

GATESOL Town Hall Meeting Minutes

May 7, 2020

English Learners and their families are struggling outside the classroom. The Board of GATESOL asked the following panelists to share their experience and resources for the benefit of all.

Panelists

Lourdes Garcia Padilla

Parent Resource Specialist

Cobb County Schools

Francisca Banuelos

Parent Volunteer

Bartow County Schools

Bethany Miller

Social Worker

Cobb County Schools

Nury Castillo Crawford

Director of Academic Support

Gwinnett County Public Schools

Author/Publisher of 1010

Moderator: Greg Wickersham, President of GATESOL

Panel Discussion: What are the pressing needs that you are seeing and how are you addressing those needs?

Lourdes Garcia Padilla

Needs:

Families have a lack of technology, have challenges meeting food needs, and there are also housing needs.

Suggestions/Examples: Collaborate with families, teachers, community members to find resources. Students are able to connect due to this collaboration. We are all in this together.

Bethany Miller

Needs:

Access to digital learning & food

Suggestions/Examples: Help parents become competent/literate in basic technology

Create visual aids

Develop relationships with families and community members. Cultivate a collaborative effort and a "whole village" cooperative mentality. For example, CCSS has support from Cobb Foundation, PTSA, church groups, the Atlanta Braves restaurants, and others.

Maintaining family stability is the key. We have been able to provide 100 tablets to families through this community support system to stay connected. Also, 300 families now have food assistance.

Online Resources:

Cobb County has a resource database

- <http://www.cobbk12.org/FamilyResources/> – local/state-wide/national links
- <https://www.readyrosie.com/> – online educational support

Francisca Banuelos

Needs:

Parents need to feel welcome

Suggestions/Examples: Kindness can overcome language barriers and make parents feel welcome/part of the community.

Make one-to-one connections

Use bilingual texts for academics

Find a way for non English Speaking parents to help/feel welcome (make copies, share a meal together, meet individually)

Reach out to Francisca if you need help making those connections. She encourages a grassroots effort to support parents and teachers. She is a community organizer, family advocate, and volunteer problem solver. Frannybanuelos87@icloud.com

Resource Suggested: WhatsApp – sends messages

Nury Castillo Crawford

Needs: The graduation gap is an ongoing concern and we are addressing disparities that have come to light

Suggestions/Examples: Address student access to computers
Food services have been provided (68 school sites and food delivery through buses)
Partnered with Public Library System for free tutoring for academic support
Communicate in the language needed. Provide digital learning updates in several languages for parents.

Nury Castillo Crawford is also a publisher of bilingual books

(<https://www.1010publishing.com/>)

She generously provided 4 books that celebrate being Latina and bilingual (very empowering). They will be randomly given to participants today

2 copies of *Sofia and Vivi* – Sofia is trying to be a great big sister

2 copies of *3,585 Miles to be an American Girl* - The journey of a girl moving to the US

Panel Discussion: Additional Comments regarding the lack of technological skills

Francisca Banuelos:

Comments: Family literacy & technological literacy - some parents lack emails and that is a barrier. Older students have less of a problem with this issue.

Perhaps moving forward, we need to have a class for parents on how to create an email and use technology.

The public library also has technology classes and ESL classes

Schools can use their computer labs for classes

Lourdes Garcia-Padilla:

Comments: Having parent workshops all year. Now technology training happens over the phone.

Bethany Miller

Comments: Continue developing relationships with community stakeholders and nonprofits (when we are able to meet in person again) to bridge the technology gap

Link with senior groups who have the time and skill to mentor parents in technology.

Schools can use community rooms in subdivisions and apartment complexes to provide onsite training. Collaborate with HOAs/leasing offices.

Nury Castillo Crawford

Comments: Biggest challenges have been finding resources for the support of undocumented parents. Many resources require some type of identification. Some grant based nonprofits and churches have limitations because these grants require participant identification.

PTAs have been helpful

Public library resources should not be an issue. Libraries may be closed, but they are providing virtual tutoring

Various panelists suggested resources

- Tutoratl.org (<https://tutoratl.org/>)
- Tutor.com (<https://www.tutor.com/>)
- Mango languages – English learning resource usually free through public libraries (<https://mangolanguages.com/>)
- The Good Samaritan – Medical assistance (<https://goodsamatlanta.org/patients/our-services/>)
- YMCA (<https://www.ymcaatlanta.org/community-update/>)
- St. Vincents dePaul – food/rent assistance (<https://www.svdpgorgia.org/who-we-are/contact-us/>)
- Social Media – Get creative and spread the word about what you need. Perhaps a company isn't using it right now and can help. Ask neighbors/post your needs

Other Comments

Elizabeth Webb - Supervisor, ESOL and Title III, Cobb County Schools
GATESOL Secretary/Board member

It would be productive to share/network with a team because collaboration is so important.
Documentation concerns create additional barriers.
Transportation is also a barrier – just getting to the resources. Collaboration is key.

Resources Suggested in Chat Room and from Panelists

- Purposity - International organization matching needs with givers/donors. <https://about.purposity.com/>
- Latin American Association (LAA) <https://thelaa.org/covid-19/>
- Ser Familia – helps families in need <https://serfamilia.org/>
- Infoline.com <https://infoline.com/>
- 211 – United Way <http://211online.unitedwayatlanta.org/>
- Unite for Literacy <https://www.uniteforliteracy.com/>
- Foodfinder.org <https://foodfinder.us/>
- Aunt bertha – Similar to United Way <https://www.auntbertha.com/>
- Ready Rosi <https://www.readyrosie.com/>
- Latina Community Fund – Bilingual services mapped across the state <https://lcfgeorgia.org/>
- Middle GA Community Food Bank <https://www.mgcfb.org/>
- Center for Pan Asian Community Services (CPACS) – <https://cpacs.org/>
- Cobb Moms Helping Cobb <https://www.facebook.com/groups/helpingcobb/>
- MUST Ministries <https://www.mustministries.org/>
- Your Local School System
- Create a fund at your school– Host a pancake breakfast, spaghetti dinner, or a \$5 jean passes for teachers. The staff is always willing to help. Of course, you will need your principal's approval).

Panel Discussion: Any comments about what schools can do to help newcomers during this time?

Francisca Banuelos: Help new ESL students – create newcomer guides. Parents need acclimation to the US as well.

Bethany Miller: Reach out to school social workers/counselors for welcome group lunch bunches to help newcomers get connected/settled

Lourdes Garcia-Padilla: High school classrooms need to be a safe place for all. Check on them often to see if they need clothing/food/anything.

Other Comments

Elizabeth Webb: Review IEPs and the trends you are seeing with gaps in student education. It might be useful to view those.

The GADOE has provided guidance and a link for newcomer information during COVID-19 crisis.

[https://www.gadoe.org/Curriculum-Instruction-and-Assessment/Curriculum-and-Instruction/Pages/English-to-Speakers-of-Other-Languages-\(ESOL\)-and-Title-III.aspx](https://www.gadoe.org/Curriculum-Instruction-and-Assessment/Curriculum-and-Instruction/Pages/English-to-Speakers-of-Other-Languages-(ESOL)-and-Title-III.aspx)

Panel Discussion: Final Thoughts

Francisca Banuelos: Willing to travel to encourage parent involvement, but please provide enough notice

Bethany Miller: Be mindful of trauma and it's impact on learning

Students will be more stressed having been isolated (anxious, depressed, etc.)

Resource packet – mental health awareness resources provided in the packet.

Let's make it common knowledge that there is nothing wrong with you if you have these feelings

Announcements

Winners of the 1010 Publishing Giveaway (Autographed copies of Nury Crawford Castillo's books)

Elizabeth Dugger

Billie Gonzalez

Judy Pena Perez

Jack Anderson

GATESOL Virtual Conference

Not a series of webinars – this will be a full conference experience

Contact: Jennifer Pendergrass, GATESOL Conference Chair (jpendergrass@gatesol.org)

Conference Registration link <http://gatesol.org/Registration>

Early Bird \$45/member and \$75/non-member (through June 30, 2020)

GATESOL Membership

Contact: Jeff Terrell, GATESOL 2nd VP/Membership Chair (jterrell@gatesol.org)

\$30/year – GATESOL is a grassroots volunteer only organization and a nonprofit 501(c)(3)

Membership link <http://gatesol.org/page-845251>

Stay tuned for updates and more events to support the TESOL community!

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