-bedroom apartment	$20,000-29,999
Thu Nguyen**	Asian	Vietnam	Vietnamese	2 (Pre-K, K)	Manicurist/ Plumber	Some formal education/ Bachelor's Degree	8	3-bedroom condo	$20,000-29,999
Oscar Valdez**	Latinx	Venezuela	Spanish	2 (1st, 3rd)	Construction Worker/ Cleaner	Bachelor's Degree/ Bachelor's Degree	4	2-bedroom apartment	$20,000-29,999
Ngoc Tran**	Asian	Vietnam	Vietnamese	2 (Pre-K, 1st)	Manicurist/	Bachelor's Degree/ Bachelor's Degree	6	4-bedroom house	$30,000-49,999

					Factory Worker				
Susan Rodriguez**	Latinx	Honduras	Spanish	2 (Pre-K, 1st)	Restaurant Worker/ Plumber	Highschool Diploma/ Highschool Diploma	5	3-bedroom condo	$30,000-49,999
Mariana Lopez	Afro-Latinx	Cape Verde	Cape Verdean	2 (1st, 3rd)	Patient Coordinator/ Realtor	Bachelor's Degree/ Bachelor's Degree	4	3-bedroom house	$50,000-74,999
Molly Morales	Afro-Latinx	Honduras	Spanish	1 (3rd grade)	Elderly Caregiver	Bachelor's Degree	2	1 bedroom	$50,000-74,999
Carol Carneiro	Latinx	Brazil	Portuguese	1 (1st)	Homemaker/ Music Teacher	Bachelor's Degree/ Bachelor's Degree	3	4-bedroom house	$75,000-99,999
Penelope Marcela	Latinx	Colombia	Spanish	2 (1st, 5th)	Administrator/ Engineer	Bachelor's Degree/ Bachelor's Degree	4	3-bedroom house	$75,000-99,999
Phung Truong	Asian	Vietnam	Vietnamese	2 (Pre-K, K)	Homemaker/ Lecturer	Bachelor's Degree/ Bachelor's Degree	4	3-bedroom house	$75,000-99,999
Thao Pham	Asian	Vietnam	Vietnamese	2 (K, 4th)	Software Engineer/ Analytics Consultant	Bachelor's Degree/ Bachelor's Degree	5	3-bedroom house	$75,000-99,999
Phuong Tran	Asian	Vietnam	Vietnamese	3 (PreK, K, 1s)	Homemaker/ Engineer	Bachelor's Degree/ Graduate Degree	5	3-bedroom house	$75,000-99,999
Ellis Canaris	Mixed	Argentina	Spanish, English	2 (PreK, 1st)	Book Editor/ Data Scientist	Bachelor's Degree/ Graduate Degree	4	3-bedroom house	$75,000-99,999

Camilla Rivera	Latinx	El Salvador	Spanish, English	3 (PreK, 1st, 3rd)	Homemaker/ Bioinformatics Specialist	Graduate Degree/ Graduate Degree	5	3-bedroom house	$75,000-99,999
Carol Lim	Asian	Hong Kong	Cantonese, English	3 (Infant, Toddler, 1st)	Child Specialist/ Accountant	Graduate Degree/ Bachelor's Degree	5	4-bedroom house	$100,000-149,999
Ellie Hirano	Mixed	Japan	Japanese, English	2 (PreK, 1st)	Homemaker/ Economist	Graduate Degree/ Graduate Degree	4	3-bedroom house	$100,000-149,999

**: families with children participating in the Free and Reduced Lunch Program

Note. All family names are pseudonyms

RQ1. What are the challenges of immigrant families with young bilingual children during the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic?

To answer the first research question, quantitative data and qualitative data were combined to illustrate the multiple challenges that immigrant families with young bilingual children faced during the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic. Findings show that when describing their experiences, family participants reported feeling stressed and overwhelmed because of the following factors:

- job loss & financial hardship,
- fear of COVID-19 infection & loss of family members
- their children's lack of learning opportunities & excessive screen time
- heightened caregiving load

The following excerpt illustrates how families were challenged by multiple factors. In this excerpt, Thu Nguyen, a Vietnamese mother of two, who lost her job, her house, and her father during the pandemic, summarized her devastating experiences:

> *"My husband lost his job first and then me.... We could not afford to pay rent and they [the landlord] did not want us to stay anymore so we had to move out... we moved into my sister's house to live with their family and my parents... Her two kids were in college, but they came back because their schools closed... So there were eight of us living in the house... I slept with my sister and K. [the 5-year-old child], my husband slept in the living room... Then we*

ran out of rice, you know, it was really bad… nothing to eat, we had to share canned food but my kid did not like it… And then some people from church helped us, they knew and they came, and then they helped us, they bought stuff [groceries] for us… It was hard when my dad got COVID, he got it first and then my mom, and then all of us,… it was really horrible, you know, the virus….me and my husband got it last… but K, we did not know if he got it so we locked him in the room with an iPad, we could not do anything but waited… Luckily, my child was okay, thank God he was okay,… my dad, he was old and had tons of health issues, when the doctor said he would die, it was also the day that my mom recovered" (translated from Vietnamese; specific information was added for clarity purpose)

This Vietnamese family was one of many immigrant families in the sample who encountered sudden and dramatic changes that shattered the stability of their home lives. As seen in this example, multiple factors such as financial hardship, unemployment, rent insecurity, food insecurity, COVID-19 infection, and family loss resulted in this family's feelings of extreme worry and tremendous stress.

Job Loss & Financial Hardship

As seen in Table 2, 9 out of 20 families reported that they experienced financial hardship, 7 families experienced job loss, and 11 families experienced cutting work hours because of the pandemic. Among low-income family participants,

the negative consequences of the pandemic were strikingly amplified. This group of immigrant parents disproportionately represented the essential, low-wage workforce individuals whose jobs could not be done from home but vital for society and their families to function. Problematically, many of these families reported being laid off (e.g., factory workers, construction workers, car mechanics) or getting significantly fewer job opportunities (e.g., cleaners, babysitters, plumbers) and/or working hours (e.g., grocery workers, manicurists) during the pandemic. Out of the nine families experiencing financial hardship, three families could not afford to pay rent and four families reported not being able to pay utility bills. One family experienced food insecurity (defined as the lack of access to enough food for the whole family) for a brief period after experiencing job loss.

Table 2.
Impacts of the pandemic on immigrant families' financial conditions

	Below 50,000 *N* = 9	***50,000 and above*** *N* = 11	***All*** *N* = 20
Experiencing financial hardship	**7**	**2**	**9**
Experiencing job loss	**6**	**1**	**7**
Experiencing cutting work hours	**7**	**4**	**11**
Unable to pay rent or mortgage	**3**	**0**	**3**
Unable to pay utility bills	**4**	**0**	**4**
Food insecurity	**1**	**0**	**1**
Eligible for stimulus cheque or any financial aid programs	**4**	**11**	**15**

Families also reported that receiving federal stimulus payments were a welcome relief for their financial stressors. In this sample, 11 families with income above $50,000 were qualified to receive federal stimulus checks[2]. Five low-income families did not receive such checks and were not eligible for any financial aid programs. There was a high chance that the families' ineligibility for financial aid programs was determined by their immigration status.[3]

Fear of COVID-19 Infection & Loss of Family Members

In addition to job and income loss, immigrant families in this study also expressed their fear of getting infected by COVID-19. Many families voiced their concerns related to the risks of their children getting COVID-19 if they were sent back to in-person classrooms. This fear was heightened by the living conditions of their neighborhood contexts. As described in the family profiles (see Table 1), many low-income immigrant families lived in multigenerational households that had limited living space in crowded neighborhoods (labeled as high-risk red-zone neighborhoods[4]) that lead to higher rates of COVID-19 positive cases.

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[2] To mitigate the negative economic impact of the pandemic, the US government issued financial aid packages that came in the form of stimulus cheques for qualifying individuals and families (individuals making less than $75,000 and couples making less than $150,000).

[3] It is important to note that families' immigration status was not collected as part of the survey or during interviews to establish trust and protect the families from being reported and deported.

[4] The high-risk category of red-zone neighborhoods includes small communities with populations under 10,000 with more than 25 COVID-19 cases; mid-size communities with populations between 10,000-50,000 people having 10 cases per 100,000 people and a positive test rate of more than 5%; and large communities of more than 50,000 people having more than 10 cases per 100,000 people

Some families lost their family members during the pandemic. Data in Table 3 shows that 13 out of 20 families reported having at least one extended family member contracted COVID-19; six families reported having at least one household member contracted COVID-19; four families with household members being hospitalized because of COVID-19; and two reported deaths of grandfathers: one residing in the home country and one living in the US.

Table 3

Impacts of the pandemic on immigrant families' health and loss

	N = 20 families
Having at least one extended family member contracted COVID-19	**13**
Having at least one household member contracted COVID-19	**6**
Having family members hospitalized because of COVID-19	**4**
Having family members deceased because of COVID-19	**2**

Pandemic travel restrictions prevented many immigrant families from traveling to their home countries to take care of their infected family members or to attend the funerals which added to the stress and sadness that families were experiencing. For example, Penelope Marcela, a Colombian mother of two, was constantly worried as both of her parents got infected. Sharing her sense of

and a positive test rate of more than 4%. See https://www.mass.gov/info-details/covid-19-response-reporting?dfgsgsddgfs

helplessness, Penelope said: "*I called every day, and I prayed every day, I don't know what to do, there is nothing else that I could do*". Adding to sentiments of helplessness were the difficulties that families faced while living so far away. Planning to visit her family in the Summer of 2020 after seven years being apart, Ellis Canaris, an Argentinian mother of two, who lost her father due to COVID-19, said in extreme anger and agony:

> *"I promised them that I would come back… and then I had J. [the first child] and then I had K. [the second child], it was crazy when they were babies… We sent gifts and photos of the kids… they have not even seen the kids, you know… He passed quickly. That was it. I am here, they are there! That was it!*".

The harsh reality of "here and there" suddenly reached a new meaning in Ellis's life: the pandemic broke her dream of a family reunion that she kept for the last seven years.

Even when family members resided in the same place, mourning for family loss was different during the pandemic. Talking about her father's funeral, Thu Nguyen, the mother from a Vietnamese family of which most members contracted COVID-19 virus, said:

> *"Nobody came [to the funeral], it was really simple, nobody came, you know, it was really hard,…we could not do anything… I could not sleep for days thinking about the funeral… it was too fast… too fast… to see him die."* [translated from Vietnamese]

The rapidness of her father's death and the simplicity of the funeral caused Thu's uneasiness and sadness. A culturally proper Vietnamese funeral is usually a multi-day event with rigid rituals and many extended family members and friends come to pay their respects. The absence of such an event made it harder for Thu's family to accept the loss and grieve as they felt that they had not done enough to fulfill their obligations to the deceased.

Children's Lack of Learning Opportunities & Excessive Screen time

When asked to identify their biggest concerns as a parent/caregiver during the COVID-19 crisis, 11 out of 20 families reported that they were constantly worried about their children's device use and excessive screen time. To working-out-of-home families, schools were often the only place that provided formal education and kept their children safe while they were working pre-pandemic. School closures meant the loss of both learning opportunities and childcare for these families. For example, Kamila Gutierrez, an El Salvadorian mother of two, said:

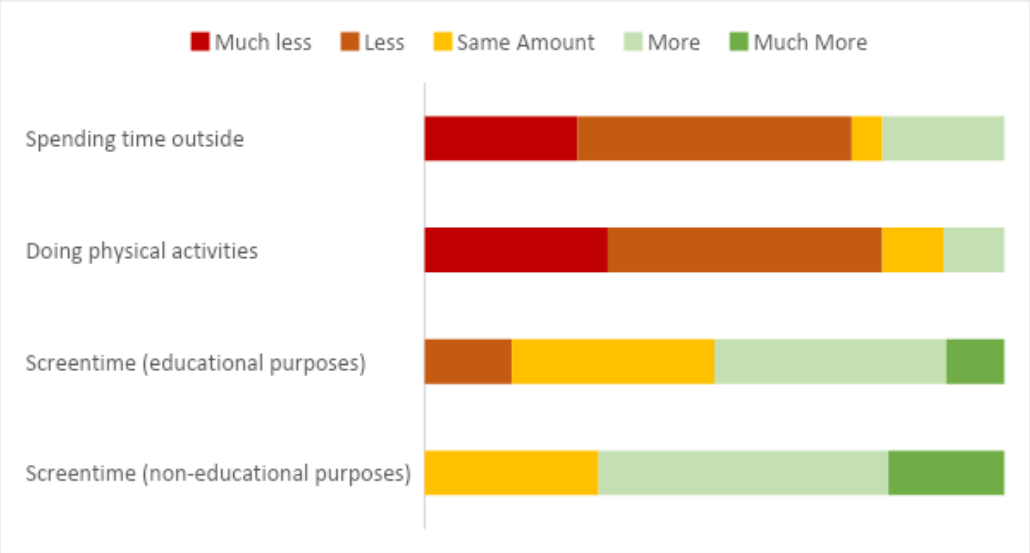
> *"My biggest concern is for my kid to go to school so I can go to work. I am not concerned about the virus but more about my kid not getting any [formal] education during this time"* (translated from Spanish)

In addition to the lack of learning opportunities, the pandemic also posed another challenge to families in relation to their children's screen time. As shown in Figure 1, a total of 14 families reported that their children's screen time for non-

educational purposes significantly increased during quarantine time. Fifteen families reported that their children participated less and much less in physical activities; 13 families reported that their children spent less and much less time outside.

Figure 1

Compared to pre-pandemic, how much is your target child doing the following?



For example, Ellis Canaris, an Argentinian mother of two, reported in the survey how she had to rely on technological devices to keep her children occupied while working at home:

> *"I feel that I'm not present for my kids because I have to spend 8 hours a day working (with a schedule that overlaps with the core of the kids' day). We've had to resort to screen time as 'a nanny' after we had successfully avoided screen time from Sunday evening until Friday evening for 2.5 years!!! I feel like I am failing"*

Similarly, Carol Carneiro, a working Brazilian mother who had to attend multiple online meetings per day, shared that she did not have time to monitor her child's iPad use and check the media content that her child was exposed to:

> *"She spends too much time on the iPad. Her life has been all about watching the iPad for school, for fun… there were these videos that were disguised as kid content but super gross… I freaked out when I saw it… she had been watching it…. she is so attached to the iPad that worries me."*

Home quarantine orders and school closure enacted in the first year of the pandemic created a unique situation that prevented the families from engaging their children in screen-free activities and caused significant increase of the children's screen time. That eventually led to the families' extreme worry about the potential negative effects of excessive screen time on their children's development. To working mothers, they had much less time to be available to monitor their children's screen use time and to engage in screen-free activities with their children that resulted in their feeling of guilt.

Heightened Caregiving Load

When families were asked to rank how worried they were about different factors of their lives including finance, health, wellbeing, care responsibility, and

personal life[5], 18 out of 20 families identified that care responsibility was the key factor that caused their worries. Taking main responsibilities as primary caregivers, the immigrant mothers in this sample carried much heavier physical and mental loads compared to the fathers. At the beginning of the pandemic, some working mothers reported voluntarily quitting their jobs, cutting work hours, and canceling their education/professional development plans to provide care for their children, household members, and extended family members living both in the US and their home countries. Most immigrant mothers shared their exhaustion and frustration from juggling care responsibilities and often chose to sacrifice their sleeping time, personal time, and their own wellbeing to cope with the significantly heightened load of caregiving during the pandemic. The multidimension of their care work often included childcare, elderly care, job responsibilities (for working mothers), and domestic tasks (cooking, cleaning, laundry, etc.). The gendered load of care work happened not only in families where the women recently lost their jobs or had been homemakers and primary caregivers pre-pandemic, but it was also reported by families where both parents worked at home remotely.

For example, Carol Lim, a Hong Kong mother of 3 children (a 6-year-old, a 2-year-old and a 6-month-old baby) worked remotely as a child specialist since the beginning of the pandemic. She provided online consultation for families with autistic

[5] In this survey, "personal life" refers to self-care and individual leisure activities of the primary caregiver

children while taking care of her own family and in-laws with little help from her husband. Sharing her tightly packed schedule, Carol said:

> *"My day starts at 5.30am, I have to take care of the young boy, he wakes up very early. Then I cook breakfast, feed the kids,...and then help A. [the first grader] log into online class. I had to work but I also had to watch him [the 2-year-old] all the time. We cannot leave him alone, he climbs on the table, on the chair... I mostly worked when he napped... I am also the one taking everyone to their medical appointments, the in-laws and the kids. I do everything. I schedule, I bring them [to the medical appointments]. Cooking and cleaning, I do that too! Cleaning and laundry sometimes he [the husband] helps but he does not cook and he does not take care of the baby. I cook. But they don't bother me when I cook. Otherwise, I will go crazy [laugh].... When the kids go to sleep, that's when I can relax, have some peace and quiet, and then the baby cries so I don't sleep [laugh] my baby does not sleep well at night. He wakes up a lot."*

As shown in Carol's story, there was an unequal gender division of labor at home among the families in this sample where the women performed significantly more care work and oversaw most household tasks while the men took a lesser role. In the case of Carol, cooking time was the only time that she was alone. For that reason, she referred to it as the only personal time that she got during the day even though cooking was still a household task.

Similar to Carol, Mariana Lopez, a working-out-of-home Cape Verdean mother, had to commute to her workplace three times per week, completed household tasks, participated in her child's remote learning, and took care of her sick mother who lived more than 60 miles away. Describing her typical week, Mariana said:

> *"My mom has many medical appointments. She is losing her vision. They could not get her blood pressure under control. She is 83 and kind of like someone giving up and we are trying to help as much as we can. I go there frequently. Two times, three times a week. I run errands and take her to the doctor. These days if I have no work, I am with her [the mother], she has back-to-back doctor appointments. And I just feel really exhausted. It really gets worse, I have so much more work. I have to make sure that I get everything done on my end, make sure she [the child] gets her things done and try to balance everything. I don't want her [the child] to miss anything important. It has been her [the child] and my mom: my two priorities right now."*

Juggling this intense multidimensional care work caused Mariana's extreme worry and forced her to sacrifice her rest time to tend to her loved ones that led to her exhaustion and fatigue. When being asked what she needed the most, Mariana answered: *"I just need a breath-in, a little more time… I just need more time*". And time seemed to be the resource that many mothers did not have. As Carol Carneiro, a working Brazilian mother, summarized: *"Maybe that's mom's life, always feel guilty*

about something. Not putting enough time to work, not putting enough time for the kids' education, not enough time for anything".

RQ2. What are the barriers that prevent immigrant families from effectively engaging with their children's school-provided remote learning during the COVID-19 pandemic?

During the pandemic school year of 2020-2021, school districts across the US adopted different reopening strategies. In general, there were three learning models: (1) fully remote with online instruction, (2) hybrid with both remote and in-person instruction (2-3 days per week), and (3) fully in-person (5 days per week). Within the scope of this study, there were four families from three school districts located in the Green Zone neighborhoods[6], which offered both hybrid and remote learning models. These families could select the schooling model depending on their needs and situations and they chose the remote learning model because of their fear of their children getting infected.

On the contrary, there were 16 families living in the Red Zone neighborhoods who did not have a choice in selecting learning models for their children. Remote learning was the only option in their school districts. While students labeled as

[6] The low-risk category of Green Zone neighborhoods includes small communities with populations under 10,000 with less than or equal to 15 COVID-19 cases; mid-size communities with populations between 10,000-50,000 having 10 cases per 100,000 people and more than 10 total cases; and large communities of more than 50,000 having more than 10 cases per 100,000 people and more than 15 total cases. See https://www.mass.gov/info-details/covid-19-response-reporting?dfgsgsddgfs

English Learners and from younger grade levels (K-3) were often prioritized to get in-person instruction by most school districts, structural factors such as school location, neighborhood population, and the number of COVID-19 cases greatly determined if a child could have an opportunity to receive in-person instruction or not. For different reasons, all families in this sample had their children participate in the remote learning model.

The findings revealed that there are two layers of barriers that prevent immigrant families from participating in school-provided remote learning. The first layer is to gain access to online classrooms and the second layer is related to how the children of these families engaged with remote learning.

Access to Remote Learning

Lack of Electricity and Internet

To most family participants, especially families from low-income backgrounds, digital access including having electricity, high-speed internet, and reliable learning devices remained the most prevalent problem. Two families reported having frequent power shortages for many hours in their neighborhoods that prevented their children from logging in and participating in remote learning. Five family participants did not have high-speed internet at home and had to use their phones as internet hotspots.

Lack of Reliable Learning Devices

Due to the lack of technological devices in certain districts with limited resources, some family participants reported that they only received iPads and/or Chromebooks after the school year had started. Even when the devices arrived, many of them did not function well. Due to the lack of technological support in home languages, families with non-working devices could not contact their schools to get the devices fixed right away. Some families had to wait up to 4 weeks to receive working devices that led to their children receiving less instructional time and being unable to fully participate in remote learning.

Lack of Language Services

As reported by families, most school districts used online platforms (e.g., websites, emails, apps) to communicate about the rapid changes related to their daily operations in response to the pandemic. Unfortunately, most family participants reported that all communications related to remote learning and technological support in their school districts were operated solely in English, even in districts that had a large population of bilingual students and families who speak languages other than English. Many family participants reported that their children's schools did not provide translation and/or interpretation services to help them transition to remote learning.

Engaging with Remote Learning

Even after gaining access, the immigrant families faced multiple barriers to effectively engage with their children's remote learning including scheduling challenges, language barriers, and passive learning practices. In addition, the barriers were also related to school expectations of how involved families should be in this process. The family participants believed that the schools expected them to take care of structural tasks such as setting up home learning corners, helping the children log in to Zoom sessions, reprimanding the children if they misbehave or violate class rules but did not let them engage as home educator and treat them as equal partner. Schools often sent conflicting messages that made most families confused. Discriminatory practices, digital punishment, and Zoom suspension reported by families also caused their frustration and withdrawal.

Scheduling Challenges

As explained by families, the hardest part of remote learning to them was adhering to the complicated learning schedule with multiple online learning sessions that required passwords to log in. Based on the analysis of the children's online schedules, each child participating in this study had 3.5-5 hours of online sessions per day on average. Most children had two full school days that started as early as 8am and ended at 2pm or 2.30pm with multiple breaks in between. To families with more than one child, it was extremely difficult to keep up with all children's remote learning schedules. Some families reported that priorities were often given to the

older children with more complicated learning tasks. Describing the typical school day of her child - a first-grader, Carol Carneiro said:

> *"She has 5 Zoom sessions on Monday and Wednesday. She also has extra reading and math. They just added another teacher, and she is new to us, so she is supposed to help M. [the child] with English lessons. It is very hard because she does not want to do long sessions like that."*

Similarly, Mariana Lopez, a Cape Verdean mom of a first grader, explained how she coped with the demands of remote learning:

> *"I have to check the meetings and make sure that she is logging into the correct sessions. Because everything in the Spring [of 2020] is less clear, now [Fall 2020] the system is more organized, but they have more Zoom sessions, and so many passcodes: for reading, for math, for library, for art. She did not like the long Zoom sessions. Thursday and Friday are the worst for her"*

It was evident that the remote learning schedule was decided and implemented by school districts without considering the children's ages, developmental and learning needs, the families' working/living situations, and their family structures.

Language Barriers

To family participants who do not speak English as an additional language, engaging with remote learning on an English-only platform requires herculean efforts. Trying to overcome language barriers, Ngoc Nguyen, a Vietnamese mother of three emergent bilingual children, heavily relied on Google translation and other

communication apps with a translation function. As an actively involved parent, she frequently texted the teachers to ask for help during online sessions but often received no reply. Describing the challenges with remote learning, she said:

> *"There is some homework that she [the child] does not understand and I don't understand either, if I knew I would guide her, something I did not understand I could not. And the teacher did not explain, so she could not complete the homework. There was some days I could not log into Seesaw [a learning app] and without the code, I did not know how to find the code. I looked for it in the emails but there were too many emails, and I had to translate them, too exhausting for me."* (translated from Vietnamese)

Similarly, Oscar Valdez, a Venezuelan father of two, explained his struggles with teaching his son at home:

> *"I feel my son is not making progress…I feel that my son wasn't getting the proper help that he needed during the crisis, although I tried my best, it was very hard teaching him. I am not familiar with the education system in the US. I do not know how to teach, for example, I do not know how to help my son to start reading in English"* (translated from Spanish)

The lack of language services and specialized support certainly marginalized families who speak languages other than English as they had to navigate not only an unfamiliar education system but a complicated matrix of an English-only online learning space with new technology-related devices, tools, and programs.

School Expectations

Many immigrant families expressed their frustration over conflicting messages and expectations set by their children's schools. The families believed that schools expected them to stay alert and be available to support their children throughout a virtual school day. The family participants explained that in order for their children to engage with remote learning, it required a lot of adult assistance such as fixing learning devices, logging into online learning sessions with passcodes, switching learning apps, explaining homework requirements, taking photos of children's work, and submitting homework via learning apps, etc. For example, Thu Nguyen, a Vietnamese mother of two, listed the common problems that she had to deal with during remote learning:

> *"Most of the time she* [the child] *has problems moving to other classes. Sometimes the device has some problems, and we have to restart or contact the teacher... and if she does not understand the Math questions, I have to work with her. I am there all the time, so she knows that she has help."* (translated from Vietnamese)

Even though families' omnipresence was demanded, some families reported that they were also expected to remain invisible during remote learning. The families said that their children were strongly discouraged to verbally ask for adult support and their families were not supposed to be on camera or actively participate in remote learning. Some families reported that their children were often publicly criticized by

the teachers if they communicated directly with their parents during class time. For example, Mariana Lopez shared an awkward moment when her help was needed but not welcomed by her child's teacher:

> *"One day Z was trying to.. uh.. get her attention [the teacher's] and uh…Z could not get her attention and Z comes to me and says - Mommy I need you to help me with this - and I am helping Z.. and then Ms. O tells Z. - Z I can help you, you can ask me any question - and Z was like - I was trying to ask you but I could not get your attention, so I needed to get my Mom. And she [the teacher] was not happy, she said - no, don't do that, don't talk to your mom!"*

These contradictory messages and expectations not only confused the families and the students but also undervalued the family roles as home educators and hindered the establishment of a meaningful home-school connection that was vital for the success of remote learning.

Discrimination, Digital Suspension & Punishment

The most disturbing information, as reported by the family participants, were incidents of discrimination, digital suspension, and punishment enacted by school personnel. Some families reported that they could not get remote learning supplies for their children even though they followed the schools' instructions sent via emails. Two families had to make multiple visits to the schools but did not get any answer or explanation from the school personnel. They also reported their beliefs that English-speaking families received more attention and support than immigrant

families. For example, Thu Nguyen, a Vietnamese mother of two, said in anger: "*I think they don't care about us. They discriminate against us, you know. Because we do not speak English, they think we don't know anything. But we know, we know very well that they just try to ignore us*" (translated from Vietnamese).

In addition, many family participants often received phone calls and emails from classroom teachers and/or administrators, which contained negative messages and complaints of their children's noncompliant behaviors during remote learning. For example, certain behaviors were interpreted as "problematic" by classroom teachers including moving their bodies/fidgeting, staying unmuted, speaking out of turn, using the Zoom chat function, and falling asleep. Four families reported that their children even experienced digital discipline, suspension, and punishment practices enacted by classroom teachers including:

(i) being threatened to call parents;

(ii) being sent to the Zoom's waiting room for a certain period of time (15-20 minutes);

(iii) being blocked from Zoom sessions completely (for 1 or 2 days).

For example, Kamila Gutierrez, a mother of two, recalled a moment when she had her very first interaction with the school since her son started Kindergarten during the pandemic school year:

"*I am at work, I am cleaning, and I cannot take calls,…but when I finally pick up, they say, oh your son does not listen to us, your son keeps moving, can you make*

sure that he sits still and follows [the instruction],… that's it, when it comes to it, I have to stay home to help him, but how can a 5-year-old child sit still for such a long time?" (translated from Spanish)

Similarly, Maria, an El Salvadorian grandmother of three, shared her grandchild's experience of Zoom suspension. The 10-year-old student found herself blocked from Zoom for two days because she fell asleep in the middle of the morning session: "*She was sleepy, and tired. She had to take care of her sister. Both her parents worked the night shifts. But the teacher did not tell us anything. When she finally got in, nobody said anything.*" (translated from Spanish). Maria did not agree with such practice. She found it extremely harsh and unsympathetic – it was hard enough for her family just to get all three of her grandchildren online for remote learning every day. As the main caregiver, she watched over them while the parents of two children were working at the grocery stores; another child's mother was deported to El Salvador last year. Struggling to make ends meet without governmental support, Maria still managed to adhere to three different remote learning schedules of her grandchildren. Zoom suspension was not only discouraging but also damaged home-school relationships and took away the children' learning opportunities.

Discussion

The findings from this study confirm that these immigrant families with young bilingual children faced multiple and diverse challenges during the first year of the

COVID-19 pandemic. The challenges included their experiences with job loss and financial hardship, their fear of COVID-19 infection and loss of family members, their concerns of their children's lack of learning opportunities and excessive screen time, and the heightened caregiving load endured by the immigrant mothers. In general, these findings echo other research studies confirming how the pandemic effects on the livelihoods of immigrant families (Cholera, 2020; Fortuna, 2020; Đoàn et al., 2021). The findings show how the challenges that immigrant families faced might be caused by structural inequities in relation to employment, housing, immigration policy, and education.

Many immigrant families disproportionally worked in low-wage industries that were hit the hardest at the beginning of the pandemic. To those who were fortunate to stay employed, their jobs also forced them to work outside of their homes. In addition, many immigrant families lived in multigenerational housing located in crowded neighborhoods. With limited protective measures implemented at both their workplaces and living spaces, these families certainly faced higher risks of COVID-19 exposure, infection, and death.

To the low-income immigrant families living in poverty, the pandemic certainly adds the last drops to the already full cup of adversity that these families had to deal with and puts additional social and economic pressures on these families. Despite this fact, five low-income immigrant families in this sample, who desperately needed financial support, did not receive any unemployment benefits or direct cash

assistance. When the first federal relief legislation passed in March 2020, the Coronavirus, Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act restricted eligibility and excluded 9.3 million unauthorized immigrants from getting stimulus payments (Gerlatt *et al.*, 2021). Commenting on discriminatory institutional policies and practices, Cross & Benson (2020) said: "the vulnerabilities of the pandemic are compounded with the vulnerabilities imposed by policies that have long oppressed immigrants" (p. 116). The exclusion of unauthorized immigrants from receiving direct cash assistance certainly increased their risks of experiencing food insecurity and homelessness and pushed them into the vicious cycle of illness and poverty.

Moreover, some immigrant families had to cope with the loss of family members, especially the elders, which has taken away the protective factors needed to survive with both financial and health crises (Fortuna *et al.*, 2020). The families who lost their loved ones during the pandemic were forced to change their cultural and religious practices related to funerals and afterlife rituals, delaying the mourning and grieving processes and furthering the trauma experienced by these families. For the immigrant families who lost family members in home countries, they carried not only the weight of mourning from afar but also the deep feeling of regret for not being able to travel and pay the last visit during the pandemic.

In addition, the findings show that the immigrant mothers experienced additional burdens of juggling multiple care responsibilities. These mothers struggled to find resources, and tend to sick family members, elders, and their

children while comforting and holding their families together during this time of crisis. Many pandemic-related studies acknowledge that mothering and care work are extremely important to community survival as women provide both physical and emotional support to their families and children while receiving much less support from others (Fryer, 2020; Hibel et al., 2021; Ornelas et al., 2021; Lee, 2021). Referring to the significant increase of gendered labor during the pandemic, feminists have coined the term “the third shift” to describe pandemic-related responsibilities carried mostly by working women (Power, 2020), in addition to “the second shift” of care work and household tasks (Hochschild, 1989). Pre-pandemic, many working immigrant mothers heavily relied on schools and low-cost childcare services to provide care for their children that enabled them to work and provide for their families or to go back to school. Shelter-in-place orders and other pandemic restrictions took away these essential services and pushed some of the immigrant mothers into quitting their jobs or changing their educational plans to tend for their own children. The findings of this study confirm how gender inequalities are exacerbated during the pandemic and have a long-term impact on these immigrant mothers: not only does it widen the gender gap in economic participation, but it also reduces the mothers’ chances to advance their education and career development and puts their wellbeing at risk.

These findings help us understand how the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated existing inequities and introduced new challenges to immigrant families

with young bilingual children. Hence, there is an urgent need to include immigrant families in federally funded safety net programs and design better support systems for immigrant families to help them weather the pandemic. In addition, we also need to bolster existing networks of support including faith-based groups like churches and temples, community centers, parks, ethnic organizations, etc. Such networks of support are crucial as they are often run by immigrant advocates and community-based organizers who immigrant families trust, especially in the hostile anti-immigrant environment with ICE enforcement that prevents immigrants from seeking help and gaining access to healthcare services.

The findings of this study also revealed barriers preventing immigrant families from effectively engaging with their children's school-provided remote learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. The barriers include not only the lack of access to basic infrastructure such as electricity, internet, and digital devices but also the lack of family services and support systems operated in home languages, even in immigrant-serving school districts with a high population of students labeled as English Learners. It provides more evidence about the disparities in school funding and resources (Sosina & Weathers, 2019) and the digital divide between students living in under-resourced neighborhoods -- many of them are students of Color, immigrants, or children of immigrants -- and their more affluent peers (Francis & Weller, 2021). Without reliable connectivity and working devices, many immigrant students in this sample could not participate in online learning sessions and complete

their learning tasks, hence received less hours of instruction and support from classroom teachers. Francis & Weller (2021) explains that “the digital divide has emerged as a key reinforcing mechanism of education through wealth and of future wealth through education” (p. 15). It also suggests that some districts in the Greater Boston Area might not prioritize the needs of immigrant families, especially families from low-income backgrounds who are less likely to have broadband internet and possess digital devices, when switching to remote learning. The neglect of immigrant families’ needs is also reflected in how school communications and technical support were operated solely in English in some school districts. While many researchers and immigrant advocates have stressed immigrant families' linguistic rights to primary language interpretation and translation (Reich et al., 2020), these districts’ failure to provide adequate linguistic services further widens the gap between schools and immigrant families and prevents immigrant families from supporting their children’s remote learning.

Even after gaining access to remote learning, many immigrant families could not effectively engage with school-provided remote learning. The findings suggest that family disengagement with remote learning might be due to scheduling challenges and language barriers. In addition, the extreme demands and unrealistic expectations set by schools seem to neglect the multiple obstacles and challenges that immigrant families and young bilingual students faced during the pandemic. By demanding the omnipresence of immigrant families to attend to the children but

dismissing their vital roles as home educators, schools continue to operate as the sole decision-maker and try to replicate traditional schooling practices in online learning space. Not only did the schools not create any reliable support system for the immigrant families but also created more barriers to prevent these families from meaningfully engaging with their children's remote learning. Family disengagement practices such as discrimination, digital suspension, and punishment enacted by school personnel had severely damaged the home-school relationships and threatened students' wellbeing. Similar practices of digital suspension and punishment were also reported in Averett's study (2021) about families with children with disabilities. Considering the severe impact of such practices, more studies are needed to confirm if schools have replicated the same patterns of discipline and punishments such as detention and suspension in remote learning.

However, it does not mean that remote learning cannot function as a feasible education model, especially during times of crisis. It creates a unique opportunity for teachers and caregivers to be co-educators and co-facilitators of learning and transcends the idea of schooling as not only bounded within the classroom walls (Garbe et al., 2020). It helps teachers develop a better understanding of their students' home lives and helps families gain direct access to school curriculum and learning schedules. While remote learning is assumed to increase home-school contact, the findings of this study suggest that the immigrant families often feel unsupported, left out, marginalized, and discriminated against. Unfortunately,

without deliberate considerations of the diversity of students' and families' needs and situations during the pandemic, schools continue to operate with the "one-size-fits-all" model that reproduces and perpetuates cycles of oppression in relation to the intersectionality of race, ethnicity, class, immigrant status, and language. Consequently, marginalized populations like immigrant families with young bilingual children struggle to survive both the pandemic and the education system in isolation.

Future research should identify working models of family engagement that aim to establish reciprocal partnerships with immigrant families within the constraints of the pandemic. Moreover, there is the need to document communal efforts to create educational experiences that are rooted in the assets and needs of immigrant students during times of crisis.

Conclusion

Situated within the historical moments of the COVID-19 pandemic, this study highlights the experiences and challenges of immigrant families and young bilingual children and their struggles with school-provided remote learning. The findings of this study confirm how the pandemic exacerbated existing social inequities and their negative impact on immigrant families and their children. In addition, the study reveals how some public schools failed to acknowledge the unique needs of immigrant families and young bilingual children and failed to provide adequate support to these families and students. The study provides clear evidence of the

pandemic-related experiences of immigrant families that helps inform educators, school administrators, and policymakers for school re-entry, online learning planning, and family engagement initiatives that take into account the diversity of families. It advocates for a more inclusive approach in education to meet the needs of immigrant families and young bilingual children during and after the pandemic.

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SECTION III. IN RESISTANCE

Home Connection: Development, Implementation, and Evaluation of a Family Engagement and Home Learning Program During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic caused serious social disruptions and posed significant challenges to all families, especially immigrant families from low-income backgrounds. In particular, immigrant families with young bilingual children who speak languages other than English faced numerous barriers as they struggled to navigate remote learning with their children without adequate language and technological support. There is an urgent need to design action plans that strive to mitigate the negative educational impact of the pandemic on immigrant families with young bilingual children. To address the immediate needs of immigrant families during the first year of the pandemic, this transformative mixed methods study presents a family engagement and home learning program called the Home Connection. This program was collaboratively designed and implemented to support 20 immigrant families with 42 young bilingual children from the Metro and Greater Boston Areas. Focusing on the development, implementation, and evaluation of the Home Connection program, findings from this

study demonstrate how the family participants actively engaged with and positively evaluated this program.

Keywords: immigrant families, bilingual students, community-based research, family engagement, transformative mixed methods, COVID-19 pandemic

Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic caused serious social disruptions and posed significant challenges to all families, especially immigrant families from low-income backgrounds. These families have limited access to healthcare and social services, overrepresent the essential workforce, and live in structurally vulnerable neighborhoods with crowded housing that make them more vulnerable to the COVID-19 virus (Berkowitz et al., 2020; Fortuna, 2020). During this time of turmoil, anti-immigration sentiments and racial unrest also negatively impacted immigrant families and heightened their risks of facing discrimination, bigotry, and violence (Cholera et al., 2020).

To mitigate the spread of the virus at the beginning of the pandemic in 2020, school closures were enacted, and home quarantine was enforced across fifty US states. Most school districts made a sudden shift to emergency remote learning without much preparation and consideration of students' diverse needs and their families' situations (Office of Civil Rights, 2021). It created numerous barriers for immigrant families with young bilingual children who speak languages other than English, especially newcomers who were taking their initial steps to settle down and build their homes in a new place. During the first year of pandemic schooling, many immigrant families struggled to navigate remote learning with their children without adequate language and technological support. To immigrant families living in under-resourced communities,

the lack of access to electricity, internet, reliable technological devices, and learning resources made remote learning an impossible mission (see Paper 1).

There was an urgent need to design action plans that strive to mitigate and redress the negative educational impact of the pandemic on immigrant families and young bilingual children. Many researchers have advocated for multisectoral community-based approaches to rapidly respond to the unprecedented challenges of the pandemic and address social, health, economic, and educational inequities (Falicov et al., 2020; Endale et al., 2020; Cross & Benson, 2020; Suarez-Balcazar et al., 2020; Salma & Giri, 2021; Weieland et al., 2022). Action-oriented scholars have argued for practical solutions to help immigrant families gain access to healthcare (Suarez-Balcazar et al., 2020), social services (Cross & Benson, 2020), teletherapy and psychological support (Endale et al., 2020; Falicov et al., 2020), and education services (Kaiper-Marquez et al., 2020). Collectively, this body of research presents possibilities where reciprocal partnerships between researchers and community members were established and maintained to drive collective actions during times of crises.

Situated within this line of action-oriented scholarship, this transformative mixed methods study (Mertens, 2003) employed a community-based approach to support 20 immigrant families[7] with 42 young bilingual children from the Metro and Greater Boston

[7] In this study, the term “family” is purposely used to include not only parents but also older siblings and multigenerational caregivers

Areas. To address the immediate needs of these immigrant families and their children, the principal researcher collaborated with community partners and immigrant families to collectively design a family engagement and home learning program called the Home Connection. Focusing on the development, implementation, and evaluation of the Home Connection program, findings from this study demonstrate how the family and child participants actively engaged with and positively evaluated this equity-focused family engagement and home learning program.

Literature Review

Socioeconomic Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Immigrant Families

There have been a myriad of factors contributing to the disproportionate impacts of the pandemic on immigrant families. Many immigrant families work in essential sectors such as service, food, construction, and agriculture that took the hardest hit in the beginning of the pandemic, resulting in more job losses and higher risks of work hours being cut (Gelatt *et al.*, 2021). As reported by Pew Research Center, the unemployment rate of foreign-born workers rose from 4% to 15.3% in the second quarter of 2020 (Kochhar & Bennetti, 2021). For those who were fortunate to keep their jobs, remote working was usually not an option. Many immigrant families were essential frontline workers who had to cope with difficult, high-pressured, and unsafe working

conditions with limited protective measures in place. Furthermore, immigrant families, especially those from low-income backgrounds, tend to take public transportation and live in multigenerational housing in overcrowded and under-resourced neighborhoods that made it harder for these families to comply to social distancing, home quarantine, and other COVID-19 safety measures (Cholera *et al.*, 2020). For these reasons, immigrant families suffered from significantly higher rates of COVID-19 infection and death (Office of Immigration Statistics, 2021). Even when contracting the virus, some immigrant families, especially unauthorized families, were afraid to seek testing and treatment due to the lack of insurance, the lack of low-cost healthcare services, and/or fear of immigration enforcement such as detention and deportation (Capps & Gelatt, 2020).

Although immigrant families are among the most vulnerable populations that experienced the hardest toll during the pandemic, many of these families also have limited access to public benefits, healthcare, and social services. For example, unauthorized and mixed-status families were unprotected and purposely excluded from federally funded COVID-19 safety net programs such as unemployment insurance and stimulus payments through the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act (Gomez & Merez, 2021). Even if they were eligible for some pandemic relief programs, immigrant families also faced multiple barriers related to language, culture, and technology to get essential information and gain access to available services. It

certainly placed tremendous social and economic pressures on immigrant families to sustain their family lives and support their children.

Bilingual Students' Schooling Experiences in the US Classrooms

There are more than 5 million bilingual students in the US public schools, most of whom are immigrants or children of immigrants (Jimenez-Castellanos & Garcia, 2017). Labeled as English learners, bilingual students are often minoritized, marginalized, and underserved (American Psychological Association, Presidential Task Force on Educational Disparities, 2012). These students need specialized support to sustain their home languages, acquire English as an additional language, and learn new academic content across different subject areas. Many education scholars have provided evidence for and strongly recommended the use of culturally and linguistically responsive pedagogy to meet bilingual students' learning needs, support their positive identity development, and foster their sense of belonging (Villegas, 1991; Herrera et al., 2012; Gay, 2014; Hollie, 2017; Zhang-Wu, 2017). Unfortunately, schools often fail to acknowledge these students' full cultural and linguistic repertoire and often devalue their families' and communities' funds of knowledge (Moll *et al.*, 1992). Education policies and programs designed to serve this population have often treated bilingualism as a problem and English monolingualism, in the specific form of standard academic English, as the only desired outcome (Garcia & Torres, 2009; Hinton, 2016). In addition,

these programs rarely address structural challenges that prevent bilingual students from accessing equitable educational opportunities and getting learning resources in the first place. As studies have shown, bilingual students tend to attend segregated and underfunded schools (Knight & Mendoza, 2017), many being tracked into lower-level classes (Callahan, 2005; Sung, 2018) and taught oversimplified curriculum by less experienced teachers (Gándara *et al.*, 2003). Struggling to survive in multiculturally deficient spaces with hegemonic structures (Nieto, 2017), bilingual students often suffer from discrimination (Pérez Huber, 2011), microaggressions (Steketee *et al.*, 2021), linguistic racism (Baker-Bell, 2020), and linguistic violence (Garza Ayala, 2022).

The Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Bilingual Students

The COVID-19 pandemic magnified existing educational equities and introduces new challenges to bilingual students. The shift to remote learning placed these students in an extremely disadvantaged position including multiple new barriers. Remote learning requires access to high-speed internet and reliable working devices that many bilingual students, especially students from low-income backgrounds and attending low-resourced schools do not have (Vogels, 2021). Bilingual students encountered not only infrastructure barriers but also linguistic, digital, and cultural barriers of an English-only online learning environment in an unfamiliar education system. With their families working out of home, some bilingual students had to navigate remote learning alone. In

many instances, older bilingual students have to juggle academic tasks while providing care for their younger siblings (Kirsch, 2020). Some even had to get jobs to help their families overcome financial hardship (Newberry, 2021).

Remote learning also poses many challenges for young bilingual children, especially those who were just starting their first year of formal schooling: these beginners lean heavily on in-person interactions and non-verbal cues to develop their proficiency in an additional language and learn both academic content and school norms (Choi & Chiu, 2021). Through an online platform with limited human contact, these young students had difficulty understanding academic content and learning tasks, all provided solely in English. To young bilingual children, participating in remote learning required substantial adult support: from operating technological devices to navigating different online platforms and learning apps, and then following a complicated schedule. In order to fully engage with online learning sessions, young bilingual children needed co-participation and facilitation of their primary caregivers. Unfortunately, many caregivers from immigrant families had to work out of home and struggled to meet their basic needs during the pandemic. For those who were able to stay at home with their children, they might not be able to offer substantial help, particularly in the absence of resources, linguistic support, and adequate information needed to navigate learning expectations from teachers, schools, and districts (Sayer & Braun, 2020).

Furthermore, many districts made the transition to emergency remote learning without sufficient resources, technological knowledge, and teacher training (Lake, 2020). As reported by numerous schools during the transition, not all teachers could quickly adapt culturally and linguistically responsive teaching practices to remote learning while prioritizing the specific needs of bilingual students (Cushing-Leubner *et al.*, 2021). For these reasons, bilingual students were particularly impacted by the pandemic and were often left behind amid emergency remote learning. In some districts, the situation was so difficult that many logged out of schools, resulting in the surge in chronic absenteeism among bilingual students in the pandemic school year (Bamberger, 2021).

Multisectoral Community-Based Approaches to Support Immigrant Families During the Pandemic

Recognizing that the COVID-19 pandemic was not only a public health crisis but carried economic, social, psychological, and educational consequences, many scholars have tried to move beyond their disciplinary boundaries and traditional practices to meet new professional demands and fulfill social responsibilities. In order to rapidly respond to complex problems such as a global pandemic, the field required innovative solutions and multisectoral partnerships to draw on “diverse experiences, skills, and knowledge” and to drive collective actions (Suarez-Balcazar, 2020). Calling it the whole-of-society

approach, the World Health Organization (WHO) strongly encouraged multisectoral stakeholders, academia included, to collaborate closely with public and private sectors, communities, and families to tackle pandemic-related problems together. Compared to governmental institutions and state agencies, community-based and grassroots organizations have more experiences in serving historically underserved and marginalized communities. These organizations have been proactive in providing support to immigrant families, facilitating immigrant integration and receptivity, and fostering their sense of belonging (Jiménez, 2011; Rodriguez *et al.*, 2018). During the pandemic, many community-based and grassroots organizations have stepped up to fill the gaps in meeting immigrant families' pressing needs, but they have also faced multiple challenges such as overstretching their limited budgets, maintaining their own staffing, and doing community outreach under the constraints of COVID-19 quarantine (Bernstein *et al.*, 2020). These organizations certainly need more funding and support to sustain their services. For these reasons, many scholars have adopted the multisectoral community-based approaches to collaborate closely with community-based organizations to funnel funding and resources to underserved communities and to create better services to mitigate the negative effects of the pandemic on these communities (Falicov et al., 2020; Endale et al., 2020; Cross & Benson, 2020; Suarez-Balcazar et al., 2020; Salma & Giri, 2021; Weieland et al., 2022).

Multisectoral community-based scholarship embraces "true collaboration between community members who understand their community needs and possible solutions, and professionals who are willing to listen and to learn" (Falicov et al., 2020, p. 866). For example, Wieland et al. (2022) documented how academics, health experts, and community partners co-created messages to deliver credible COVID-19 information to African and Hispanic immigrant populations. The study emphasizes how the use of bidirectional communication helped accelerate responses to address communities' concerns and obstacles and to facilitate connection of community members to essential resources. Similarly, Washburn (2022) reported on community-academic partnerships that aimed to improve equitable access to COVID-19 testing, data, communication, and vaccination. The study highlights that such partnerships ensured that community partners' voices were heard, and their perspectives were included in the decision-making process. Falicov *et al.* (2020) explained how the pandemic taught their research team to become more flexible in terms of time and space to overcome pandemic-related constraints and to attend to communities' basic needs such as food, transportation, translation, and interpretation services. In this study, an interdisciplinary team of physicians, pharmacy teams, medical staff, and social workers collaborated closely with *promotoras* (experienced and trusted community members) to provide not only physical and mental healthcare but also cultural and emotional support to Latinx immigrant communities. The *promotoras* understood communities' challenges and valued cultural

practices of patients. Their roles as community connectors, health facilitators, and advisors were essential in connecting immigrant patients with much needed services during times of crisis.

These studies have informed the current investigation and illustrated the possibilities of research that engages with communities in social action. Adopting a community-based approach also means explicitly addressing social inequities and recognizing how "the vulnerabilities of the pandemic are compounded with the vulnerabilities imposed by policies that have long oppressed immigrants" (Cross & Benson, 2020, p. 116). This line of research often adopts an intersectional lens (Crenshaw, 2017) to understand how overlapping forces of oppression hinder immigrant families' survival and wellbeing and seeks concrete solutions from the ground up. It shifts the focus from creating individual-focused intervention programs to redesigning social support systems to funnel resources, increase access, and equip communities. The ultimate goal of community-based projects is to enable marginalized communities "to take control of their own context and circumstances" (Suarez-Balcazar, 2020, p. 219). Moreover, actively engaging communities in the process of designing support systems leads to more effective capacity building, stronger program impact, and longer-term sustainability (Suarez-Balcazar, 2020; Salma & Giri, 2021).

The Current Study

Learning from multisectoral community-based research, the current study aimed to establish meaningful and reciprocal partnerships among the researcher-educator, community organizers, and immigrant families to collectively solve pandemic-related educational problems and advance educational equities. Specifically, this transformative mixed methods study was collaboratively designed to support 20 immigrant families with 42 young bilingual children from the Metro and Greater Boston Areas. The community and family partners participated in the co-design, implementation, and evaluation of a family engagement and home learning program called the Home Connection. Guided by the equitable collaboration framework (Ishimaru, 2017), the Home Connection program was created to recognize and leverage the families' collective strengths and their existing capacities to mitigate the negative forces of the pandemic. It centered the crucial roles of immigrant families as home educators and aimed to equip and engage immigrant families whose skills, knowledge, and sociocultural resources were highly valued and prioritized. Finally, it aimed to improve remote learning experiences for the young bilingual children participating in the program, to elevate intergenerational home learning, and to foster community building.

Theoretical Framework

To enhance family engagement efforts, this study relies heavily on the conceptual framework of equitable collaboration (Ishimaru, 2017). Rooted in critical scholarship, this framework pushes back against deficit-based narratives that frame immigrant families as not valuing education, not trying hard enough, or lacking sociocultural capital and knowledge needed for successful engagement; hence, always in need of remedies (Valencia, 2010). It also challenges traditional family involvement practices that are often centralized around White middle-class norms and with the sole purpose of forced assimilation and acculturation (Levine-Rasky, 2009).

Looking through an equity-focused lens, the framework presents multiple strategies that constitute equitable collaboration with nondominant families and communities. These strategies aligned with the purpose of this research and the goals to support immigrant families and their children. Specifically, it emphasizes enacting systemic change through shared responsibilities and collective efforts. Equitable collaboration aims to build capacities and establish reciprocal relationships with families rather than merely providing services and support needed for their own children's academic success. Shifting the focus from the individual to the collective, equitable collaboration with families aims to "facilitate advocacy and leadership to benefit *all* the children in a school or community" (Ishimaru, 2017, p. 7). In addition, equitable collaboration strategies aim to identify and leverage existing resources and families'

funds of knowledge (Moll et al., 1992). Lastly, it cultivates relational power among families, community members, and educators to not only increase access to educational opportunities but also to transform schools systematically.

Within the context of this study, the equitable collaboration framework was used to inform the design and implementation of different components of the Home Connection program. Considering the special context of the pandemic, collective efforts to transform “schools” were redirected to foster family connection, community building, and collective healing during home quarantine.

Research Design

The research design of study follows the cyclical model for transformative mixed methods research (Mertens, 2003). Drawing from community-based participatory research, the transformative mixed methods design prioritizes community engagement throughout the whole research process: from defining the research problems based on communal needs, creating concrete social action plans, to making research decisions in terms of data collection and analysis, and evaluating the implementation of the solutions. The research process depends on:

(i) the establishment of trusting relationships between the principal researcher and the research partners (in this case, community organizers and immigrant families)

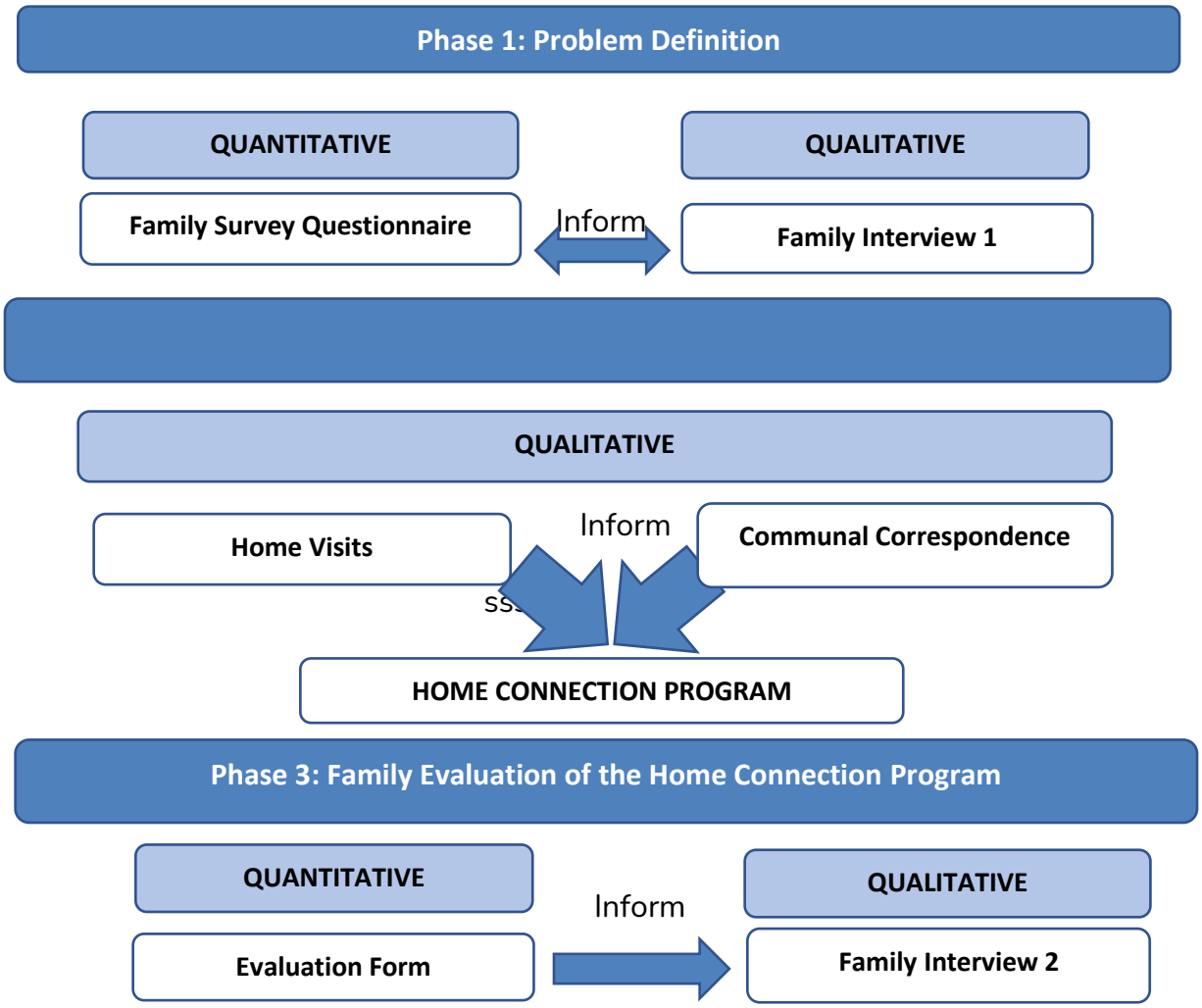
(ii) the co-design and development of culturally, linguistically responsive, and equitable evaluation instruments, and

(iii) awareness of power dynamics and willingness to address it at every research phase.

For more information on the transformative research cycle, please refer to Figure 1. In this project, multiple sources of data were collected and analyzed to serve the purposes of each research phase and answer the research question. Each phase is described with more details in later sections.

Figure 1

Transformative Mixed Methods Model



Partnering with Immigrant Families and Community Organizers

In this project, I collaborated closely with two community organizers referred to as community partners and three immigrant families referred to as family partners in this paper. These partners helped me recruit family participants, participated in the design, implementation, and evaluation of the Home Connection program. The community

partners worked for two immigrant-serving community organizations located in the Metro Boston Area and had been supporting immigrant families through multiple pandemic-responsive programs. I was connected to these community partners by immigrant-serving school districts and Camila Rivas, whose role and involvement in the Home Connection program was explained in the Introduction. The family partners were recommended by both Camila Rivas and the community partners. These partners were first-generation immigrants speaking Spanish, Portuguese, and Vietnamese who had been living in the neighborhoods for a long time that allowed them to build trusting relationships with many family participants. All family partners' children also participated in the learning activities of the Home Connection program.

Sampling

Criteria-based snowball sampling was used to recruit family participants (Atkinson & Flint, 2004). Snowball sampling is an effective recruitment method as it helps connect with isolated communities under restricted conditions affected by COVID-19 and leverages the existing acquaintances among families and partners (Sadler *et al.*, 2010). The final sample includes 20 immigrant families with 42 bilingual children (age range: 4-10 years old) participating in the Home Connection program at different times. The first group of families (10 families and 15 children) participated from September to

November 2020. The second group of families (10 families and 27 children) participated from January to March 2021.

Positionality

This study carries certain assumptions, beliefs, and biases centered around my multiple roles in the research site: education researcher, early childhood educator, and immigrant mother. I am a cisgender married Vietnamese woman with children, which puts me in an advantaged position to conduct research with young children and families. While sharing language and cultural skills with some of the families, I did not assume that I understood the experiences of these diverse families during the pandemic and was open to learning from them about their desires and challenges. For this project, my cultural and linguistic competency allowed me to communicate and collaborate more effectively with Vietnamese families who speak different dialects and migrate from different regions of Vietnam. To collaborate with other families with whom I do not share a linguistic background, I relied mostly on my community and family partners, language brokers within the families, and translation apps. While the cultural and language barriers posed certain challenges to me, I also saw it as a learning opportunity and a realistic projection of a teacher in a multilingual multicultural classroom who often needs to work with a linguistically and culturally diverse population of children and families. It certainly diminished my power as “the knower” in this context and forced me and my

community/family partners to acknowledge and appreciate our interdependence in the process of co-construction of knowledge.

Phase 1. Problem Definition

Family Survey Questionnaire

All 20 family participants completed a Qualtrics survey questionnaire including 50 open-ended and multiple-choice questions (4-point and 5-point Likert scale). The questionnaire was available in multiple languages: English, Spanish, and Vietnamese and was organized into four sections: (i) Demographics (20 items), (ii) Language Practices (7 items), (iii) COVID-19 Pandemic Experience (7 items), and (iv) Remote Learning Experience (16 items). The questionnaire was sent via email to 12 families who were able to read, write, and respond to an online web-based survey. For the remaining 8 families, the content of the questionnaire was orally explained by the researcher in Vietnamese (4 families) or by the community/family partners in Spanish (4 families). These families responded to the questionnaire orally using their home languages.

Family Interview 1

All primary caregivers, most of whom were immigrant mothers, participated in a semi-structured 1-hour interview. This interview was purposely conducted before the families joined the Home Connection program with the following goals:

(i) to gain a deeper understanding of the families' backgrounds and their pandemic-related challenges

(ii) to learn about the families' remote learning experiences, especially on what barriers prevented the primary caregivers and their children from effectively engaging with remote learning provided by their school districts.

This interview was conducted online with 12 families who had access to digital devices, were more familiar with the Zoom platform, and would be able to log into Zoom with minimum support. To the other eight families who did not have access to devices and/or needed more technological support, this interview was conducted in-person during home visits with social distancing practices.

Phase 2. Development & Implementation of the Home Connection Program

Home Visits

To establish trust and build relationships with the family participants, the researcher and community/family partners made multiple in-person and virtual home visits to the families during the program. The purposes of these visits were:

(i) to document the families' current access to resources and services

(ii) to provide and connect the families with essential services

(iii) to provide digital devices and/or technological support as needed

(iv) to gather the families' funds of knowledge and learn about their sociocultural and multilingual practices,

(v) to learn about the children's learning interests

During these visits, the researcher took field notes and photos and used these data to inform the design of the Home Connection program.

Communal Correspondence

All social interactions and communal correspondence among the researcher-educator, the community/family partners and the family participants were documented by the researcher. This set of data included text messages and photos of the families and their children's engagement with the program. The photos of the children's learning activities and their works were taken by the primary caregivers and sent to the researcher via different platforms including WhatsApp, Facebook Messenger, WeChat, and SMS text messages.

All data collected through Phase 1 interviews and Phase 2 home visits and correspondence were used to inform the development of the Home Connection program.

Phase 3. Family Evaluation of the Home Connection Program

Evaluation Form

Family participants were asked to complete web-based evaluation forms three times during their participation in the program. The forms included 5 open-ended and 5 multiple-choice questions (5-point Likert scale). This evaluation form included three main sections related to (i) the picture books, (ii) the learning boxes, and (iii) the online learning activities (see Appendix G. Family Evaluation Form). This form was available via Qualtrics in different languages including Vietnamese, Spanish, and English. Child-friendly evaluation forms with a 3-point rating scale and visual items were also sent to the families to obtain child participants' evaluation (see Appendix H. Child Evaluation Form).

The evaluation form was sent via email to 12 families who were able to read, write, and respond to an online web-based survey. For the remaining 8 families, the hardcopy of the evaluation form was sent to the families to fill out. This evaluation form was sent at Week 3, Week 6, and Week 10 of the program to gather the families' feedback for each set of the learning boxes with the purpose of using the families' suggestions to continuously improve the program.

Family Interview 2

The second interview was conducted at the end of the Home Connection program to learn about the families' overall experiences with the program. By the end of the program, all adult and child participants were already familiar with the Zoom platform

and could troubleshoot their devices themselves. Therefore, all interviews were conducted online via Zoom. As the children's experiences and their evaluation were highly valued, both primary caregivers, most of whom were immigrant mothers, and their children were asked to participate in the second interview together. Additional interviews were also conducted with three family partners and two community partners who took more active roles in the program to gather their feedback on the impact of the program and future directions for the program.

Data Analyses

Quantitative

Family Survey Questionnaire

The data were analyzed directly on Qualtrics to obtain descriptive statistics to build the family profiles (see Table 1, Paper 1) and to determine how the families ranked different aspects of their home lives and remote learning experiences (see Paper 1 of this dissertation for more detail).

Program Evaluation Forms

The data were analyzed directly on Qualtrics to reflect the families' ranking of different components of the Curriculum including (i) picture books, (ii) learning boxes, and (iii) online learning sessions. The rapid feedback evaluation method (McNell et al., 2004) was employed to capture the families' ongoing experiences. After that, the

researcher quickly revise each set of the picture books and learning boxes and make changes to the online learning sessions according to the families' feedback.

Qualitative

Family Interview 1

The first set of interview data collected during Phase 1: Problem Definition were transcribed, translated into English, and transferred to MAXQDA for thematic coding analysis (Saldaña, 2012). In the first cycle of coding, this set of interview data were deductively categorized into two main topics: (i) pandemic-related challenges and (ii) barriers to engage with remote learning, which were also aligned with the questions outlined in the family survey questionnaire. From each transcript, recurring statements and phrases directly related to the two main topics were highlighted, extracted from transcripts, and prescribed meanings (aka, codes). In the second cycle of coding, similar codes were clustered into themes and common themes across most transcripts were determined. After that, the researcher engaged in a participants' check process by selecting four focal families and confirming with them about the selected statements and interpretations of these statements to validate the findings.

Family Interview 2

The second set of interview data collected during Phase 3: Family Evaluation of the Curriculum were transcribed and translated into English. This set of interview data was categorized deductively to reflect the families' evaluation of each component of the program including: (i) Connection, (ii) Curriculum, and (iii) Community. From each transcript, recurring statements and phrases directly related to each component were highlighted, extracted from transcripts, and prescribed meanings (aka, codes). In the second cycle of coding, codes were clustered into two predetermined sub-themes: (i) affordances and (ii) constraints related to each program component. The affordances were reported in the finding section and the constraints were reported in the limitations and future directions section.

All field notes, text messages, and photos taken during the program were used to further illustrate how the families engaged with the program and to triangulate the research findings. After that, the principal researcher conducted a participants' check with the community and family partners by presenting the preliminary findings of both affordances and constraints of the program to validate these findings and to collect the families' suggestions and ideas on how to improve the program in the future.

Findings

Phase 1: Problem Definition

The findings revealed that these immigrant families faced multiple challenges to sustain their home lives during the pandemic. They also struggled to gain access and engage with school-provided remote learning. In summary, findings show that when describing their pandemic-related experiences, family participants reported feeling stressed and overwhelmed because of the following factors:

i. job loss & financial hardship,

ii. fear of COVID-19 infection & loss of family members,

iii. their children's lack of learning opportunities & excessive screen time,

iv. heightened caregiving load for immigrant mother

As identified by the immigrant families, they also faced multiple barriers to access and engage with remote learning. These barriers were mostly related to the following categories: (i) infrastructure, (ii) curriculum & instruction, and (iii) family engagement (see Table 1).

Table 1

Immigrant Families' Barriers to Engage with Remote Learning

Infrastructure	Curriculum & Instruction	Family (Dis)engagement
Lack of electricity and high-speed internet	Complicated learning schedule that did not take into consideration the families' working schedules and settings	Lack of social connection and family engagement practices

Lack of reliable technological devices and technological support	Lack of culturally and linguistically responsive educational resources	Microaggressions and discriminatory practices enacted by school personnel
Lack of language services such as translation and interpretation for the families who speak languages other than English	Lack of developmentally appropriate, culturally, and linguistically responsive pedagogical practices	Digital discipline, suspension, and punishment enacted by classroom teachers via Zoom

Phase II: Development & Implementation of the Home Connection Program

After identifying the immigrant families' pandemic-related challenges and the barriers that prevent them from successfully engaging with remote learning, the researcher-educator, community partners, and family partners engaged in multiple discussions and started planning for actions. We designed the Home Connection program[8] to include three key components (see Figure 2):

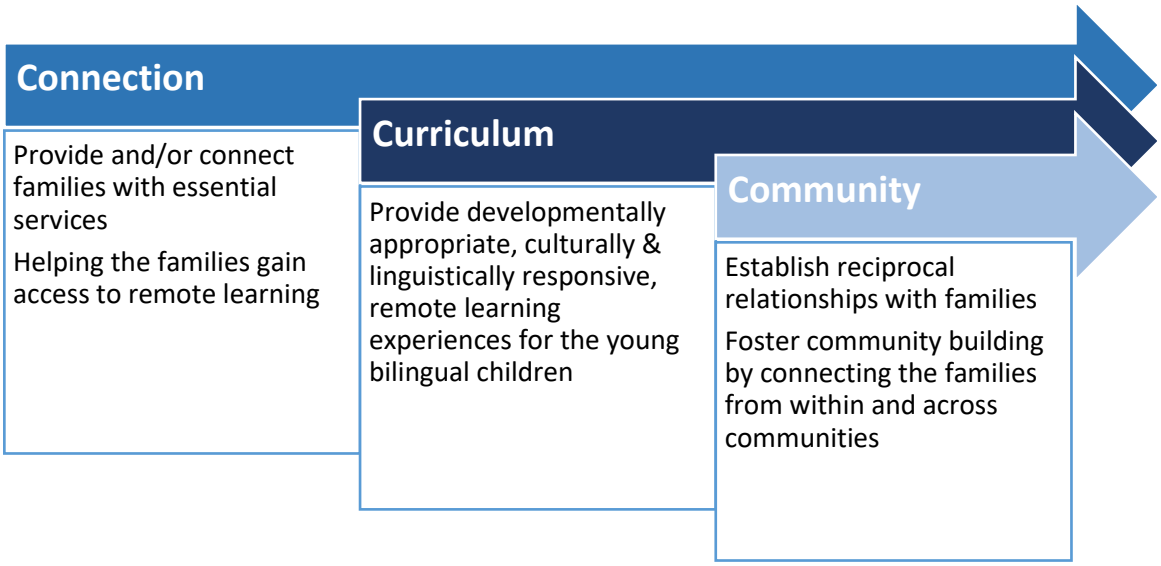
(i) **Connection:** providing/connecting the families with essential services and helping the families gain access to remote learning

(ii) **Curriculum:** providing developmentally appropriate, culturally & linguistically responsive, remote learning experiences for the young bilingual children

[8] This program was funded by multiple sources including the COVID-19 Rapid Response Student Success Grant by the NEA Foundation, the Equity Grant by American Educational Research Association-Division C Teaching & Learning, and crowdfunding sources through the collective efforts of community organizers and immigrant families participating in the program.

(iii) **Community:** establishing reciprocal relationships with families, creating a safe space for the families to share their knowledge, resources, and strategies to improve the children's learning experiences, and fostering community building by connecting the families from within and across communities

Figure 2
The Key Components of the Home Connection Program



The design of the Home Connection program was firmly grounded in the equitable collaboration framework of family engagement to build a strong partnership with the family participants and to recognize the crucial roles of the families as co-designers, co-educators, co-researchers, and co-evaluators in this program. We acknowledge that the Home Connection program was not a panacea that aimed to solve all pandemic-related problems and remote learning challenges that these immigrant

families were facing. Taking into consideration the temporal and spatial constraints created by the pandemic, we intentionally and collectively designed this program to meet some of the basic needs of the families but focused mainly on helping the families gain access to remote learning and improving the children's remote learning experiences.

Connection

To address the families' pandemic-related challenges, we partnered up with two community-based organizations and one faith-based organization from the red-zone neighborhoods in the Greater Boston Areas to provide and/or connect the families with basic services including:

- Delivering free groceries and home-cooked meals to the families infected with COVID-19
- Sending text messages in home languages to inform the families about COVID-19 vaccination
- Helping the families register for COVID-19 vaccination appointments
- Providing translation and interpretation services for the families who speak languages other than English

To remove barriers to access remote learning, we provided internet hotspots for two families who did not have access to high-speed internet. We also sponsored two iPads and three Chromebooks to five children who had not received school-provided devices at the beginning of the pandemic school year. The researcher-educator and the family partners helped troubleshoot school-provided devices and provided technological support in home languages to some family participants. We also provided translation and interpretation services for the families who speak languages other than English.

Curriculum

We designed a 10-week Home Connection curriculum that came in the form of a learning box to be delivered to each family. This integrated curriculum centralized play-based hands-on activities suitable for young learners, celebrated the students' diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds, and fostered intergenerational learning in home settings. Each learning box included bilingual picture books, an integrated project-based home learning curriculum with detailed instructions in English and home languages, and all supplies and materials needed for all children from each household (see Figure 3).

Figure 3
Learning Boxes

The learning activities included: (i) independent, (ii) family-guided, and (iii) teacher-guided activities spanning across subject matters including language arts, math, science, arts & crafts, and sensory play. For language arts and math activities, there were three different levels of difficulty: K-1, 2-3, and 4-5 to fit the learning levels of the child participants. For science, arts & crafts, and sensory play, the learning activities were designed to encourage the child participants to work with their siblings and/or other family members to complete learning tasks (see Appendix D. Sample Curriculum).

To assist each family and their children with the teacher-guided activities, the researcher-educator conducted weekly online learning sessions via Zoom. Even though

the caregivers were encouraged to participate in the online learning sessions, it was not mandatory. Most children could independently work with the researcher-educator as the activities were designed to suit their learning levels. To the families with multiple children, all children participated in the online learning sessions together. These sessions were also scheduled with flexibility to fit each family's working schedule and home settings. Embracing a multilingual online learning space, the researcher-educator collaborated with the family partners to conduct all online learning sessions in both English and home languages.

Community

To foster community building, the researcher-educator, the community partners, and the family partners conducted both in-person and virtual home visits to establish trusted relationships with the families. We also made sure that we had regular check-ins and used multiple methods of communication such as social media, text messages, emails, and phone calls to connect with the families. It was part of our protocols to send reminders in home languages to the families before the learning boxes were delivered and before each online learning session. We also gathered the families' verbal feedback for each learning box and right after each learning session.

To connect families from within and across communities, we leveraged group text messages and social media to share remote learning tips and strategies and send out announcements about online family-friendly events that the families might be interested in joining. At the end of the program, we conducted a virtual family gathering to showcase the children's work and celebrate all the children and families for their active participation and engagement with the program.

Phase III: Family Evaluation

In the following section, findings related to three components of the program will be presented. In general, all family participants showed a high level of participation, engagement, and interest with the Home Connection program. 19 out of 20 families completed all 10 weeks of the program and participated in all online learning sessions; only one family withdrew from the program after 7 weeks of participation due to COVID19 infection. In terms of engagement, 18 out of 20 families completed all learning activities including independent, family-guided, and teacher-guided activities.

Most families shared that participating in the program helped them gain access to essential resources and services during the pandemic, become more confident to navigate school-provided remote learning, recognize their active roles in their children's education, and connect more closely with other families and communities.

Connection

Essential Services. Most families, especially those who had members infected with COVID-19 virus, shared their gratitude that the program directly provided and/or helped them connect with essential services such as groceries/meals delivery, COVID-19 vaccination, online learning resources, online family events, etc. that were much needed at the beginning of the pandemic. It is important to note that in addition to the essential services provided by community-based or faith-based organizations, some families also volunteered to prepare groceries, cook meals, and deliver them to other families in need (see Figure 4. Groceries & Food Delivery Services). Through these activities, many families were more connected to their community-based and faith-based organizations and these connections have been maintained until now.

Figure 4.

Groceries & Food Delivery Services

Language Support. Recognizing the lack of translation and interpretation services in most family participants' school districts, some bilingual families and community organizers volunteered to provide translation and interpretation services such as translating and explaining school emails, especially those related to remote learning policies and practices. The researcher-educator also supported two Vietnamese family participants during parent-teacher conferences throughout the pandemic school year. The family participants who speak languages other than English found the translation and interpretation services extremely helpful to get latest information on the COVID-19 vaccination and to communicate with their children's schools, especially with the classroom teachers, more effectively.

Technological Support. Some families who faced the problems of connectivity and unreliable devices shared that the program helped their children gain immediate access and could participate in school-provided remote learning without delay. Recognizing the lack of technological support in home languages, some family participants also took initiatives and volunteered to record instructional videos in their home languages to share with other families to guide them on how to log into Zoom, how to access learning apps, and how to upload their children's work through learning

apps. All of these videos were shared widely through WhatsApp group chat and Facebook Group page of the program.

The results show that the family participants were not only beneficiaries who merely receive resources and services but also active agents whose participation drives the change-making process. They served in multiple roles such as volunteers, translators, interpreters, technological support staff, and advocates whose voices and ideas had helped us constantly improve our design and implementation of the program.

Curriculum

All families shared that the best aspect of the program was the Curriculum, which was often described in both the evaluation forms and family interviews as “fun”, “hands-on”, “engaging”, “flexible”, and “beneficial” for the children. There were several themes in the feedback received by families regarding the positive elements of the curriculum and the effectiveness of the program. For example, families reported that the program contained **Good Reading Materials** that are engaging, entertaining, culturally, and linguistically responsive. For this reason, most family participants read the books 4-5 times a week, some read them 2-3 times a week, and one family even read them more than 5 times a week. The families engaged with the picture books in multiple ways: by reading to their children or listening to their children read the books or retell the stories orally. If the children were old enough and knew how to read independently, some of

them read the books to their siblings and grandparents. Most families also confirmed that they used the suggested discussion questions to talk about the books with their children.

Sharing how the program had sparked her daughter reading interest, Carol Carneiro, a Brazilian mother of a 6-year-old emergent bilingual, said:

> *"I always have a hard time catching Mimi's attention and she is always on the tablet, on the games. Compared to that, you know, seeing a book is kind of boring to her. But, as she got into the program, she knew that she would do the projects with the books, so she was very interested and willing to pay attention to the story and try to understand what it is about. In the first week, she saw the mini koalas and she was very curious about them, and I told her that you would teach her how to create a house for them, she was so into it. She read the book many times and even drew some designs of the koala house... She was more interested in animal stories and really loved the dragon book..."*

Penelope, a Colombian mother of two bilingual children, 6 years old and 9 years old, complimented how the picture books came in different languages and embraced cultural diversity:

> *"We love the books, they are so diverse, beautiful stories with good lessons. The pictures are so beautiful. They love the tacos book, and the kids were like, aah,*

> *they have Spanish words, these books are both in Spanish and English"* [translated from Spanish]

Thu Nguyen, a Vietnamese mother of two, explained that having picture books in home languages encouraged her to participate more in shared reading with her children:

> *"Most of the time I don't know how to teach my kids, I don't read to them because I am afraid of my accent… my pronunciation, you know, would not be correct, but these books were in Vietnamese and you sent us the YouTube link for the English reading, so K. got to listen to both. He really loved it and he talked a lot about the egg book, that's his favorite. He told his Dad about the book and asked all of the questions…"* [translated from Vietnamese]

Having picture books sent directly to their homes helped the families build their home libraries and started having regular shared reading sessions with their children. Having access to high-quality picture books and reading with family members such as parents, grandparents, and siblings created a literacy-rich environment for many young emergent bilinguals participating in the program. Some of our youngest students had started learning how to read, like Cami, a 5-year-old emergent bilingual. Sharing Cami's emergent reading activities, her mother, Camilla Rivera told us:

> *"The other day I saw Cami waking up very early, and usually Caitlyn* [the older sibling] *had to read for her but that day Cami woke up and went to the living room*

and took the Egg book out, she slipped through the pages and she just concentrated on it, she looked at the pictures and she pointed to some of the words that she recognized, tried to say it, and I was so happy, I was so happy that she did it all by herself."

Another theme related to the curriculum consisted of families and children's engagement with **Hands-on Relevant Activities with Instruction in Home Languages.** Commenting on the Curriculum, Penelope Marcela, a Colombian mother of two, described her children's excitement and active engagement because of the experiential learning approach and the interconnection of the picture books' content and the learning activities:

"I think that the kids really love it... every time I said it's time to go learn with Alisha... they were like yeah, and they are so excited, all the time. I can see that the activities are all connected to the book, the math... and science, and all other things. I think that's the best part of the program.... My kids, they love working with their hands, with the materials, I have to say the projects, they are really cool..., they are fun... and the sessions are not too long, you know, for Ben, he is younger and it's good that it's [the online session] not too long and he can work through the whole session by himself... My kids love the koalas and the tacos books, but overall, they love all the boxes." [translated from Spanish]

Other families such as Phuong Tran, a Vietnamese mother of two, shared that the family-guided activities had detailed instruction in home languages and a lot of visual aids that made them very accessible and easy to follow:

> *"Mie could just look at the photos of the step-by-step instructions and she would remind me on what to do next. I know it was a family-guided activity and you wanted the parents to help the kids, but they were so clear that Mia could even do it herself, of course with my supervision, but they were easy and fun"* [translated from Vietnamese]

Finally, families commented on the importance and success of **Interactive Online Learning Sessions**. Evaluating the teacher-guided activities conducted through online learning sessions, many families said that the setup of these sessions made them very interactive and engaging. Thao Pham, a Vietnamese mother of two, shared her children's experience with the online learning sessions:

> *"So when they did the online sessions, they were really engaging, they focused… and sometimes we had some family events and we told them, oh how about skipping a session and they did not like it, they wanted to learn with you and they did not want to miss the lesson, any minute of it. They loved the birthday card project because they got to give them to their dad right away that week. But they loved everything… They were very excited, and they always reminded me, it's*

> *time to log in, mommy, and I am glad they remembered.*" [translated from Vietnamese]

Similarly, Penelope Marcela, a Colombian mother of two, talked about how her son engaged better with hands-on learning activities that were more aligned with his learning interests:

> *"They [the kids] are present and concentrate very well when they do the lessons with you. Sometimes for Ben, I don't think it's his strong suit... When he learned in remote learning, he was not excited to learn through Zoom, he did not like the teacher lecturing, he would start finding something else to do, find something to play here and there and not paying attention. I can tell that he does not like that, you know, like in reading, and writing, and math he does not like it as much as he did with you, and I think because you connected well with him, and he got to do a lot of cool projects that he really liked"* [translated from Spanish]

At the beginning of the program, the first few online learning sessions were purposely conducted with one family at the time to help the researcher-educator establish a relationship with each family and the children of each household. Many families found this setup highly effective in getting their children more engaged with remote learning. For example, Carol Carneiro, a Brazilian mother of one, shared that the one-on-one setting worked in favor of her daughter, Mimi, who was still developing both of her

languages and needed more of a teacher's attention to support her participation in learning activities:

> *"She is very shy when she came to [school-provided] remote learning. When she was in Zoom class with schools, with other kids, and she did not talk, she was afraid she said something wrong, wrong words, wrong pronunciation, and she thought they would laugh at her. I tried to encourage her, but she needs time, and school Zoom [sessions] with a lot of kids do not work for her, they were all fighting for attention and Mimi knew that she would never get picked first. So one-on-one sessions are better for her. I could see that she changed completely when she did the program with you, she talks more, she can express herself better and learn better. I think it's a good design for kids like her."*

In the last four sessions, we started grouping the students, especially the children who did not have siblings, into small-group sessions (3-4 students max) to encourage more peer learning. Some families with one child found this small group setting helpful for their children. For example, Carmen Dalo, an Argentinian mother of one, shared her daughter's experience:

> *"She loves to talk and to share with her friends and she did not get a chance to talk very often during remote learning... She loved the sessions with other kids. That's why she is so excited about the program, she talks about it all the time."*

During the overall evaluation, families reported the importance of **Intergenerational Connections** through the program**.** One of the important aspects of the Curriculum is that all family-guided activities were purposely designed to encourage family interactive learning that might possibly come in different forms: it could be parent-children or siblings working together on projects and/or grandparents-grandchildren interactions during read-aloud sessions. Some families with grandparents living in the same household recognized how the program had actively engaged all family members and fostered meaningful intergenerational connection. For example, Vietnamese families like Phung Truong and Thao Pham explained how the grandmothers also participated in the program:

> *"Grandma read for them. The Coming Home book, and she was surprised to see a book in Vietnamese. She was really happy, I know, and then she said it is a good program"* [translated from Vietnamese]

> *"Grandma likes it, she likes that the kids made a lot of stuff and… remember the week that they asked her about the fruits' names, and she got to help them with the Vietnamese names, and she went to the supermarket, the other week, she went to the supermarket to get the jackfruit. Then she cut it, she showed them how it looked like inside.* [translated from Vietnamese]

Observation data from the online learning sessions showed the same results. Even for families whose grandparents living separately, they were always included in some of the activities that could be done remotely such as reading picture books via Zoom, watching how plants grow, or learning fruit names in home languages, etc. During some of the online learning sessions, the researcher-educator noticed that sometimes grandparents and other extended family members such as uncles, aunties, and cousins visited the households, and they were also considered part of the children's learning circles. For that reason, these family members were encouraged to participate and work with the children in the projects if they were interested. The flexibility and family-focused aspect of these online learning sessions built a seamless learning environment with a high level of family engagement.

Community

The findings show that as a team, including the researcher-educator, the community and family partners, we were successful in establishing trust and reciprocal relationships with the family participants and the community members throughout the program.

Camilla, the family partner, shared in the interview:

"I think many families love the program because we really connect with them and care for their kids. They can see that we care for the education quality of the program and want it to be better... And we talked to the families all the time, we texted them, we visited them, we called."

Camilla believed that by offering a high-quality education program that engaged the children with meaningful learning experiences, we already set ourselves up for success with the families. She also believed that having clear communication and regular contact with the families made all the difference.

Hani, the community partner, shared with us that frequent contact was good but treating the families with respect and listening to the families were even more important:

"*Many people came into our neighborhood, brought this and that and said they wanted to help the families, but they did not treat the families with respect, you know, yes, we are poor, yes, we don't have these fancy houses with green lawns and white fences, but we care for our children as much as you do. Even more because some of them move earth and mountain to get the kids into schools, to get an education... so when you* [the researcher-educator] *came to us and you worked with us, we told you that same thing... and the families told us that you listened to them, you talked to them and listened to what they got to say about their kids' education and that's what matters to us, you know. That's why we worked with you.*"

Regular contact, respect, and reciprocity were important factors that help establish and sustain the relationships among the researcher-educator, the family/community partners, and the family participants. These relationships were not only maintained throughout the program but also even after the program ended.

By participating in the program, many families had connected with each other through our online gathering sessions and mostly through social media and group chat. Many shared their children's work through Facebook and WhatsApp and received a lot of positive comments from other families. Some families sent gifts, donated books, and the children made cards for their friends who participated in the same online learning session.

Another positive impact of the program was that it amplified the family participants' voices and encouraged some of them to get more involved with district-level discussions and take on leadership roles. For example, four families volunteered to participate in a district-wide presentation to share about their experiences with the Home Connection program and to advocate for equitable family engagement practices with immigrant families.

Limitations and Future Directions

Even though the Home Connection program has successfully established reciprocal relationships with the immigrant families, offered an engaging and interactive remote learning program for young bilingual children, and fostered community building, this program has certain limitations in relation to each component as listed below.

Connection

With limited grant funding, the program could provide internet and/or devices to only 5 immigrant families from two different school districts while the actual number of immigrant families in need was definitively much higher. We also recognized that relying on family participants and community organizers to provide translation and interpretation services and technological support was a temporary solution for a systemic problem that should be addressed at the district-level. Therefore, we reached out to district leaders, especially those from immigrant-serving districts, to alert them about immigrant families' linguistic rights to translation and interpretation services and how the lack of clear communication could marginalize these families and prevent them from engaging with their children's schooling. While some district leaders acknowledged the problem and promised to work towards having a better solution, some families shared with us that the problem of language barriers remained unsolved

until now. More advocacy work is needed to keep school districts accountable and responsible for providing translation and interpretation services for immigrant families.

Curriculum

Even though the Curriculum received positive evaluation from both the family and child participants, it also had some limitations. Firstly, the design of the program was mostly determined by the input from the seed families of the first group. When the program was offered to the second family group, some modifications were made to make the program more suitable for the children's learning levels and their linguistic backgrounds. However, the central texts and learning activities remained the same. For that reason, it is important to acknowledge that the Curriculum might privilege the first family group's lived experiences and funds of knowledge over those of the second group.

Secondly, due to limitations in funding and human resources, the program could not be offered for a longer period to serve more immigrant families, especially families living in under-resourced neighborhoods. Some families commented that the program should be extended to have more sessions and should be offered more regularly rather than as a one-time program. To some families, 10 sessions seemed to run out very quickly and they felt that their children would benefit from more sessions. For example,

one family suggested that: *"I think it's such a great program that we should have it for after school or summer programs for bilingual children. To be honest we want it to be longer and have more sessions. My suggestion would be to have more content developed and get it connected with the school curriculum."*

Taking such a comment into consideration, we did reach out to some school districts and proposed to run the Home Connection program as an afterschool and/or summer program for young bilingual children. Still, funding remains the biggest concern and we are in the midst of applying for more funding to implement and expand the program in the near future.

Community

While we had made certain progress with connecting the families from within communities, especially those sharing cultural and linguistic backgrounds, Hani, the community partner, explained how connecting families across communities had been a real challenge:

> *"Many families we worked with need to focus on getting back on their feet and it will be very hard to add more to their plates, right? We understand that connecting different communities is important, but we need to take into consideration the families' situations and of course which community would benefit more from these activities."*

Reflecting on the Community component, Camilla said: *"I know it is hard, but we have to try, and we have to keep trying, because we are living in silos. We need to keep reminding ourselves that it is important to connect with different communities and bring the program to different neighborhoods*".

While we attempted to organize online family gathering sessions to bring families together, an asynchronous setting seemed to work better for the families, considering that the families had different working schedules and other obligations. Considering that COVID-19 restrictions changed overtime, we plan to hold family events and group learning activities in outdoor places such as gardens or public parks to foster community building, which remains a very important component of the program.

Conclusion

By prioritizing equitable family engagement practices, the Home Connection program was positively evaluated by the family participants whose active engagement had defined the success of the program. One of the reasons that the program could be successfully implemented during the pandemic was that we had built a network consisting of the community partners, family partners, and community-based organizations and leveraged on their existing resources and connections to support different components of the Home Connection program. We have learned that

sustaining such a network is crucial to build a more reliable support system for immigrant families. Listening to families' ideas and gathering families' feedback are also important, considering how the pandemic requires us to quickly adapt and respond to meet the families' changing needs.

It is significant to note that the participating families were not mere receivers of resources and services. Most families contributed to all three components of the program through different ways and in different roles. Even after the program concluded, many families said that they would like to continue contributing to the program to show their appreciation, to sustain the Home Connection program, to maintain their connection with other immigrant families, and to build stronger communities.

By actively engaging in the design, implementation, and evaluation processes of the program, these immigrant families, who have traditionally been marginalized and disempowered by discriminatory and disengaging practices, could see themselves as key stakeholders whose funds of knowledge were highly valued and incorporated into the home learning program. Some families eventually became social advocates who actively worked towards expanding and sustaining the program to serve more immigrant families and young bilingual children.

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SECTION IV. IN SOLIDARITY

Building Culturally Sustaining Learning Spaces with Immigrant Families and Young Bilingual Children During Pandemic Remote Learning

Abstract

This practitioner inquiry provides a critical reflection of my teaching practices as a multilingual immigrant early childhood educator who attempted to build partnerships with immigrant families during the COVID-19 pandemic. This partnership allowed me to collaborate with 20 immigrant families and 42 emergent bilingual children from the Metro and Greater Boston Area to design and implement a remote learning and family engagement program called Home Connection. Using culturally sustaining pedagogy to guide curriculum design, pedagogy, and family engagement, this paper presents what I have learned while teaching in the Home Connection program. The findings reveal that through the Home Connection program, I have learned to (i) affirm the diversity and pluralism in my students' learning interests, lived experiences, identities, and home lives, (ii) foster intergenerational connections and collective learning, (iii) recognize embodied learning through multiple spaces across family homes, and most importantly, I have learned to (iv) embrace healing-centered teaching and learning that helps pave the path for collective healing within this learning community.

Keywords: practitioner inquiry, culturally sustaining pedagogy, young bilingual children, COVID-19 pandemic, remote learning

Problem Statement

In 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic forced school closures across states and put the US education system through a severe test. Unsurprisingly, this test revealed and turned a spotlight on existing educational inequities in school districts across the nation. While wealthy White students and families were sheltering in place and forming learning pods with abundant resources (Moyer, 2020); racially minoritized, disabled, and disenfranchised students and families struggled to engage with schools and fight for survival, often in isolation (Walters, 2020). Recent research has shown that families of Color faced much higher risk of COVID-19 exposure, infection, and death (Hooper *et al.*, 2020), struggled to make ends meet (Clark et al., 2020), and encountered multiple barriers to gain access to remote learning for their children (Paper 1). Ignoring the diverse needs of students and families, most school districts transitioned to remote learning with minimum preparation and often without including educators' voices in the decision-making process (Barlett, 2021). Schools trembled to sustain what deemed most important even in times of crisis: the schooling hegemonic structure (McKinney de Royston & Vossoughi, 2021). As presented in Paper 1 of this dissertation, the common structure of school-provided remote learning often includes fixed classroom schedules, multiple online learning sessions with participation guidelines, printable worksheets, and online learning apps that heavily expected teachers to teach, families to assist, and students to "learn" in a global crisis like they had always been doing in brick-and-mortar

classrooms pre-pandemic. Moreover, some studies reported that discrimination, punitive discipline, and family disengagement practices against nondominant students and families continued to be perpetuated in remote learning spaces making student learning even more problematic (see Paper 1, Cioè-Peña, 2022).

While acknowledging that the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated educational inequities, this paper argues that the COVID-19, as disruptive and challenging as it is, has also created a unique opportunity to remind educators that families and communities are important educational stakeholders and that building strong collaborative relationships with families and communities is essential for student learning. For this reason, I conducted this practitioner inquiry to reflect on my role as a multilingual immigrant early childhood educator who attempted to build partnerships with immigrant families during the COVID-19 pandemic. This partnership has allowed me to collaborate with 20 immigrant families and 42 emergent bilingual children from the Metro and Greater Boston Areas to design and implement a remote learning program called Home Connection. Through the Home Connection program, we formed a learning community and worked together to provide meaningful remote learning experiences for our children and support each other during the pandemic. In the first two papers of this dissertation, I have discussed the families' struggles, the challenges and successes in co-designing, implementing, and evaluating the Home Connection program with the families and community partners. In this last paper, I will to dive deeper into how we

collectively built culturally sustaining remote learning spaces that were centered on love, care, and solidarity and how this process rewarded me, as a teacher, with something larger than I expected. Using the theoretical frameworks of practitioner inquiry (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2015) and culturally sustaining pedagogy (Paris, 2012), I will examine my own teaching practices and will present what I have learned, or more specifically, what I, a teacher-researcher, have purposely sustained while working with immigrant families and teaching young bilingual children from diverse backgrounds during pandemic remote learning.

Theoretical Frameworks

Practitioner Inquiry

Practitioner inquiry is defined as systematic, intentional study conducted by educators of their own professional practices (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1993, 2009). It is grounded on the concept of "inquiry as stance" or "a critical habit of mind" that often pushes teachers to continuously question and critically examine the construction of knowledge (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1993, 2009, p. 121). Challenging mainstream education research that often centers around objective knowledge generated by outside researchers, most of whom are university-based, practitioner inquiry legitimizes teachers' insider knowledge generated in local contexts. The main purpose of this line of research is to establish a dialogic relationship between theory and practice, research

and action, conceptual and empirical, and to commit to the continuous search to improve practices (McAteer, 2013). Most importantly, it disrupts the hierarchy of knowledge generation and positions teachers as knowers and knowledge creators, whose agencies can drive positive changes, transform learning contexts, and advance educational equities (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009).

I entered this project as a bilingual early childhood teacher co-designing a remote learning curriculum with 20 immigrant families and teaching 43 young bilingual students in 10 continuous weeks via Zoom during the pandemic. Similar to other teachers, remote teaching was completely new to me. Working on this project required me to continuously learn, experiment, and reflect on my own teaching and revise instructional materials as much as I could to improve student and family engagement – the type of work that Cochran-Smith and Lytle (2015) referred to as “consequential but invisible, except to its immediate participants'' (p. 6).

Differing from other practitioner inquiries focusing mainly on single teachers’ classroom-based practices, this practitioner inquiry is nested within a community-based action research project. It expands the definition of “practitioners” or “educators” to include families as home-based educators. As a collective project, it is aligned with Cochran-Smith and Lytle’s definition of practitioner inquiry as “a way of knowing about teaching and what teachers and communities come to know when they build knowledge collaboratively… useful both locally (in the village) and more publicly (in the world)”

(2009, p. 3). Specifically, this project embraces both “local knowledge” generated from the Home Connection program and “public knowledge” shared by a learning community consisting of me, my students, and their families.

This practitioner inquiry, as part of a larger investigation, is also grounded on critical action research that emphasizes teachers’ transformative agency and connects to a larger sociopolitical agenda. Recognizing the disruptions and challenges of pandemic schooling, I worked alongside community organizers and family partners to implement the Home Connection program. The main goals of this program, as explained in Paper 2, include mitigating the negative effects of pandemic schooling and offering a more equitable remote learning program to better serve young bilingual children.

Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy

Rooted in the paradigm of resource-based research, culturally sustaining pedagogy “seeks to perpetuate and foster – to sustain – linguistic, literate, and cultural pluralism as part of the democratic project of schooling and as a needed response to demographic and social change” (Paris & Alim, 2014, p. 88). It sharply contrasts with the dominant deficit-based approaches in education that function to devalue, marginalize, and eradicate cultural linguistic practices and ways of living and being of nondominant communities (Smitherman, 1977; Valdés, 1996; Ladson-Billings, 2007; Gorski, 2011).

Legitimizing the diversity of students' repertoire of practices, culturally sustaining pedagogy "disrupts a schooling system centered on ideologies of White, middle class, monolingual, cisheteropatriarchal, able-bodied superiority" (Paris & Alim, 2017, p. 13). Through connecting and integrating students' diverse linguistic and cultural ways of learning and living into the daily curriculum, culturally sustaining pedagogy helps counter negative forces of social oppressions and foster students' sense of belonging.

Another aspect of culturally sustaining pedagogy is its resistance against cultural essentialism. Instead of seeing culture and language as static and unidirectional, culturally sustaining pedagogy embraces how communal linguistic and cultural practices change and evolve over time and pays close attention to how youth of Color contribute to that process.

Most importantly, culturally sustaining pedagogy calls for scholars of Color to take an "inward gaze" to critically examine our own communities' cultural practices. The purpose is to identify and eventually eradicate problematic residues of internalized social oppressions within each community. Paris and Alim (2017) pose the important question of "what if the goal of teaching and learning with youth of color was not ultimately to see how closely students could perform White middle-class norms, but rather was to explore, honor, extend, and at times, problematize their cultural practices and investments?" (p. 3). For this reason, culturally sustaining pedagogy also aims to

foster students' critical consciousness and build students' capacities to critique and address social injustices.

In this project, I used culturally sustaining pedagogy to guide curriculum design and pedagogical practices while partnering with immigrant families and bilingual children in the Home Connection program. Bearing in mind the struggles of these immigrant families and their needs to support their children's education in difficult times like the pandemic, I embarked on this pedagogical journey and asked how we, teachers and families, could possibly teach and learn together in a way that centers our cultural and linguistic diversity. The goals of this project were to explore and honor the students and families' diversity in language and culture and connect their home lives with the curriculum rather than extend and problematize communal practices. While recognizing the importance of taking the inward gaze, I had to prioritize what the Home Connection could achieve realistically within the constraints of pandemic remote learning.

Data Collection & Analysis

In this study, the main site of inquiry was the 10-week remote learning and implementation of the family engagement program called the Home Connection. The research participants included 20 immigrant families from diverse backgrounds and 42 young bilingual students from different school districts across the Metro and Greater

Boston Area (see Table 1. Family Profiles, Paper 1). During the program, each family received 10 Family Interactive Learning Boxes that included:

- A bilingual text-set with one central picture book and supplementary texts
- An integrated curriculum with detailed instructions, illustrations, and materials needed for the learning activities.
- The learning activities including reading discussion questions, vocabulary games, writing projects, arts & crafts projects, science experiments, and sensory play.

This integrated curriculum provided culturally and linguistically responsive reading materials and centralized play-based, hands-on activities to enhance students' learning engagement. The curriculum was also available in different language pairs to fit the needs of the family participants.

Procedure. The students participated in weekly online learning sessions with the teacher-researcher via Zoom. These sessions were conducted with flexibility in terms of scheduling, duration, structure, and language of instruction. These sessions were specifically designed to foster meaningful caregiver-child and sibling interactions. While most sessions were conducted with one single family at a time, some online learning sessions were in a small-group format to encourage family-family and peer interactions.

The structure of these learning sessions evolved overtime to suit the changing needs of each family.

Data Sources. Data sources included 137 video recordings of online learning sessions, written teacher reflections, and 125 photos of student learning artifacts (e.g., tinkering products, art works, writings, completed worksheets, etc.) taken and sent by the families. During these online learning sessions, short conversations with the families happened frequently and are considered short family interviews. These short interviews helped me gather family feedback to better understand student learning as situated within a family unit and in a home-based context. These short interviews also provide the family's continuous evaluation of the Home Connection program that helped me revise the curriculum, reflect on my teaching practices, and apply new teaching strategies throughout the program.

For the purpose of this inquiry, I selected four student cases: Cami (6 year-old), Hi (5 year-old), Khoa (5 year-old), and Zoe (6 year-old), to represent the diversity of students' linguistic (e.g., Spanish, Vietnamese, Cape Verdean, English), cultural backgrounds, home settings, and learning needs (see Table 1). While Cami lived in the Green Zone neighborhood, Hi, Khoa and Zoe lived in Red Zone neighborhoods where remote learning was the only option available for them during the first year of pandemic learning (see Paper 1). These students and their families were highly engaged with the Home Connection program, and their experiences represented the varied learning with

the curriculum and pedagogical practices used during the project. These students participated in all online learning sessions, communicated with me, the teacher, frequently, and sent a large number of photos of the children's learning artifacts. They also contributed greatly to the curriculum design process, which means many selected learning themes and texts were based on the students' learning interests, identities, and home lives.

Data Analysis. For each student case, I selected 2 video recordings of the online learning sessions. I selected the videos that represented both successful and disruptive learning moments while also taking into account engagement by family members and topics of interest that target particular cases. I re-watched and analyzed a total of 8 videos (video length: 45 - 60 min). During my first round of analysis, I paid close attention to the similarities among my student cases and focused on "successful learning moments" that were closely aligned with the culturally sustaining pedagogy framework and yielded high student and family engagement. I flagged these moments in the videos and used the short family interviews and photos of related learning artifacts to gather more information and seek more meaning for these learning moments.

In the second round of analysis, I focused on the uniqueness of each case. I looked for "disruptive learning moments" that forced me to redirect my teaching, make spontaneous changes, or completely put me at a deep pause. I flagged these moments

in the videos and used my written reflections to seek more meaning for these disruptive learning moments.

After two rounds of analysis, I organized these learning moments into larger categories and further considered themes related to what I, as a teacher, have learned from and sought to sustain through these learning moments, both successful and disruptive, across student cases and within each case. Within the scope of this paper, I will report on four themes that I think were salient in the findings and most useful for my own learning and for other teachers to consider while implementing culturally sustaining pedagogy in their practices.

Table 1

Student Cases

Student Cases	Age/Grade Level	Family's Country of Origin	Home Languages	Household size	Housing Arrangements	Mother's and Father's Occupations	Family Income
Cami	6 year old 1st grade	El Salvador	Spanish, English	5 family members (two siblings, two parents)	3-bedroom house	Homemaker/ Bioinformatics Specialist	$75,000-99,999
Hi	5 years old Kindergarten	Vietnam	Vietnamese	13 family members (two siblings, two parents, seven extended family members)	5-bedroom house	Manicurist/Driver	$20,000-29,999
Khoa	5 years old Kindergarten	Vietnam	Vietnamese	8 family members (two parents, two grandparents, three extended family members)	3-bedroom condo	Manicurist/ Factory Worker	$20,000-29,999
Zoe	6 years old 1st grade	Cape Verde/ Ecuador	Cape Verdean Spanish	4 family members (one sibling, two parents)	3-bedroom house	Patient Coordinator/ Realtor	$50,000-74,999

Focal Student 1: Cami

Cami was a 6-year-old first-grader, middle child, Spanish-English emergent bilingual student. She lived with two siblings and her parents in a 3-bedroom house located in a Green Zone neighborhood. Cami's mother, Camila, was the first family partner of the project making Cami the very first student to join the Home Connection program. Cami's father had a full-time job as a bioinformatic specialist that allowed him to work remotely and support the family financially. Cami's mother stayed at home full time and was available to provide care to all three children during the pandemic.

Cami was described by her mother as a quiet and shy child who did not make friends easily. She loved listening to music and played with her siblings, a 5-year-old and an 8-year-old. Pandemic remote learning was especially hard for her as the ESL language support that she previously received was no longer available. She showed very little interest in joining school-provided remote learning sessions. She often stayed idle and did not verbally participate in these sessions despite the fact that her mother was fully present to support her. As reported by her mother, Cami started to become irritated and cried more often during remote learning.

Focal Student 2: Hi

Hi was a 5-year-old Kindergartener, youngest child, Vietnamese-English emergent bilingual student. She lived with two siblings, her parents, and extended family members in a multigenerational 5-bedroom house in a Red Zone neighborhood. Her

parents worked full time as a manicurist (mother) and a driver (father). For that reason, the parents could not support Hi and her siblings with school-provided remote learning. Her older siblings, a 7-year-old and 9-year-old, could log into Zoom sessions independently, but Hi needed substantial support to use her iPad, navigate the learning schedule, and stay focused during school-provided learning sessions. Her siblings often helped Hi log into Zoom but could not stay to help her as they had their own learning sessions to attend.

Described as a very active child with a great imagination, Hi started her first formal schooling experience during the pandemic. She often got teased by her brother and sister for not being able to speak English, which made her very nervous about Kindergarten in the first place. The lack of parental support and language support made remote learning even more difficult for Hi. She did not fully understand what was going on in these sessions and could not fully participate. Her parents often received phone calls from her school complaining that Hi sometimes slept during sessions or left the online sessions without notice.

Focal Student 3: Khoa

Khoa was a 5-year-old Kindergartener, Vietnamese-English emergent bilingual student. He lived with his parents in a multigenerational household with 8 people in a 3-bedroom condo in a Red Zone neighborhood. Similar to Hi, the pandemic school year of 2020-2021 was Khoa's first year of formal schooling. Before joining the Home Connection

program, Khoa's parents lost their jobs as a manicurist (mother) and a factory worker (father). The family could not afford to pay rent and had to move to their sister's house. Most of Khoa's family members got infected with the COVID-19 virus and Khoa's grandfather passed away during the pandemic. This adversity took a hard toll on Khoa's family and affected his learning experiences.

Described as a very active child who loved cars and Marvel superheroes, Khoa did not engage well with school-provided remote learning sessions. These sessions were conducted fully in English without language support that made it extremely hard for Khoa to understand, hence, unable to participate. In addition, he was not used to sitting and listening for a long period of time. Even though his mother was fully present to support him during school-provided online learning sessions, these sessions were described as "terrible" and often turned into a "big fight" to keep him seated.

Focal Student 4: Zoe

Zoe was a 6-year-old first grader, Spanish-Cape Verdean-English multilingual student. She lived with a sibling and parents in a 3-bedroom house in a Red Zone neighborhood. Zoe was part of the METCO program and got bussed to a different district pre-pandemic. During the pandemic, Zoe's parents decided that Zoe would join a fully remote learning program provided by the same school district to avoid taking the bus.

Described as an active and social child, Zoe made friends easily and loved playing with her friends in school. Unlike other student cases in this study, Zoe engaged quite

well with school-provided online learning sessions in the beginning of the school year. With her mother's support, Zoe attended these sessions diligently, listened carefully, and often raised her hands to contribute her ideas. However, Zoe started to show less interest in these sessions as the semester progressed. Zoe quickly realized that she did not get to speak with her friends during these sessions. In addition, there were a few times Zoe got disciplined by her classroom teacher for talking to her mother and/or seeking help from her mother during remote learning. These incidents completely demotivated Zoe and damaged the home-school connections.

Findings

In this section, I will present the findings of what I have learned from and sought to sustain in the Home Connection program. Emerging themes from both successful and disruptive learning moments have shown that, as a multilingual early childhood teacher, I have learned to (i) **affirm diversity and pluralism** in relation to my students' learning interests, lived experiences, identities, and home lives. I have learned to (ii) **foster intergenerational connections and collective learning**. I have learned to (iii) recognize my students' **embodied learning through multiple spaces** across family homes. Most importantly, I have learned to (iv) **embrace healing-based teaching** that helps foster collective healing within this learning community. I will provide more details for each

finding with examples from my curriculum design, my pedagogical approaches, and my reflections of the learning moments.

Affirm Diversity and Pluralism

In this project, I worked with a racially, socioeconomically, culturally, and linguistically diverse group of immigrant families and bilingual students. To meet my students' learning needs, I purposefully implemented culturally sustaining pedagogy to affirm their diverse cultural and linguistic identities and practices, and connect their home lives and home cultures with the curriculum.

Specifically, I selected and used a variety of picture books for the learning boxes that reflected the diversity of students and families. These picture books needed to be aligned with and relevant to:

(i) the students' learning interests,

(ii) the students' racial/ethnic identities, and

(iii) the students' home lives.

For more details of the selected books and their connections to each student case, please refer to Table 2.

It is important to note that most of these picture books were not available in different languages. I worked together with the family partners to translate the texts

and included the translated texts with the hard copies of the books when sending them out to the families.

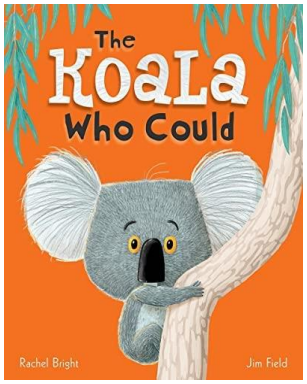
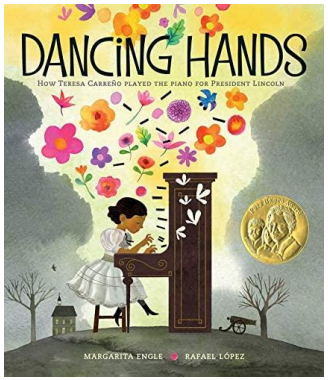
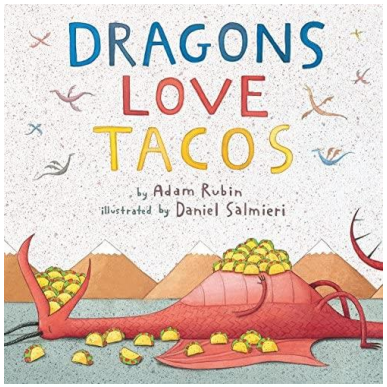
The design of the learning boxes and the pandemic remote learning setting set certain constraints for the curriculum design process. I had to prioritize using versatile texts with multiple themes that allowed me to develop full units of study cutting across subject matters and at the same time would be of interest to young bilingual children across grade levels.

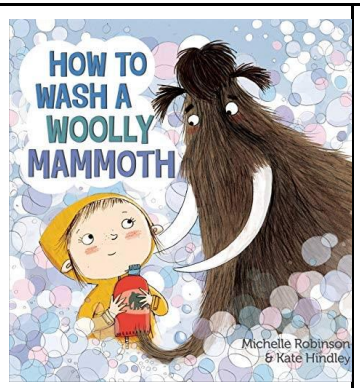
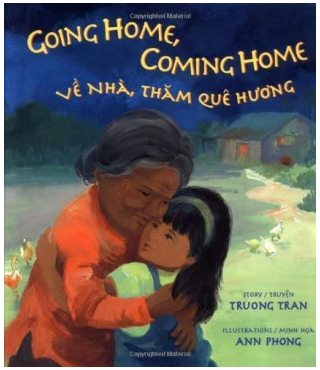
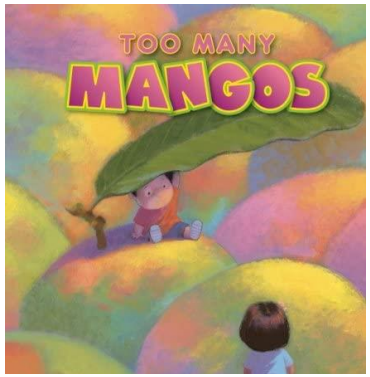
While attending closely to differences among families and students, I also tried to find the common threads across homes and communities. For example, I used picture books that center on home-based practices such as shopping for groceries (*The Good Egg*), cooking and sharing food (*Dragons Love Tacos*, *Too Many Mangos*), growing plants and trees, gift giving and receiving (*When Grandma Gives You a Lemon Tree*). These stories also embrace intergenerational relationships (*When Grandma Gives You a Lemon Tree*) and community building (*Too Many Mangos*).

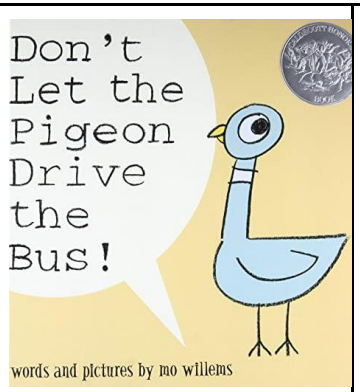
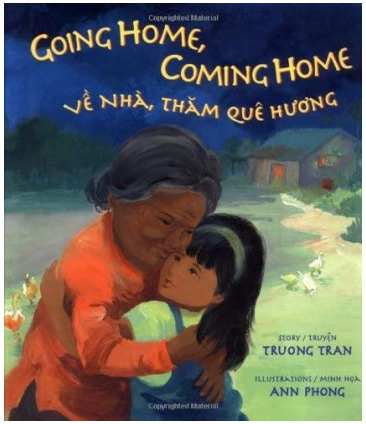
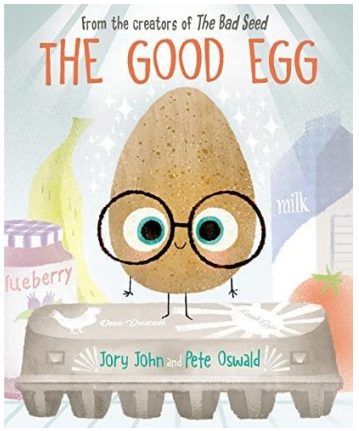
Overall, I have learned that using high-interest, culturally and linguistically responsive, and home-connected texts helped me establish a good foundation to effectively engage my students and families during the remote learning sessions.

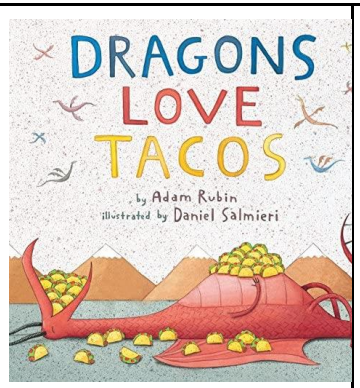
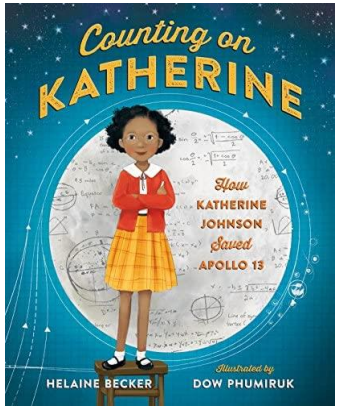
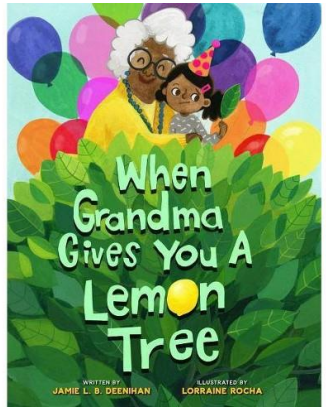
Table 2

Sample Books and Connections

Student Cases	Learning Interest	Racial/ Ethnic Identities	Home Lives	Connection to Learning Interests	Connection to Identities	Connection to Home Lives
Cami	Animal stories Koalas Tacos Music	*Latinx* *El Salvadoran - American*	Shopping for groceries Cooking and sharing food Growing plants and trees Gift giving and receiving Intergenerational relationships Community building	 ***The Koala Who Could*** *(Writer: Rachel Bright, Illustrator: Jim Field)* This story is about Kevin, a koala, who loves everyday to be the same and prefers staying on his tree all the time. The ground down below seems to be a frightening place to him. One day, he is forced to change and learns to embrace all the joys that come with trying something new.	 ***Dancing Hands: How Teresa Carreño Played the Piano for President Lincoln*** *(Writer: Margarita Engle, Illustrator: Rafael López)* This book is about a famous pianist, Teresa Carreño and her key life events including moving from Venezuela to the United States, coping with a new place, going through the Civil War, and growing famous as the talented Piano Girl who could play anything from a folk song to a sonata. At the end of the story, she was invited by President Abraham Lincoln to play at the White House.	 ***Dragons Loves Tacos*** *(Writer: Adam Rubin, Illustrator: Daniel Salmieri)* This book is about dragons who love tacos but cannot eat spicy salsa. They are invited to a party that serves buckets and buckets of tacos. Unfortunately, where there are tacos, there is also salsa. And when a dragon accidentally eats spicy salsa, it starts breathing fire.

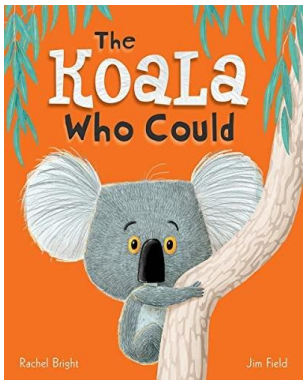
Hi	Animal stories Funny stories Mangoes Pets	*Asian Vietnamese - American*		 ***How to Wash a Wooly Mammoth*** *(Write: Michelle Robinson)* This story is a step-by-step guide to successfully clean up a wooly mammoth.	 ***Going Home, Coming Home*** *(Writer: Truong Tran, Illustrator: Ann Phong)* This book is about Ami Chi taking a trip to Vietnam. To her parents, Vietnam is still home-a home they haven't seen since they left during the war. To Ami Chi, Vietnam may be nothing like America, but this strange place still feels familiar. Ami Chi finds that sometimes, you can travel farther than you ever thought possible and still find yourself at home.	 ***Too Many Mangos*** *(Writer: Tammy Paikai, Illustrator: Don Robinson)* This book is the story of two young Hawaiians, Kama and Nani, who help their grandpa pick mangos from the giant mango tree. They pick too many mangos that they need to load up the wagon and share the tasty treats with other friends and neighbors in their community.

Khoa	Animal stories Funny stories Cars Marvel superheroes	*Asian Vietnamese - American*		 ***Don't Let the Pigeon Drive the Bus*** *(Author: Mo Willems)* When a bus driver takes a break from his route, a very unlikely volunteer springs up to take his place-a pigeon! But you've never met one like this before. As he pleads, wheedles, and begs his way through the book, children will love being able to answer back and decide his fate.	 ***Going Home, Coming Home*** *(Writer: Truong Tran, Illustrator: Ann Phong)*	 ***The Good Egg*** *(Writer: Jory John, Illustrator: Pete Oswald)* The book is about a good egg living with other not so good eggs who often behave badly. The good egg starts to crack from all the pressure of feeling like he has to be perfect all the time. He decides to leave and practice self-care.

Zoe	Animal stories Funny stories Cooking Math	*Afro-Latinx* *Cape-Verdean-Ecuadorian*		 ***Dragons Loves Tacos*** *(Writer: Adam Rubin, Illustrator: Daniel Salmieri)*	 ***Counting on Katherine: How Katherine Johnson Saved Apollo 13*** *(Writer: Helaine Becker, Illustrator: Dow Phumiruk)* This book is about Katherine Johnson, an African-American mathematician who worked for NASA during the space race. As a child, Katherine Johnson loved to count. She counted the steps on the road, the number of dishes and spoons she washed in the kitchen sink, everything! Boundless, curious, and excited by calculations, young Katherine longed to know as much as she could about math, about the universe.	 ***When Grandma Gives You a Lemon Tree*** *(Writer: Jamie L.B. Deenihan, Illustrator: Lorraine Rocha)* This book is about how a child is surprised and a bit disappointed to receive a lemon tree from Grandma for her birthday. This clever story, complete with a recipe for lemonade, celebrates the pleasures of patience, hard work, nature, community . . . and putting down the electronic devices just for a while.

During remote learning sessions, all four focal students quickly recognized that the selected books were closely connected to them and these recognitions were often affirmed by their mothers. For example, during the session on the book *The Koala Who Could*, Cami showed a lot of excitement working on the key project of making the koala house. She kept saying that koalas were her favorite animal and that she had seen one in the zoo before. Cami's mother asked me "*how do you know that she loves koalas?*", and I said: "*I learned from talking to her and I noticed that she often drew koala pictures at home*" (see Figure 1).

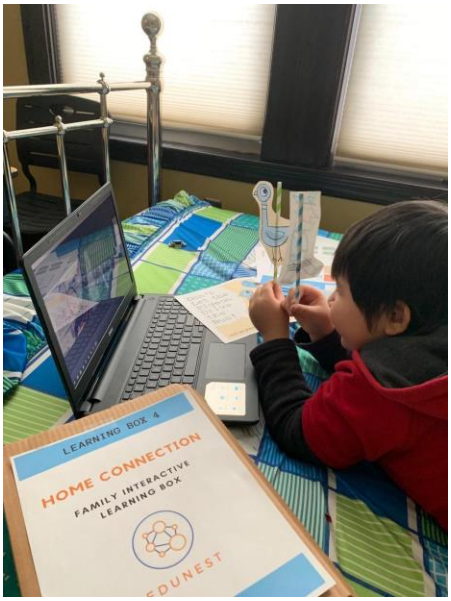
Figure 1
Cami's Koala Drawing - The Koala Who Could



Similarly, Zoe loved seeing the main character with big Afro hair on the cover of *When My Grandma Gives Me a Lemon Tree*. Her mom commented during the learning

session that "*this girl looks exactly like you, she has hair like you*" that made Zoe feel very confident while working on the key project. Hi got to showcase her knowledge of how to choose the best mangos and named most of the tropical fruits by herself when we learned the book *Too Many Mangos*. Khoa became much more engaged with the theme of transportation given his interests in cars and buses and could work on the bus design independently in *Don't Let the Pigeon Drive the Bus* (see Figure 2).

Figure 2
Khoa and His Bus Design



Learning about and bringing students' interests and lived experiences to the center of learning and teaching certainly pays off. These learning sessions often took a longer time to design and implement than usual and yielded much higher student engagement.

To center the learning sessions around the students' linguistic strengths and leverage on their existing family resources, I worked together with the mothers or other language brokers within the families such as older siblings to honor the use of home languages. I often repeated my instruction in both English and home languages (Vietnamese or Spanish) to help students access the content easily and foster bilingual vocabulary building. To support bilingual students across all learning sessions, I also incorporated a lot of visual aids such as photos, videos, and used the Whiteboard function to draw pictures to provide step-by-step instruction. These are research-based teaching strategies that aim to support bilingual students.

When I worked with Vietnamese-speaking students like Hi and Khoa, I could leverage my own bilingual language skills to communicate with them in Vietnamese. When I worked with Spanish-speaking students like Cami and Zoe, I always made sure that I had translation apps opened on my iPad, and translated all key vocabulary into Spanish beforehand. Even though it created some challenges for me as a teacher, these sessions often reminded me that similar to my students, I was, too, a language learner. That, in return, allowed the families to step up and take on more responsibilities as home educators and allowed the students to gain more autonomy as learners and experts in their own language. Spanish-speaking students sometimes corrected my Spanish or helped me learn new vocabulary which resulted in their linguistic strengths being recognized and affirmed during the program.

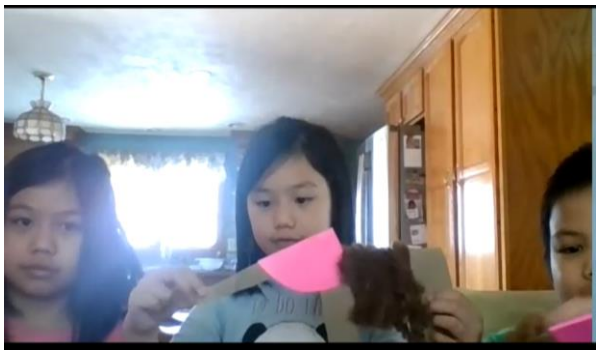
Foster Intergenerational Connections and Collective Learning

Working in the Home Connection program also taught me the importance of fostering intergenerational connections and collective learning, which is certainly an essential part of the curriculum design and implementation of the Home Connection program. While the mother-child dyad seems to be the most common pattern across student cases, learning with siblings happened most frequently and engagement with other family members such as grandparents also happened occasionally (See Figure 3).

Figure 3
Family Interactive Learning

The participating families had multiple children at different grade levels and some shared the living spaces with immediate and extended family members. All four focal students, for example, had siblings. For that reason, the design of the learning boxes took into account the diversity of family settings and contains learning materials that can be shared among family members including multiple activities suitable for all children. The children from each household engaged in the same key projects together but they took on different tasks. For example, in the online learning session of *How to Wash a Wooly Mammoth*, Hi, her older sister (6 year-old), and older brother (9 year-old) worked collaboratively on the project of building the mammoth habitat (see Figure 4). They discussed and decided on different tasks so that Hi and her sister would make origami mammoths while her brother would cut the box and make bushes with craft papers. In working together, they also relied on each other to complete the project. For example, Hi had not learned to use scissors skillfully yet, so she needed her sister's help in cutting papers. Hi's sister could not figure out which parts of the mammoths would go together and Hi assisted her with that. Sometimes the children asked for help from their aunt, who was around in the same kitchen space, to gather necessary materials such as scissors and glue sticks.

Figure 4.
Hi and Her Siblings Working Together.



These online learning sessions were often very interactive and filled with students' laughter and excitement that encouraged family members to participate. There were many instances of family members entering the "learning space". If I saw them on the screen, I would encourage the students to talk to them or ask for their help if needed. For example, in one learning session on *Two Many Mangos*, Hi and her siblings did not know the Vietnamese words for 'mangosteens', they would turn and ask their grandmother who was cooking in the kitchen. While making a lemon tree card for the learning box *When Grandma Gives Me a Lemon Tree*, Zoe told me that her grandmother was visiting and that she was in the kitchen. Zoe's mother reminded us that Zoe's grandmother's birthday was coming up. At that moment, we decided to change our project into creating a birthday card for Zoe's grandmother which made the learning session very engaging and meaningful for the whole family. Small collective learning

moments like these examples demonstrate how I was able to establish a stronger intergenerational connection between the students with their family members and honor the students' home spaces.

Recognize Embodied Learning through Multiple Spaces

Another key finding from the project is that I have learned to recognize my student's embodied learning through multiple spaces in their family homes. Teaching students online via Zoom can sometimes give the illusion that learning only happens within the constraints of what can be seen on screen. However, my students showed me that there were many learning moments and possibilities for home-based learning spaces. For example, Khoa learned on his bed in the shared bedroom, Zoe learned with her mother at the kitchen table, and Hi and Cami learned with their siblings at dining tables (Figure 5). The students often did not sit still and stay on screen all the time as could be expected given their developmental ages. Seeing the potential of home-based learning spaces, I often encouraged my students to move around their homes to gather learning materials, to find resources, to get their stuffed animals and other favorite toys, and family photos to show me.

There was one time Hi and her siblings went to another room for 10 minutes to look at their family photos hung on the wall and count their family members. I could hear their voices in the background, counting and exchanging stories about each family

member, but I could not see the students on screen. These moments reminded me that learning is embodied and indeed happens in a diversity of spaces and interacting within spaces plays an important role in student learning.

Being aware of the students' home learning spaces helped me design the curriculum that connected to the students' homes and encouraged them to use home-based resources to support their learning. For example, while working on a science experiment of making a green dragon breathing bubbles as in *Dragons Love Tacos*, Cami's family used vinegar and dishwashing soaps found in their kitchen. To figure out if they could adopt a mammoth as a pet as depicted in the book *How to Wash a Woolly Mammoth*, Cami and her siblings measured their front door and bedroom door and evaluated if they were large enough to fit a mammoth (see Figure 5).

Figure 5.
Cami Measuring Her Bedroom Door.

Even when the students and their families worked on the same project, they interacted and used the materials in their home spaces in different and creative ways. For example, when my students prepared for a spaceship launch related to the book *Counting on Katherine*, they needed a large enough space for their balloon spaceships to blast off from one corner to another. Cami's family moved the project to the garden, Khoa's family used the chairs found in their basement to set up their station and all the projects were a success (see Figure 6).

Figure 6
Launch Spaceships at homes

Embrace Healing-Centered Teaching and Learning

The last important theme that I was able to identify in this project is how I have learned to embrace healing-centered teaching and learning while working with my students. I will zoom into the case of Khoa to illustrate this finding. Khoa's family had to

deal with multiple adversities during the pandemic: both parents lost their jobs and the family could not afford rent, which forced them to move out of their family home and live with their parents and their sister's family. While joining the program, Khoa's family members got infected with the COVID-19 virus and Khoa's grandfather passed away at that time. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, the family could not organize a traditional Vietnamese funeral that often involves a large gathering of family and community members to say their last goodbye to the deceased. Instead, the family organized home-based praying sessions that happened for days. During that time, Khoa often participated independently in online learning sessions with me without his mother accompanying and supporting him. There was one session when we learned about the book *The Good Egg*, Khoa's favorite book. We were discussing the topic of emotions and Khoa was drawing different facial expressions on the plastic eggs to show their emotions. Suddenly, he stopped. He showed me the sad face on the egg and said to me: "*Ms. Alisha, my grandfather died. They sang and it was noisy. They cried. They are sad like the good egg.*" I asked him: "*Who were sad?*". He said: "*My mom and my grandmother*". [translated from Vietnamese]. At that moment, I was dealing with my own loss and Khoa's words suddenly forced me to stop teaching and acknowledge that aspect of my life and our shared experience. This moment put me in a deep pause. I looked at Khoa on the screen and saw him not only as a student but a child whose family went through a whirlwind of loss and grief. I finally said to Khoa: "*My grandfather passed*

away too. I am sad too. Like the good egg. What do you think we should do when we are very very sad?", and Khoa answered me: "*We cried*" [translated from Vietnamese].

After this session, I thought of how I could help Khoa and support his family's healing process. I decided to engage other families and students participating in the Home Connection program to create cards and send gifts to Khoa's family to help them move through this difficult time. By carefully listening to my student and validating his experience, I formed a trusting relationship with him that strongly impacted Khoa's learning experiences. As our work together continued, Khoa made good progress and became more and more independent and engaged through all learning sessions.

Disruptive teaching moments like this remind me, a teacher, that the pandemic is a traumatic experience for all of us and that healing-centered pedagogy is essential for pandemic teaching and learning. I was not only teaching content to my students but also creating and sharing a communal space with them and their families through the Home Connection program. In our sessions, we laughed and cried, we danced, sang, and shared stories in different languages, and honored different home lives and cultural practices. Working in the Home Connection somehow fostered my own healing. As shared by the participating families, seeing their children experience joyful learning certainly gave them hope and made their days much less difficult to bear. In short, as a learning community, we entered the path to collective healing through this program.

Discussion

Partnering with immigrant families and teaching bilingual students in the Home Connection program have taught me many things. I have learned to affirm the diversity and pluralism in my students' learning interests, lived experiences, identities, and home lives. Guided by culturally sustaining pedagogy, I selected suitable texts and designed learning activities that were aligned with my students' interests and closely connected to their home lives and cultures. The program enhanced the students' engagement during online learning sessions while also provided many opportunities for learning that were content rich and developmentally appropriate. Moreover, my pedagogical approaches were grounded in pluralism: all instructional materials and instructions were given in multiple languages and multimodality (i.e., the use of visuals and sensory-based activities) was at the heart of all learning sessions. However, all of these "teacher moves" would not have made the lessons come to life without the great help of the families and home educators, who provided support to both the students and me. Working with linguistically and culturally diverse families and students helped me adopt a learner stance and created a co-learning space for me and my students, similar to what Martinez and I (2020) wrote: "when students' language and culture are valued and when students are respected as experts for their linguistic and cultural backgrounds, educators and students become co-learners and co-owners in learning and teaching". It certainly disrupts the traditional model of teacher-centered classroom by fostering

student autonomy. It is important to note that many of the successful teaching moments were largely determined by students' input and their strong influence on the curriculum since they had control over the key projects. This type of pedagogy sent a very different message to the students that their voices matter and their ideas were important drivers of the learning experiences. To these young bilingual children who have been marginalized and silenced in their online classrooms, having their voices and ideas centered helped foster a "deeply held sense of identity and social belonging" (Bucholtz, 2017, p. 45).

Another lesson from the program is the importance of intergenerational connections and collective learning. While traditional schooling approaches often encourage home-school separation and devalue families' involvement and engagement, I took a different approach with the Home Connection program. I acknowledged the rare opportunity created by the pandemic that allowed us a glimpse of our students' home lives and recognized families as home educators. Home-based remote learning creates multiple opportunities to foster intergenerational connections and relationships, which is closely aligned with the cultural ways of living and being of many immigrant families. In addition, students got to learn together with their siblings, which created a robust interactive and relational learning environment. Intergenerational learning helps my students see themselves as part of their families' and communities' traditional ways of knowing and being, see their grandparents, parents, and siblings as teachers and co-

learners, and see their homes as potential spaces for knowledge generation and circulation. If educators see cultural practices as a continuum filled with "elder epistemologies" (Holmes and Gonzalez, 2017) and youth cultures (Alim, 2011), then we can recognize "the necessary intergenerationality of culturally sustaining pedagogy" and "push for teaching and learning contexts which include multiple generations" (Alim *et al.*, 2011, p. 266).

While working with my students across family homes, I have also learned to embrace my students' embodied learning through multiple spaces during remote learning. This finding not only disrupts the false Cartesian dichotomy of mind versus body but also confirms multiple theories of early learning which posit that children learn through multiple senses (Adams, 2016), and that bodily moments and sensorimotor abilities are connected with learning (Anderson, 2003). In addition, this finding aligns with research that has shown how home spaces can generate multiple learning opportunities for young bilingual children from immigrant backgrounds (Li, 2009; Reese, 2009). Within the Home Connection program, the students' home spaces like bedrooms, kitchens, dining tables, and living rooms became learning spaces with valuable resources for students to explore family cultural practices (e.g., what food we cook and share, what gifts we give and receive), learn family histories (e.g., who the family members are and their stories), and interact with others (e.g., gardens are where we play, dining tables are where we eat and learn together). In the strangest way, the

pandemic creates this rare learning opportunity for an educator like me to see the richness of my students' home lives and to critically look at space as a crucial part of learning design.

Finally, I have learned to embrace healing-centered teaching and learning through sharing loss and grief with my students and their families. I have come to realize that healing is always at the heart of culturally sustaining pedagogy. The framework acknowledges not only bilingual immigrant children of Colors' individual trauma caused by multiple social oppressions (Crenshaw, 2017) but their historical and intergenerational trauma (Brave Heart et al., 2011) caused by land dispossession, dislocation, racism, language loss, and linguistic violence. Hence, healing-centered teaching means focusing on students' strengths and resilience while restoring the values of their identities and their communities' cultural ways of learning and being. As explained by Ginwright (2018), "a healing centered approach is holistic involving culture, spirituality, civic action and collective healing". By offering an alternative learning space not centering "ideologies of White, middle class, monolingual, cisheteropatriarchal, able-bodied superiority" (Paris & Alim, 2017, p. 13), the Home Connection program allows me, my students, and their families to collectively heal and from there, to dream and hope in the midst of chaos.

Conclusion

As an immigrant early childhood educator, this practitioner inquiry has confirmed the importance of holding on and dreaming with culturally sustaining pedagogy while working with families in crisis. Culturally sustaining pedagogy is not a “nice-to-have“ package for teachers to pick up or randomly sprinkle in when we have extra time in the classroom. Culturally sustaining teaching is not for showcasing how “diverse” students and families are or how we, teachers, briefly celebrate these students and families during heritage months. Taking a culturally sustaining stance is an approach that is integrated and relevant to everyday teaching and the lessons we design and implement centering the lived experiences of our students and families. Moreover, I argue that this pedagogical stance is a prerequisite for good teaching and learning to happen. It certainly requires deliberate learning, systematic planning and implementation, and continuous reflection from teachers. During challenging times like the COVID-19 pandemic, our collective struggles constantly remind us how connected and interdependable we are and how we need to lean on each other. That means as teachers we must prioritize establishing trusting relationships with students and families, affirming our students and families’ cultural ways of learning and living, and implementing healing-centered practices that aim to support our students’ and families’ mental health and wellbeing. Teaching in this way, in return, helps us reclaim the humanistic aspect of the profession and gives us hope in the most difficult times.

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SECTION V. CONCLUSION

This 3-paper dissertation presents the pandemic-related stories of 20 immigrant families and 42 young bilingual children from the Metro and Greater Boston Areas. The first paper used sequential mixed methods to provide an in-depth account of how a diverse group of immigrant families coped with the conditions of the pandemic and experienced their children's school-provided remote learning. The findings of this study revealed multiple and unique challenges that these immigrant families faced during the pandemic. The pandemic certainly added the last drops of severe adversity to the already full cup of pre-existing challenges and problems for these immigrant families including inequities in economic, housing, and healthcare services. Findings also showed that there were structural barriers hindering the establishment of meaningful home-school connections during the COVID-19 pandemic including:

- the asymmetric power relationships between school personnel and immigrant families
- the lack of a resilient support system for immigrant families, and
- the oppressive practices of schooling on young bilingual children.

In addition to existing social and educational inequities, families experienced schools as a hostile environment even when moving to online learning spaces, which resulted in the families reporting frustration, struggles, and withdrawal.

The second paper employed a transformative mixed methods model to address the immediate needs of the immigrant families and to provide meaningful learning experiences for their young bilingual children during the pandemic. In this study, I collaborated with 3 community partners and 20 immigrant families to collectively design a family engagement and home learning program called the Home Connection. Focusing on the design, implementation, and evaluation of the Home Connection program, the findings from this study demonstrated how equitable family and community engagement played a crucial role in building a resilient support system for immigrant families and enhancing the educational experiences of their children. Within the constraints of the pandemic, this study confirms that establishing reciprocal partnerships with immigrant families makes it possible to create educational experiences rooted in the assets and needs of immigrant students during times of crisis.

The third paper is a practitioner inquiry reflecting on my teaching practices and showing how young bilingual children actively engaged with a culturally sustaining remote learning curriculum. The findings revealed what I, a teacher-researcher, have learned and purposely sought to sustain while working with immigrant families and teaching young bilingual children from diverse backgrounds during pandemic remote learning. These lessons included practices for:

- Affirming the diversity and pluralism in students' learning interests, cultural and linguistic practices, racial/ethnic identities, and their home lives
- Fostering intergenerational connections and collective learning within family homes and communities
- Recognizing embodied learning through multiple spaces across family homes and understanding space as an essential part of learning design
- Embracing healing-centered teaching and learning during times of crisis
- These families and children have taught me to recognize different facets of learning and ignited my hope for learning possibilities during the pandemic.

Implications

By documenting the struggle, resistance, and solidarity of the immigrant families and their young bilingual children, this dissertation has some implications for policy making, education research, and teaching practices. The findings of the first paper help inform policymakers, school leaders, and educators about the unique and diverse challenges that some immigrant families from the Metro and Greater Boston Area faced during the pandemic. It is important for educational stakeholders to recognize these

challenges and work towards creating more equitable immigration policies and educational practices and for building a stronger support system for immigrant families and young bilingual students.

The second paper highlights the importance of family and community engagement in creating an equitable learning community and supporting diverse needs of immigrant families and bilingual students. The Home Connection program shows how a learning ecology could potentially be formed in the most difficult time with limited resources if we prioritized establishing trusting relationships with families and communities. In addition, the second paper presents a counter-narrative about immigrant families: these families were not merely participants in a funded research program or receivers of services, but they were active social agents whose hopes and dreams for their children's education motivated them to find ways to collaborate in fostering a home-based learning environment for their children. Seeing them as co-educators and co-facilitators of home-based learning transcends the idea of schooling as not only bounded within the classroom walls and knowledge as not only generated in formal learning contexts.

Lastly, the third paper provides concrete examples of curriculum design and pedagogical practices showing how the powerful combination of family engagement and culturally sustaining pedagogy could potentially help enhance student engagement in remote learning and beyond. The findings suggest that we must prioritize establishing

meaningful relationships with families and adopt a learner stance to acquire knowledge about bilingual students' learning interests, home lives, and cultural and linguistic funds of knowledge. Incorporating these valuable resources to the process of curriculum design and implementation would potentially help teachers create joyful and culturally relevant learning experiences for young bilingual learners and foster their sense of belonging.

Dissertation Limitations

This dissertation involved a small sample of family participants from the Greater Boston Area where home quarantine restrictions were dependable to state regulations and remote learning practices were determined by each school district. While the findings of Paper 1 provide a glimpse to these families' lives and the challenges that they faced during the pandemic, these findings should not be generalized to other immigrant families living in the Greater Boston Area or other contexts.

It is important to recognize that the Home Connection program had successfully addressed basic needs to the 20 family participants and provided joyful culturally sustaining learning experiences for 42 child participants. However, the Home Connection curriculum and remote learning practices might be difficult to replicate to in-person teaching in different classroom contexts. The curriculum content of the Home Connection program was designed based on specific student cases, hence, should not

be used as a one-size-fits-all curriculum for all bilingual students. Similar to any curriculum, the Home Connection curriculum should be revised according to different groups of students and families.

Considering that the researcher-educator is a seasoned early childhood teacher who also designed the learning curriculum, had specific training in bilingual education, and was strongly supported by the family participants, the researcher-educator had multiple advantages in implementing the Home Connection program and directly teaching the bilingual students. Teachers who would like to adopt the Home Connection curriculum for classroom use might need to consider multiple factors that impact teaching and learning such as meaningful family and community engagement, culturally sustaining curriculum design and pedagogical practices to address students' different learning needs in specific learning contexts.

Appendix A. Recruitment Flyer

Lynch School of Education and Human Development
Department of Teaching, Curriculum, and Society

FAMILY INTERACTIVE LEARNING DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC

This study is designed to understand the challenges of quarantine remote learning and to provide interactive learning resources to support immigrant families with young bilingual children

LOOKING FOR IMMIGRANT FAMILIES WITH YOUNG BILINGUAL CHILDREN FROM 5-8 YEARS OLD

Please contact Alisha Nguyen at ***alisha.nguyen@bc.edu*** *or* ***832-846-4526***

Appendix B. Family Information Packet

PROGRAM AT A GLANCE

HOME CONNECTION

Home Connection is interactive learning program designed to support immigrant families with young bilingual children from 5 to 9 years old. The program aims to provide meaningful learning experiences with culturally relevant, linguistically responsive, and developmentally appropriate materials for young bilingual learners. Taking the thematic approach and following the integrated curriculum model, the Home Connection program fosters young bilingual learners' creativity and imagination, problem solving and critical thinking skills, language development and most importantly, collaboration and teamwork through family interactive activities.

INTERACTIVE LEARNING BOXES

Interactive learning boxes contain selected picture books, supplementary texts, weekly lesson plans, and learning materials for STEAMES (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, Math, English Language Arts and Sensory Play) activities. Interactive learning boxes are specifically designed to fit students' interests, learning styles, and academic levels and to encourage interactive learning experiences among family members.

ONLINE LEARNING SESSIONS

Online learning sessions are provided weekly to offer extra support with theme-based discussion, vocabulary learning, academic writing, and STEAMES projects. Family members are strongly encouraged to join the online sessions with young children. Each session is scheduled with flexibility depending on family schedules. Each session takes 30-40 minutes to complete.

CURRICULUM AT A GLANCE

READING

Central Text

Picture Books: Interest-powered, culturally relevant, and linguistically responsive

Supplementary Texts

Non-fiction Books: procedures, guidelines, reports, explanatory texts, historical biographies

Other genres: poetry, plays, movie scripts, etc.

LANGUAGE ARTS

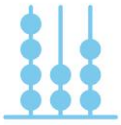
Vocabulary

Vocabulary cards

Genre-Based Writing

Procedure, Report, Explanation, Argument, Historical Biography, Personal Recount, Fictional Narrative, Poetry

STEM



STEM

Connected Math

theme-based, problem-centered, and meaningful

Tinkering

curiosity-driven, theme-based, and collaborative

MOTOR SKILLS

Arts & Crafts

Process Art

Child-directed, choice-driven, and celebrates the experience of discovery

SENSORY PLAY

Sensory Play

Includes activities that stimulates young children's various senses: touch, smell, taste, movement, balance, sight and hearing.

Appendix C. Sample Learning Box

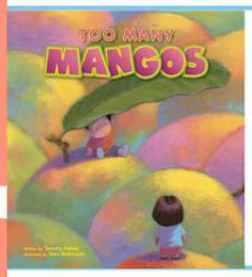
EDUNEST

HOME CONNECTION

Weekly Lesson Plan

PREPARED BY ALISHA NGUYEN

READING



Central Text
Too Many Mangoes (by Tammy Paikai)

Supplementary Texts
Hawaii (Source: National Geographic Kids)
Volcano Facts (Source: National Geographic Kids)

LANGUAGE ARTS

Vocabulary
Vocabulary Flashcards

Genre-Based Writing
Reports & Explanations

MATHS OR SCIENCE

Math
Number Operations, Multiplication, Fractions

Science
Volcano Experiment

MOTOR SKILLS

Art & Craft
Leis (Flower Garlands)

SENSORY PLAY

Sensory Play
Island in a Jar

Appendix D. Sample Curriculum

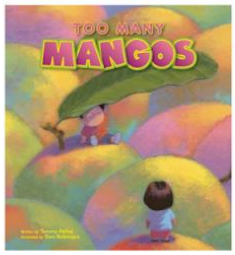
EDUNEST

HOME CONNECTION

Weekly Lesson Plan

PREPARED BY ALISHA NGUYEN

READING



Central Text

Too Many Mangoes (by Tammy Paikai)

Supplementary Texts

Hawaii (Source: National Geographic Kids)
Volcano Facts (Source: National Geographic Kids)

Vocabulary

aloha, mahalo, macadamia nut, shoyu, li hing powder

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

What does Grandpa ask Kama and Nani to do with the mangos?

How do Kama and Nani carry all the mangos?

What will Aunty Pua make with the mangos? What does she give Kama and Nani?

What does Mami give Kama and Nani for the mangos?

How about Mr. Wong? What will he make with the mangos? What does he give Kama and Nani?

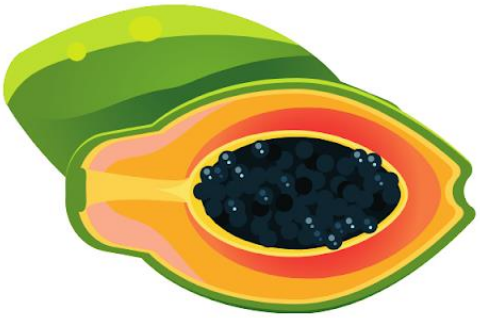
What happen when Kama and Nani gives away all the mangos?

What happen at the end of the story?

What can we share with our neighbors and our community?

MATCHING GAME

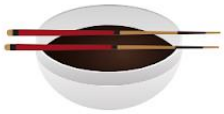
BANANA	PAPAYA
GUAVA	LYCHEE



In Hawaii, **LI HING POWDER** is often sprinkled on tropical fruits such as pineapple and papaya. Li hing mui powder is made from dried salted plums. It has both a sweet and sour taste with a hint of saltiness. Li hing mui was brought to the islands by way of China in the early 1900s.

ALOHA: Commonly used as a greeting and farewell, both hello and goodbye. It is also synonymous with love and good feelings.

MAHALO: a Hawaiian word meaning thanks, gratitude, admiration, praise, esteem, regards, or respects.



SHOYU: Japanese style soy sauces that are made from fermented soybeans, wheat, salt and water

MACADADIA NUTS: are tree nuts that have a subtle, butter-like flavor and creamy texture.

EDUNEST

HOME CONNECTION

Weekly Lesson Plan

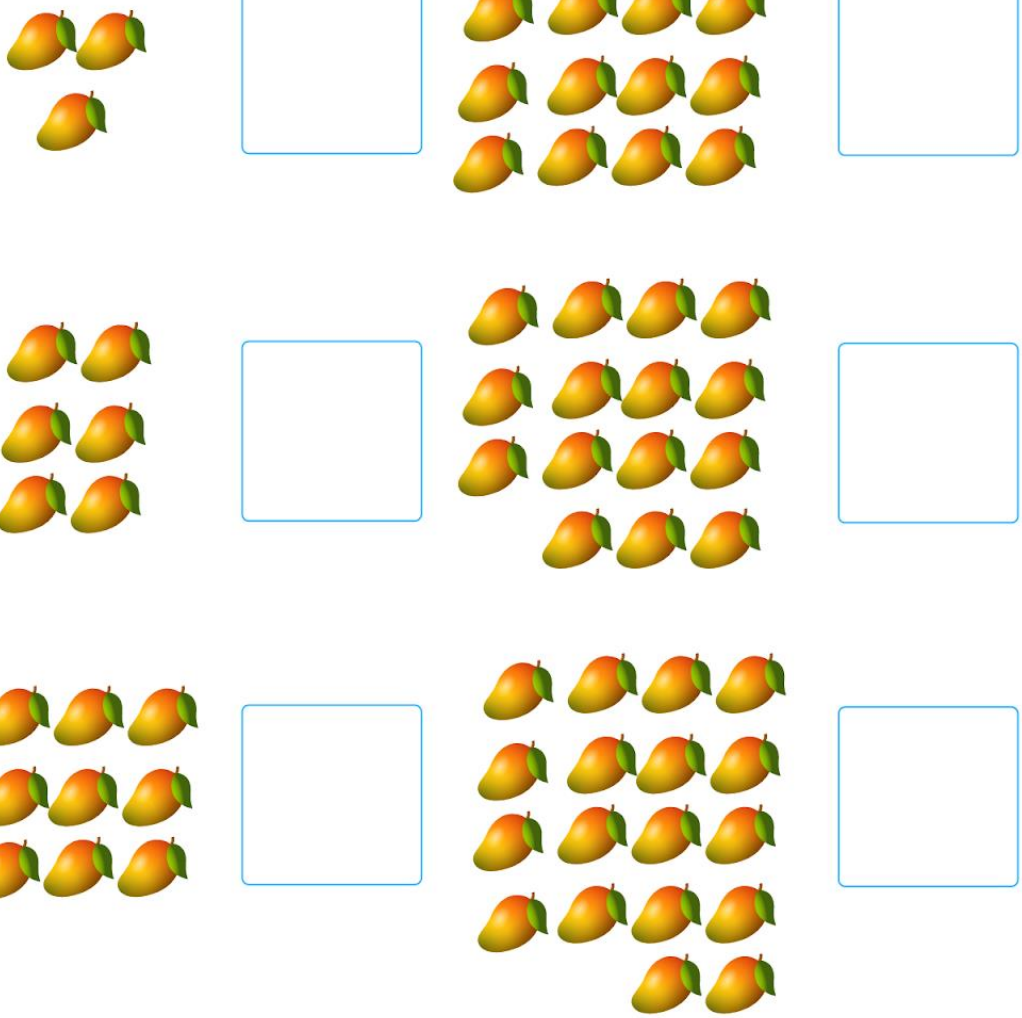
PREPARED BY ALISHA NGUYEN

MATH

LEVEL 1

MATH PROBLEM

Count and write the correct number of mangos. Can you circle the mangos in group of 3?



EDUNEST

HOME CONNECTION

Weekly Lesson Plan

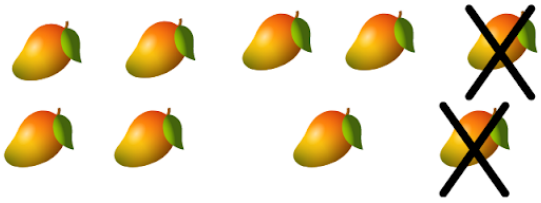
PREPARED BY ALISHA NGUYEN

MATH

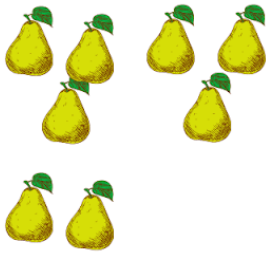
LEVEL 2

MATH PROBLEM

Cross out to subtract and write the difference



9 - 7 =



8 - 3 =

8 - 5 =

7 - 4 =

EDUNEST

HOME CONNECTION

Weekly Lesson Plan

PREPARED BY ALISHA NGUYEN

MATH

LEVEL 2

MATH PROBLEMS

Write the fact family for each set of numbers

6

4 + 2 = 6
2 + 4 = 6
6 - 4 = 2
6 - 2 = 4

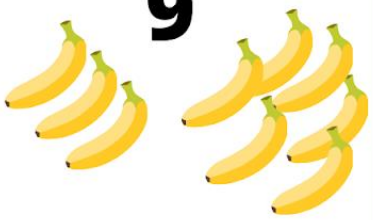
7

\+ =
\+ =
\- =
\- =

8

\+ =
\+ =
\- =
\- =

9



\+ =
\+ =
\- =
\- =

EDUNEST

HOME CONNECTION

Weekly Lesson Plan

PREPARED BY ALISHA NGUYEN

MATH

LEVEL 3

MATH PROBLEMS

PROBLEM 1

Kama and Nani have harvested **24 mangos**. They want to give the mangoes to **6 neighbors**. If each neighbor receives the same number of mangos, how many mangos does each neighbor get from Kama and Nani?

PROBLEM 2

Kama and Nani can exchange **one mango** for **4 muffins** or **6 bananas**. They have **12 mangos** in total. If Kama and Nani exchange 8 mangos for muffins and 4 mangos for bananas, how many muffins will they get? How many bananas will they get? Which number is greater?

CHALLENGE

If Kama and Nani want to have **the same number** for both muffins and bananas, how many mangos should they exchange for muffins? How many mangos should they exchange for bananas?

EDUNEST

HOME CONNECTION

Weekly Lesson Plan

PREPARED BY ALISHA NGUYEN

SCIENCE

VOLCANO EXPERIMENT

MATERIALS

Detergent
Baking Soda
Vinegar
Food Coloring
Plastic Cup
Sand (optional)
Aluminium Foil
Big tray

STEP 1. Build a volcano with sand or aluminium foil. Don't forget to make a hole and place the plastic cup in the middle of the volcano

STEP 3. Mix the baking soda with water

STEP 2. Pour the liquid soap or detergent, vinegar and food coloring into the plastic cup

STEP 4. Pour the mix into the volcano and watch. Don't forget to take a photo of your work.

EDUNEST

HOME LEARNING

List of items

PREPARED BY ALISHA NGUYEN

READING

1. Too Many Mangoes
2. Hawaii Facts
3. Volcano Facts

LANGUAGE ARTS

4. Vocabulary Flashcards
5. Reports/Explanations Writing Kit

MATH

6. Math Problem - Level 1
7. Math Problem - Level 2
8. Math Problem - Level 3

SCIENCE

9. Aluminium Foil
10. Plastic Cup
11. Food Coloring
12. Baking Soda

MOTOR SKILLS

13. Pre-cut Flowers
14. Straws
15. Beads
16. Necklace Strings

SENSORY PLAY

17. Sand
18. Seashells
19. Palm Tree Umbrellas
20. Plastic Jar

PARENTAL GUIDE

Weekly Lesson Plan
Weekly Learning Goals
Achievement Stickers

Appendix E. Family Survey Questionnaire

SECTION I. CONSENT FORM

You are invited to participate in a research study. Your family has been selected to be in the study because your family has: (i) at least one member identified as bilingual with immigrant background, (ii) emergent bilingual children within the age range of 4-9, and (iii) at least one school-aged child in public schools.

What is the study about?

This research study is designed to provide an in-depth understanding of quarantine remote learning and its impact on immigrant families and young bilingual children. In addition, this study offers learning materials and online learning sessions to enhance home learning experiences. There will be approximately 20 families with 40+ children participants in this project.

What will participation involve?

If you choose to participate in this study, you will be asked to:

- Complete ONE online survey questionnaire and ONE online evaluation form (approximately 20 minutes to complete)
- Participate in TWO online interview sessions (60 minutes via the Zoom platform)
- Participate in EIGHT weekly interactive livestream sessions for STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, Mathematics) activity learning (30-45 minutes for each session, via Zoom platform)

Do you have to participate?

Taking part in this research project is voluntary. You do not have to participate, and you can stop at any time. Please take time to read this entire form and ask questions before deciding whether to take part in this research project. Even if you decide to be part of the study now, you may change your mind and stop at any time. You do not have to answer any questions you do not want to answer. If you decide to withdraw before this study is completed, all video recordings that have your and your children's participation will be deleted from the project folder. If you choose not to be in this study, it will not affect your current or future relations with Boston College or the Lynch School of Education and Human Development.

How will we protect your information?

The records of this study will be kept private. In any sort of report we may publish, we will not include any information that will make it possible to identify you. All names of parents, children, neighborhoods, schools, districts will be replaced with pseudonyms. Research records will be kept in a password protected folder. Only the PI and the Faculty Supervisor will have access to them.

The Institutional Review Board at Boston College and internal Boston College auditors may review the research records. State or federal laws or court orders may also require that information from your research study records be released. Otherwise, the researchers will not release to others any information that identifies you unless you give your permission, or unless we are legally required to do so.

How will we compensate you for being part of the study?

Your family will receive all learning materials including 8 picture books and 8 STEAM Interactive Learning Boxes

What are the costs to you to be part of the study?
There is no cost to you to be in this research study.

If you have any questions about this research, you may contact the Principal Investigator, Alisha Nguyen (Email: alisha.nguyen@bc.edu; Phone: 832-846-4526), or the Faculty Advisor, Mariela Paez (Email: mariela.paez@bc.edu; Phone: 617-552-4068)

Contact Information for Questions about Your Rights as a Research Participant
If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, or wish to obtain information, ask questions, or discuss any concerns about this study with someone other than the researcher(s), please contact the following:
Boston College
Office for Research Protections
Phone: (617) 552-4778
Email: irb@bc.edu

I understand what the study is about and my questions so far have been answered. I agree to take part in this study.

○ Yes, I consent

○ No, I do not consent

I agree to video-record and take photos of my children's remote learning activities and send them to the Principal Investigator:

○ Yes

○ No

SECTION II. DEMOGRAPHICS

Mother's First and Last Name

Father's First and Last Name

Mother's Age

Father's Age

Mother's Race and Ethnicity

○Asian

○Black or African American

○Hispanic or Latinx

○White or Caucasian

○Middle Eastern or North African

○Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islanders

○Native American or Alaska Native

○Multiracial/Multiethnic

○Other (please specify)

Father's Race and Ethnicity

○Asian

○Black or African American

○Hispanic or Latinx

○White or Caucasian

○Middle Eastern or North African

○Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islanders

○Native American or Alaska Native

○Multiracial/Multiethnic

○Other (please specify)

Mother's Country of Origin

Father's Country of Origin

Mother's Highest Level of Education

○Some Formal Education

○Some Formal Education Up to Highschool Level

○Highschool Graduate

○Some College

○Associate degree

○Bachelor's Degree

○Graduate Degree

Father's Highest Level of Education

○Some Formal Education

○Some Formal Education Up to Highschool Level

○Highschool Graduate

○Some College

○Associate degree

○Bachelor's Degree

○Graduate Degree

Mother's Occupation

Father's Occupation

What is your total annual income?

○Less than 20,000

○20,000 to 34,999

○35,000 to 49,999

○50,000 to 74,999

○75,000 to 99,999

○100,000 to 149,999

○150,000 and above

Do your children receive free and reduced lunch from school?

○ Yes

○ No

Child 1: First & Last Name

Child 1: Age & Grade Level

Child 2: First & Last Name

Child 2: Age & Grade Level

Child 3: First & Last Name

Child 3: Age & Grade Level

School District & School Name

School Address

Home Address

Phone Number

SECTION III. LANGUAGE PRACTICES

Mother's languages

Father's languages

Please describe what languages are primarily spoken at home:

What language did your children learn first? If your children learn multiple languages at the same time, please list all of them. Please write answers for all children.

What language(s) do your children use most at home? Please write answers for all children.

Have your children received English language support from schools? If yes, please describe the types of support provided by school district/school/classroom teacher. Please write answers for all children.

Have your children received English language support DURING remote learning? If yes, please describe. Please write answers for all children.

SECTION IV. COVID-19

Broadly speaking, what is your biggest concern as a parent during the COVID-19 pandemic?

What is your biggest concern about your children not being in school as a result of COVID-19?

What are your family's pressing needs at the moment? List them all.

In the past 7 days, how often have you:

	Rarely or None	Sometime (1-2 days)	Moderate (3-4 times)	Most of the times (5-6 days)
Felt anxious or nervous	○	○	○	○
Felt depressed	○	○	○	○
Felt lonely	○	○	○	○
Felt hopeful about the future	○	○	○	○
Had trouble sleeping	○	○	○	○

How do you rank the following factors in your life?

	Much worse better	Somewhat worse	About the same	Somewhat better	Much better
Health	○	○	○	○	○
Finance	○	○	○	○	○
Wellbeing	○	○	○	○	○
Childcare Responsibility	○	○	○	○	○
Personal Life	○	○	○	○	○

During quarantine remote learning, how supported do you feel when you wanted or needed help from school, staff and/or classroom teacher?

Extremely supported	Very supported	Somewhat supported	Not supported	Not at all supported
○	○	○	○	○

SECTION V. REMOTE LEARNING

Who is the person most responsible for managing or helping your children with their remote learning?

What devices are available for your children's remote learning? List them all.

The following questions are asking about the experiences of remote learning for your children. Please select **one child** to answer all the questions. We will refer to this child as **the target child** for these questions. Please indicate the child's name, age, and grade level.

Compared to before the COVID-19 pandemic, how much is your **target child** doing the following?

	Much Less	Less	Same Amount	More	Much More
Eating	○	○	○	○	○
Sleeping	○	○	○	○	○
Physical Activity	○	○	○	○	○
Spending Time Outside	○	○	○	○	○
Spending Time with Friends (in person)	○	○	○	○	○
Spending Time with Friends (online)	○	○	○	○	○
Screen Time (Educational Purpose)	○	○	○	○	○
Screen Time (Non-educational Purpose)	○	○	○	○	○

Spending time with Extended Family Members (In-person)	○	○	○	○	○
Spending time with Extended Family Members (Online)	○	○	○	○	○

How many hours do your child spend with remote learning in total?

What kinds of learning activities have your child received from schools? Check them all.

○Online learning sessions with teachers

○Online learning sessions with specialists (literacy, math, language, art, music, PE)

○Online sessions with school counsellors

○Online sessions with administrators

○Other (please specify)

What subjects are covered by the instructional materials provided by the teachers/schools?

○Math

○Reading/ELA

○Science

○Social Studies

○Art

○Music

○Physical Education (PE)

○Other (Please specify)

How would you rate the job **the teacher** has done handling remote learning during COVID-19?

Poor	Not So Good	Fair	Good	Very Good
○	○	○	○	○

How would you rate the job your child's **school and district** handing remote learning during COVID-19?

Poor	Not So Good	Fair	Good	Very Good
○	○	○	○	○

What learning apps/software are **mandatory** for school work? List them all.

What learning apps/software do you select and get for your children? List them all.

What are **barriers** that prevent your children from effectively participating in remote learning?

- ○ We don't have enough devices at home
- ○ We don't have reliable high-speed internet access at home
- ○ We don't know how to use the learning apps
- ○ My child does not engage well with online learning sessions
- ○ My child is too young to participate in online learning independently
- ○ Online learning schedule does not fit my family's schedule
- ○ I do not see the benefits of online learning for my child
- ○ Others (please specify)
- ○ None of these applies

How would you rate online learning support?

	Poor	Not So Good	Fair	Good	Very Good
District & School	○	○	○	○	○
Teachers	○	○	○	○	○
Specialists	○	○	○	○	○
Learning materials	○	○	○	○	○

In the past 7 days, has anyone in your family done the following things with your children?

	None	Once	2 Times	More than 3 Times

Tell stories or read books	○	○	○	○
Done art & craft activities	○	○	○	○
Played board games or did puzzles	○	○	○	○
Played sports or physical activities	○	○	○	○
Let your children participate in housework	○	○	○	○
Talked to your children about your culture	○	○	○	○
Discussed with your children about COVID-19	○	○	○	○

Others (Please specify)

In general, how confident were you in supporting your child's learning during COVID-19 quarantine?

Not Confident at all	Slightly Confident	Moderately Confident	Confident	Very Confident
○	○	○	○	○

How successful has remote learning been for your child?

Not successful at all	Slightly successful	Moderately Successful	Successful	Very Successful
○	○	○	○	○

Do you think the remote learning experiences of the target child similar or different to the experiences of other children in the home? Please explain.

What would you recommend to school or teacher to make your child’s remote learning experiences better?

Appendix F. Family Interview Questions

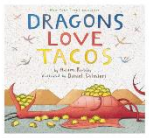
SECTION I. QUARANTINE REMOTE LEARNING

1. Could you please tell me about your children? What do they like, dislike? How are their learning styles? What are their favorite subjects, books, activities, etc.? What are your main challenges in working with your children during COVID-19?
2. How are you coping with quarantine life?
3. How are your family coping with quarantine life?
4. What is the typical schedule of your family at this time? What changes have you made to fit the current situation?
5. How do you arrange your homeschooling schedule for your children?
6. How do you feel about remote learning? How are your children coping with current online learning practices? Could you please tell me more about your children's experiences of weekly online learning sessions with teachers? Describe the types of activities that you and your child are involved through the school (examples to prompt: Small-group sessions? Recorded read-aloud videos? Learning apps)?
7. In addition to the teacher and school directives/activities/programs, are you doing anything additional at home to support learning for your children?
8. How do you feel about home-school communications from the teacher/school? Do you think you have received the information that you need to support your children? Do you need any additional information from teachers or the school? How do you feel about the assigned school work and activities your children are currently receiving?
9. What do you think are the main challenges of quarantine remote learning for your family?

SESSION II. PROGRAM EVALUATION

1. How do you feel about the picture books? How do your children find the picture books?
2. Do you use the recommended discussion questions? How do your children respond?
3. How do you find the Interactive Learning Box of activities? How do your family engage with the boxes?
4. How do you find the online learning sessions? What do you think about your children's engagement with the sessions?
5. How do you feel about the Home Connection program? Do you have any recommendations or suggestions to refine or improve the program?

Appendix G. Family Evaluation Form



SECTION I. THIS SECTION WILL HAVE QUESTIONS RELATED TO THE PICTURE BOOKS

How much do you like the picture books?

	Dislike a Great Deal	Dislike	Neutral	Like	Like a Great Deal
The Koala Who Could	○	○	○	○	○
How to Wash a Woolly Mammoth	○	○	○	○	○
The Good Egg	○	○	○	○	○
Don't Let the Pigeon Drive the Bus	○	○	○	○	○
Dragon Love Tacos	○	○	○	○	○
When Grandma Gives You a Lemon Tree	○	○	○	○	○
Too Many Mangoes	○	○	○	○	○
Counting on Katherine	○	○	○	○	○

How many times do your family read the picture books?

	1 time	2-3 times	4-5 times	More than 5 times
The Koala Who Could	○	○	○	○
How to Wash a Woolly Mammoth	○	○	○	○
The Good Egg	○	○	○	○
Don't Let the Pigeon Drive the Bus	○	○	○	○

Dragon Love Tacos	○	○	○	○
When Grandma Gives You a Lemon Tree	○	○	○	○
Too Many Mangoes	○	○	○	○
Counting on Katherine	○	○	○	○

How do your family engage with the picture books? Select all that apply.

	Caregivers read to children	Children read to siblings	Children read independently	Answer questions
The Koala Who Could	○	○	○	○
How to Wash a Woolly Mammoth	○	○	○	○
The Good Egg	○	○	○	○
Don't Let the Pigeon Drive the Bus	○	○	○	○
Dragon Love Tacos	○	○	○	○
When Grandma Gives You a Lemon Tree	○	○	○	○
Too Many Mangoes	○	○	○	○
Counting on Katherine	○	○	○	○

Please give some examples to show how your children engage with the picture books:

SECTION II. THIS SECTION WILL HAVE QUESTIONS RELATED TO THE LEARNING BOXES

Please select the most suitable answer to describe your family's experiences with each component of the Learning Boxes.

	Bad	**Not So Good**	**Average**	**Good**	**Excellent**
Reading	○	○	○	○	○
Math	○	○	○	○	○
Science	○	○	○	○	○

Art & Craft	○	○	○	○	○
Sensory Play	○	○	○	○	○

What do you like most about the learning boxes?

What are your suggestions to improve the learning boxes?

SECTION III. THIS SECTION WILL HAVE QUESTIONS RELATED TO THE ONLINE LEARNING SESSIONS

How do you rank the online learning sessions?

	Bad	**Not So Good**	**Average**	**Good**	**Excellent**
The Koala Who Could (Making a Koala's House)	○	○	○	○	○
How to Wash the Woolly Mammoth (Making a Mammoth Habitat)	○	○	○	○	○
The Good Egg (Shopping for Groceries Game)	○	○	○	○	○
Dragons Love Tacos (Foaming Dragon Experiment + Paper Tacos)	○	○	○	○	○
When Grandma Gives You a Lemon Tree (Growing Bean Sprouts & Birthday Card)	○	○	○	○	○
Too Many Mangoes (Island Jar & Bead Necklaces)	○	○	○	○	○
Counting on Katherine (Solar System & Balloon Rocket Launching)	○	○	○	○	○

What do you like most about the learning sessions?

What are your suggestions to improve the learning sessions?