

**UC IRVINE PROJECT REACH & MATH CEO**

proudly bring you

# THE POWER OF PARENTS

Educational lessons in times of challenge from parents like you

**PART 1 | OCTOBER 2021**

Read about the incredible ways  
Orange County parents overcome challenges to help their kids in school



# DEAR PARENTS,

Thank you for taking the time to read this booklet. We are a group of educators from the University of California in Irvine. Our work is all about understanding how students learn and how parents and after-school programs help in students' learning. It is a pleasure to meet you.

It's been a challenging time for many families. But through the changes and uncertainties in the last year, you have made it work. So, **we want to celebrate YOU**—the parents of students learning during the COVID-19 pandemic—**by showing how parents have continued to support their kids in school during a time of challenges.**

In the next pages, you will read stories about **how parents like you overcame challenges when helping their kids in school and have helped students overcome challenges themselves.** We hope these stories underline **how you make amazing impacts in your students' lives and give you more ideas on how to help your children in school!**

Sincerely,

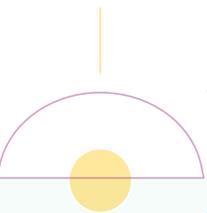
Nestor Tulagan, Ph.D.

Alessandra Pantano, Ph.D.

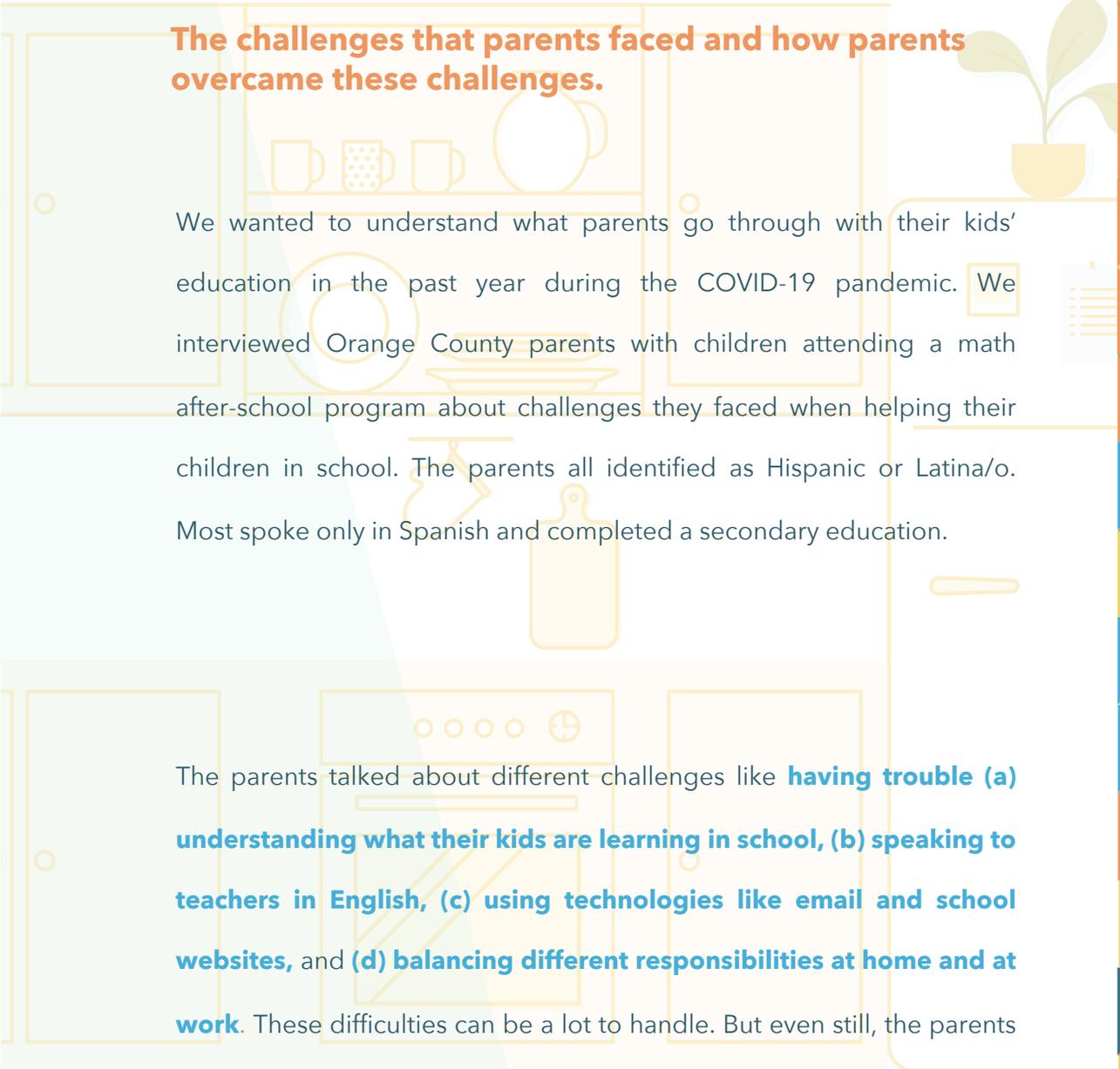
Sandra Simpkins, Ph.D.

*University of California, Irvine*





# "IF I CAN'T HELP, I FIND SOMEONE TO HELP."



## The challenges that parents faced and how parents overcame these challenges.

We wanted to understand what parents go through with their kids' education in the past year during the COVID-19 pandemic. We interviewed Orange County parents with children attending a math after-school program about challenges they faced when helping their children in school. The parents all identified as Hispanic or Latina/o. Most spoke only in Spanish and completed a secondary education.

The parents talked about different challenges like **having trouble (a) understanding what their kids are learning in school, (b) speaking to teachers in English, (c) using technologies like email and school websites, and (d) balancing different responsibilities at home and at work.** These difficulties can be a lot to handle. But even still, the parents took these problems head-on and found ways to overcome them. ■

*Read about what parents did to deal with challenges in the next pages!*

# HOW PARENTS OVERCAME CHALLENGES

Parents relied on MANY strategies to get through these challenges. Here are the five important things that Orange County parents did to overcome challenges and to support their children in school.

- 1. Parents asked for help from family members.**
- 2. Parents asked for help from schools and after-school programs.**
- 3. Parents worked together with their children despite difficulties.**
- 4. Parents used helpful digital tools like Youtube videos.**
- 5. Finally, parents made sure their child had the opportunities, spaces, materials, and structure to learn at home.**

Read the next pages to learn more about how these strategies helped parents!

# HOW PARENTS OVERCAME CHALLENGES

## 1. Parents asked for help from family members.

"If she were to ask me, I'm sure if I didn't know the answer and that was the issue. Of course, I will go to my brother because he's more the brains... When I get home, it's like, 'I'm done with my homework. We can just continue on with our other duties.' **I don't really go back and question her like really see it because again, I trust my brother, and he checks on her.**"

- Penelope, mother of 7<sup>th</sup> grader Emma

The whole family unit matters. Different family members may provide different types of help for your teens. Many parents rely on the close relationships they have in their family to make sure their child does well in school. So, relying on members of your family for help is an important tool to support your child.



# HOW PARENTS OVERCAME CHALLENGES

## 2. Parents asked for help from schools and after-school programs

"I think that it is important to help them because regardless, if one does not help them, they will not feel supported. **There was a time when he had a problem that I couldn't help him and I already told him, 'You know what? I didn't find solutions here, nor did I understand. Today you have to tell your teacher to help you because you didn't understand.'** When there is something like this that I do not understand, **I also go with the girls [at the afterschool program] and ask for their help,** I look for extra help, then they explain to me how to do the problem and I will come and help him. **It is almost always what I do, find a way to help him and if I can't, I try to find someone to help him."**

**- Carmen, mother of 6<sup>th</sup> grader Christian**

Working with educators in your child's life is so important because they likely know the the type of help your child needs to succeed in school.

But, we recognize that talking with educators can be intimidating. In the next pages, we provide tips and resources for you to start communicate with your teachers.

# **STARTING A CONVERSATION WITH TEACHERS**

Here is an example on how to start a conversation with teachers.

Feel free to use copy and paste for emails or use as a guide to talk with teachers on the phone!

*Dear [Teacher],*

*My name is [Your Name]. I am the parent of [Child name]. I would like to speak with you about my child's progress in your class. Would you be able to contact me at [contact information] when you are available? The best time to talk to me would be [Times to call teacher].*

*Thank you for your time.*

*Sincerely,  
[Your Name]*

# **STARTING A CONVERSATION WITH TEACHERS**

## **SOME MORE QUESTIONS TO ASK TEACHERS:**

- ❖ **HOW DO I CHECK MY CHILD'S SCHOOL ASSIGNMENTS ON THE INTERNET (CANVAS, GOOGLE CLASSROOM)?**
- ❖ **HOW DO I CHECK FOR MY CHILD'S GRADES AND MISSING ASSIGNMENTS ONLINE?**
- ❖ **HOW DO I GET ALERTS EVERY WEEK TO SEE WHICH ASSIGNMENTS MY CHILD HAS COMING UP?**
- ❖ **HOW CAN I MONITOR MY CHILD'S PROGRESS AND SCHOOL ASSIGNMENTS?**
- ❖ **HOW CAN I SUPPORT MY CHILD AT HOME?**
- ❖ **WHERE CAN I GET MY CHILD HELP IF I CAN'T HELP THEM?**
- ❖ **CAN I MEET WITH YOU VIA THE PHONE, SKYPE, OR ZOOM?**

It is important that your teacher responds to you and that you both work together to solve problems your child may have at school. If your child's teacher does not respond to you in a week, follow up with the school administration to see how they can help.

# HOW PARENTS OVERCAME CHALLENGES

## 3. Parents worked together with their children despite difficulties

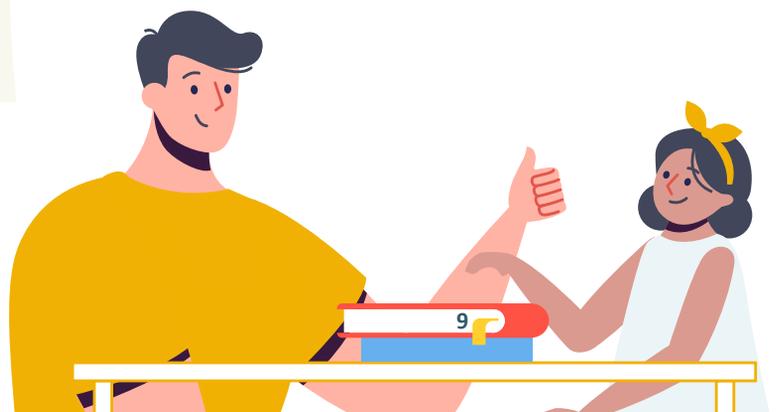
"Sometimes I approach her, asking her even though I don't have knowledge about it, I ask her, 'What are you doing?' She begins to explain, although I honestly don't even know what she is talking about, but she says, 'It's easy, it's like that', and she asks me, 'How would you do it?', I say, 'I really don't remember', I know that at some point I did, but that's when I realize yes, she is learning. Yes, then **she also says, 'There is more than one way to do it.**

**Look, it is done in one way, this is the second option that can be solved,' and that's when I can make sure that yes, she is doing it right."**

**- Gabriela, mother of 8<sup>th</sup> grader Araceli**

Some parents had their children explain to them what their child knows about a subject and others helped their children understand what the questions were asking in their schoolwork.

The ability for your child to practice demonstrating their knowledge and understanding is an important life skill that you both can work on!



# HOW PARENTS OVERCAME CHALLENGES

## 4. Parents used helpful digital tools like YouTube videos

“Sometimes there are things that I do not understand because my level of school was minimum. I only finished primary and secondary school since where I lived that was the only thing there was. Right now, when I don’t understand something or he asks me about something, **what I do is use YouTube, look for more or less the same thing that he is doing and now see the videos on YouTube how to do it, how they explain it and now that way I can help him a little more.**”

**- Carmen, mother of 6<sup>th</sup> grader Christian**

Technology is a big part of students’ lives today, and so parents can use it as a tool to support their kids.

In the next pages are helpful online tools to help you support your child’s learning!



# ACTIVITIES TO LEARN TOGETHER ONLINE!

Learning and doing educational activities together with your child has many benefits. First, doing educational activities helps parents relearn skills that their children are learning, which makes it more likely that parents can help students with schoolwork when needed. Second, learning together can help start or continue students' interest in specific subjects in school. Last, doing activities together can help strengthen your bond with your child, helping you to become closer with each other!

In this page, we offer some suggestions for enriching math games, lessons, and activities that you and your child can do together.

## PBS DIGITAL STUDIOS

- ❖ [PHYSICS GIRL](#)
- ❖ [TWO CENTS \(FINANCIAL LITERACY\)](#)

## PBS LEARNINGMEDIA COLLECTIONS

- ❖ [MATH AT THE CORE](#)
- ❖ [KHAN ACADEMY](#)
- ❖ [CYBERCHASE](#)

## MATH CEO

- ❖ [MATH CEO GAMES](#)
- ❖ [MATH CEO PRINTABLE ACTIVITIES](#)
- ❖ [VIRTUAL MATH CIRCLE ACTIVITIES](#)
- ❖ [PERSONAL ENRICHMENT ACTIVITIES](#)

## NASA SCIENCE ACTIVITIES

- [NASA FAMILY ENGAGEMENT](#)
- [JPL EDUCATION ACTIVITIES](#)

## MATH VIDEOS ON YOUTUBE

- ❖ [ADUGO & KOMIKAN](#)
- ❖ [HNEFATAFL](#)
- ❖ [STUDY HALL - ALGEBRA](#)

# HOW PARENTS OVERCAME CHALLENGES

## 5. Finally, parents made sure their child had the opportunities, space, materials, and structure to learn

"More than anything, **if I find out that there is going to be a program of some kind, I convince him [to go]...** If there is a meeting there and if I know there are going to be programs for children, I try to make them. I don't work, I'm focused on them and I say, **'I have to help them to improve themselves.'**"

- Daniela, mother of 6<sup>th</sup> grader Ian

"I'm not really good at math like I told you. **What we try is to get her a desk that she can go in her room and close the door without my babies interrupting her.** Right now, **she's been doing really good since she started doing this program (Math CEO) after school.**"

- Itzel, mother of 8<sup>th</sup> grader Luna

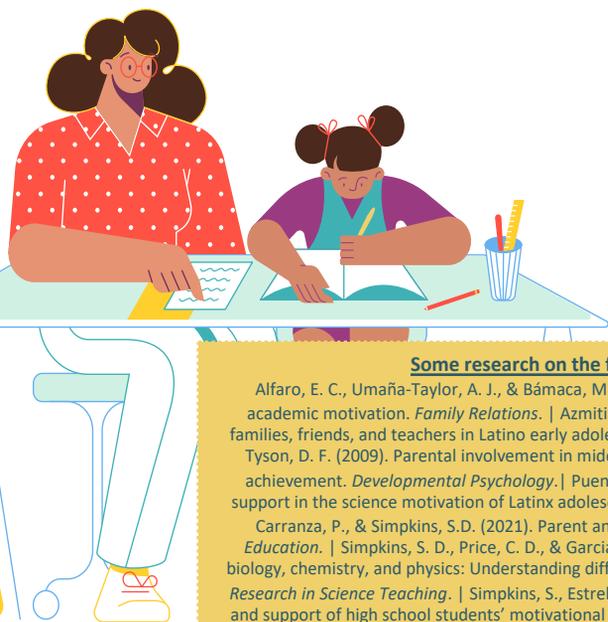
For parents like Daniela and Itzel who face challenges in helping their children directly in school, giving students' learning opportunities at home without distractions or in educational after-school programs is just as important as working directly with your child.



# PARTING THOUGHTS

We wanted to learn from the voices of parents how they adapted and responded to challenges they faced in the last school year. What is amazing is that the research on families shows that the more parents use these supports, the better their children do in school (see the list of research below!).

We hope that some of the stories give you ideas on how to deal with challenges and other ways to support your child's education. More importantly, we hope these stories give you a sense of assurance at how impactful you are in your kids' lives! We thank you again for influencing the next generation of lifelong learners.



## Some research on the family's support and students' education:

Alfaro, E. C., Umaña-Taylor, A. J., & Bámaca, M. Y. (2006). The influence of academic support on Latino adolescents' academic motivation. *Family Relations*. | Azmitia, M., Cooper, C. R., & Brown, J. R. (2009). Support and guidance from families, friends, and teachers in Latino early adolescents' math pathways. *The Journal of Early Adolescence*. | Hill, N. E., & Tyson, D. F. (2009). Parental involvement in middle school: A meta-analytic assessment of the strategies that promote achievement. *Developmental Psychology*. | Puente, K., & Simpkins, S. D. (2020). Understanding the role of older sibling support in the science motivation of Latinx adolescents. *International Journal of Gender, Science and Technology*. | Ramos Carranza, P., & Simpkins, S.D. (2021). Parent and sibling science support for Latinx adolescents. *Social Psychology of Education*. | Simpkins, S. D., Price, C. D., & Garcia, K. (2015b). Parental support and high school students' motivation in biology, chemistry, and physics: Understanding differences among Latino and European-American boys and girls. *Journal of Research in Science Teaching*. | Simpkins, S., Estrella, G., Gaskin, E., & Klobardanz, E. (2018). Latino parents' science beliefs and support of high school students' motivational beliefs: Do the relations vary across gender and familism values?. *Social Psychology of Education*. | Soto-Lara, S., & Simpkins, S. D. (2020). Parent Support of Mexican-Descent High School Adolescents' Science Education: A Culturally Grounded Framework. *Journal of Adolescent Research*.



# WE'D LIKE TO TALK TO YOU!

This booklet would not be possible without the help from parents like you. Learning from parents has been an important part of the work that we do. So, we'd like to talk with YOU! Please consider being part of our interviews. If you'd like to share your story, reach out to **Dr. Nestor Tulagan** at [ntulagan@uci.edu](mailto:ntulagan@uci.edu) or **619-727-1338**.

We will also send information through the after-school program your child attends!

## Acknowledgements

This booklet wouldn't be possible without the parents, students, and families who were a part of the interviews and the Math CEO after-school program at UCI.

Thanks to the college students who helped get information from these interviews. Talented doctoral students like Stephanie Soto-Lara, Kayla Puente, and Perla Ramos Carranza provided amazing expert insights into Latinx/Hispanic families. Hard-working rising scholars like Victor Arroyo, Cody Uyeda, Victoria Rocha, and Priscilla Castaneda were instrumental in helping make sense of the data.

