

BUSCANDO EL SUEÑO MEXICANO

An Educational Goal Setting Best Practice Guide

Mexico's Transnational Students
Educational Goal Setting in the
Age of Heightened
Immigration Enforcement

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Executive Summary

Harsher immigration enforcement in the US has led to a dramatic rise in deportations. As a result of deportation or to avoid being separated from loved ones, entire families—which may include US citizens or legal resident members—have returned to Mexico (Medina & Menjívar, 2015). Students who have lived in the United States for several years are among the fastest-growing populations in Mexican schools. Many of them have encountered an “assemblage of ruptures” such as a lack of Spanish fluency, stigma, and the shock of austere schooling environments (Zúñiga & Hamann, 2015, p. 645). For others, returning to Mexico presents an opportunity for a post-secondary education that might have been denied them had they remained in the US (Cortez Román & Hamann, 2014).

Project goals

The primary goal of this project was to answer the following questions:

1. How are students’ educational goal-setting behaviors, activities, and strategies affected upon their return to Mexico, and what factors improve or undermine them?
2. What are the roles of family members in helping students set and achieve their educational goals?
3. What roles, if any, do non-family adults play in helping set or achieve students’ goals?
4. What roles do schools, communities, or government agencies play in supporting students in setting or achieving educational goals, and are there gaps in the support systems?

In keeping with the binational approach for this study, a project goal was to include participants who had overlapping knowledge of US and Mexican contexts. In the US, this context is one that harbors concerns and insecurity for families in which least one member is undocumented. In Mexico, the context includes unresponsive bureaucracies, economic instability, and social stigma—conditions known to accompany those returning to Mexico. We followed Guest, Bruce, & Johnson (2006) by interviewing 12 individuals from three groups of returnees who could speak to any of the related facets of both these social, political and legal contexts. Parents (or caregivers more broadly) as primary decision-makers were thought to have first-hand experience and knowledge of these two contexts, and to further understand these two contexts through the student experience, we interviewed two age groups of students. Young adults ages 18-24 were interviewed because they are already at that life-changing crossroad, a dilemma long considered by so-called “Dreamers”¹, and DACA² students whose legal status for

¹ “Dreamers” refer to children brought to the United States without documentation, who after years of living in the US, know no other country and consider themselves American even though the threat of deportation is always present. The word is a play on the *Development Relief, and Education for Alien Minors* (DREAM) Act, which was proposed in the US Congress several times but never passed.

² DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals) was established by President Obama through Executive Order in 2012. However, the Order has been repeatedly challenged through litigation. As of Jan 17, 2025, the US 5th Circuit of Appeals ruled that USCIS can continue to accept and process DACA renewals, remaining valid until they expire or are terminated, but new (“initial”) applications to the DACA program will no longer be accepted (UCIS 2025).

entering a post-secondary institution in the US has long posed both legal and financial challenges (Pérez, 2012). Young Adults thus may also have knowledge or experienced of both US and Mexican contexts, although not entirely in the same way as their parents and caregivers. Adolescents aged 15-17 were interviewed because the literature shows that at this age, they have likely begun to envision their future, which may include a college education. To be eligible for the study, participants had to have lived in the US for at least two years before returning to Mexico and returned after 2010, the year Arizona enacted the harshest immigration law in the US, SB 1070.³ The University of Arizona Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects approved the research, and all research team members were certified under its training program.

³ Although “The Support Our Law Enforcement and Safe Neighborhoods Act” (informally known as SB1070) was only partially enforced after the US Supreme Court ruled that parts of the law as proposed were unconstitutional, many immigrants left the state of Arizona or considered leaving, according to a study by the Bacon Immigration Law & Policy Program at the University of Arizona (Lopez 2011). This report also documents the law’s disturbing consequences on Arizona’s youth including decreased school enrollments (and resulting cuts to school funding), distrust of law enforcement, and stress-related health problems as reported by school counselors.

Acknowledgments

This project was made possible with a Fulbright Mexico-U.S. García Robles Border Scholar award grant. It was carried out in keeping with the Fulbright mission, which aims to build lasting connections between the people of the United States and the people of other countries, build mutual understanding between nations, advance knowledge across communities, and improve lives around the world.

The Universidad de Sonora (UNISON) and University of Arizona (UA), have enjoyed long standing institutional collaborations. For this Fulbright project, we wish to acknowledge the time and resources provided by UNISON as the designated host institution under the Fulbright award by providing workspaces, administrative support, and allowing for the time devoted to the project by Professor Nolvía Cortez and Ph.D. student Maria Auxiliadora Saucedo. Their collaboration was crucial for the successful completion of this project, especially with the added efforts needed to navigate project delays and modifications to accommodate restrictions imposed by COVID-19 mitigation measures. This allowed us to remain faithful to the Fulbright mission of advancing knowledge to benefit the communities we sought to include in our study.

Our research team is also indebted to the administrative officials of the Secretaría de Educación Pública (SEP), who also took the time to meet with us during our data collection efforts and provide welcoming encouragement for our ideas.

Finally, with immense humility and gratitude, the binational research team members acknowledge that the success of the project is due to the participation of all the individuals who volunteered their time for this study. This Best Practices Guide would not have been possible without their patience and the time they took to candidly speak with us about their experiences. Recalling and sharing these experiences with the research team may have been painful and difficult at times and for some. They nevertheless proved committed to the idea that by sharing their stories, others might be spared much of the frustrating and disorienting effects of abrupt displacement, which may take years to overcome. We will be forever grateful for the opportunity to learn from you.

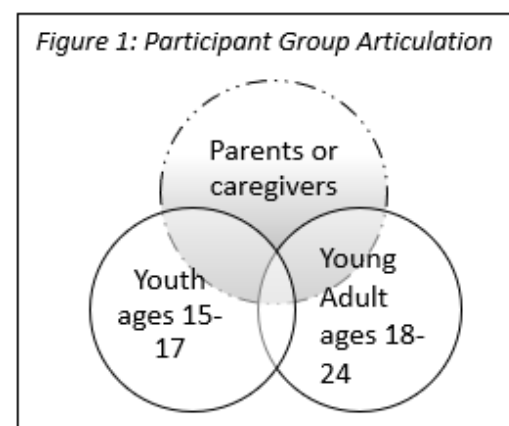
Educational Goal Setting

This research focused on an almost invisible yet critical step in educational attainment: the setting of educational goals and the effort that goes into achieving them. We know from the existing literature that educational goalsetting is linked to learning and students' future academic achievement (Morisano et al., 2010; Napiersky & Woods, 2018). Under normal conditions, setting educational goals can be strengthened or made more deliberate through college readiness programs where in the US many of these programs exist. Moreover, while parents and teachers are also known to influence and facilitate students set educational goals (Brown et al., 2009; Zimmerman, Bandura, Martínez-Pons, 1992), student can independently set their own goals (Travers 2015, p. 226). Altogether, setting and working to achieve educational goals mitigate adverse outcomes, such as dropping out of school (Meece & Kurtz-Costes, 2001).

Obstacles to goalsetting is therefore an important parallel topic. Educational goal setting makes academic achievement possible despite obstacles or even if students underestimate abilities (Grant & Dweck, 2003). However, there is a knowledge gap in educational goal-setting strategies amidst the obstacles countenanced by immigrant students in the US and upon students' repatriation. This is due in part to the difficulty in identifying and recruiting members of this population for study. Our study is thus expected to contribute to how educational goal-setting operates among this population that is underrepresented in the literature to advance cross-cultural understanding of an essential step in human capital development (Erez, 2012).

Study Participants

This section provides brief profiles of each group. The goal was to recruit 12 individuals from each group and to interview them twice,⁴ allowing each group the opportunity to share their knowledge from their vantage point that articulated with the knowledge and perspectives of the others (see Figure 1). Between September 2021 and June 2022, study participants were recruited using a snowball sampling technique. We obtained their permission to record the interviews using a structured interview guide to help us answer our research questions. Most interviews (N=79) were in Spanish. The recorded interviews were then transcribed for analysis.



⁴ For a non-probabilistic study such as this, Guest and colleagues (2006) found that saturation occurred within the first 12 interviews.

Group A: Young Adults

A total of 14 young adults ages 18-24 were interviewed once, and 13 were interviewed a second time: six males and eight females, for a total of 27 interviews collected. Most students in this group were high-achieving students in the US. Many were honor-roll students, had received letters from universities inviting them to apply, and were frequently acknowledged with certificates of achievement in US schools. Most continued as high-achieving students in Mexico even though they described their academic performance as having suffered at first, mostly due to inadequate levels of Spanish language proficiency for Mexican classrooms, which in turn made them targets of bullying. This exacerbated anxiety over academic performance and for many initially it delayed their social integration. However, by the time of our interview, many of these challenges had been overcome. Most of the participants in this group were enrolled or had already completed a post-secondary education. Six completed their post-secondary education by the time they were interviewed the second time. Only one student in this category had not yet experienced higher education but had completed a university admissions test.

Group B: Adolescents

A total of 11 adolescents ages 15-17 were interviewed once, six males and eight females, and ten were interviewed a second time: for a total of 24 interviews. In contrast to Group A participants (Table 1), the majority of Group B (Adolescents) had been born in the United States; only two participants in this category were born in Mexico. These participants lived on average 5.45 years in the United States and returned to Mexico when they were 7 years old on average. It is also likely that because they had spent less time in the US and arrived to Mexico at an earlier age that they did not describe their return to Mexico as traumatic nor as academically challenging as many Group A participants. Many of this younger group remembered little detail of their experiences in the United States and their return to Mexico. At the time of our interviews, all but one participant was in their last year of middle school/junior high school (equivalent to *secundaria* in Mexico). Everyone else was enrolled in *preparatoria* (equivalent to *High School in the US*). Most all shared that they had higher education ambitions.

Table 1: Group A and Group B participants compared

	Group A (n = 14)	Group B (n = 11)
Average number of years spent in the US	10.75	5.45
Average age when they returned to Mexico	14.75	7
Oldest age when they returned to Mexico	25	14
Youngest age when they returned to Mexico	10	3
Percent Female	59	45
Percent Male	37	54
Percent US Born (2)	14	81

Group C: Parents

A total of 15 parents were interviewed once, and 12 were interviewed a second time. Most of the parents interviewed were women, with three sets of parents interviewed (sets of parents were counted as one interview) for a total of 27 interviews collected. While most of the parents interviewed had some college education, only three had a university degree.

Best Practices

This study concerns students' educational goals after returning to Mexico. A literature review shows that many factors influence the development and achievement of academic goals. Most of what we know about this topic comes from institutional practices and formalized policies intended to produce a desired outcome such as college admissions and retention, and improved grades, which can be tracked or measured. Alternatively, experiences, attitudes, and expectations that are not readily observed or easily measured may also correspond to activities and attitudes needed to achieve desired outcomes. Qualitative research thus continues to be essential for documenting behavioral and deliberative processes that contribute to goal achievement.

Today, more information is needed about the educational goalsetting and achievement of a growing population of youth who have returned to Mexico. Unlike populations in relatively stable environments, they are unique products of two nations, two schooling environments, and two languages. With pathways to regularizing one's immigration status becoming more elusive, an increasing number of transnational students continue to face uncertainties, forcing them to contemplate the possibility of returning to Mexico. If so, they, too, may encounter the challenges we documented. Our research moves beyond this hypothetical scenario with actual strategies and approaches adopted and practiced by student returnees that have factored into their educational pursuits.

The subsections that follow are organized by key ideas and concepts found in the education research literature that support our findings as they relate to the strategies, approaches, and practices described by our study participants. Each subsection introduces the idea, concept, or approach, and a brief general definition. This is then followed by how we found the idea, concept or approach operating among our participants, which appeared to enable their educational goal setting and achievement. We bring attention to these practices using bullets to help locate them and where possible, provide the words of our participants *verbatim* to help illustrate. A quick reference of these bulleted practices is found in the Recommendations Section at the end of this guide.

Academic Engagement

We begin this subsection with activities stemming from formal institutional learning spaces, with which students are likely first to engage: Mexico's schooling system. Our participants described their experiences in ways consistent with the interrelated material, psychological,

and emotional dimensions of institutional environments described in the literature (Alrashidi et al., 2016). Material dimensions primarily include organized educational activities (tutoring, sports, and other extracurricular events). Emotional and psychological dimensions include developing a connection, a sense of belonging, and a commitment to learning that transcends classrooms and institutional environments, which are essential for nurturing positive attitudes toward learning (Alrashidi et al., 2016).

Formal Academic engagement

- Look for teachers willing to help.

The school is the primary entry point for students to Mexico. Ideally, students should not hesitate to ask for help when needed. However, we found that language barriers and apprehensiveness of being identified as new arrivals from the U.S. posed challenges. Some teachers were sensitive to these and were willing to help. Students had but to find who would help them further their learning.

Mientras todos andaban jugando en la hora del recreo y a mi no me molestaba quedarme sin jugar por aprender más. Entonces ella [la maestra] se sentaba y nosotros solitos llegábamos con ella y nos enseñaba extra en tiempo extra.

En Historia era donde yo más batallaba. Ya en quinto ya mis compañeros ya sabían mucho de historia, toda la historia de Sonora, la historia de México, y yo pues no, porque allá [EUA/USA] cuando estuve en la escuela ya pues no estudié historia de México....[T]uve muy buena suerte con mi maestra porque se quedaba tiempo extra ayudándome. Me daba líneas del tiempo para que yo repasara y como me gusta mucho leer, pues yo me pasaba las tardes leyendo historia y como me veía interés ella, todos los días me traía libros. [A] ella es a la que le debo mucho en esa materia en historia.

- If a teacher is not willing to help, don't give up.

Sometimes, I would ask the teacher for help ... and sometimes they would. [But] by the time I hit ninth grade here.... I didn't need to do it anymore.

Pues siempre trataba de preguntarle a mis maestros, pero ya si no obtenía una respuesta, que a mí me entendieran, ...le preguntaba a un compañero o algo así para que lo explicara, a ver si de esa manera yo podía entenderlo. Y pues hasta la fecha así lo he hecho. Si ocupo ayuda porque el maestro no me puede brindar, o que yo no lo entiendo...pues le pregunté a mis compañeros.

- As a student, claim and appropriate your space to engage.

To be sure, some returned students took steps proactively and intuitively sought to create spaces for engagement on their own. In one example, one participant recognized the classroom as an opportunity, as an environment centered on learning that united students.

and proactively appropriated the setting to restore a sense of belonging, creating connections with other students in a mutually beneficial way.

Whenever a classmate asked for help, I would tell myself that teaching them would be another strategy to understand the assignment fully. In teaching [others], I also understood it better ...And so when somebody would ask for help, I was always that classmate. I'd say, 'I can explain it to you.' I wouldn't just pass them my work. I would take time and explain how I did it. And I was helping.

Por ejemplo, hacen un concurso. Se puede decir que primero el maestro enseña, tú aprendes. Si quieres aprender más por tu cuenta, pues llegas.

Network-building through collaboration activities

- Look for communities of support; if they are not found, create them.

When students first arrive in Mexico, they may experience isolation that can disrupt schooling. However, language barriers and apprehensions as a new arrival from the US posed challenges for finding supportive communities. On their own, some students found that engagement with similarly situated students, once they found who they were, helped them build connections and foster a sense of belonging. The formation of study groups for studying and homework exemplifies this process. Sadly, we do not know how many others may have been helped with this strategy had they been made more aware of the importance of creating supportive communities if none appeared to exist. As the excerpt below demonstrates, successful endeavors to organize supportive communities were serendipitous.

Me acuerdo que [la maestra] en los primeros días de clase nos preguntó ¿cómo sabías inglés? Entonces muchos salieron que vivieron en Arizona, la mayoría. Pero de que Phoenix, Glendale, Scottsdale, así diferentes ciudades Douglas, de Nogales, uno que otro de California, ya de ahí ya nos identificamos, pero faltaba ahora el paso de que como hacemos el grupito no? Entonces yo me empecé a juntar con unos que también venían de Phoenix, otros venían de Tucson. Y así entonces nos juntamos y decidimos que iríamos a la biblioteca. Y sí, llegaron, "pueden entrar y pueden practicar, están practicando el idioma, entren!" Entonces otros se dieron cuenta y nos preguntaron, "¿Puedo ir? ¿podemos entrar con ustedes?" Y así se empezó a hacer. Y así se fue yendo, se fue yendo. Y ya después teníamos el grupito de los que se juntaban.

Yo batallaba un poquito porque tenía una amiga que hablaba español ahí en el salón, que era la que primero me ayudaba y ya como que él se dio cuenta y él hablaba español, pero no hablaba muy bien el español, o sea como que apenas estaba aprendiendo y un día me dijo que, que a que los dos nos íbamos a ayudar, que yo le iba a ayudar a aprender el español y que me iba a ayudar a aprender el inglés y ya, pues, así fue. .. de

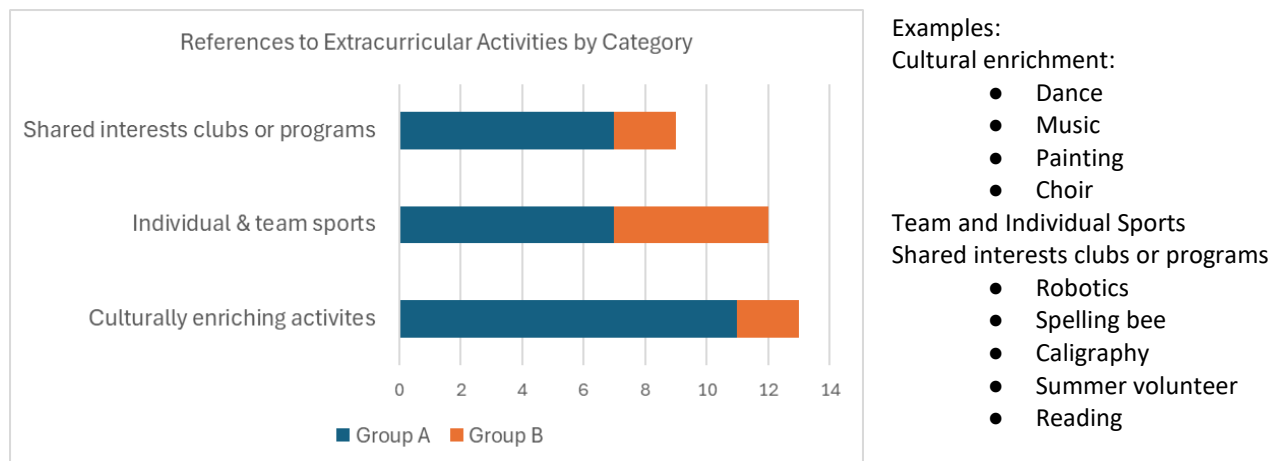
hecho cuando me gradué me dijo que muchas gracias, que porque lo había ayudado a aprender el español mucho más rápido y más fácil.

Extracurricular Activities

- Become involved. Remain involved.

Research has robustly demonstrated that extracurricular activities work to improve engagement, which improves academic achievement. Extracurricular activities improve cognition (e.g., shown by test scores and college admission exams), as well as many noncognitive skills: motivation, self-regulated learning, leadership skills, adaptability, curiosity, initiative, perseverance, and social awareness, while providing balance, building self-confidence, increasing a sense of contribution and duty, belonging, and a mindset that makes long-term educational goals more attainable (Shaffer, 2019). Moreover, students involved in extracurricular activities are more likely to benefit from “deep learning,” (that which strives for enhanced understanding through concepts and ideas) in contrast to “surface” or “rote” learning that is less meaningful and easily forgotten (Chan, 2016). In the US, 57% of high school students participate in at least one extracurricular activity. Almost all of our 14 returning young adult students (Group A) and some among our 11 adolescents (Group B) reported participating in extracurricular activities in the US and Mexico. Many engaged in more than one activity. This is summarized in Figure 2.

Figure 2



In sum, education research on the benefits of extracurricular activities shows that these foster student academic success. Our sample of students aligns with this research. As mostly high-achieving students, strong connections to schooling were forged through extracurricular activities to reinforce a positive psychosocial relationship to education enough to contend with the disruptions caused by their return to Mexico.

Summary

Our research revealed examples of academic engagement activities known to benefit academic achievement. The fact that most of our participants were currently attending, planned to enroll, or had completed academic programs validates the research on the relationship between engagement and student achievement: the more engaged students are, the better they perform academically (Alrashidi et al., 2016).

Employ Available Resources and Help Seeking Behaviors to Enhance Academic Spanish

Return migrant children and youth's language repertoires differ from students raised and educated in Mexico. Our returning migrant children arrive with bilingual abilities in English and Spanish as children raised in Spanish-speaking households but educated in English-dominant schools. Their literacy skills were thus primarily acquired in English, with rare instances of Spanish literacy learning in the home. Such a language configuration may suffice for the U.S. context, but returning to Mexican classrooms often proved challenging for our participants because they did not have the Spanish literacy skills needed for full participation in the classroom. Despite this decades-old reality, no specific programs have been developed by Mexico's Ministry of Education to help immigrant students successfully transition into their new classrooms and better equip them with the new linguistic and cognitive demands (Despaigne & Manzano-Munguía, 2020). However, returning students demonstrated their agency by using the available resources they had at hand and by exploring learning strategies on their own (independently) or with others (collaboratively).

Asesorías (Tutoring)

- Ask questions, ask for help, cast a wide net.

Participants in our study reported that asking questions and asking for help was important for learning and improving their academic Spanish skills. However, help-seeking behaviors presume the confidence to ask for and accept help and the inherent challenges that come with their newcomer status. As new arrivals, they lack cultural capital (Richards, 2020), the advantage "in-groups" have of over "out-groups," which reinforce existing social inequalities (Calarco, 2011, p. 879). In this way, newly arrived students, marked by their different Spanish and cultural competency levels, may struggle to meet their needs in their new environment and help-seeking skills help might not come naturally or quickly. Beyond asking their teachers for help, we found our participants incorporated a more comprehensive network of allies to help them develop skills and strategies for asking *how and when* to ask for help (Calarco, 2011; Richards, 2020). Our participants reported a lack of formal Spanish literacy tutoring services in the schools, compelling them to seek help outside their school or home settings. In the school setting, students reached out to available peers and teachers, while in the home setting, they often sought help from parents and other family members as described below:

- Ask your Peers

We found that students' peers and classmates were the most approachable when asking questions about completing homework. This is likely because they had classes together or are taught by the same teacher. Some peers and classmates also helped ease the apprehensions that newcomer students had. This encouraged them to ask questions to avoid or correct mistakes, and eventually, understanding, as the following excerpt illustrates:

Tenía una amiga que era muy inteligente para tomar español y lo sabía y a veces lo llevaba con ella. Decía, “¿está bien esto que hice, o está mal?”..A veces me explicaba y le decía, “es que no entiendo de las palabras de la esdrújula, las de graves” y ella me decía “no, pues mira, son de esta manera, por esto y equis razón”.

- Ask your Teachers or other School Tutors

Participants also reported that some teachers readily accommodated their need to improve Spanish, and were open to suggestions and supported students' initiatives, as this excerpt illustrates:

Entonces yo le decía al maestro, “¿no me puede poner unas diez palabras o algo más para yo intentar hacerlo en mi casa y mañana me lo revisa?” Y sí, y me los ponía en el cuaderno y al día siguiente yo llegaba con mi [tarea].

- Ask your Parents and other Family Members

Parents and other family members, who were more likely Spanish-speakers and products of the Mexican schooling system, were also invaluable allies. Moreover, they were willing to aid however possible in students' language learning struggles by encouraging, admonishing, and posing compelling rationales, in addition to providing informal instruction:

Y ya mi mamá decía, “trata de leer en español que a lo mejor te va a gustar, te van a tomar atención”. Y sí lo hice. Y sí había muchos que me llamaban la atención. Y “Mamá, no sé qué es esta palabra”, y a buscar en Internet. Y buscaba el significado ya me decía ella, si no, no entendía cómo esto se parece así de esta manera y así va aprendiendo, aprendiendo nuevas palabras.

- Ask your Friends or others Outside of School

Friends and acquaintances (and technology) were also sources of help:

[Cuando se daba cuenta que estaba batallando con el español],... a veces el celular, con mi novio también me ponía [a aprender español] porque...así como podía con el teléfono, la mayoría de los tiempos, con el teléfono.

Learning Strategies and Techniques

Like many children of Mexican immigrant parents living abroad, our participants struggled with their Spanish literacy skills upon their return to Mexico. As former students in mainstream English-dominant schools, they were educated to achieve proficiency in English often at the expense of their first language. After they arrived in Mexico, students in our study consciously and actively worked to learn or improve their Spanish literacy skills, developing strategies on their own to accomplish this. In language learning, Oxford (1990) defines strategies that are essential in assisting students to become more proficient in a second language are conscious, specific, problem-oriented actions and tools students use to enhance their language proficiency and communicative competence. Oxford further describes these strategies as flexible, not always observable, and in the best circumstances can be learned. Implementing these strategies is influenced by several factors and does not only involve the learner's cognitive aspects, but also emotional and social aspects. The students in our study thus adopted language learning strategies, often by instinct, but for the most part aware that they needed to take action and develop behaviors to improve their Spanish proficiency, especially in reading, writing, and for other academic tasks needed in the classroom.

In analyzing the participants' strategies, we were able to detect that strategies could either be described as the *individual's cognitive and memorization strategies* - that is, strategies they carried out on their own; or as *social strategies* understood as learning strategies that were carried out with other Spanish speakers they considered as more proficient. Below are some examples of both types of strategies:

Individual Strategies

- Read with the purpose of learning Spanish

Participants found that reading different texts in Spanish not only helped them develop general reading comprehension skills but also learn new vocabulary, acquired either by understanding its meaning through context or by looking up the word's meaning using dictionaries. Reading helped them reach their non-migrant peers' reading levels:

Eh, sí puedes aprender un español. Más que nada así como quedó todos los días aprendiendo y leyendo y yo fui a citas para tratar de alcanzar el nivel de los de la escuela.

- Look for models of good writing and imitate them

Other participants described how imitating writing samples in Spanish helped them develop their language abilities. Such a strategy can be helpful and is often used in writing workshops because it allows learners to analyze written texts and understand their components and how they can be organized in a written composition. More importantly, such a strategy has also been shown to increase learners' confidence in their writing abilities (Locketz, 2017), more so when their own compositions evolved to look more like the texts they sought to imitate.

Lo que fue la secundaria y creo que esos dos años que a fuercitas tenía que leer y a fuercitas redactar ...a veces era de copy-paste, así que leía el libro, lo escribía así igual hasta que ya me podía expresar [ya por mi misma podía expresarme].

- Look for and observe model behaviors and duplicate them.

Students become active participants in their own learning through their interaction with others. (Ness, 2022; Vygotsky, 1978). This is a natural strategy in the learning process, especially for younger learners. Following observable model behavior can be made more deliberate in the context of return migration, when students find themselves in unfamiliar classrooms and exposed to different teaching styles. Observing their more experienced peers (the “knowledgeable others”) is a problem-solving social learning strategy through which new skills and confidence develops.

Batallé mucho con el español, pero no en el sentido... Sabía hablarlo y sabía escribirlo. Lo que no sabía era gramática. Por ejemplo, se usaba mucho antes el dictado que nos dictaran. Y [cuando] nos estaba dictando la maestra decía punto y seguido o punto y aparte. Y yo no sabía qué era eso. Yo sabía que era el punto, pero ya no sabía qué hacer. Pero poco a poco, viendo lo que hacían los demás, ya que yo lo hacía, no me daba mucha vergüenza preguntar. Entonces yo veía lo que hacían los demás y se los copiaba.

- Use online resources such as translators and dictionaries to translate, but also to explore new words and their meaning.

Individuals who are bilingual, as in the case of most all of our study participants, typically do not possess equal competencies in two languages. Moreover, within each language, students may have different proficiencies in any of several essential components of language (e.g. vocabulary, language structure, also called syntax—the rules in any language that governs how words, phrases and sentences are organized to convey meaning). For bilingual individuals, translating one language to the other may be a “natural” action but in so doing, they notice differences in language components. This allows them to use what they recognize in one language to acquire, develop, and strengthen their knowledge and competence in a second language in ways that

might go unnoticed by individuals who are monolingual (Nieto, 2006; Valencia, 2011). Our participants used both physical and online dictionaries primarily to improve their vocabulary in Spanish, but by using online translation applications, we presume that they also improved their knowledge of its language components:

Buscaba en el diccionario buscar qué significa, qué significa conectar o preguntaba la maestra. Me podría explicar un poquito más. Pero de todos modos, aún así, con todo el apoyo que me dio, batallé mucho

De que buscar palabras en diccionarios, porque en aquel entonces no estaba Google, pues no había Google, era diccionario. Entonces ahí estoy con el diccionario todo el tiempo y programa de lectura y así entonces.

Y ahí me la llevaba Google Translate y me ponía a traducir así palabras que no entendía y entendía textos, pero a veces ciertas palabras clave, no?

Visit the school's designated study areas

School libraries and other academic facilities, such as learning labs, provide students with spaces to do homework, access information, study, and have a safe place in their new environment. Most schools, from primary to university levels, have library facilities students can easily access. There they are likely to find staff members and librarians to assist them in finding the information they need. Libraries can also be places that foster welcoming spaces for vulnerable or underrepresented students to help them develop confidence, independence, and self-esteem (Murray, 1999). Moreover, returning students might not have quiet spaces with internet access to do homework or study. Some of the students in our study relied on these spaces because they provided learning resources such as language labs, self-access centers, and tutoring or as a place for quiet study:

- Exploit the library as a resource

En ese tiempo yo no tenía computadora, no tenía cómo imprimir tareas. Sí creo que teníamos Internet, pero tenía un teléfono muy básico. En ese tiempo no, pues no había mucho, mucho dinero en mi casa, porque sí me iba a café Internet, pero para evitarle gastos, mejor me quedaba en la escuela, en la biblioteca, a buscar otras formas de hacer mis tareas.

- Visit Language Labs

Eso sí, el uso de lo que era CAALE [Centro de Auto Acceso de Lenguas Extranjeras], la biblioteca, las computadoras, los libros, todo eso sí fue, me ayudó muchísimo. Y más que nada, que siempre estaba ahí, al alcance, en la escuela y cerquita, igual.

Social Strategies:

Learning is achieved through interaction with others (Vygotsky, 1978). Infants, children and adults learn from others, at first by observing and then by interacting with them in the form of asking questions, clarifying doubts, and doing activities together. Such learning can also be defined as “social learning.. a broad term that refers to any form of learning—such as motor, verbal and knowledge-based learning—via any form of social context” (De Felice et al., 2022, p. 2). When interacting with others, action occurs in the interaction. Both the learner and the teacher/parent/peer contribute to the learning process and can provide explicit and implicit feedback, leading to learning.

Learning with the teacher

Principles of good teaching show that when teachers know their students, they are better able to tailor their instruction, build positive relationships, and create a supportive classroom environment for all the students. Unfortunately, not all teachers are aware of their students’ previous educational experiences, including those impacting their language and cultural competencies. With more students from the US returning to Mexico, large and diverse classrooms can be a challenge and teachers by impeding the opportunity to get to know each student on a personal level despite its importance to achieving an appropriate learning environment. In such circumstances, students should feel encouraged to approach the teacher and explain their previous educational experience. In discussing language and cultural challenges, both students and teachers can learn together about how challenges to both teaching and learning might be mitigated.

- Approach the teacher to explain your migration history and language situation

Well I'm always asking for help like I'm the type of person that if I do not understand a subject or an assignment or anything where I know I can improve (I'm very like perfectionist) to like I want to do it right and I don't care if I have to ask for help ...And I remember the first day I waited until everybody was gone and I talked to the teacher and told her I've never had Spanish. Please be patient with me like I was taking Spanish like from 2 to 3. So it was like "I can stay for the other class so it can help me like just a practice more", so I would stay for Spanish in the afternoon as well

- Ask teachers for extra exercises to practice

En cuanto...al español con el maestro que les menciono. Yo era [de que] a veces que hacíamos un ejercicio de cualquier razón, entonces yo le decía el maestro, “no me puede poner unas diez palabras o algo más para yo intentar hacerlo en mi casa y mañana me lo revisa?” Y sí, y me los ponía en el cuaderno y al día siguiente yo llegaba con mi [tarea].

- Clarify doubts or ask for more information.

Pues buscaba en el diccionario buscar qué significa, qué significa conectar o preguntaba a la maestra [si] me podría explicar un poquito más. Pero de todos modos, aún así, con todo el apoyo que me dio, batallé mucho.

Learning with and from peers

Learning from peers is considered an essential part of learning, and one which not only provides cognitive benefits, but also social ones. Experts such as William and Leahy (2015) explain that peer collaboration activates students as learning resources for one another, promoting life-long skills of knowing how to work with others and more immediate benefits, such as the possibility of producing “...greater learning of subject matter than would be possible by having students work individually or in competition with their peers.” In other words, more learning is possible with others than struggling to learn alone. Working with peers can allow students to feel more comfortable and discuss answers, ideas, and views in more familiar language. Such social spaces can be where supportive discussions of past mistakes take place and can help avoid mistakes in the future. Furthermore, peers learn from each other by detecting what strengths everyone brings to the table to help make collaboration more meaningful and find they each as common with others create and promote positive relationships.

- Have a peer check or proofread an assignment before submitting it for a grade.

Students can benefit by having a second pair of eyes proofread homework before turning it in. Peers may be more knowledgeable about what is expected of them and can identify for their less knowledgeable classmate (the returnee) errors to improve their work.

- Study and do homework with peers.

Whether working on assignments together or studying for an exam, students can bring in their strengths to help each other in reciprocal fashion.

Learn with and from friends, parents, and other family members

We found that parents, friends or other family members can also be important resources. They can share knowledge and help with homework or other school-related tasks: translating explaining or illustrating word meanings or ideas or proofreading written assignments. The parents we interviewed had all been schooled in Mexico, so they knew the rules of grammar, and knew Mexican history. They, as well as friends and other family members were familiar with the social norms and the expectations of Mexico’s educational systems. Adopting a “learning together” approach is one in which returning students can maintain communication with their support systems and learn about and navigate obstacles to educational success, all working together to mitigate them.

- Ask parents to help with definitions of words

Y sí había muchos que me llamaban la atención. Y “Mamá, no sé qué es esta palabra,” y a buscar en Internet. Y buscaba el significado ya me decía ella, si no, no entendía cómo esto se parece así de esta manera y así va aprendiendo, aprendiendo nuevas palabras.

- Ask parents to proofread or check homework

A mi mamá en cuestión de redacción y a mi mamá siempre le pedía que “a ver chécame el ensayo ¿cómo puedo escribir esto?” le daba mis ideas y era como que “mira lo puedes poner así”.

Persistence and Perseverance

We know from the literature that highly persistent students will likely persevere, thrive in college, and complete their degrees (Valencia, 2011, p. 128). Indeed, many of the participants in our study can be characterized as persistent, “*continuing to do something or to try to do something even though it is difficult or other people want you to stop*” (The Britannica Dictionary, 2025a), or having perseverance, “*the quality that allows someone to continue trying to do something even though it is difficult*” (The Britannica Dictionary, 2025b). Our open coding of Groups A and B revealed 95 references to one or more psychological strengths that contribute to students’ ability to persist and persevere, with their distribution by group shown in Figure. 3.

Openness

- Be open to new opportunities.

Openness refers to one's receptiveness to new ideas or experiences. It is associated with creativity and intelligence and is a factor in achieving success. In the excerpt below, one student described displacement as the world closing in on her. However, later in reassessing, she became open to exploring the opportunities in Mexico and successfully achieved her goal.

El pensar siempre positivo es que siempre hay una salida, siempre hay otra puerta, el no cerrarse, porque siento que eso me ayudó mucho al principio, sí todo era negativo, todo era “no, no quiero estar aquí, ya me quiero regresar”. Pero después, le empecé a ver el lado bueno ...Hay más. Ok, está Hermosillo, ciudad grande, ... y digo yo “bueno también hay otras oportunidades” ...el no cerrarnos tanto pues a la idea de que si no estoy en Estados Unidos no voy a hacer nada. Sí, es un poco más complicado, más difícil, pero. ... Ahora lo veo ya del lado adulto que me tocó a mí estar en Estados Unidos no se me hubiera hecho tan fácil el seguir estudiando, se me hubiera complicado, o tal vez no hubiera terminado. Y siempredigo todo pasa por algo ...terminé mi carrera, tengo trabajo y no se me cerró el mundo.

Self-efficacy

- Although much is outside our control, focus on what you can control.

Self-efficacy is an individual's belief in their capacity ("*I can do it!*") to execute behaviors necessary to produce specific performance attainments (Bandura, 1977; Bandura & Adams, 1977). It reflects confidence in one's ability to control one's behavior and social environment.

Porque me gustaría lograrlo por mí mismo. Lo que voy, a lo que voy a cumplir. No quiero. No quiero que alguien más me lo dé, sino que yo ganármelo con mérito. O sea, no voy a esperar nada de nadie.

Básicamente, no estoy dependiendo de nadie, sino de mí misma. Me imagino yo estando bien, porque realmente lo quiero así y quiero lograrlo porque soy una de las personas que no me gusta esperar nada a cambio y tampoco pedir mucho porque quiero, quiero realmente ganármelo por mi esfuerzo y decir "lo logré". Básicamente "¡sí, lo logré!". Cuando me propuse esto tuve, tuve mi plan, tuve lo que pedí y estoy aquí gracias a mí.

Self Regulation

- Focus on what's important—no hay que quitar el dedo del renglón.

Self-regulation is the capacity to moderate the thoughts and emotions governing human behavior (Leventhal et al., 1998). For students, this may be turning off the phone while studying, exerting effort to listen, or paying more attention to the teacher. Given the extent to which emergent desires could influence behavior, self-regulation suggests that individuals consciously attempt to control their behavior to mediate outcomes (Baumeister & Vohs, 2007). Self-regulation has direct linkages to motivation (Bandura, 1991); the motivation to achieve success is presumably linked to self-discipline and adherence to the strategies that promote goal achievement.

Y es que al sentarme a estudiar, minimizaba mis distractores, apagaba la televisión, cerraba la puerta de mi habitación, evitaba navegar en Internet, enviar o enviar mensajes o texto o responder a llamadas de mis amigos o amigas.

Me enfoqué más que nada en estudiar, no reprobar ninguna materia porque yo quería titularme por promedio. Entonces eso es lo que yo estaba enfocando en ese momento.

Lo que me funcionó a mí era simplemente abstenerme de usar el celular e imponerme 100 por ciento, a estudiar, o a repasar, o hacer trabajos o hacer problemas. También quitarle el volumen al celular porque es como un distractor y como yo he pasado la mayoría de mi vida con un celular, pues diría que sí el celular me quita mucho tiempo y al momento de estudiar, pues no es óptimo tenerlo a un lado.

Self-determination

- Find the way to get there!

Self-determination is a self-sustaining form of motivation influenced by internal stimuli such as having a problem to solve (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Ryan & Deci, 2000). One student said simply: *"I have to find a way to get there."*

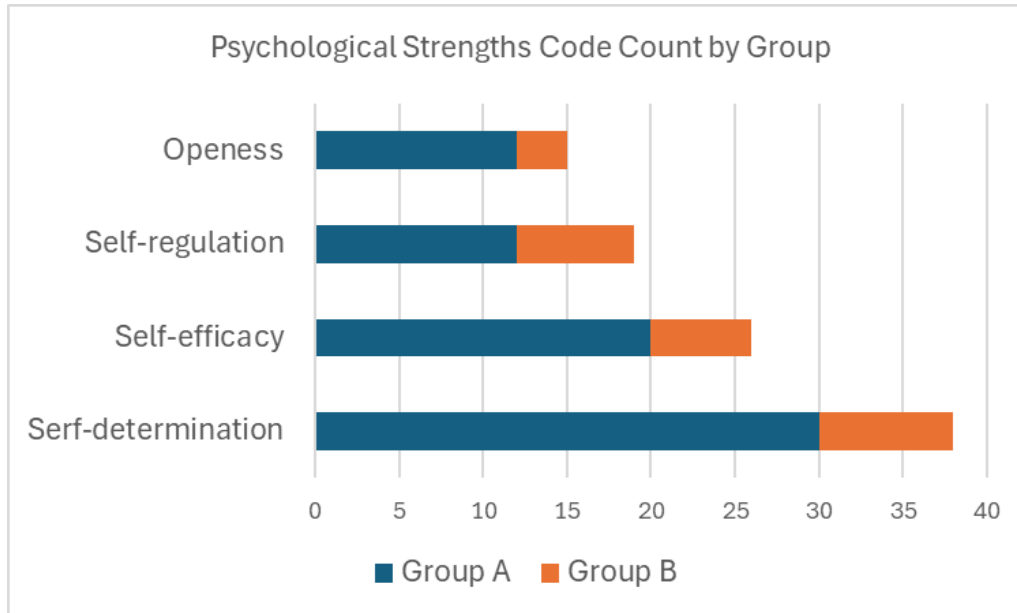
Sí era más que nada eso: Siempre mantener mi GPA bien. Era lo que siempre cuidaba.

[P]or ejemplo en matemáticas si explican un tema aunque el profe no deje tarea, yo me pongo diez problemas en un cuaderno y yo los hago y luego los verifico y si me salen bien pues ya, ya hice mis repasa y si me salen mal pues me pongo otros 10 trabajos. Bueno, repaso que tengo que hacer y hago otros.

De hecho, pues ya está en cada quien verdad? en ponerle ganas, en saber o aprender, ... ya está en cada quien. El querer es poder, como dicen por ahí.

Siempre tuve en mi mente "tengo que buscar cómo voy a pagar mi escuela". Entonces siempre en los programas y era más difícil, pero decía yo, "ni modo, I have to find a way to get there."

Figure 3



Activities and Behaviors as Indicators of Perseverance

Psychological traits like those described above are operationalized with corresponding behaviors, actions, and activities, which are in turn essential for achieving long-term goals such as a college degree or professional career that may since may take years. We thus documented the many task-specific “short-term” activities undertaken to achieve “long-term” goals as indicators of persistence and perseverance. Because activities were highly varied, we categorized them according to their general objectives. We present them below in a hypothetical order of progressive steps towards meeting a long-term goal but acknowledge that the steps are related, may have overlapping objectives, and may take place simultaneously. Their distribution in our sample is then summarized in Figure 4.

1. Education Planning and Independent Research & exploration

- Talk to others about possible careers and consider what the pathway there might entail.

Research shows that educational planning is a collaborative effort, ideally undertaken as one of the first steps taken toward a career path. The collaborative effort may involve different support systems: families, schools, and institutions. In the US, school and college counselors offer invaluable support to students, helping them explore potential career paths. However, the roles that parents and family members play in planning are less known. Our data shows that asking family members about career goals was a strategy. For example, when asked about their future goals, a student was uncertain but was considering if a law career might be suitable.

[N]o estoy muy seguro, porque un amigo de mi mamá estudió leyes y me ha dicho eso de que... tengo que leer un montón... y me gusta la lectura...”

2. Build up your capacity through scholastic programs:

- When and where possible take advantage of programs that provide you with skills or knowledge to help achieve career goals.

Scholastic programs refer to programs designed to enhance academic performance by introducing or reinforcing academic skills and increasing self-confidence. Some of our study participants, participated in training programs (Cursos Propedéuticos), incentivized academic achievement programs (e.g., Open Foundation), or college preparatory programs (International Baccalaureate Diploma Program).

3. Problem-solving (Academic Performance):

- Know what is expected to earn a good grade.

Good grades at one level indicate that you are ready for the next. Students in our study acknowledged this and found ways to maintain good grades. Grades are the most common indicators of performance, but good grades are earned, and maintaining good grades over

time is necessary to further one's education. Knowing what they are expected to do to earn good grades is but one of several tactics for improving academic performance.

- Acknowledge when you might need help, and find help.

Most of the students in our study understood that unsatisfactory grades would hurt their academic progress, and when they found themselves faltering, they sought help from others such as family or friends.

Pues yo, yo le pedí ayuda porque por lo la tarea, pues era más bien tareas que me dejaban en la escuela y pues ya no, no podía solo, ya que le tenía que pedir ayuda.

- Learn to learn and how to learn better.

The academic journey involves reflecting on how one learns and what works best and taking responsibility for one's own learning. This learner-centered approach helps in identifying what detracts from learning and eliminating it and finding what improves learning and adopting it.

Cuando estábamos en línea me pasaba que no entendía algún tema y como tengo mucha familia, sé cuando mi familia sabe de algo, pues cuando estudiaron alguna carrera o algo así. Por ejemplo, cuando estaba en problemas de química, el primer año fui con una tía y ella me enseñó prácticamente a estudiar. Fue como mi maestra o tutora, se puede decir. Y cuando tuve problemas con matemáticas tenía otra tía que me ayudaba también.

- To earn good grades, develop and maintain a system that works to achieve this.

Once a learning tool is identified (e.g. reviewing notes, writing down questions) and it appears to work, work to systematize it: Acknowledge that no teacher is perfect, and that the teacher-student relationship is a partnership in *your* learning.

Pues estaba estudiando o sentado viendo videos [de la maestra], los videos que pueda ver. Y después todo se trató de lo que no se ve en los vídeos...por ejemplo, me aparece algo que yo no sé,... Entonces algo que no está en los vídeos me aparece y no entiendo, pues compro una libretita y lo apunto ahí de una manera que a mí me vaya beneficiar, o sea, que yo me vaya a recordar qué es lo que estudié y se me vuelva a venir a la mente.

4. Problem-solving (Economic):

- Help yourself by applying for scholarships

Students sought and/or applied for scholarships which can ease the burden of having to work to pay for education-related costs, or reliance on material support from a family that is already struggling economically.

5. Preparing for College Admission Exams:

- Become informed about college entrance exams, and what resources there are and who might be available to help you prepare for them.

Sí, creo que fue un mes antes o semanas antes, ingresé a unos cursos para poder entrar en licenciatura para poder salir...Y sí, fue un constante estudiar, estudiar y nerviosismo de tres meses anterior al examen...Sabía que era una carrera también que bastantes personas querían, que sabía que muchas personas que yo conocía no habían logrado entrar. ...Entonces dije, “quiero entrar a esa carrera y voy a lograrlo, [y] conseguir asesorías con mis compañeros”. A veces nos reuníamos a estudiar juntos, descargamos, nos pasaban, se hacía el examen para tener una idea de cómo era...

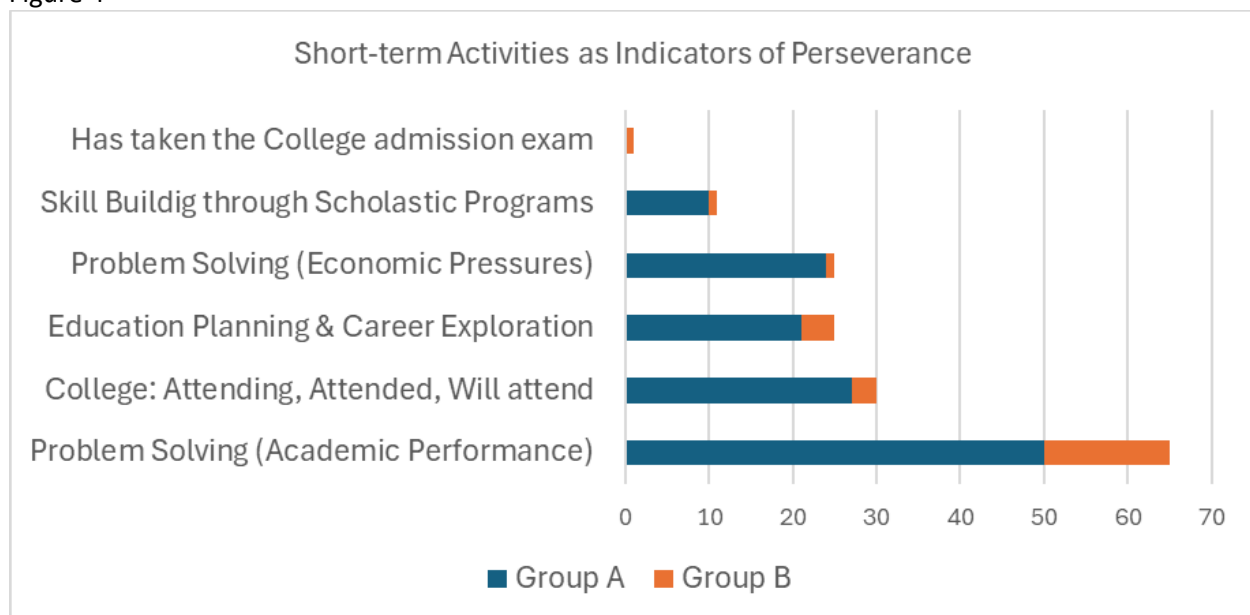
Pues no he tenido dinero para entrar a cursos, pero unos amigos que ya entraron nos van a prestar unos apuntes que tenían. Yo los voy a estudiar y este examen que es de prueba, pues lo voy a usar como guía.

College (Attending, attended, will attend):

- Set the goal to attend college, and attend

We coded students as attending, had attended, or planning to attend a college or university by enrolling in or attending college prep classes; students were filling out admissions applications, had filled out applications or were reapplying for admissions.

Figure 4



Summary

Study participants described several mindsets they felt helped them persist and persevere, which helped them achieve long-term goals despite challenges and disappointments. In addition, however, we also asked what activities were deployed to show how mindsets enabled the corresponding behaviors and actions needed to achieve goals. Our study thus illuminated a range of short-term practical activities and actions sustained over time, making the elements of persistence and perseverance visible, and long-term goals achievable.

Supportive Activities by others

Our study examined goal-setting practices within the social context by exploring how families support their children's schooling and education-related activities. This section is organized by the major themes that emerged from the data we collected: (a) Advocacy, (b) Parental Support for Academic Achievement, (c) Moral, Emotional and Psychological Support, and (d) Material Support. In this way we contribute to others who have also adopted an ecological approach for understanding the roles of parents and others in supporting the educational aspirations of their children (Ceballo. 2004; Carolan-Silva & Reyes, 2013)

Advocacy

For many parents, communicating their children's needs to teachers and administrators can seem intimidating, especially if schools do not promote parent-school engagement. However, because parents have insights about their children's needs, strengths, and challenges that the school may not detect, we found advocacy to be a crucial role that parents undertook to ensure that their children's educational, social, and emotional needs are being addressed beyond the home setting, and regardless of whether the school encourages parent-school engagement (Epstein, 2022). Parents in our study identified important gaps and even negligence in the educational system, which were resolved, but only after they actively engaged in advocacy. The following are some of the approaches parents adopted as advocates for their children:

- Take the necessary steps to improve your children's education: Remember you have the final word.

Parents are likely to be the most familiar with their child's previous schooling experiences and to understand their specific needs. As primary caregivers, parents inform decisions shaping their children's educational journeys. The excerpts in this section highlight various ways in which parents identified and acted on the available options.

- Collaborate with teachers on strategies that will best help your child.

Ahí también me involucré y fui a pedir chance que le dieran oportunidad de entrar con teléfono, de grabar las clases, de entregar las tareas. Este lunes les expuse cuáles

podrían ser las herramientas que él necesitaba y la forma de adecuarlo y lo apoyaron.

○ Consider other educational options depending on your child's needs

[C]omo ir a una escuela pública, a un kínder público regular. La metí a la niña. Sí, o sea, alguien me dijo “sabes que ahí son buena onda, te van a dar chanza de que tú intervengas y todo.” Y sí, muy abiertos, muy abiertos a que “oye, pues esto se maneja así y esto se maneja así”. “Ah, qué bueno, estoy aprendiendo” ... Entonces este sí, sí, sí, sí, la metí en un kínder público.

¿Entonces ahí todos eran superdotados o qué? Y resulta que no, que por ser escuela privada es muy fácil que todos saquen diez. Y dije yo, “pues me lo llevaré a una escuela, me lo llevaré a una escuela pública.” Pero entonces anduve viendo las escuelas públicas.

Y tiene mucho que ver con lo económico. O sea, porque yo puedo saber cuál es la mejor escuela de Sonora o de Baja California, pero también tiene que estar acorde a las posibilidades económicas también. Entonces tienes que sondear bien y preguntar y investigar sobre ... la reputación de esa escuela, los maestros... Sí, creo que es un punto importante, no nada más escribirlo porque me queda cerca de mi casa o porque es la más barata o porque no sé. O sea que hay que saber qué buscarle.

○ Look for opportunities

[C]on la niña me enfoqué más a encontrar una escuela donde me dejaran entrar a ayudarla. Es que, ¿yo pagarle a una maestra sombra para que fuera con ella? Me dieron las planeaciones para hacer la adecuación de sus trabajos. Entonces tuve mucha apertura en las escuelas.

Y sí, llegué aquí y empecé a buscarle. Entonces mucha gente dice, “no, es que aquí no hay nada, es que, esto que lo otro”. Yo pues “es que si lo buscas o lo creas,” también está. Porque como te digo, siempre he estado con la [niña] y mis trabajos siempre se tratan de eso. O sea, yo trabajo en lo que yo creo. Yo misma hice el trabajo que necesito para estar con mi hija ... Entonces, este, es cuestión de buscarle, ¿no? Y sí es... Si hay apoyo, voy y busco. Aquí no hay, toco por la otra puerta. Entonces así, así lo he hecho.

Sí, sí, sí. Me he sentido apoyada, la verdad, pero yo pienso que es porque lo busco, busco el apoyo. O sea, las cosas no te caen así nomás y mucha gente se queja porque no, que no hay aquí que no, no, no, pues no, o sea, si no lo buscas no lo vas a encontrar. Si yo me voy, yo busco, me dirijo a quien me tengo que dirigir.

- Develop social networks through involvement with others; find help through family, friends, etc.

Although parents hold the primary responsibility regarding their children's well-being and education, they are sometimes unable to fulfill this role alone. In this research, it was common to find that to enroll their children in a Mexican school, parents sometimes had to appeal to friends or family members for help. For many returning families, their social networks may have weakened after years in the US. On average, most unauthorized immigrant adults from Mexico live in the US for more than 10 years (Lopez et al., 2021), and in 2017, had lived in the US for 15 median years (Passel & Cohn, 2019). So, it would be important to seek out existing social networks when they arrive and rebuild their social ties with others.

Pues preguntando hija, preguntando. A la niña más grande no me la aceptaron en ninguna escuela especial. Ah, y por parte de la hermana que vive aquí en Hermosillo. Es la hermana de mi esposo. Ella fue la que me ayudó ayudando y para acomodar a la niña a la escuela. A la más grande me la aceptaron en una escuela, en una primaria, pero en la escuela especial de ninguna. Y ahí estuvo estudiando ella y estuvo estudiando [la hija mayor].

- Seek intervention by others

Teachers are not always aware of nor may be prepared for returning students. When a parent identifies that something is unfair or harming their children, it is important that they remember that they are entitled to intervene directly on behalf of their children. Absent this, some participants in our study sought the intervention by others and had better results:

- Government agencies or officials

"Pues deme el número," le dije al de la escuela, y me lo daban y hablaba y me decían que no, que siempre "estaban llenas las escuelas llenas, llenas." Hasta que yo hablé con mucha gente, yo de la Secretaría de Cultura hablé con mucha gente y les dije yo pues bueno, "ustedes no me pueden ayudar. "Le dije, "ahora deme otro número para yo marcar donde sí me pueden ayudar".

- School authorities

... A ver, yo hasta en ocasiones de que fui así directamente a la escuela de que ... No me gusta que pase esto, eso y estas cosas. Yo siempre fui clara, la verdad. Y sí, primeramente sí actuó el director, no, la trabajadora social. Eh... también porque una vez, en una ocasión, una maestra le levantó la voz y yo, "no me anden levantando la voz

para nada, sea como sea, aunque no esté en mi país, no me importa. Pero a ella no la van a levantar la voz”. Y este y sí, sí hizo, sí actuó el director.

- Teachers

Simplemente era de que él ya se aburría. Empezaba a hablar y reportes y reportes porque no se aguanta y porque esto... Y yo les explicaba “es que ya entendió, o sea, tú necesitas mostrárselo, él lo va a escanear la información en un minuto y ya la va a entender de cualquiera que le pongas”. Le digo “entonces necesitas ponerle más trabajo”. [el maestro decía] “No, es que así no trabajamos aquí”. Bueno, entonces nosotros nos hicimos, o más bien se hizo al sistema.

Parental Support for Better Academic Achievement

In this section we focus on supportive behaviors as they relate to academic achievement. A meta study of 75 research studies on the relationship between parental involvement and children’s academic achievement, Boonk et al. (2018) identified four primary ways parents can favorably impact their children’s academic success: by reading to them at home, by having high expectations, by maintaining open avenues of communication with their child’s school, and by encouraging and supporting their children in their learning. Among the parents we interviewed for our study all these were represented in more than one way, and in the context of our study, we are emboldened to add others to the list.

- Help children with their homework

Published findings on how parental assistance with homework impacts academic achievement are mixed. Some studies suggest that the result has been negative (Boonk et al., 2018) and others find that that parent involvement with homework supports their child’s autonomy, which in turn predicts student academic achievement (Gonida & Cortina, 2014). We support the idea that when parents sit with their children while they do homework, they model their commitment to learning and demonstrate the value and importance of homework.

Pues para empezar, les doy mi teléfono, los pongo a y lo siento porque les tengo un área y como si fuera el salón, pues en una pared es en una mesa. Tengo los números, los blogs, colores y todo y ahí lo siento, les conecto mi teléfono, les doy los orejeras y le pongo el internet y todos los conecto ahí lo siento y les arrimo los Colores, toda su Mochila y una mesita de tres colores y crayolas y todo traen tijeras. Y ahí estoy con ellos. Y cuando le hacen a la maestra a hacer tarea, pues ahí me meto por un ladito y ahí le ayudo. O mi hijo más grande también me ayuda mucho, me ayuda con los chamacos, con sus hermanos.

- Monitor and promote student-centered responsibility

Children whose parents have high expectations about their academic achievements have been found to do better in school (Boonk et al.,2018). In our study, there were many examples in which parents provided reminders to their children to do their homework, asking about how they are doing, and emphasizing one's responsibility. In this manner parents communicated to their children that they are paying attention and interested in their academic outcomes. The following quote illustrates as much.

...Pues que le pongan atención a la maestra, que hagan las tareas, de que lo que van a hacer en la casa, que se pongan a estudiar las tablas. Le digo, "tienes que saberte muy bien las tablas", le digo, "porque donde quiera los vas a usar". "Esas tablas ya me las sé", me dije, "a ver si me dedico a esto" y sí me dice, "uno o dos, tres", pero le digo "no, no, no, no, no hace falta", le digo ella y se las tengo pegadas en la pared, yo, las tablas del abecedario, los colores y todo. porque en todas las cosas de mi teléfono, pues todas las cosas las tengo en mi teléfono

- Maintain Communication with teachers and schools

School and home are two important places in which children spend their time. However, teachers do not see what happens at home, while parents do not see what happens at school. Therefore, communication between parents and teachers is important, with parents approaching the teacher or school with questions and taking advantage of invitations to meetings or other school events and listening to what the teacher has to say.

Sí, sí, de hecho eso se hacía cada tres meses o cada 3 meses. No, creo que cada dos o tres meses era eso. Citaba ... muy suave porque es una hora por papá. Tú escoges el horario que puedas ver a la maestra, o sea, te dice Ok. Es hoy una semana que es de entrega de boletas. Entonces tú escoges. Ah, bueno, "¿sabes qué, maestra? Yo puedo el martes a después de las dos de la tarde" y ya te agenda la maestra. Entonces ya tú vas presencial con la maestra e igual pues se quiere ir la niña o no. Y ya estás directamente con la maestra, ya muy suave porque ella te explica todo.

- Find extra help when needed.

When parents were not able to help or attend school visits due to work schedules, they considered extra help from others: other family members, friends, or schoolteachers or counselors. If it is economically possible, they might consider hiring a tutor to help their children with subjects they are struggling with.

Lo que podemos hacer es buscar algún profesional que se dedique a eso, a alguien que sí le entienda y que quizás te lo explique con otras palabras para que lo puedas entender, porque tiene la capacidad de entenderlo.

Ahí fue cuando busqué ayuda para matemáticas exclusiva.

- Offer logistical support to show your commitment to good study habits

Some parents in our study carved out spaces as study areas at home, furnishing them with desks, computers, and books, which served to make clear their commitment to their children's education and their willingness to invest in them. Equally important, was that through these spaces they installed a dedicated space for quiet study. In the following excerpt, the parent also used this space to revitalize the literacy practices that she so admired in US schools, adapting it for their new setting in Mexico:

Sí. Definitivamente es indispensable contar con un lugar donde él tenga su propio escritorio y que de hecho lo tiene en su escritorio, su propia computadora, desde su impresora. Pues lo que se necesita no, acceso a Internet, un lugar bien iluminado...pero ya ve que en México realmente no tenemos, no manejamos la cultura de la lectura, pero yo en mi caso sí, pues he tratado de fomentar también un poco de lectura y si él veo la más mínima intención de tomar un libro o de quizás interesarse por alguna lectura es te gusta? ...eso también es muy importante apoyar.

- Become involved with your child's schooling at home.

Parents described how they supported their children when they were struggling in school. They emphasized study habits at home, such as reminding their children to do homework, admonishing them to pay attention to their teachers, and to study.

Pues que le pongan atención a la maestra, que hagan las tareas, de que lo que van a hacer en la casa, que se pongan a estudiar las tablas. Le digo, "tienes que saberte muy bien las tablas" le digo, "porque donde quiera los vas a usar"...y se las tengo pegadas en la pared, yo, las tablas del abecedario, los colores y todo.

- Help with language learning

Parents need not have a formal education in language learning to help their children academically succeed.

- Spanish

One of their biggest challenges is settling into a new academic environment in Mexico is learning the language of the new environment. At the most basic level, parents can help their children understand instructions or unknown words.

¿Aquí? Yo creí que iba a ser muy fácil, pero no. El niño... [para él] sí fue fácil porque a él sí lo saqué a medio ciclo... yo casi el inglés no lo tengo al 100 por ciento y era muy difícil para mí, porque todo en inglés y en inglés, en inglés. Entonces yo tenía que traducirle

[E]lla [la niña] no hablaba, un poco. No leía ni escribía nada de español. Pues aquí en lo que fue seis meses estuve yo dándole y dándole, dándole. Si se equivocaba, le borraba y otra vez hasta que aprendió y ahorita ya lee ...

- English

Similar to parents' assisting their children learn Spanish, parent can encourage the learning of English, even if they themselves do not know English, by showing that this learning is valued, even if only demonstrating a willingness to listen:

Y no era que sí sabía, que a veces sí le decía "léeme en alto en voz alta para yo escuchar" aunque no entendiera. Pero sabía que estaba lara lara lara y sí...

- Help bridge a gap in content knowledge with what you know

Another significant impact that parents can have in Mexico is in their appreciation for the culture in Mexico where they will learn about new cultural elements, new holidays, different school traditions and routines, different academic content levels, and the ways in which this content is taught in the schools. History and Spanish classes can be especially challenging for returning students because they are learning content for the first time. In our study, parents did this by answering children's questions, while cooking and conversing with their child, and reading to or asking students to read about and nurture a love for Mexican culture or history, as is addressed in the quote below:

... [a] mis hijos yo siempre les inculqué el español. O sea, de hecho mis hijos no tenían en Estados Unidos, ellos no llevaban ninguna clase que les impartiera el español. Pero yo siempre estaba procurando, este, libros de acá de México, de las primarias Y, "léelo, mira es esta es la independencia de México... Yo creo que sí me puse un poquito más estricta con mis niñas y fue más así con Alexa porque le decía yo o sea eh: "México es tu nación" eh.. O sea "Tú perteneces a México." Yo jamás inculqué en la mentalidad de mi hija que ella era de los Estados Unidos, o sea, "tú eres de México". Cada que cambiaba su presidente, este mira ahora este es el presidente de México y siempre la tenía...." o sea "Tienes que aprender a leer y de alguna manera a irte preparando ...a tener a tener un poquito de historia de México." Y lo mismo fue con Noel. No más que Noel, pues tenía diez años.

Moral, Emotional, and Psychological support

In this section, we define moral and emotional support as behaviors described by parents that helped their students' educational progress, their social skills, and emotional well-being. While moral, emotional, or psychological support is often invisible in the schooling experience, its importance to achieving education goals is critical. Studies show that with moral and emotional

support children develop a sense of self-worth, regard for others, emotional understanding, and management skills needed for setting goals, making responsible decisions, and make progress in school (Redding, 2014, p. 6).

- “Échale Ganas!” Remind your children they have your support.

The phrase, “Échale ganas” (“give it your all”) was often used in the conversations between parents and their children. As a popular refrain used in many different contexts, “echale ganas” conveys the idea that with effort and determination, almost any obstacle can be overcome. Its intent is to motivate and to remind that the power of agency resides in everyone and to not give up in the face of challenges. As former migrants, parents are no strangers to determination. As such, they serve as reminders of the need for effort when confronted with obstacles. Scholars such as Giraldo García (2014) and Suárez-Orozco et al. (2009) explain that with heartening speeches, parents communicate interest in the outcome of the educational project. Indeed, parents’ investment and embracing of their roles are key in shaping their child’s future (Kerckhoff, 1989; Smith & Robbins, 1982). In validating and stoking their aspirations, their child is morally and emotionally supported. Below, a parent provided some context and added a proverbial expression for flare.

no soy ... egoísta que los quiera tener aquí conmigo e iba a tener una edad en que ellos puedan regresar a Estados Unidos. Lo que sí, que aquí en México, “sea algo o vete porque aquí no vas a hacer nada o algo”. O sea, como dicen, “el que estudia y el que le echa ganas y que lo apoyen, sale adelante”.

- Support your child’s educational path, wherever it leads them

Parents understand the importance of moral support and backing up their children’s educational decisions—an important factor that is positively related to their academic success because children feel motivated and supported by their parents.

Yo voy atrás de él. Pues el apoyo moral, o sea, él quiere irse, pues yo lo voy a apoyar, si él quiere irse, que adelante. Yo pienso que es importante, muy importante, el apoyo moral. O a lo mejor no ir a ayudarle a estar allá, pero sí a apoyarlo, que es lo que él quiere.

- Support your child’s extra-curricular activities

An important difference between Mexican and US schooling experiences is the amount and nature of extracurricular activities provided in the schools. In public schools in Mexico, there are typically fewer extracurricular activities than in the US. The section on extracurricular activities show that students who engage with them increase their connection to schools and sense of belonging. In Mexico, in contrast to the US, engagement in clubs, art classes, or sports all come with their cost of fees and transport their children if necessary. (See also Material Support below.). In the end, the benefits of such activities include cultural capital and

connectedness to schools which in turn, enhance opportunities to develop additional creative, artistic or academic skills, while increasing their motivation, and ultimately, improved academic results (Wallhead et al., 2014). Below, one parent described how she supported her child by taking him to tutoring classes and sports at school.

... también apoyarlo con actividades deportivas, porque yo siempre pienso, he pensado que todo lo que pensamos o lo que aprendemos también tiene que ir muy acompañado de la actividad física por todo lo que genera las hormonas de la felicidad y todo lo que genera el ejercicio. Entonces también lo estamos apoyando con llevarlo a las actividades deportivas por la tarde en su escuela. Pues creo que de esa manera lo estamos apoyando

- Be involved, stay involved in your child's schooling.

A review of 448 research articles by the American Psychological Association Parental in 2019, affirms decades-long educational scholarship proving how parental involvement in and engagement with their child's education leads to higher student achievement and better social-emotional outcomes. Involvement and engagement can take on many forms but are commonly practiced through parent-teacher conferences, parent-teacher organizations, parents volunteering in the classrooms or field trips, attending or organizing school events, and at-home discussions about schooling, all of which were mentioned by the participants in our study as the excerpt below shows.

Entonces a mí me ayudó mucho trabajar en la guardería con él teniéndolo ahí, porque yo aprovechaba cualquier oportunidad que tenía para utilizar ese material didáctico, todos esos recursos que ni en la vida iba yo poder adquirir para usarlos con él. No, obviamente siempre en equipo, pues porque tenía más niños que atender y de ahí me me seguí involucrando, involucrando hasta que llegó la adolescencia y ya no me lo permitió. Pero mi mejor técnica ha sido involucrarme en la escuela.

Parents also mentioned attending school events, such as spelling bees, or going to parent-teacher conferences as ways of validating their children's achievement:

Cuando mi esposa trabajaba la jornada íbamos, que había juntas, yo también iba y había una vez un concurso en el...Spelling... Yo fui y participe con él, apoyarlo a que no se sintiera solo

- Be attentive to the signs that a professional psychologist may be needed

Psychological support refers to professional support that parents might seek to attend to their children's mental health needs. Many of the adolescents and young adults we interviewed reported struggling with many obstacles to succeeding academically (e.g. lack of social networks, Spanish language proficiency, and cultural knowledge), but other issues include blatant discrimination of returnees and bullying. Many students reported having experienced

frustration, anxiety, shame, stress, and fear, which negatively impacted their adjustment to their new schooling environments. Although not all indicated the need for professional intervention, parents expressed concerns about their children's emotional well-being. Sometimes, parental emotional support and intervention sufficed, but other times, parents realized the need for professional help. Unfortunately, many parents did not have the means or support network to seek help as they were worried about more immediate issues, such as enrolling their children in schools or making ends meet. However, one mother found that despite her efforts to provide academic and moral support, this was not enough to help her child adjust during a difficult period and who was experiencing depression:

Yo acudí con A. cuando le digo que A. tuvo ese ese ese cambio que no quería nada, que de alguna manera A. estaba entrando en depresión y yo tuve que acudir a otras personas, [profesionales] para que, para de alguna manera orientar, orientarme a mí y ayudarme y apoyar a mi hija para que lograra sus metas. Pues entonces creo que si en cualquier momento, cualquier circunstancia, siempre que sea para bien de mis hijos, siempre acudo. Si no está en mis manos, siempre busco otras alternativas u otras posibles soluciones.

Though procuring professional help was little reported by the parents we interviewed, it is important to note that studies have only recently but with greater frequency reported on the negative impact on mental health on children and families that have resulted from forced or voluntary departures from the United States (Rodríguez, 2024; Torres, 2024; Zayas et al., 2024).

Material Support:

Financial costs

We coded for material support if parents or other family members expended money or time to advance their child's schooling and/or educational goals (see Figure 5 below).

- Expect that support for your child's education will come with financial costs

Parents in our study typically felt strongly about their responsibility to financially support their children's education. Many parents hope that their children have a better life that would come with study and someday a profession. This was what they aspired for their children when they first decided to migrate to the United States:

"Yo no te quiero ver así, trabajar", que es un trabajo que está uno orgulloso, debe de estar orgulloso de cualquier trabajo que haga uno, pero él no lo quiere ver así, dice, "yo quiero que tú seas alguien en la vida, que tú seas un profesional para que tú salgas adelante, que tú te quieras ir a comprar lo que tú gustes. Serán lo que tú gustes, pero que tengas una carrera y salgas adelante. Eso es lo que nosotros te vamos a dejar como padres. Eso es lo que te podemos dar nosotros, pagarte tu escuela para que tú puedas salir adelante".

Time spent

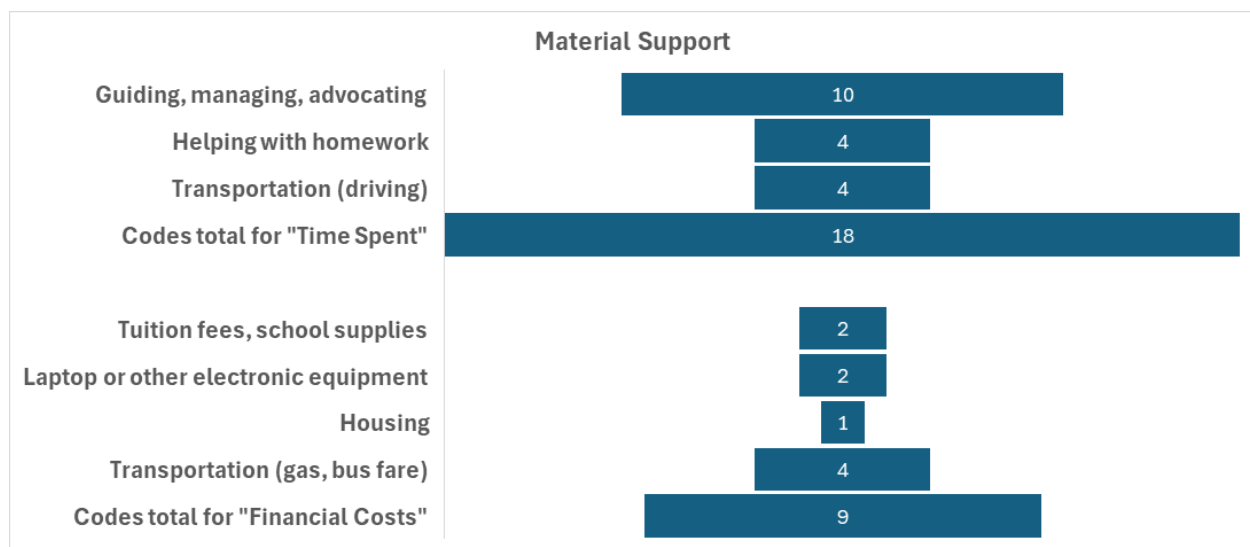
We considered financial expenditures and time to be intricately related, considering that, for most cases, time spent supporting schooling efforts was time away from income-generating activities (in both the US and Mexico). Time was also a valuable resource, given that financial struggles were aggravated by the abrupt and often costly unexpected return to Mexico. A good example is our coding for “transportation,” which counted as an expense (gasoline or bus fare) and time taken to drive to and from scholastic activities.

- Factor in the time you will need to help advance your children’s schooling needs.

Other time-consuming activities included attending school events and parent-teacher conferences, helping students with homework and remaining vigilant that it was completed, and transporting students to and from school or extracurricular activities. Other time-consuming activities involved managing or organizing household affairs to accommodate students’ schooling and/or work schedules.

Como mamá mexicana, estoy friegue y friegue la vida, las tareas, las tareas. Entrega las tareas! Yo no sé, ...es algo tan diferente ...mi mamá no se preocupaba por yo entregar a mis tareas, a mí me dejaba... O sea, es cuestión de calificaciones, no? Pero ahora con estos chamacos es una de las tareas. Que entrega tareas. Y más en esta situación, que “A dónde tenían que mandarlas? Por esta plataforma. Y quién manda sus tareas?” Y yo tengo su cuenta ligada a mi celular. Entonces yo me doy cuenta cuando entrega tareas no? Entonces les trato de inculcarles de verdad la responsabilidad, la responsabilidad de la escuela. Hay muchos niños que trabajan a su edad. Los veo en las calles o en los campos. Y le digo, “Y usted? Su responsabilidad es la escuela”. Entonces, como buena mamá mexicana estoy fregando. Es la vida, la escuela. Primero la escuela.

Figure 5



Summary: Through our coding analysis, we found that financial costs (for school supplies, fees, transportation, and equipment) were about half of all codes applied for Material Support. Although related to the financial cost of schooling, parents spent an appreciable amount of time on any activities supporting their children's schooling. These activities included providing advice or guidance about educational or schooling matters, advocating for them, especially for seeking assistance amidst Mexico's bureaucracies for finding a place in overcrowded schools or securing irregular admission after the school year was underway.

Recommendations

Introduction

Schools' role in educating Mexican children, whether U.S.-born or not, is vital to the acculturation process of newly migrated youth. Social and academic aspects within a school setting can foretell adaptation outcomes. Negative school experiences can anticipate migration trauma. However, positive school experiences can be vital in overcoming migration-related challenges and adjusting to new cultural surroundings. The recommendations section is a quick reference guide to the recommendations based on our analysis of the testimonies gathered from our research participants.

For Returning Students

Academic Engagement

- Look for teachers willing to help.
- If a teacher is not willing to help, don't give up. Find someone who will.
- Claim and appropriate spaces for engagement.
- Look for communities of support; if they are not found, create them.
- Become involved. Remain involved.

Employing available resources and help-seeking behaviors to advance academic Spanish

- Ask questions, ask for help, cast a wide net to include peers, teachers, tutors, parents and other family members, friends or people outside of school
- Comply with homework
- Read with the purpose of learning Spanish
- Look for models of good writing and imitate them
- Observe others/find model behaviors
- Study and do homework with peers.
- Have a peer check or proofread an assignment which (the student) has already completed.
- Ask parents to proofread or check homework
- Approach the teacher to explain your migratory history and language situation
- Ask teachers for extra exercises to practice
- Clarify doubts or ask for more information
- Use Dictionaries (including online) and books to help
- Take advantage of online translation tools

Persistence and Perseverance

- Be open to new opportunities.
- Although much is outside our control, focus on what you can control.

- Focus on what is important—no hay que quitar el dedo del renglón
- Find the way to get there!
- Talk to others about possible careers and consider what the pathway there might entail.
- Take advantage when and where possible of programs that provide you skills or knowledge to help achieve career goals
- Know what is expected to earn a good grade.
- Acknowledge when you might need help, and find help.
- Learn to learn and how to learn better.
- Develop and maintain a system that works for you to earn good grades.
- Help yourself by applying to scholarships
- Become informed about college entrance exams and what resources might be available to help prepare for them
- Set the goal to attend college, and attend

Other

- Create and use dedicated areas for interaction and engagement
- Attending Courses/workshops
- Going to the library
- Visiting Language Labs

For Parents and families of Returning Students

- Encourage your child to seek or create study groups and provide a welcoming and safe place for them to come and study together.
- Attend school events to support your child
- Help with homework
- Assist your child in attaining laptop or other electronic equipment
- Advocate for your child, guide them and help them manage their schedules
- Provide transportation or carpooling
- Be involved, stay involved in your child's schooling.
- Help them with language (Spanish or English)
- Help your children learn and appreciate Mexican Culture
- Help them do homework
- Monitor children's responsibility
- Communicate with teachers
- Find extra help
- Develop social networks through involvement with others; find help through family, friends, etc.
- Seeking intervention by others: Government offices, school authorities, and teachers.
- Make decisions that will improve your children's education

For School Administrators in the Mexican Schools

Although we did not interview administrators, participants' narratives suggested areas where changes might be made to improve the returning student experience and learning, which we provide below for consideration:

- Develop mechanisms (e.g. workshops, training) to help raise awareness among teachers about the risks posed by language barriers and the stigma attached to students as returnees.
- Develop a rewards system that acknowledges and incentivizes teaching excellence for those who, through their teaching and modelling, embody and uphold the school's core values of equity, inclusion, fairness, and respect for all students regardless of their background.
- Establish newcomer student support services as welcoming spaces and to promote an inclusive learning school culture that encourages all students to succeed by providing resources such as orientations, tutoring, and counseling.
- Offer training to create positive engagement opportunities for migrating students and foster classroom and school environments that promote validation rather than microaggressions.

For teachers in Mexican Schools

- Develop a welcoming program for newly arrived students, including peer buddies who can help them navigate the school.
- Acknowledge and value their unique experiences and bilingual skills. Encourage them to share their stories to build confidence and a sense of belonging.
- Evaluate students' Spanish proficiency and provide targeted Spanish language support, especially in academic writing and reading comprehension.
- Recognize and utilize their English proficiency as an asset rather than a deficiency. Allow them to use English strategically while strengthening their Spanish skills.
- Provide bilingual resources and scaffolded instruction to bridge potential learning gaps.
- Conduct diagnostic assessments to identify gaps in knowledge, particularly in math, science, and social studies, as curriculum content may differ between the U.S. and Mexico.
- Implement differentiated instruction and tutoring programs to help them catch up in areas where they may struggle.
- Provide parent workshops or informational sessions to help families understand the Mexican education system, grading policies, and school expectations.
- Encourage parents to support literacy at home in both Spanish and English, reinforcing bilingual development.
- Connect students with community organizations, libraries, and after-school programs that offer bilingual and academic support.

For School Administrators in the U.S. K-12 School System

Adjust to the ongoing changes in the U.S. Administration

- Promote “know your rights” workshops in the community
- Develop statements currently issued by local schools. For example: Letters ensuring a safe school climate and restricted access to Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE).
- Familiarize yourself with nondiscrimination laws in the U.S., such as the Plyer vs. Doe case from 1982.
- Develop school-to-home connections by promoting opportunities for family engagement with their schools.
- Support culturally relevant curriculum to support student’s socio-cultural experiences
- Support training on trauma-informed care and how to access resources and counseling services for students.
- Support teacher’s requests for establishing a Spanish language course.

For Schools and Teachers in the U.S. K-12 Schools

Prepare for evolving priorities of the U.S. government

- Be informed of the rights provided by case law, such as in Plyler v. Doe, 1982.
- Promote cultural understanding that ALL students can use
- Be sensitive to cultural traditions and beliefs of newcomer students.
- Embed Mexican American Studies in curricula and include topics such as immigration and migration.
- When possible support immigrant students with bilingual learning materials.
- Actively support newcomer students when they face challenges in understanding English.
- Develop a school-to-home connection: Cultural bridge, family engagement, culturally relevant teaching, support systems and Identity validation.
- Ask your administrator to create a Spanish Language course.

Consejos

In concluding the study, participants were asked three questions,

1. What advice would they have liked to have received when they first returned to Mexico?
2. What advice do they have for others who are similarly returning to Mexico?
3. Upon your returning to Mexico, what would you have done differently?

¿Qué consejo hubieras querido recibir al regresar a México?

a. Darle prioridad a la educación.

Que por ningún motivo se quedan [los hijos] sin estudiar. Eso sería lo que a mí me habría gustado que me aconsejaran: cómo hacer para que todos ellos estuvieran estudiando, que no se quedarán sin estudios...nadie me dijo eso.

Que me enfocara más en mis estudios, más que en el trabajo...sí, eso yo creo enfocarlo más en los estudios para terminarlo rápido.

[Que] lo que traía ella [mi hija] de Estados Unidos, [que] no se fuera a perder, ...eso que traía en cuestión de educación, ...el aprendizaje que traía de allá no? Pues principalmente que siguiera la escuela, apoyarla para que siguiera adelante.

b. Aprende sobre las escuelas

[Que] aprendan acerca de las escuelas Que nos hubieran dicho “sabes que esta escuela es es muy importante, o le deberían de ponerlo [al hijo] en esta escuela porque hay más ayuda”,les dan más importancia, los alumnos tienen más atención.’

“[Que]cómo eran los trámites para poder meter a mis hijos a la escuela? ¿Las ayudas? O sea, muchas cosas que no sabía. Y aparte que no pregunté.

Que me acercara a la escuela. Que me acercara a las profesoras y a los directores. Hablar. ... Que me animara a acercarme a las personas que van a tratar con mis hijos. Esa es yo creo que la clave, porque una vez que yo aprendí que yo llego directamente a hablar con la persona que va a estar a cargo de mi hija o cargo de mi hijo. Cuál va a ser la calidad en su estancia de mis hijos ahí. ...no estás preguntando cuál escuela es más buena, sino dónde hay una persona que te puede apoyar.

c. Infórmate de como funcionan las escuelas en México

Que es completamente diferente la escuela [aquí] a comparación de allá, pues es algo que no fuera tanto que hubiera sido tan diferente. La forma de educar también era muy

diferente... pues acá, por ejemplo, ...usamos mucho más los libros. Los profes ocupamos un libro, los deciden en dónde agarrarlo y que para cuando lo tenemos que hacer, o en donde nos podríamos ir a comprar y todo eso. Pues por eso es que no, mi consejo hubiera sido que por lo menos hubiera sabido que la escuela es mucho más diferente aquí que allá. Mi consejo.

Que las escuelas son muy diferentes en Estados Unidos, porque eso sí, me tomó a full así el desprevenido, O sea, no tenía ni el más mínimo conocimiento desde el escribir, la manera que iba las clases, .. y eso siento que fue lo que más me afectó aún - para mal. Como que me desorientó mucho.

Me hubiera gustado haber tenido alguien más conocido como que conociera más el proceso de enrolarme en la escuela para haberme metido en cuanto llegué. Eso sí me hubiera gustado. Como no tenía nadie que me dijera nada de eso, pues me esperé como tres años para entrar a la escuela.

d. Ser abiertos

"[Que] sean abiertos, que con los cambios también se presentan oportunidades."

No más acostumbrarse. Comienza a ser abierto.

Cálmate! Ya lo viviste allá y es exactamente lo mismo [aquí], pero como que un poquito más a tu favor, porque es como que ya estás, como que en tus raíces, pues ya estás en tu país. Sí, eso, porque me acuerdo que me frustraba. Pues no sabía.

e. Aprendan un poco de las culturas y tradiciones que la gente tiene

Que aprendan un poco de las culturas y tradiciones que la gente tiene para ya saber cómo hablan, cómo actúan, para que no se les haga tan extraño. Para que tampoco hayan tantos choques culturales.

f. Busca apoyo, y apoya

Que tenga cuidado, que hay muchos trastornos psicológicos, que estés más pendiente, yno dar pie a haber tenido algún tipo de consecuencias, por no haberme dado cuenta [de los trastornos].

Me hubiera gustado que me dijeran déjalo ser [a mi hijo]. Déjalo ser. Porque hasta ahorita es que yo lo estoy dejando ser. ...[no] imponerme, [no] de tratar que siguiera con la misma mentalidad e ideología que tenía cuando vivía en Estados Unidos, siendo un país 100% diferente.

¿Qué consejo le darías a otros/as?

a. Que busquen ciudadana mexicana desde allá:

... Antes de que se vengán, visiten el consulado y en una hora haces todo... Yo fui al consulado de México y me ayudaron a hacer a los niños ciudadanos... porque al llegar aquí a México es bien difícil meterlo [a la escuela] cuando no tienen doble ciudadanía [o nacionalidad mexicana].

b. Que se informen sobre las escuelas:

...Pues lo principal es saber [buscar] dónde meter a sus hijos a la escuela.

...Que le busquen, que le busquen. Que si hay [espacios en las escuelas.]

c. Que no hay necesidad de abandonar el inglés mientras desarrollan el español

(D)arte el tiempo ... de practicar más el idioma [el inglés] ... yo sé que muchas veces extrañamos ... el contenido, vaya el lenguaje, pero también suele estar aquí la oportunidad de conocer más.

Si están al igual como yo llegué, que desconocían un poco el español, que se enfoquen primero en comprender, hablar y entender el español bien.

d. Que mantengan o desarrollen redes sociales de apoyo:

Apóyense en la familia. O sea, si no hay una familia cerca, apóyate en algún amigo... donde haya un apoyo moral... O acércate a alguien porque muchas veces no sabe cómo sale uno de allá. Búscate ese apoyo moral. O sea, ya sea la familia, algún amigo, o el apoyo religioso... La religión que sea, ¿no? la que profese... búscalo. Es muy necesario también.

... Que se acerquen a gente que les inspire confianza... Que se acerquen más con sus maestros, que le expliquen su situación a sus maestros o a su psicóloga en las escuelas.

e. Que no se queden callados:

No tengas vergüenza de preguntar porque te vas a ahorrar mucho tiempo de confusión y problemas, de estrés, de todo... de que no entendiste algo, pero por vergüenza no podías preguntar en frente de todos.

Que sean más abiertos a preguntar, porque uno no es nomás llegar y hacer las cosas... Saber qué es lo que vas a hacer. Preguntar a tu familia si tienes familia. Si tienes amistades, preguntarles, "¿qué puedo hacer para hacer esto para mis hijos"?

Mi consejo sería trata de abrirte más a las personas, porque por lo menos yo, yo sí era muy callado.... Que no se sientan tan callados, pues. Porque algo que yo tenía... era muy callado...

Que tratan de abrirse más a la gente ... para poder conocer más gente también... Ya conociendo más compañeros, muchas veces te ayudan y [si] ocupas ayuda en algo, así como si no lo entiendes a una palabra o algo así, que no sabes leer muy bien... y no te sientes muy cómodo preguntándole al maestro, pero a tu compañero sí... pues él te puede explicar.

f. Que planifiquen metas:

Que siempre, siempre tengan un sueño, o que siempre tengan una meta o un objetivo, algo, lo que sea, y que a lo mejor sí puede cambiar y puede ser muy diferente, pero que siempre va a haber oportunidades. Y solo hay que buscarlas. A lo mejor aquí no se dan en bandeja de plata o en charola de plata, pero a veces se disfrutan más.

g. Que pongan atención a las emociones de los hijos:

Estar pendiente de cómo se sienten sus hijos porque es muy traumatizante [el retorno] para ellos. A veces se necesita terapia familiar y uno no lo hace, entonces eso es estar bien pendiente de cómo se sienten.

h. Que [los hijos] sigan estudiando:

Siempre doy el mismo consejo. Les digo, “estudien algo, agarren un diplomado, un certificado o lo que sea, aprendan algo que les pueda ayudar”.

i. Que tengan la mente abierta:

... Hacerte a la idea de que ya no estás allá, porque si sigues con la mentalidad de, “¡hay, tan a gusto que vivías allá! Y allá costaba tanto, no era tan caro, o te hacías más fácil de ropa.” No, te tienes que hacer a la idea de que ... ya estás aquí.

Don't set high expectations. And I don't mean that in a bad way. It's just [that] you need to get accustomed to the new set of rules. So, trying to bring expectations from over there to here would either disappoint you or maybe even surprise you in a good way. But I tried to assume that everything over there would be the same here. Clearly, it was not. So, I kind of got bummed out for a very long time. So I guess it was just to be like, temper your expectations and sort of slowly accept your new way of living because trying to escape back to the old life you had won't do much for you.

j. Que tengan paciencia:

Que no se frustren... así como aprendieron allá, van a aprender aquí. Todo tiene su tiempo, su momento. Que tomen las cosas con calma. Porque si tú también estás, como que no voy a hacerlo, no quiero hacerlo, me siento mal por no hacerlo, es como que te ciegas, pues, te topas, te bloqueas. Es como que más con calma. Eso sería mi consejo.

Que no se desesperen.... Es que mucha gente se desespera, ¿qué voy a hacer?, ¿dónde la voy a meter [la hija a la escuela]? ... Que ... no se desesperen. Que todo, todo se pone en su lugar. Y todo pasa por algo para bien. Nunca hay que ser negativos para nada. Si vienes de otra ciudad o vas o vienes, no hay que ser tan negativo.

Ser pacientes consigo mismos en que no va a ser una adaptación de un día para otro. Y el pedir ayuda ... a veces es muy difícil, porque a mí, cuando recién llegué, no fue el mejor recibimiento, pero aun así poco a poco fui pidiendo ayuda y me fueron encaminando más y como que saliendo de ese show en que estaba... Les diría también a los demás ... aquí puedes salir adelante también. Y en verdad, todo lo que tú te propones... Hay maneras, hay maneras aquí también de eso, de sobresalir.

¿Qué harías diferente?

a. Adaptarme

So I guess what I would have done differently back then is embrace it, because at that point, there's not really that much you can do. It's just a matter of adapting to your new surroundings and making the best of it. Because in many cases, no matter how much you complain about it, it's better not to dwell on the past, because understandably, it's really, really hard to let go of it. But you need to start, I guess, putting the flame to the ice cube.

No disfruté porque era como siempre I was day dreaming or just thinking I could be doing this and forever happy [if I was in the USA]. Y no estaba disfrutando el presente. ...O sea, ese era mi presente y esa era mi realidad. Pero yo no lo quería como afrontar.

b. Administrar mis finanzas mejor

Hubiera...administrado mi dinero mejor... más inversiones. [haber] empezado un negocio propio mucho más antes. Y pues en realidad no más tener un poco más de enfoque, porque fue que llegué I was like a deer walking in head lights, como dicen not really know[ing] what I was doing so. Tal vez es tener un poquito más de enfoque en mis goals, en mis metas.

c. Buscar Opciones

A lo mejor buscar más opciones en cuanto universidades. Estoy encantada con la Universidad de Sonora y estoy muy a gusto con Sonora, pero ahora me pongo a pensar que había más universidades, que la carrera estaba en otros lugares que....Nunca vi otras opciones en cuanto a las universidades en México.

A lo mejor lo que cambiaría fuera el ámbito escolar. O escuela, tal vez para tener una mejor enseñanza, entonces creo que eso sería lo único que cambiaría... cambiarme de escuela.

d. Apoyarme en otros

¿Qué hubiera hecho diferente? Tal vez ser un poco más, más apegado a las amistades de la secundaria. Bueno, viéndome como llegué y a la situación que llegué era un poco callado con mis compañeros. No, no compartía mucho, pero tal vez es lo único que me puede, de lo que me puedo acordar ser un poco más, más apegado. Tal vez se hubieran presentado más oportunidades en el futuro y si todavía les hubiera hablado, hubiera seguido esa amistad.

Y no estaba disfrutando el presente. Que digo yo, no? O sea, ese era mi presente y esa era mi realidad. Pero yo no lo quería afrontar. Y era cuando tenía problemas de frustración y de que porque esto y lo otro y poco a poco ir saliendo de esa mentalidad y el pedir ayuda. O también lo que hubiera hecho diferente es pedir ayuda desde un inicio y no tener la mentalidad de que hay un anybody.

e. Mantener el Bilingüismo

Tal vez seguir practicando el idioma...El idioma inglés. Digo sí, uno lo practica al oír la tele. Yo leo en inglés, leo novelas, leo libros en inglés, llevo, leo artículos. Sí lo leo mejor que lo hablo. No dejar de hablar en inglés.

Me hubiera gustado haber tomado un curso de inglés externo a las clases que me daban en la escuela. Yo creo que hubiera estado bien...siento que me estanque muchos años en lo mismo... me explicaban cosas que ya sabía ...y a lo mejor si hubiera tomado un curso de castellano, hubiera mejorado.

f. Mantener los Hábitos de Estudio

Tal vez no perder muchos hábitos en el sentido de la educación, como la lectura... en Estados Unidos, todo el tiempo que estuve, estuve en el honor roll o estuve en cada Student of the Month. Entonces al llegar a México, cuando yo mismo me daba cuenta que también había en la escuela en la que estaba, había un honor roll y no estaba ahí, ahora me desmotivada porque pensaba ¿por qué en Estados Unidos si lo podía tener?...Siento que hubiera sido mejor como seguir esos hábitos que traía de ella. Aunque fueran diferentes países, diferentes ambientes. Me hubieran ayudado, siento de una manera mejor.

Pues no enfocarme tanto en los amigos y así enfocarme más en mis estudios, en no, no tratar de caerle bien a todos, pues tratar mejor de mejorar mis estudios.

g. Ponerle atención a las emociones

Dejarlo [a su hijo] que se adaptara a su tiempo, sin presiones.

[Con] la mayor [hija], es a la que dejé un poquito, dando más atención a los otros ..."Pues hija, tú ya estás grande, tú ya entiendes." era la que vivió toda su vida en Estados Unidos.

Los otros no estaban de alguna manera tan afectados porque pues era muy poco, el tiempo, se adaptaron al cambio. Entonces pienso yo que pues [lo que haría diferente es] estar un poquito más alerta, ¿no? De que muchas veces creemos que la atención es a los más pequeños y pues muchas veces no es así.

Creo que haber ido con un psicólogo ... porque sí era bastante el cambio de mudarme. Y luego yo sabía que los demás se reían de mí por no saber hablar español, por la manera en la que hablaba y el acento y todo. Entonces creo que esas dos cosas eran lo principal que cambiaría.

h. Prepararse para el español

Creo que habría tomado clases con alguien profesional de español porque no fue hasta como 5.º 6.º que ya pude hablar decentemente, pero haber hecho eso.

So I definitely could have spent all of that time doing something else, even if it was just to improve bits of Spanish.

Hubiera tomado un curso de castellano...hubiera ido mejorando.

Resources

In the US: Governmental Education Agencies

The United States education system provides programs, agencies and services that support both undocumented and documented foreign students. A list of programs are found in the school the student is registered at and by contacting the school district's resources department. The following are a list of agencies and resources that can be utilized by families when entering the U.S. school system and a new community:

- Head Start and Early Head Start Programs <https://schoolhouseconnection.org>
- Arizona Migrant Education Program (MEP) <https://www.azed.gov/migrant>
- Refugee Student Support (RSS) serves local education agencies (LEAs), community-based organizations, students, and families to ensure that newcomer students have access to educational and essential services <https://www.azed.gov/welcome-refugee-student-support>

In Mexico: Governmental Education Agencies

The Secretaría de Educación Pública (SEP) and the Instituto Mexicano de Educación (IME) offer several services to support students who are migrants or returning to Mexico, including:

EDUCATEL Migrante

A telephone line that provides information about education in Mexico, including revalidating studies, re-entering the national education system, and obtaining scholarships. The line is available Monday through Friday from 8 AM to 8 PM. 1-866-572-9836

Mexterior

This agency provides updated information on the services and educational offerings that the Mexican government has for Mexicans living abroad, and for those who reside or return from the United States. Mexterior provides enrollment information for public schools, revalidation of studies and school control standards, as well as guidance on all the services and programs for returnees who wish to continue their studies in Mexico.

- The website www.mexterior.sep.gob.mx
- The MEXTERIOR phone line at 1-866-572-98-36 for English assistance
- The TELSEP phone line at 01-800-288 6688 for Spanish assistance
<https://sep.gob.mx/mexterior/>

UNAM, Acción Migrante

UNAM Migrant Action is a digital platform that provides users with support, guidance and legal and psychological support to Mexican and non-Mexican migrants who live in the United States or who are now in Mexico.

- The website <https://accionmigrante.unam.mx/>

CIAM

Centro de Información y Asistencia para Personas Mexicanas (CIAM) or Information and Help center for Mexicans is a 24/7 phone line that offers professional and humane support to Mexicans living in the United States and Canada. It offers information on missing family members, consular events and activities as well as orientation in case of fraud or abuse.

- The website <https://www.gob.mx/ciam>
- The phonelines are listed on the following website: <https://www.gob.mx/sre/acciones-y-programas/telefonos-de-emergencia-de-la-red-consular-de-mexico-en-estados-unidos-7865?state=published>

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