



Immigration Initiative AT HARVARD

# ISSUE BRIEF SERIES

The IIH supports the production and dissemination of rigorous, non-partisan, and non-ideological research on immigration issues across a broad diversity of disciplines and perspectives, and the application of this research to local, regional, and national policy issues.

## KEY FACTS

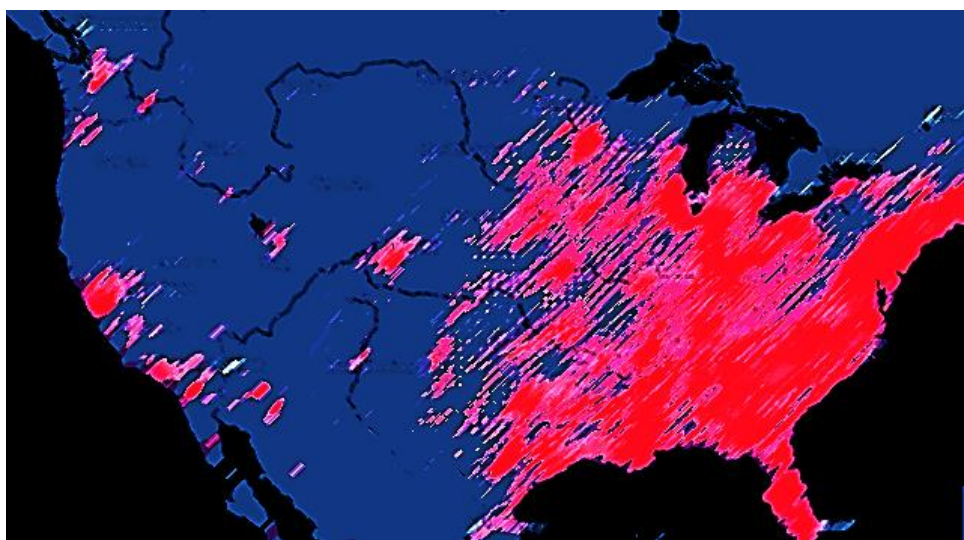
- The disproportionate and inequitable impacts of COVID-19 nationally mean that immigrant communities face added burdens on their physical and mental health, in addition to economic disparities. These increasing concerns, combined with ongoing efforts to restrict immigration, limit access to educational opportunity.
- Immigrant-serving districts have grappled with these challenges as they seek ways to ameliorate inequalities exposed and deepened by the COVID-19 pandemic.
- School districts can support immigrant-origin students and families during this time by creating innovative strategies to meet families' basic resource-related needs, developing rapid-response equitable instructional policies that center students and their needs, and prioritizing relationships and communication in a way that is sensitive to the specific needs of immigrant families.

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# Connectivity and Creativity in the Time of COVID-19: Immigrant Serving Districts Respond to the Pandemic

Rebecca Lowenhaupt, Julie Yammine, Melita Morales, Paulette Andrade, Boston College; Ariana Mangual Figueroa, Jennifer Queenan, City University of New York, Graduate Center; Dafney Blanca Dabach, University of Washington; Roberto G. Gonzales, Edom Tesfa, Harvard University

Immigration Initiative at Harvard Policy Brief 4.



Confirmed Covid-19 cases in U.S. by region, 10 July 2020. Source: Center for Systems Science and Engineering (CSSE) at Johns Hopkins University

## Background

In recent years, educational institutions have sought ways to support immigrant students and their communities as they cope with heightened anti-immigrant policies and discourse.<sup>1</sup> Schools serve as key points of contact for immigrant communities for academic and language learning, social integration, and access to a range of social services. These crucial supports have been shaken by the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent school closures. The United States has seen important differences in how these school closures have played out across local contexts. As a district administrator in Texas commented, “It’s like we’re all in the storm, but on different boats. Some people are in a yacht, some on a raft, some have no boat at all. We have a responsibility as humans to help one another, but especially as educators, it’s compounded. In this storm, our role is to really help kids and their families get through this.”

Since 2018, our research team has worked in partnership with six immigrant-serving school districts across the country to identify

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promising practices to support immigrant-origin<sup>2</sup> youth and work toward reducing the inequalities they face.<sup>3</sup> We recently engaged our partners in conversations about their experiences to understand how educators in immigrant communities were experiencing and responding to the crisis. Based on two meetings in mid-May of 2020, this issue brief presents some initial findings from this research in progress. We share these emergent findings now in order to contribute to ongoing discussions, aid time-sensitive planning efforts, and inform district policymaking.

In this brief, we address the following:

- how local contexts are influenced by and also shape COVID-19 trends;
- the impacts of COVID-19 on immigrant-serving districts;
- the innovative, creative ways six school districts are adapting and connecting with communities despite the pandemic and school closures.

COVID-19 has engendered new forms of inequality and upheaval. Meanwhile, pre-existing community traumas have been exacerbated by the pandemic and its related political response. The disproportionate and inequitable impacts of the virus nationally mean that immigrant communities are facing added burdens on their physical and mental health, along with economic disparities. As they navigate this context, now more than ever, schools are sites of possibility where educators, families, and communities can come together to support one another and plan for the future. District-level practices have the power to facilitate meaningful, lasting connections, leverage resources and expertise, and rebuild schools to better serve these students.

### Different Local Contexts

Our research interrogates how local contexts shape the experiences and outcomes of immigrant-origin students. It posits that schools, and educators within schools, have some influence over that context, and our partnerships focus on improving these contexts through various district and school-level practices. However, in the midst of the pandemic, we find ourselves in a position where the context itself is profoundly shaped by the virus, both in terms of the ways in which schools can and cannot operate under current constraints, and in terms of the lived experiences of educators, students and their families who are coping with new burdens presented by the virus.

The table on this page gives a sketch of how these contexts have been differentially impacted by the virus, although all our partner districts experienced a similar

State	Locale	Student Population	Description of Context at the Outset of the COVID-19 Pandemic
Georgia	Rural	Almost all immigrant-origin students in this small district come from Spanish-speaking communities from Mexico and Central America.	Georgia quickly reopened the state after a shutdown. As the number of cases rises throughout the summer, this may impact plans to open school in person early to make up for lost learning time due to their lack of remote learning during the initial brief period of closure.
Illinois	Suburban	This small diverse district serves immigrant-origin students speaking more than 70 languages. Although situated in a fairly affluent area, the district serves a high percentage of low-income students.	In a state with a high number of cases, this small district quickly closed and pivoted to remote learning.
Maine	Small urban	Coming from around the world, immigrant communities make this district one of a few racially, ethnically and linguistically diverse districts in the nation's Whitest state.	The district is in a region of the state with the highest number of cases. The state has maintained a strict closure policy into the summer. Maine also has the country's worst COVID-19 racial disparity: 2% of Mainers are Black, but 25% of COVID-19 cases are Black and mostly immigrants. <sup>4</sup>
New Jersey	Small urban	Most immigrant-origin students in the district come from Spanish-speaking communities from Mexico and Central America. The district routinely welcomes newcomers.	Due to the high number of cases, New Jersey had a prolonged shutdown which has continued into the summer.
Texas	Rural	The majority of immigrant-origin students come from Spanish-speaking communities from Mexico.	Although initially, the area was not hit by the virus, the district pivoted to remote learning quickly. Due to pandemic-related border closures, some students and their families were in Mexico and had to stay there. With a wave of the virus hitting Texas this summer, there is uncertainty about school reopening plans.
Washington	Part of a larger metro area	Another site with a wide range of racial and linguistic diversity, this district serves immigrant communities from around the world. Top languages include Spanish, Vietnamese, Somali, and Amharic, among many others.	One of the first states to close due to the virus, Washington state leaders have largely adopted a data metrics approach to restrictions (through four phases) based on county-level data.

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timeline in terms of closures this spring. State contexts seem particularly relevant as each state develops its own set of guidelines for the fall, and districts envision what will be possible as far as reopening. The COVID context has also informed practices initiated this spring and early summer. For example, some districts were able to distribute in-person materials and facilitate outdoor meetings whereas others were not. Context also seemed to play a role in terms of the technological infrastructure to support remote learning. While the availability of affordable internet networks, functional cellular networks, and access to hardware allowed most districts to ensure students were able to access some online opportunities to learn, this was not the case everywhere. In a few districts, this proved more challenging, with one rural district determining it was unfeasible. These features of local contexts emerge as central to district responses amid the pandemic.

### Specific Impact on Immigrant-Origin Families

How COVID-19 has affected immigrant-origin families across these districts is difficult to determine, as there are currently no specific data about this subgroup. However, many of the immigrant families served in these districts are people of color, and according to the CDC,<sup>5</sup> their data suggest that racial and ethnic minority

groups are being disproportionately affected by the virus, in terms of illness and death. The CDC<sup>6</sup> also considers that newly resettled refugee populations are expected to be at higher risk of getting COVID-19. In addition, COVID-19 has led to the loss of tens of thousands of jobs across the United States. Recent data suggest that immigrants, particularly immigrant women and those aged under 25 or without a high-school degree, are especially impacted. Undocumented immigrants are particularly at risk financially because they are not eligible for federal relief or unemployment benefits.<sup>7</sup>

### Planning Amid Uncertainty: Challenges and Concerns

These shifting features of the local context continue to evolve as the pandemic unfolds. Planning for an uncertain fall, educators are being asked to develop adaptable practices that might address them. This situation raises several challenges and concerns related to their impact on 1. Students and Families; 2. Educators; and 3. Schools and Districts. These are summarized in the table below. Each is then discussed in more detail.

#### Impact on Students and Families

School closures have left many immigrant-origin students more vulnerable to food insecurity and lack of the

**IMPACT ON STUDENTS AND FAMILIES**

- Students required to take on caretaker and provider roles.
- Lack of access to healthcare.
- Meeting basic food and school supply needs.
- Family movement, displacement and income insecurity due to federal immigration policies.
- Increased reliance on caretakers to support and understand students' learning objectives.
- Understanding changing requirements around graduation, national testing, and higher education.

**IMPACT ON EDUCATORS**

- Balancing rigor and enrichment.
- Finding ways to meet students' emotional, academic, physical, language (etc.) needs.
- Blurred lines between personal, family, and professional times.
- Changing work hours and conditions.
- Navigating increased exposure to students' home lives.
- Interpreting unclear directives on purposes of learning initiatives and changes in grading policies.
- Uncertainty about how to prepare classrooms and themselves for fall.

**IMPACT ON SCHOOLS AND DISTRICTS**

- Connection and communication amidst family movement due to changes in employment and federal policy.
- Meeting requirements of special needs, IEP and language learning support remotely.
- Meeting technology (computer and connectivity) needs of the whole learning community.
- Communicating learning directives and decisions about fall learning.
- Conversations with unions on changing educator working conditions and demands.

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connectivity necessary for remote learning. Even though districts have undertaken massive efforts to support access, educators still worry that some students struggle with basic necessities and cannot connect with their classes. Some educators reported that certain students felt increased economic pressure to work while juggling school. A family liaison in Maine remarked that this situation had led some high school students to express a sense of “hopelessness”: “I have kids who are high schoolers and parents are sick and positive for COVID. These kids are picking up the slack and just doing whatever they can do to try to keep the house afloat with income and whatever they are doing.”

Mixed-status families with undocumented members are feeling especially vulnerable due to the lack of access to healthcare and historic labor market shifts resulting in a loss of income; and yet they are not eligible for financial supports that others in the US are currently receiving from the government.<sup>8</sup> A principal in Washington reported, “They are still going to work because they can’t afford not to. And they are in denial that they are as at risk as they are. So there is a lot of stress that the advisors are feeling trying to work with families.” Teachers identified students that have had to take on the roles of both caregiver and main provider in their households. Even if they were in these roles before, they have taken on new meaning and pressure in the current crisis. In some cases, this has required them to move away from their homes and school districts. A district administrator in Washington commented, “Because we track all of our district-given devices, we know that they have already left the state. That’s because as people lose jobs and homes, they are going to have to go elsewhere to go live with others.” A district administrator in Texas explained that in some cases, these movements were cross-border. “We’re a border city and many of our kids and families would go on the weekends to Mexico with their families and come back on Monday. We know that many of our kids have gone across the border and right now they can’t come back, even though the bridges are open, they are not letting anybody back that is not a legal resident or has legal residency or is a U.S. citizen. So all those families are stuck back in Mexico. Surprisingly, a few are connecting with their teachers, trying to follow the schedule online. But many are not.”

As schools transitioned into online communication and learning, district administrators observed other obstacles. Many were challenged to provide adequate accommodations for English learners and students with special education plans. Some noticed that some parents and students had difficulties engaging with online platforms due to language barriers or



unfamiliarity with certain technologies. A district administrator in Washington explained, “Though meals, devices, and connectivity have been priorities, we still fear that we have about 2,500 students who don’t have home internet access, so they are unable to connect with their teachers and peers. We’re doing everything we can do to improve, but it’s a national issue.” Remote learning relies on individual student and parental support in new and particular ways which district administrators worried were not always clearly defined or presented to families. They also discussed ongoing concern about the impact of national policy changes on immigration and visa status. District administrators worried that these issues made it challenging for some immigrant students to engage fully in remote learning.

Yet they also commented on the strength and resilience of their students and communities during this time to support and address some of the identified obstacles. Immigrant students have still been joining remote learning spaces despite difficult circumstances. We found numerous examples of immigrant families – and families in general – working in partnership with educators to ensure their children had space and time for schooling. As a Washington district administrator highlighted, “A danger I’m worried about is that we may not be understanding the resilience and the creativity that the families have. I have observed and seen and tried to work with some of my colleagues on what I think sometimes can be low expectations for what families are able to do.” These insights revealed a commitment among these districts to build on the strengths and assets of these communities and try to attend to the knowledge families already have.<sup>9</sup>

### ***Impact on Educators***

Educators are also feeling the weight of this moment, particularly in terms of their own mental and emotional

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health. Personal time and family needs are often experienced as being in tension with the demands of changing work hours and conditions. Many educators are parents themselves, juggling teaching their classes with homeschooling their own children. An Illinois district administrator shared, “One of the things I’m noticing is that we don’t know how to turn off because the hole we are trying to fill is just infinite. People are having a hard time taking a day off or going to bed at night.” Meanwhile, a teacher in New Jersey reported, “I’m trying to balance homeschooling my own three children and teaching my students, making sure that everyone gets enough attention and what they need from me. I’m trying not to spread myself too thin at the same time.”

Many teachers also have unprecedented access to students’ home lives through online meeting platforms and are working to address privacy concerns. At the same time that they gain important insight and deeper connections with students by seeing their homes and families firsthand, this comes with added responsibility and worry about the many barriers facing them. This is especially true for families navigating immigration concerns. A Maine district administrator explained, “I have really been working a lot on just keeping families’ spirits up and just trying to keep them not too worried about what they are going to do about rent or food. My work has shifted a lot to social-emotional and connecting with resources.”

Uncertainty continues to weigh heavily on educators as they not only address immediate needs for distance learning, but also try to plan for an unknowable future. Educators grapple with how to maintain a high standard of learning for all their students and seek more guidance about how to navigate this unprecedented transition. As states and school districts announce their plans to resume in-person instruction in the fall, some teachers – especially older teachers and those with health

vulnerabilities – are resigning, retiring, and even writing their own wills as they anticipate the risks of reopening.<sup>10</sup>

### ***Impact on Schools and Districts***

Moving forward, schools and districts are plotting how to address the impact of the pandemic context. They worry about academic impacts and the trauma that students have experienced or re-experienced during this time. As an Illinois district administrator commented, “The focus for me has been trying to meet everyone’s needs—physical, socioemotional, and somewhere in there, academic. I’m connecting people and trying to keep people’s spirits up because I have seen the progression through these Zoom meetings I’ve had for 5 to 6 hours a day every day. You can see people’s expressions changing over time. You can really see it starting to get to them.”

Aware of the aforementioned impact of employment and policy changes on family movement, districts and schools are working to maintain communication and connection. There is also a need to ensure that these plans are rolled out in a sustainable way that avoids placing an unmanageable burden on individual people. As a district administrator in Washington remarked, “I can see the toll it’s taking on my leadership team. We had a really rough cabinet meeting yesterday. People are fraying around the edges and I’ve got as good a team as there is anywhere.”

Schools and districts have had to mobilize quickly, partnering with community organizations and businesses to provide widespread access to food and technology. With ambiguous guidance from federal and state education departments, many districts are feeling the pressure to design and implement new policies and procedures to ensure the safety and learning of their students, families, colleagues, and community members. As changes occur, districts need to carefully navigate multiple interests as they plan for fall teaching and learning.

### **Promising Strategies**

Despite the substantial challenges raised by the current crisis, educators have responded in innovative and creative ways. Prior to the pandemic, our work sought to elevate the approaches educators were developing to support immigrant communities navigating a hostile and changing set of policies. In the midst of the pandemic, we have seen how these approaches have become all the more essential. Educators have responded by amplifying and adapting their care of youth and communities to address the substantial challenges of this moment. In particular, educators we spoke to have engaged with the challenge of meeting families’ resource-related needs,

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developed new rapid-response instructional policies, and found ways to strengthen relationships and communication with immigrant communities. We describe each with specific examples below:

***Creation of innovative strategies to meet families' basic resource-related needs***

Districts have found ways to provide families with the resources needed during this pandemic. On the one hand, they are providing food to students that families can pick up at the schools. In cases where districts have realized that not all families can get to the school, they have found other options to make sure that the food arrives to all the community, for instance, by busing it.

At the same time, districts have provided families with the resources needed by the students to pursue their education in this new climate. This means providing internet access, lending electronic devices, or, in cases where this is not feasible, distributing learning packets for students who have no access to the internet at home.

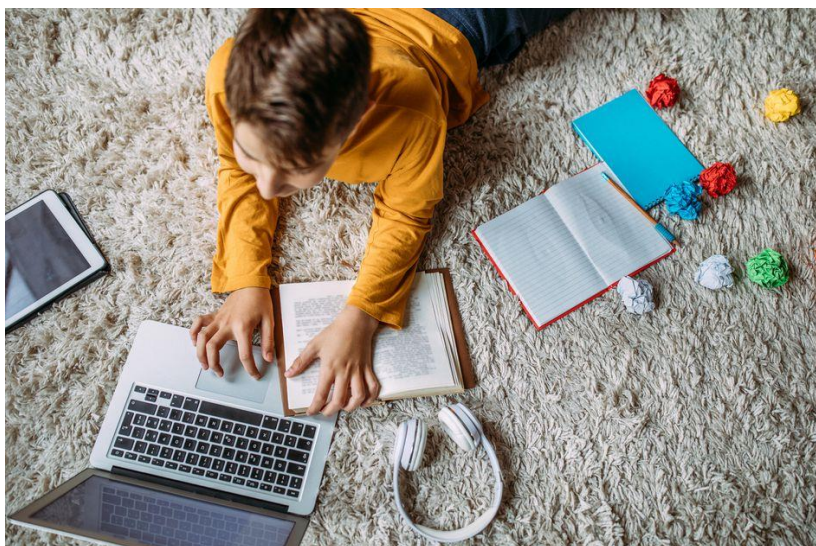
One Illinois district administrator commented, "One of the two great things that happened was our mobilization to deliver breakfast and lunch to our families. That was the number one priority when this first all happened. That was so appropriate to make that a top priority. Each day of delivery, we see more and more families getting meals. We also made sure that parents had wi-fi connections, whether that was through district-wide hotspots or getting them access to reduced price Internet connection."

***Creation of rapid-response, equitable instructional policies that center students' and their needs***

Learning plans have varied across the districts in this study due to differences in access to the internet. In one district where many families do not have internet access and the district was unable to provide access, the district created packets (as mentioned above) and did not attempt remote learning. While such policies have been controversial, as one Illinois-based administrator commented, this is a universal challenge: "We've had conversations over and over reminding people that children across the world are going through this, so there's no falling behind. All children are coping with this in some way or another. Whether they're in Illinois or they're down in Texas or up in Washington or in Spain, or in England, or in Scotland or in Turkey, right? It's happening everywhere. And so sometimes, I think building that broader context that this is universal is helpful." Ultimately, each district is making decisions about learning that center the particular needs of the students in that district and align those needs with the resources the district is able to provide.

In another district where many families already had technology provided through schools, they were able to distribute technology to remaining families and purchase internet for every family. The district also recognized that some families, particularly some newcomer immigrant families, might not be familiar with technology and so they set up a phone help line (with translation available) and are working individually with families to get online and help with learning related to technology.

Districts are also grappling with how to grade with equity and their students in mind. One New Jersey teacher remarked, "We had a really good conversation about the equity piece and the idea that when we're giving number grades and letter grades in this situation, we're grading students' privilege, rather than what they actually know and can do. And in thinking about equitable grading practices, we also need to contemplate how to hold kids accountable and keep up a rigorous education. Everyone is trying to figure out a balanced way forward."



According to district administrators, many teachers knew what was happening in their students' lives because of previous relationships they had built with their students, including the knowledge that some of their immigrant students were working to support their families. One district administrator acknowledged that the real-life experiences and struggles faced by students and their families during COVID-19 were far more important than what they might be able to gain through remote learning. At the same time, however, this administrator wanted to ensure that the district did not lower expectations for their students and acknowledged the creativity and resilience that many immigrant students exhibit. He noted how some educators provided excuses for students who did not complete assignments and worried this trend might ultimately harm students' opportunities. He and

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others voiced a commitment to maintaining high expectations that made sense for the students and families they serve.

***Prioritization of relationships and communication in a way that is sensitive to the specific needs of immigrant families***

Districts have put a focus on communication with immigrant families to meet their needs in ways that are differentiated for each community. One way they have done this is by prioritizing socio-emotional needs and relationships alongside academics. A few districts described organizing online meetings with parents to talk about social-emotional issues, with the support of social workers, and shared resources among educators to raise awareness that the current situation may be triggering for past experiences for some families. For example, some families shared that words like lockdown reminded them of negative experiences they had in violent situations they fled as refugees. A Maine district administrator commented on this community response, “A positive thing about all this is that I see opportunities to connect with families and students via technology. Thanks to Zoom, we are even able to translate our meetings in real time through simultaneous chat messaging. I feel like we have gotten closer as a community.”

Educators have maintained and opened a variety of communication channels to reach all families, for instance: phone calls, WhatsApp groups, phone and email helplines. In fact, some have even offered drive-through open house meetings for English Learners. The districts are making sure that multiple channels are available to families by offering the services in a bilingual/multilingual mode, depending on the needs of the community (which can be especially challenging for communities where many languages are represented). It is important to highlight that even before the COVID-19 pandemic, educators and administrators in our partner districts clearly prioritized developing strong relationships with students and their families. Now, those relationships are a large part of what has enabled our partner districts to determine and meet the needs of families during this crisis.

“A positive thing about all this is that I see opportunities to connect with families and students via technology. Thanks to Zoom, we are even able to translate our meetings in real time through simultaneous chat messaging. I feel like we have gotten closer as a community.”

## Conclusion

Conversations with our partner districts have shown how educators across the country are keenly aware of the challenges this current situation raises for the communities they serve. As educators navigate their own set of difficulties, they also are seeking ways to respond to these challenges.

In our partner districts, educators are seeking to balance providing support for emerging needs with the opportunity to address the many inequities of which they are already well-aware. Some district leaders view this moment as a policy window, a moment to reimagine what equitable schooling looks like. In this moment of upheaval, these educators remain committed to elevating the strength, resilience and resourcefulness of the immigrant communities they serve. During these times, it is all the more important to critically assess what kinds of responses will actually promote just schools rather than perpetuate ongoing injustices.<sup>11</sup>

Context continues to matter profoundly during this crisis. In these six districts across the US, educators serve distinct communities that face steep and compounding challenges. In addition to the context as it relates to immigration policy and discourse, the movement of the virus through their communities, the availability of resources, and their state policy responses to the virus also shape how the crisis unfolds. We continue to learn from our partners about how all these factors intersect to influence the educational experiences of immigrant youth. Importantly, however, our conversations with district partners reveal how their work and commitments as educators and leaders reshape that context.

By strategically identifying additional resources, rethinking local policies, and leveraging existing relationships to connect more directly with families, our partner districts are building on the work they've already done as they respond to the ongoing crisis as it unfolds. These efforts help support immigrant-origin youth and families, but also have served their communities overall. Taken together, these approaches illustrate what a key role educational institutions have played in responding to the pandemic.

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<sup>1</sup> Ee, J. and Gándara, P. (2020) “Under Siege: The Disturbing Impact of Immigration Enforcement on the Nation’s Schools,” Immigration Initiative at Harvard Issue Brief Series no. 2, Cambridge MA: Harvard University. (2019, October 25). Here’s What to Know About the Status of Family Separation at the U.S. Border, Which Isn’t Nearly Over. Retrieved April 7, 2020. <https://time.com/5678313/trump-administration-family-separation-lawsuits/>.

<sup>2</sup> We use immigrant-origin youth to describe youth who are immigrants themselves or who are the U.S.-born children of immigrant parents.

<sup>3</sup> Funded by the W.T. Grant and Spencer Foundations, the PIECE (Putting Immigration and Education in Conversation Everyday) research collaborative was established in 2017 with the goal of “putting immigration and education in conversation everyday” by examining the educational implications of increasingly restrictive immigration policy in the US. Led by a team of researchers at four universities including Boston College, City University of New York’s Graduate Center, the University of Washington and the Harvard Graduate School of Education, the research-practice partnership involves district and school administrators in 6 immigrant-serving school districts in distinct contexts around the US.

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.pressherald.com/2020/06/21/maine-has-nations-worst-covid-19-racial-disparity/>

<sup>5</sup> CDC. (2020, June 25). COVID-19 in Racial and Ethnic Minority Groups. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/need-extra-precautions/racial-ethnic-minorities.html>

<sup>6</sup> CDC. (2020, June 1). COVID-19 in Newly Resettled Refugee Populations. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/need-extra-precautions/refugee-populations.html>

<sup>7</sup> Capps, R., Batalova, J., & Gelatt, J. (2020, June). COVID-19 and Unemployment Assessing the Early Fallout for Immigrants and Other U.S. Workers. Migration Policy Institute. <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/research/covid-19-unemployment-immigrants-other-us-workers>

<sup>8</sup> Immigrants who are undocumented did not qualify for the federal stimulus check from the CARES Act. Undocumented workers are also not eligible for unemployment assistance.

<sup>9</sup> As emphasized in a recent blogpost by Ann Ishimaru, <https://www.tcpress.com/blog/prospects-schools-wake-covid-19-responses/>

<sup>10</sup> Gray, L (2020, July 13). “Teachers are writing wills: Should Texas schools open up? Teachers vent frustrations, concerns. The Houston Chronicle. <https://www.houstonchronicle.com/coronavirus/article/Teachers-are-writing-wills-Should-Texas-15404484.php>.

<sup>11</sup> Ishimaru, A. (2020). <https://www.tcpress.com/blog/prospects-schools-wake-covid-19-responses>

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*This issue brief is also available in Spanish.*



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## About the Authors

**Rebecca Lowenhaupt** is an Associate Professor of Educational Leadership at Boston College and a founding member of the research collaborative, PIECE (Putting Immigration and Education in Conversation Everyday). She serves as the Principal Investigator of the project funded by the W.T. Grant Foundation and which this brief describes.

**Ariana Mangual Figueroa** is an Associate Professor in the Ph.D. programs in Urban Education and Latin American, Iberian and Latino Cultures at the City University of New York Graduate Center. A founding member of the PIECE research collaborative, she also co-leads the City University of New York-Initiative on Immigration and Education.

**Dafney Blanca Dabach** is an Associate Professor in the College of Education at the University of Washington. She is a founding member of the PIECE research collaborative.

**Roberto G. Gonzales** is Professor of Education at the Harvard Graduate School of Education and Director of the Immigration Initiative at Harvard. He is also a founding member of the PIECE research collaborative.

**Julie Yammine** is a doctoral student at Boston College studying immigration and education. She is a former teacher and aspiring school administrator.

**Melita Morales**, educator and current doctoral student at Boston College, focuses on the sociopolitical contexts of classrooms and schools, specifically through agentive inquiry and interactions.

**Edom Tesfa** is a doctoral student at Harvard University focusing on the intersection of education, Black studies, critical migration studies, critical youth studies, and critical Internet studies.

**Paulette Andrade** is a doctoral student at Boston College who studies language and literacy development in bilingual students. She has worked as a teacher educator in Chile.

**Jennifer Queenan** is a doctoral student in Urban Education at the City University of New York Graduate Center as well as an English as a New Language educator in New York City. Her research focuses on the ways in which educators and school systems can support immigrant and undocumented youth and their families.

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**ABOUT IIH**

The Immigration Initiative at Harvard (IIH) was created to advance and promote interdisciplinary scholarship, original research, and intellectual exchange among stakeholders interested in immigration policy and immigrant communities. The IIH serves as a place of convening for scholars, students, and policy leaders working on issues of immigration—and a clearinghouse for rapid-response, non-partisan research and usable knowledge relevant to the media, policymakers, and community practitioners.



**Immigration Initiative**  
AT HARVARD

**Also in this series:**

Ee, J. and Gándara, P. (2020) “Under Siege: The Disturbing Impact of Immigration Enforcement on the Nation’s Schools,” Immigration Initiative at Harvard Issue Brief Series no. 2, Cambridge MA: Harvard University. Available at: <https://immigrationinitiative.harvard.edu/under-siege-disturbing-impact-immigration-enforcement-nation%E2%80%99s-schools>



**Under Siege: The Disturbing Impact of Immigration Enforcement on the Nation’s Schools**

Jongroon Joy Ee, Loyola Marymount University  
Patricia Gándara, University of California, Los Angeles  
Immigration Initiative at Harvard Policy Brief 2.



**Background**

A great deal has been written recently on the topic of immigration enforcement and its impact on families and communities. The outcry over family separations at the border was frontpage news for weeks in the early summer of 2018. But little attention has been focused on how extensive the effects are or how they are experienced by the schools that enroll immigrant students.

Immigration was a central pillar of Donald Trump’s campaign for the presidency. In an effort to send a message to would-be immigrants, as well as those already here, he has ordered random raids and arrests of people who have lived here peacefully for years, and even decades. The current administration’s immigration enforcement makes no distinction between someone with a felony conviction, and someone who has simply committed the crime of crossing the border without documentation.<sup>1-3</sup> Thus, when in July of 2017 a man who had lived in the Los Angeles area for more than 20 years and raised his U.S. born children there was arrested as he dropped off one of his daughters for school, it sent shock waves through the immigrant community. Now, seemingly, no one and no place is safe. In this context, the present study sought to answer the following questions?<sup>4</sup>

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