

November 2021

## Listen to the Voices: A Reflection on How 2020 and COVID-19 Have Affected Lives

Sara Abi Villanueva  
*Garcia Early College High School, villanueva7784@gmail.com*

Alexandra C. Daub  
*alexandradaub@dusty.tamtu.edu*

Alejandra Y. Martinez  
*alejandra.mtz451@gmail.com*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.sfasu.edu/jma>



Part of the [Elementary Education and Teaching Commons](#), [Higher Education and Teaching Commons](#), [Junior High, Intermediate, Middle School Education and Teaching Commons](#), [Online and Distance Education Commons](#), [Pre-Elementary, Early Childhood, Kindergarten Teacher Education Commons](#), [Secondary Education and Teaching Commons](#), and the [Social and Behavioral Sciences Commons](#)

Tell us how this article helped you.

---

### Recommended Citation

Villanueva, Sara Abi; Daub, Alexandra C.; and Martinez, Alejandra Y. (2021) "Listen to the Voices: A Reflection on How 2020 and COVID-19 Have Affected Lives," *Journal of Multicultural Affairs*: Vol. 6 : Iss. 2 , Article 20.

Available at: <https://scholarworks.sfasu.edu/jma/vol6/iss2/20>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Journals at SFA ScholarWorks. It has been accepted for inclusion in *Journal of Multicultural Affairs* by an authorized editor of SFA ScholarWorks. For more information, please contact [cdsscholarworks@sfasu.edu](mailto:cdsscholarworks@sfasu.edu).

## Listen to the Voices: A Reflection on How 2020 and COVID-19 Have Affected Lives

*Sara Abi Villanueva, Garcia Early College High School*  
*Alexandra C. Daub, Texas A&M International University*  
*Alejandra Y. Martinez, Texas A&M International University*

Throughout the last few months of 2019, stories of a new and deadly virus were on every news channel around the world. Many Americans saw it as foreign news, others worried about the virus's spread, and some felt that it would be contained quickly, never making it past the Atlantic or Pacific. How wrong many were. By March of 2020, COVID-19 made its way to the United States, forcing a new normal of quarantining, remote learning/teaching, and teleworking. For members of Professional Opportunities Supporting Scholarly Engagement (POSSE), a program for graduate students *in* and *of* the College of Education at Texas A&M International University (TAMIU), Laredo, Texas, moving to virtual gatherings enhanced the opportunity for members at a distance to be more active. Members' first chance to contribute to the international discourse came with an invitation to participate in a project led by two organizations, the International Council on Education for Teaching (ICET) and Mapping Educational Specialist knowHow guide (MESHguide). These organizations wanted to learn about teacher experiences during COVID-19. In October 2020, educators and graduate students were invited to join their international symposium attended by educators from across the world and were given a window of opportunity to share the challenges and victories experienced during the pandemic (see Daub et al., this issue). As helpful as this symposium was in allowing members to debrief and listen to similar struggles from around the world, we wondered: How were other educators fairing with the situations they were facing?

In November 2020, a chance to help answer that question arose when Dr. Osaro Airen, the editor of the *Journal of Multicultural Affairs*, invited Professor Tonya Huber, POSSE founder from TAMIU, to serve as guest editor. Huber then invited POSSE members, with previous editorial and reviewing experience, to serve as guest assistant editors, editorial assistants, and reviewers. This was the opportunity POSSE had been waiting for; there was now a platform to launch our queries. Deciding to make this a comfortable process for all, a simple questionnaire was sent to as many educators, parents, and concerned citizens as possible. This would help us *voice* as many concerns, challenges, struggles, and even victories as possible. It is important to note that while POSSE was already engaged in a research-based study of educators' experiences during the pandemic (see Daub et al., this issue), this project was an opportunity to listen to others' voices and share about their experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic.

We created a questionnaire (see Figure 1) using Google forms to make this project possible during this virtually mandated time.

Figure 1

Google Form Questionnaire

POSSE gathered demographics (see Figure 2) from those responding to the reflective questionnaire; this would help provide a clearer picture of those volunteering to answer the questions. It is important to note that we allowed our participants to choose whether their words could be published, and if so, how they wanted to be represented. Some chose to identify with full or partial names. Participants were also given the

opportunity to choose how they wanted to racially/ethnically identify; they were given the opportunity to self-identify with fill-in-the-blank options instead of choosing from forced-choice options.

**Figure 2**

*Demographic Questions, Reflections on 2020*

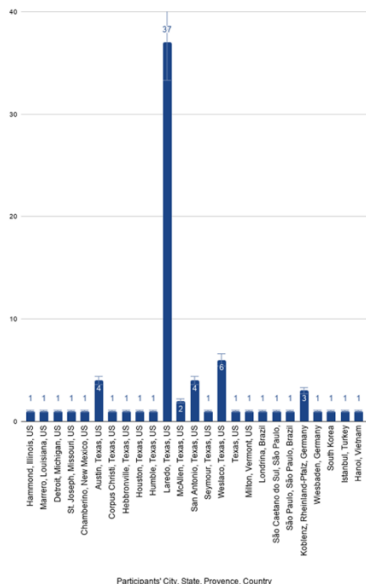
The authors reached out to POSSE members to help complete and pass along the reflective questionnaire. Social media platforms, like Facebook, LinkedIn, and Twitter, were used to share the Google form link. Seventy-five volunteers from seven states—Illinois, Louisiana, Michigan, Missouri, New Mexico, Texas, and Vermont—and from five other countries—Brazil, Germany, South Korea, Turkey, and Vietnam (see Figure 3)—responded to some or all of the 14 reflective questions/prompts:

1. How has the pandemic positively impacted your life/education?
2. How has the pandemic negatively impacted your life/education?

3. How do you see your country recovering from the turmoil created by this pandemic?
4. If you could time travel to right before the pandemic, what piece of advice would you give yourself?
5. How have you occupied yourself during lockdowns? (e.g., watching t.v., reading books, playing games ... )
6. What was the last book you loved?
7. Who is an educator who inspires/inspired you and why?
8. Who is a role model who inspires/inspired you, and why?
9. What should educators read next?
10. What makes a teachable moment?
11. Share a favorite teaching tip.
12. Teaching and Learning is/are ...
13. How would you describe your class/home experience in 2020 using a song, image, sound, movie, emotion, or food? You can respond with text and/or an authentic photo/image.
14. Something else you would like to share ...

Figure 3

Participants' Location

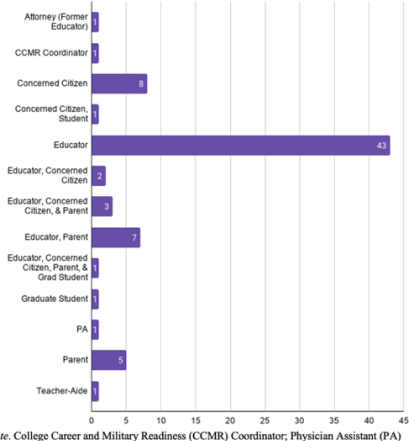


Note. Two participants responded only with the name of their state or country.

Participants ranging from educators, parents, students, and those who were outside of education responded to the call (see Figure 4). Because participants were allowed to choose more than one occupation/title or to fill in their title, some chose to identify multiple titles, such as educator, parent, and concerned citizen.

Figure 4

Participants' Occupation/Title



Note. College Career and Military Readiness (CCMR) Coordinator; Physician Assistant (PA)

Other facets of information that we asked participants to share with us were

generation (see Figure 5), gender (see Figure 6), and racial/ethnic identity (see Figure 7), for which participants filled in a blank rather than a forced-choice option.

Figure 5

Generational Identification

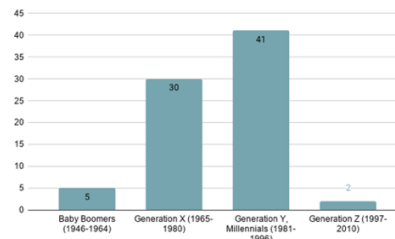


Figure 6

Gender Identification

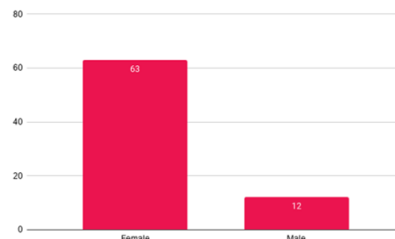
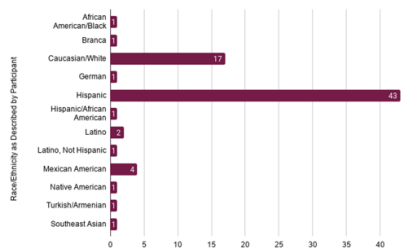


Figure 7

Racial/Ethnic Identification



Note. Participants were given the opportunity to identify their race/ethnicity. *Branco/a* is a Brazilian identifier for race.

## Motifs Emerging From Responses

The authors poured over the responses looking for common motifs amongst the answers. Each author focused on finding responding quotes for the motifs emerging from the responses: (a) COVID-19's effects on mental health and social emotional development, (b) the perception of time during mandated lockdowns and quarantining, and (c) the emergence of a better, brighter self. Though the first motif calls for immediate attention and remedy,

the second shows that participants found both negatives and positives about how time was spent in the last year into the beginning of 2021. The third motif ends on a bright note; as devastating as COVID-19 has been on everyone around the world, there is a sense of hope for the betterment of humanity.

## Motif 1: Mental Health and Social Emotional Development

Evidently, the COVID-19 pandemic and the changes it brought have had adverse effects on the mental health and social-emotional development of educators, parents, and students alike. The voices (see Figure 8) echo the trials and hardships that many citizens around the world have grappled with.

Figure 8

*Voices Reflecting on Mental Health and Social Emotional Development*

Unfortunately, the pandemic exacerbated an already stressful work environment. Most certainly, the new modes of teaching were a significant source of stress.  
(Educator; South Korea)

I let myself go physically, spiritually, and emotionally. It's been a struggle trying to reach some sort of normalcy.  
(Michelle Devally, Concerned Citizen; San Antonio, Texas)

It was frustrating to feel like a failure every day because so many kids are failing and to have that blame placed on you because parents don't want to take responsibility for their children.  
(Amanda Dexter, Educator; St. Joseph, Missouri)

I start with life. I don't think I've ever felt this much stress before. I've been stressed worrying about getting sick or about my husband and our families getting sick. I've been stressed about work. I'm a dyslexia teacher at an elementary school, and I've had students who have just completely shut down because they don't like virtual classes. I had a student who wouldn't stop crying. It made me want to cry because I felt like I couldn't do anything to make it better. I couldn't hug the student. I couldn't change the situation. This pandemic has definitely made me feel powerless, which has just led to stress.  
(Mary Romero, Educator; Laredo, Texas)

Depression, anxiety, feelings of ineffectiveness as a teacher, lack of connection with students, now teaching different subject matter in order to keep students at least 6 feet apart at school, poor communication from certain admin, last summer's college courses for PD canceled, have considered leaving this profession.  
(Educator; Milton, Vermont)

The pandemic affected my family directly and changed the routines of daily life. It is a constant fear of what direction COVID-19 will take. The stress is obvious in the lives of my children, and I feel helpless in making things better for our family.  
(Sara Abi Villanueva, Educator, Parent; Laredo, Texas)

Because of my very busy schedule, I have been extremely stressed and started experiencing insomnia. I've tried many things to help like massages and herbal teas without caffeine and even aromatherapy. This has affected my focus during the day while working and will make me irritable at times.  
(Amanda, Parent; McAllen, Texas)

It has caused me stress and anxiety, plus depression.  
(Cynthia C. Chapa, Educator; Laredo, Texas)

Added stressors of raising children while attending virtual classes and working from home.  
(Monica Lara, Parent; Marrero, Louisiana)

Figure 8 (continued)

My school-aged child had to be homeschooled and hasn't been able to be active with other children. It has caused our family to be filled with anxiety and depression.  
(Alicia M. Cano, Parent; Hammond, Illinois)

It caused [stress] and depression in my life. In education, as well, and even anxiety.  
(Martha A. Lozano, Teacher-Aide; Laredo, Texas)

The pandemic has negatively impacted my life as an educator. We have been asked to continue teaching as a typical school year. Teachers are overwhelmed, stressed, overworked, and anxious. We are trying to comply with everything that the state and the district are asking us for. However, we are forgetting that educators and students are human beings.  
(Elena D. Pecina, Educator; Laredo, Texas)

Movement was challenging. The limitations of physical distancing were mentally debilitating at times. When I moved around public spaces, the indirect reaction of others to move away was disconcerting at times. I realize it was important to be distanced physically, but to have people not even acknowledge each other with a hello or a knob was very uncomfortable. Living in the southern region of the USA, the culture of social interaction can include a hug, shaking someone's hand, smiling, and exchanging words, to offer a blessing for a good day. All of these social nuances were minimized, and my fear for the very young who are growing up in this environment is they will miss learning the value of these behaviors while in their impressionable years.  
(Lucinda N. Sohn, Ph.D., Educator; San Antonio, Texas)

Even though I did not have any financial losses, as I am employed by the state, I notice that the pandemic emotionally wears you down through less social contacts and less presence in school.  
(Educator; Koblenz, Germany)

The pandemic has kept me away from my family. The last time I was able to give my parents a hug was on February 13, 2020. I also fear that the pandemic may have lasting effects: on how I interact in a group setting once it is safe for us to be around one another again.  
(Liz Rubio, Concerned Citizen; Austin, Texas)

It is heartbreaking to see how 5th-grade students are putting their mental health at risk. Everyone in this pandemic is grieving; we have lost our routines, social contact, family members, and so much more. As a society, we need to learn how to take care of our mental health in the "new normal."  
(Elena D. Pecina, Educator; Laredo, Texas)

It has led me to be less social with others and has made me feel lonely at times.  
(Barbara Buitron, Concerned Citizen; Laredo, Texas)

Figure 8 (continued)

It forced my Ph.D. program to go completely remote, which eliminates any and all types of social and emotional support we get from interacting with other students and professors in person. It made conferences go online.  
(Daniela A. Beckelhymer, Concerned Citizen, Student; Laredo, Texas)

Without a doubt, this pandemic has negatively impacted people at all levels. As I mentioned previously, it has brought out the worst in some, especially when people's nerves and emotions are all on edge. Unfortunately, domestic violence, child abuse, and divorce cases have increased. In a society, where we are so accustomed to our 8:00-5:00 pm office space and kids' soccer practice/ballet class pick-up time at 7:00 pm, it is only normal to have some emotional outbursts after prolonged confinement. We are dealing with all sorts of emotions and trying to make things happen at the same time--from working remotely and homeschooling simultaneously to caring for a loved one while trying to stay healthy.  
(Lizette Mendive-Gonzalez, Educator; Laredo, Texas)

Constantly having to worry about the stability of my job.  
(PA, Austin, Texas)

...I worry about my daughter's emotional state.  
(Lucero, Laredo, Texas)

For my mental health, I had to give up a well-paying K-8 job to know that I'd be safe at home this year and not ride the arc-we-returning-in-life-threatening-ways roller coaster.  
(Angela Knight, Educator; Detroit, Michigan)

Fears of sickness, death, and losing loved ones. While the educational aspect was good for most of my students, there were far too many who struggled with virtual classes, which added to their anxieties about the pandemic.  
(Deena Alexander-Garza, Educator; Hebbronville, Texas)

I am exhausted thinking about my children's needs, cooking, cleaning, preparing my lessons, correcting, marking, and teaching online. I have to juggle work commitments and also a hectic family life simultaneously.  
(Educator; Istanbul, Turkey)

## Motif 2: Perception of Time During COVID-19

When the pandemic hit the US in March 2020, the "universe stopped time," wrote Clarissa Murillo, an educator in San

Antonio, Texas. For some, time came to a halt, and for others, time started to fly. Some experienced the pandemic as an opportunity to slow down and refocus on what actually matters: spending time with family and loved ones, compassion, and pursuing academic and educational goals. Others felt like time sped up; there were not enough hours in the day to meet all the new demands that surfaced.

When reading the responses provided by concerned citizens, parents, and educators who reflected on their experiences in 2020, we noticed the concept of time mentioned repeatedly by numerous individuals. However, the way time was perceived could not have been more different. The onset of the pandemic marked the beginning of a multifaceted collective experience—sharing these diverse perceptions of the concept of time can remind us that a singular situation, affecting people around the world, evokes different, sometimes paradoxical experiences for everyone. We took the time to listen to diverse voices to show that all experiences, emotional responses, and realities are valid and worth listening to (see Figure 9).

Figure 9

## Voices Reflecting on the Perception of Time During COVID-19

My pace of life has slowed down significantly.  
(Brenda L. Escudero, Educator; Laredo, Texas)

I have been forced to slow down in life and carefully assess and examine that which I place importance and meaning on.  
(Ramiro Hernandez Jr., Concerned Citizen; Laredo, Texas)

And just like that, time stopped. Before the pandemic, my life roared with the force of a runaway train. Just as I was ready to leap into an unknown rabbit hole, God reached for my hand as if to say "wait". By chance, the shiny new grad program I was about to begin became a sitting box on a shelf in some fancy department store. My mind kept saying "let's go", but my heart knew better. I was pregnant. I was over the moon until news of the pandemic spiraled closer and closer to Texas. As panic set in and ideas of what my pregnancy would look like during the pandemic, time stood still. The one thing I had always asked the Universe for was to stop time... and it finally worked. Time came to a complete stop and I soaked in every living moment that I forgot existed. Eating breakfast was no longer a luxury and cooking went from non-existent to epic survival. Being able to watch my son grow, that's the takeaway. The pandemic gave me time. Time to bask in caring for my children, my husband, and myself. Time made me ask myself if the pursuit of education was for my enlightenment or for the boastful arrogance that came with it. And was this next step in my education my calling? Living through the pandemic has allowed me to pay attention, listen, and slow down.  
(Clarissa Murillo, Educator, Parent, Concerned Citizen; San Antonio, Texas)

The pandemic positively provided me with time to reflect. The pandemic slowed my fast-paced teaching life to a more fulfilling life.  
(Regina J. Bustillos, Educator, Parent, Concerned Citizen; Chamberino, New Mexico)

Since I have a job not affected by it, life had only become quieter and therefore less stressful. I had the chance to spend more time with my family and my horses. There were fewer places to be and events to attend, which wasn't entirely bad for me personally.  
(Maryam Stock, Concerned Citizen, Koblenz, Germany)

Since the pandemic, we have slowed our pace of life a lot and now have dinner together in the dining room talking about the day's events or any topic of interest to our daughters. We have connected more as a family and have improved our communication skills. I have also been able to resume my degree courses online since I'm working from home which has been a blessing.  
(Amanda, Parent; McAllen, Texas)

Positively, I think it slowed things down. Before the pandemic, it seemed that something was always going on/happening.  
(Educator; Laredo, Texas)

Figure 9 (continued)

It has given me more time to dedicate to my academic goals.  
(Barbun Buitron, Concerned Citizen; Laredo, Texas)

Mais tempo para estudos específicos, que antes não teria.  
I have more time for specific studies which I did not have before.  
(Missila Cardozo, Educator; São Caetano do Sul, SP, Brazil)

I SPENT MORE TIME STUDYING FOR UNIVERSITY BECAUSE I SPENT LESS TIME WITH FRIENDS AND FUN ACTIVITIES. I ALSO ATTENDED MORE UNIVERSITY CLASSES BECAUSE ZOOM CALLS ARE LESS OF A HASSLE THAN TAKING THE TRAIN TO UNIVERSITY. SO ALL IN ALL MY UNIVERSITY EDUCATION BENEFITED FROM THE PANDEMIC.  
(Charlotte Daub, Educator; Wiesbaden, Germany)

I was completing my education degree online. Covid shutdown allowed me to focus solely on my degree and I graduated a year and a half early!  
(Educator; Seymour, Texas)

As an educator, I have taken this time to continue my education pursuing a Master's Degree in Curriculum and Instruction.  
(Liliana Gonzalez, Educator, Parent, Laredo, Texas)

School: Even though the pandemic led to many missed days of school (my first-graders only visited school 5x from March through August), I was able to maintain close contact through personal phone calls. In everyday teaching life, there is usually less time to talk about personal issues.  
(Educator; Koblenz, Germany)

THE PANDEMIC HAS BEEN A GIFT OF TIME FOR ME. IT HAS ALLOWED ME TO PLACE MORE FOCUS AND EMPHASIS ON AREAS OF MY FIELD THAT I HAVE BEEN WANTING TO LEARN MORE ABOUT. IT HAS HELPED ME TO REACH MY GOALS FASTER THAN I WOULD HAVE WITH THE DISTRACTIONS OF SOCIAL ENGAGEMENTS, ETC.  
(Liz Rubio, Concerned Citizen; Austin, Texas)

I got to spend more time with my family.  
(Educator; Laredo, Texas)

It has given me more bonding time with my family.  
(Mayra Garcia, Educator, Parent; Laredo, Texas)

The pandemic has at times isolated me, however, I have been able to manage my personal life in that I can spend time with my immediate family.  
(Lucinda N Sohn, Ph.D., Educator; San Antonio, Texas)

Figure 9 (continued)

...I was fortunate enough to spend more time with my husband and children. We had just moved into a new home a few months prior and this gave us the opportunity to spend time together, as a family, in our new home.  
(Sara Abi Villanueva, Educator, Parent; Laredo, Texas)

Every single conversation/meeting/getting together with friends and family gets more important and I appreciate the time which I can spend with them.  
(Jule Daub, Educator; Koblenz, Germany)

Positively-I have been able to spend a lot more time with my family. I feel it has brought us closer.  
(Jennifer Batey, Educator; Laredo, Texas)

I also feel like my husband and I have gotten closer in the pandemic because we spend so much time together.  
(Mary Romero, Educator; Laredo, Texas)

This pandemic experience has given me a lot of time to spend with my own family and pursue hobbies and interests. I would have not had time to do otherwise. It gave me an eye-opening revelation to the importance of spending more time with my family doing activities that are productive to building a solid relationship.  
(K. McCreight, Educator, Parent; Texas)

As far as teaching, I feel like I have no time off: I'm working 24/7!  
(Jennifer Batey, Educator; Laredo, Texas)

Excesso de trabalho e de tarefas. Urgência na execução.  
Excessive work and tasks. Urgency in executing them.  
(Missila Cardozo, Educator; São Caetano do Sul, SP, Brasil)

Teaching hybrid was like doing twice the work in an already overworked profession.  
(Amanda Dexter, Educator; St. Joseph, Missouri)

Although I enjoy working from home, I am a lot busier with cooking/cleaning/teaching/etc. I realize that it is difficult for teachers to retain the attention of 20-30 kids online especially the elementary kids. I see the message in the morning 15-20 into class where the teacher is messaging the parents for missing students to join the zoom call. Therefore, if my daughters don't understand something, they will come to me while I am working and ask me for assistance. Because of my very busy schedule, I have been extremely stressed and started experiencing insomnia.  
(Amanda, Parent; McAllen, Texas)

### Motif 3: A Better, Brighter Self

As challenging as 2020 and the beginning of 2021 have been, positives have come out of all this. Participants voice how they have benefitted from quarantining, remote-learning/teaching, teleworking, and an overall halt to a fast-paced life. Three subcategories identified within this particular motif were professional, physical and emotional, and spiritual growth (see Figure 10).

Figure 10

#### Voices Reflecting on "A Better, Brighter You"

**PROFESSIONALLY**

I am more empathetic to the choices my students have to make, to the community they live in, and to the chaos around them as they tackle the time to learn.  
(Regina J. Bustillos, Educator, Parent, Concerned Citizen; Chamberino, New Mexico)

I was able to reacquaint myself with what I enjoyed about education; learning new things and genuinely reflecting on the why, and also how to apply/teach the insights without feeling rushed.  
(Craig Stowers, Educator; Humble, Texas)

The pandemic allowed me to really value boundaries, empathy, and the impact of implementing technology.  
(Selina Peña, Educator; Laredo, Texas)

The pandemic has allowed me to come up with creative solutions on how to communicate and reach out to my students and loved ones. I have learned so much in regards to technology, how to engage students, and apply it to my field of teaching which is science. It has allowed me to explore various ways to make a lesson more interesting and hands-on. In my personal life, it was further allowed me to teach my loved ones how to use technology and better connect with them.  
(Cynthia Gallardo, Educator; Laredo, Texas)

It has made me a better teacher because I have discovered new innovative ways to teach.  
(Rolando Mejorado Jr., Educator; Weslaco, Texas)

In education personally, has helped me learn so much about technology and it was like I had to relearn how I was going to teach. So I think I also grew as an educator.  
(Educator; Laredo, Texas)

The pandemic forced me out of my level of comfort into exploring the possibilities of teaching using technology.  
(Rocio Torres, Educator, Parent; McAllen, Texas)

But I no longer am scared to death of having to learn something new on the computer. This pandemic brought me to the confidence of pursuing my master's degree in education.  
(K. McCreight, Educator, Parent, Concerned Citizen; Texas)

This pandemic has given me the chance to advance in my career, I do not think I would have made this decision if things would still be in their "normal" routine.  
(Liliana Gonzalez, Educator, Parent; Laredo, Texas)

Additionally, I have learned to be more empathetic with my students. It is essential to respect and validate our students' feelings.  
(Elena D. Pecina, Educator; Laredo, Texas)

I feel more empathetic for my students that have suffered grief either financially or personally. Other than being able to be more empathetic, I feel that I have been able to connect more with students and their guardians.  
(Anna L. Gomez, Educator; Laredo, Texas)

Figure 10 (continued)

**PHYSICALLY & EMOTIONALLY**

I'm doing things to stay healthy like eating better and exercising.  
(Jennifer Batey, Educator; Laredo, Texas)

The pandemic made it once again clear to me that family and friends are the most important thing in life for me.  
(Jule Daub, Educator; Koblenz, Rheinland-Pfalz, Germany)

I feel like this was a much-needed re-set in my life.  
(Cindy L. Dominguez, CCMR Coordinator; Laredo, Texas)

I've also been able to increase my physical activity by running 3-5 times a week in our neighborhood in the morning.  
(Amanda, Parent; McAllen, Texas)

My wife and I got married a week before the pandemic started affecting work. We have used this time to grow closer, and help each other troubleshoot any and all virtual teaching headaches.  
(J. Medina, Educator; Laredo, Texas)

It brought me closer to my parents and afforded me to save money, and spend more time at the ranch with my children or alone.  
(Ricardo Flores, Parent; Laredo, Texas)

I have diligently reconsidered that which I value and the amount of value, which I bestow upon it. I believe that this has helped me take a different take on life and has altered my perspective for the best.  
(Ramiro Hernandez Jr., Concerned Citizen, Laredo, Texas)

Figure 10 (continued)

**SPIRITUALLY**

This pandemic has also [shown] me what is truly meaningful in my life.  
(Mayra Garcia, Educator; Laredo, Texas)

It has helped us get closer to God! Our faith got stronger and we started having our own bible studies.  
(Educator; Laredo, Texas)

Overall, I can say that this pandemic has allowed us to grow personally spiritually, and emotionally. I have come to realize even more how much I am blessed despite our circumstances. When this whole fiasco began back in March, I was happy to pick up 'Grab-n-Go' school meals for a young mother of a toddler and two baby girl twins (who had just been abandoned by her husband. She would tell me "You don't have to go out of your way to drop off food we are okay." However, even though I was not making the food nor buying it, it just felt good inside to devote some of my time (and gas) to share God's abundance. And I am not sharing this to flatter myself in any way but rather to emphasize the importance of [selfless] acts of kindness. As I watched the news at the beginning of this pandemic, sometimes I just wanted to tune off because of the alarming case numbers and devastation. However, touching stories of individuals going out of their way to help others inspired me to pay it forward in my own way.  
(Lizette Mendive-Gonzalez, Educator; Laredo, Texas)

## A Euphonic Collection of Ideas

In reading beyond the words, in truly listening to what others had to share, we learned that this year and a half has had both negative and positive outcomes on the lives of so many. Though tragedy and world shifts cannot be ignored, we can rejoice in the fact that families have learned to slow down and appreciate those around them. In the spirit of embracing advice and adapting and evolving, we share some responses to questions and prompts from this non-research based, reflective project:

- How do you see your country recovering from the turmoil created by this pandemic? (see Figure 11)
- If you could time travel to right before the pandemic, what piece of advice would you give yourself? (see Figure 12)
- How have you occupied yourself during lockdowns? (e.g., watching television, reading books, playing games ... , see Figure 13)
- What was the last book you loved? (see Figure 14)
- What should educators read next? (see Figure 15)
- What makes a teachable moment? (see Figure 16)
- Share a favorite teaching tip. (see Figure 17)
- Teaching and Learning is/are ... (see Figure 18)
- How would you describe your class/home experience in 2020 using a song, image, sound, movie, emotion, or food? You can respond with text and/or an authentic photo/image. (see Figure 19)

Figure 11

Responses to Question 3

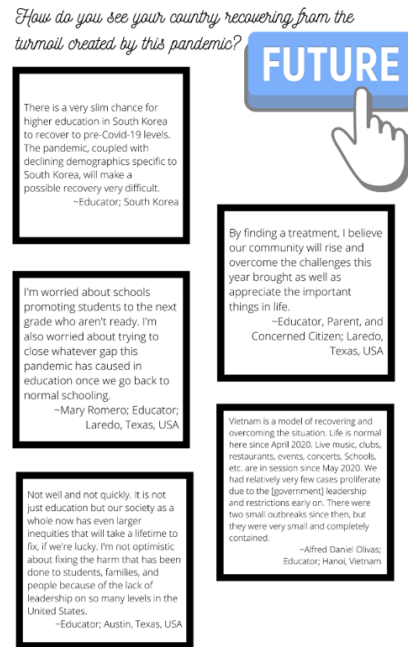


Figure 11 (continued)

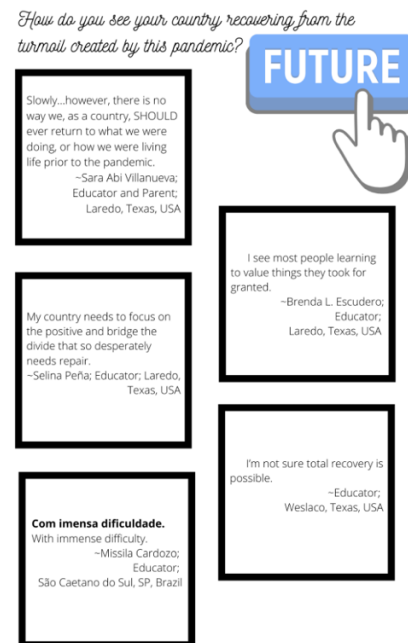




Figure 11 (continued)

*How do you see your country recovering from the turmoil created by this pandemic?*

**FUTURE**

Slowly...however, there is no way we, as a country, SHOULD ever return to what we were doing, or how we were living life prior to the pandemic.  
-Sara Abi Villanueva; Educator and Parent; Laredo, Texas, USA

I see most people learning to value things they took for granted.  
-Brenda L. Escudero; Educator; Laredo, Texas, USA

My country needs to focus on the positive and bridge the divide that so desperately needs repair.  
-Selina Peña; Educator; Laredo, Texas, USA

I'm not sure total recovery is possible.  
-Educator; Weslaco, Texas, USA

**Com imensa dificuldade.** With immense difficulty.  
-Missila Cardozo; Educator; São Caetano do Sul, SP, Brazil

Figure 12

Responses to Question 4

*If you could time travel to right before the pandemic, what piece of advice would you give yourself?*

Get ready emotionally, hardships is coming. Tough decisions will need to be made; pray often, and don't lose hope  
-K. McCreight

"Hang on Lady, We're going for a Bide!" Life as we know it will change forever. We will have to be much more aware of not having too much closeness with anyone & Virus so Deadly that just Hugging could kill you!  
-K. Cina

This will be hard. Try not to beat yourself up for not maintaining the same level of education for students. And put down that ice cream!  
-Anonymous

Practice your meditation more and read the news a little less. Instead of impulse buying things leave them in the cart and check back in a week to see if the item is just a want instead of a need  
-Elizabeth DeZoucha

You are not invincible and need to draw boundaries between work and life  
-Selina Peña

I would tell myself to focus more on emerging technology and focusing on teaching students how to use tech to their advantage.  
-Ashley Ramirez

Stop planning and live two weeks at a time. Don't plan your plans and plans and plans. No, planning for the grand week is important during the pandemic, but long term plans are too difficult when we don't know what day we will wake up in a month. That was an emotional adjustment for me at the beginning and something I continue to work on.  
-Anthonette

Figure 13

Responses to Question 5

*How have you occupied yourself during lockdowns?*

I spend most of my time with my family in a variety of activities, including playing, learning, reading, watching TV, arts and more  
**Anonymous**

Cleaning, exercising, cooking, reading, praying, listening to daily mass, making puzzles, watching Netflix, and playing games.  
**Martha A. Lozano**

Going for long rides and walks with my horses. Visiting my parents and some friends outside. Often went for walks with friends instead of meeting in town. Also cleaning the house thoroughly, like wiping down cupboards, defrosting the freezer, organizing the wardrobe... Things I usually can't make time for.  
**Maryam Stock**

Exercise, getting outdoors and rearranging my home. I did get into counseling which is something I find hard to consider, but now, I look forward to talking with my counselor once a week. It is hard to pull away from the computer and make time for personal life. But I have increased my opportunities to workout, getting my body into shape and not giving into the craving to eat and use food and drink to make me feel better.  
**Lucinda N. Sohn, Ph.D.**

Read all of Toni Morrison's novels to really understand social injustices, binge on Grey's Anatomy till its seasons end these episodes motivated me to live in the moment and not to feel any shame after expressing strong opinions, and managed remote learning at work, but also the learning of my 4 children (bikes in college, youngest in park) at home.  
**Regina J. Bustillos**

...I was taking classes for my graduate studies, so I occupied myself with homework, research, and trying to publish. Now that I've graduated, I have a list of must-read books I want to get through. As for my family, we've had more game and movie nights at home.  
**Sara Abi Villanueva**

Cats! I finally fulfilled my wish and adopted two cats. They keep me company and entertain me. A lockdown is the perfect opportunity to get a pet. Since you have to stay home anyway, you can dedicate a lot of time to them.  
**Alexandra Daub**

I started doing home-workouts five times a week, I go for long walks, I've read all the books that have been on my shelf for far too long. I played online video games with friends...  
**Charlotte Daub**

Figure 13 (continued)

*How have you occupied yourself during lockdowns?*

I have occupied myself by getting closer to God, by writing more, and by singing as it is one of my passions. I also coordinate a single mom's group through church, and that has helped me tremendously.  
**Angie Ramirez**

I have built LEGO buildings, watched way too much tv, read books, worked out (lots of running and cycling), learned how to make margaritas, cosmopolitans, and espresso drinks, cooked homemade meals, watched Michael's (the store) Zoom classes, and used my planners.  
**Mary Romero**

I keep constant communication with my family and friends through ZOOM calls, Facetime, and even WhatsApp video calls. All my pre-pandemic hobbies intensified. My gym workouts became home workouts. I am now an improved cook and recently became a rookie baker.  
**Anna L. Gomez**

I tried to really take care of myself mentally and spiritually. Sometimes I would catch up on books I left unread, try to keep sane by doing Yoga, FaceTime my loved ones, puzzles. I started writing a journal of everyday during this pandemic to further read in my future.  
**Rocio Villareal**

Because of the multiple surfaces that live in my apartment, I have kept a steady hand on wiping them down DAILY. However, when I am not combating germs, I spend every minute with my family. My son and I are experts on all things pancakes, pumpkin bread, and Pokemon. My daughter has learned to roll over. My husband and I are absorbing every family moment that jumps at us.  
**Clarissa Murillo**

My six kids, learning how to teach virtually, and being a student in graduate school are definitely taking up all of my time right now. On the occasional outing, my husband and I go to the beach when we predict there will be little people there, we go on hikes, and go frequently on runs in the park. At home, I have taught myself to sew and I have been helping my husband construct a tiny house in our backyard for our teenage boys. That has been an amazing learning experience because I build something from the foundation to the roof and it reminds me of how we can accomplish anything we set our minds to.  
**Rocio Torres**

Well, I can say that I revived the inner chef in me when attempting to cook around-the-world recipes. In fact, I will never forget when this past summer I realized my taste was gone after eating half a dozen of Argentinian empanadas I had baked. I kept asking my husband, "Babe, are you sure they don't need more salt?" Being the salty eater of the family, he reassured me the saltiness of the empanadas was just fine. "Oooh Oh. I have COVID!" It hit me right there and then. Indeed, I did test positive but was fortunate to only have that mild symptom.  
**Lizette Mendive-Gonzalez**

Figure 14

Responses to Question 6



Figure 14 (continued)



Figure 15

Responses to Question 9



Figure 16

Responses to Question 10

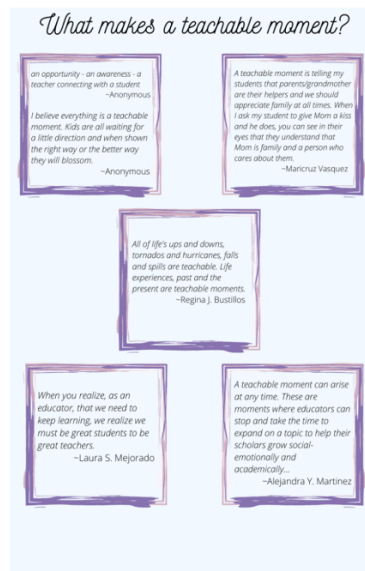


Figure 16 (continued)

*What makes a teachable moment?*

Typically these are viewed as when something negative happens, in someone learning a difficult and often painful lesson. While these are often very teachable moments, I find that many experiences, positive, negative, or neutral, can provide the opportunity to be a teachable moment if the learner is open[ed] to being taught.  
-David E. Allen

A mistake – either yours or a student’s – is always a chance to teach and learn.  
-Amanda Dieter

An unexpected question or comment that makes a connection to the goals of the school, lesson or life.  
-Alfred Daniel Olivas

...Wenn Schüler erkennen, dass sie etwas für sich selber lernen und nicht für den Lehrer.  
...When students comprehend that they are learning for themselves, not for their teacher.  
-Anonymous

Any moment one can share expertise according to one's field or wisdom from life experiences can contribute to a teachable moment. Even not having the answers to certain questions, can lead to a teachable moment by guiding students to self-discovery and independent learning.  
-Lizette Mendive-Gonzalez

A teachable moment is where a teacher goes off script to take advantage of a situation to influence a child's learning in a positive way. Taking the time to realize that a child could learn something if given the time, even if the curriculum doesn't require it.  
-Rocio Torres

Figure 17 (continued)

*Share a Favorite Teaching Tip ...*

Get to know your students as people, not just about their interests.  
-Mary Romero

If you say you are doing something, follow through. Always lead by example.  
-Anonymous

Make your students laugh.  
-Rocio Torres

Create an environment which fosters a sense of memorable experiences that will truly allow an individual to explore, exchange ideas, and discover a part of themselves.  
-Ramiro Hernandez Jr.

LISTEN to your students. Many times we just hear them and don't pay attention to their body language, facial expressions and tones of their voice. Every child learns differently and when you listen to them, their contextual clues will help you find how to get through to them.  
-Amanda

Talk to yourself aloud and allow for students to hear you trying to make sense of things. If students can hear the way you process, then they will learn to break the thinking process down as well.  
-Regina J. Bustillos

...be kind to yourself as an educator and believe in the impact that you have in students...I think we need to be more kind to ourselves and that as long as we continue to do our best, we will continue to grow and become the educators we aspire to be.  
-Alejandra Y. Martinez

Figure 17

Responses to Question 11

*Share a Favorite Teaching Tip ...*

Listen to your students. All them to say more when they ask a question. I find that the first question they ask doesn't always get to what they really want to know. So I say "Tell me more." After that tell me more they say so much more that really allows me to understand what they are thinking and what they need clarification on.  
-Anonymous

Know your student! Knowing where your student lives, what food they like, what instrument/sport they play matters. All of us want to feel important, including our students!  
-John Anthony Ball

Make [teaching] real. Whatever subject or demographic you teach, make your lesson real to the student you are teaching. It may not be the same lesson for each student at the same time.  
-Craig Stowers

Breathe. You don't have to have all of the answers. Sometimes the best thinking comes from asking questions, even if answers aren't available or age-appropriate. Encourage thinking. Trust the process.  
-Angela Knight

Respect your students, even when they don't respect you. Start each day with a blank slate rather than holding a grudge.  
-Anonymous

Figure 18

Responses to Question 12

*Teaching and Learning is/are...*

Sharing, caring, helping, and improving our community.  
(Martha A. Lozano)

[T]he epitome of knowledge and strength.  
(Regina J. Bustillos)

A spiritual act that cannot always be quantified.  
(Craig Stowers)

[T]he exchange of ideas or problems between curious minds that are open to discovery and change.  
(Elizabeth DeZouché)

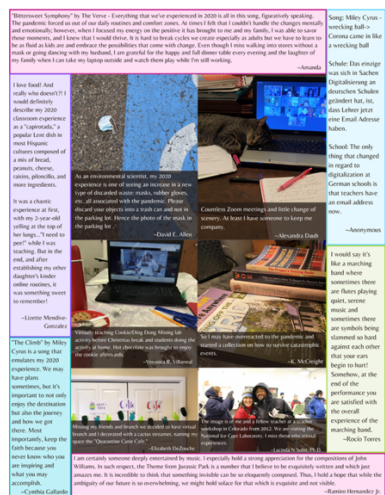
Quoting Joseph Joubert, to teach is to learn twice. This quote resonates with me because of how relatable it is. As teachers, we may understand the material we are teaching. However, teaching this to someone else requires another level of understanding. Also, to learn is more than to memorize or recall something; it is to understand.  
(Alejandra Y. Martinez)

Gifts not to be taken lightly, always in a positive light.  
(Ricardo Flores)

... I teach by one of Aristotle's principles which states, "Evaluating the mind, without educating the heart, is no education at all." Yes, as educators, need to continually realize that some students, ranging from elementary to high school, come to school with heavily hardened emotional baggage. We cannot solely focus on the academic aspect of teaching and neglect the emotional well-being of the student. After all, we need to be committed to meet students' needs, socially and emotional. Eventually, by teaching from the heart we can inspire passionate learning...  
(Lizette Mendive-Gonzalez)

Figure 19

Responses to Question 13



## Conclusion

Through this reflective project, we heard stories of sadness and loss, of sickness and death. There were stories that made us realize just how big an impact this pandemic has had on individuals' relationships, health, and finances. However, amidst the chaos and challenges are rays of hope, and we must celebrate the victories that so many have encountered during this time as well. There were stories of change and ingenuity, of unity and faith. There were stories of revival, appreciation, and love.

It has been a few months into 2021, and as we write this article, new variants of this deadly virus have emerged around the world, continuing to shine a light on the

inequities and injustices dealt to the most vulnerable populations. With a newly elected president of the United States in office, breakthroughs in medical research for vaccinations, and the evolution of humankind's resiliency, people must not forget to step aside and re-examine carefully the outcomes of the COVID-19 pandemic. Though everyone's plight differs, we urge all to stay cognizant of those still struggling. Let no one ignore the voices still needing to be heard, the cries for help and change ringing forth from countries whose peoples were torn apart from conflict, poverty, famine, and injustice long before the world faced this humbling disease.

## Acknowledgments

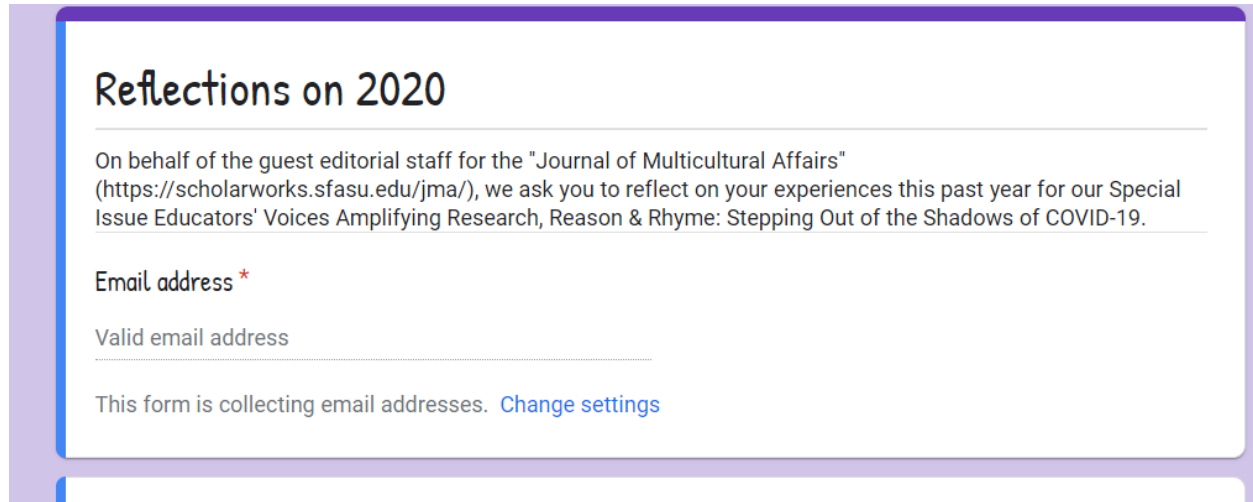
We want to thank our 75 participants for taking the time from their already busy schedules to complete our reflective questionnaire. Thank you for allowing us to share your experiences, concerns, and thoughts.

Special thanks to Cristina Maria Soares Ferraz for translating the Portuguese responses into English, and to Alexandra C. Daub for translating the German responses into English. We are also very grateful to Kristen Erdem, Maricruz Flores Vasquez, and Stephanie Wright for the time invested in reviewing responses and choosing the quotes represented in the figures. We are also very grateful for Consuelo L. Guzman for her creative design of Figure 19.

## Appendix A

### Figure 1

*Google Form Questionnaire*



The image shows a screenshot of a Google Form titled "Reflections on 2020". The form is enclosed in a purple border. The title "Reflections on 2020" is at the top. Below the title, there is a paragraph of text: "On behalf of the guest editorial staff for the 'Journal of Multicultural Affairs' (https://scholarworks.sfasu.edu/jma/), we ask you to reflect on your experiences this past year for our Special Issue Educators' Voices Amplifying Research, Reason & Rhyme: Stepping Out of the Shadows of COVID-19." Below this text is a text input field labeled "Email address \*". Underneath the input field, there is a validation message: "Valid email address". At the bottom of the form, there is a note: "This form is collecting email addresses. [Change settings](#)".

## Appendix B

**Figure 2**

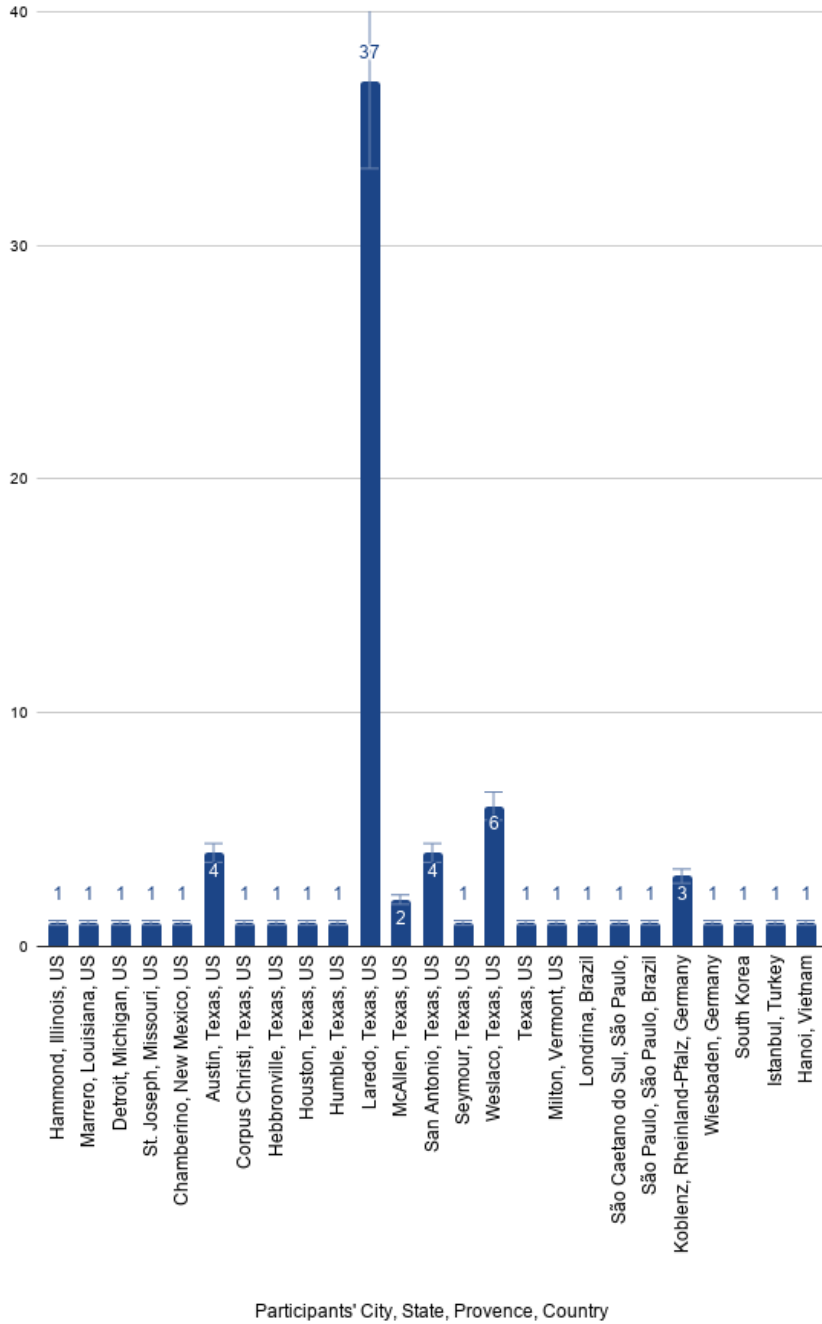
*Demographic Questions, Reflections on 2020*

<p>Publishing with your name *</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Yes, please feel free to use my name if you publish my response(s).</li><li>2. No. I would prefer my response(s) as anonymous contribution.</li></ol>
<p>Your name as you would like it to appear... *</p> <p>Short answer text</p> <p>.....</p>
<p>Occupation/Title *</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Educator</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Parent</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Concerned Citizen</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Other...</p>
<p>From which generation are you based on the year in which you were born? *</p> <p><input type="radio"/> The Silent Generation (1928-1945)</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Baby Boomers (1946-1964)</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Generation X (1965-1980)</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Generation Y, Millennials (1981-1996)</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Generation Z (1997-2010)</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Generation Alpha (2011-Present)</p>
<p>Gender *</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Male</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Female</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Prefer not to say</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Other...</p>
<p>City, State, Province, Country (Full address NOT required) *</p> <p>Short answer text</p> <p>.....</p>
<p>What is your racial/ethnic identity? *</p> <p>Short answer text</p> <p>.....</p>

### Appendix C

**Figure 3**

*Participants' Location*

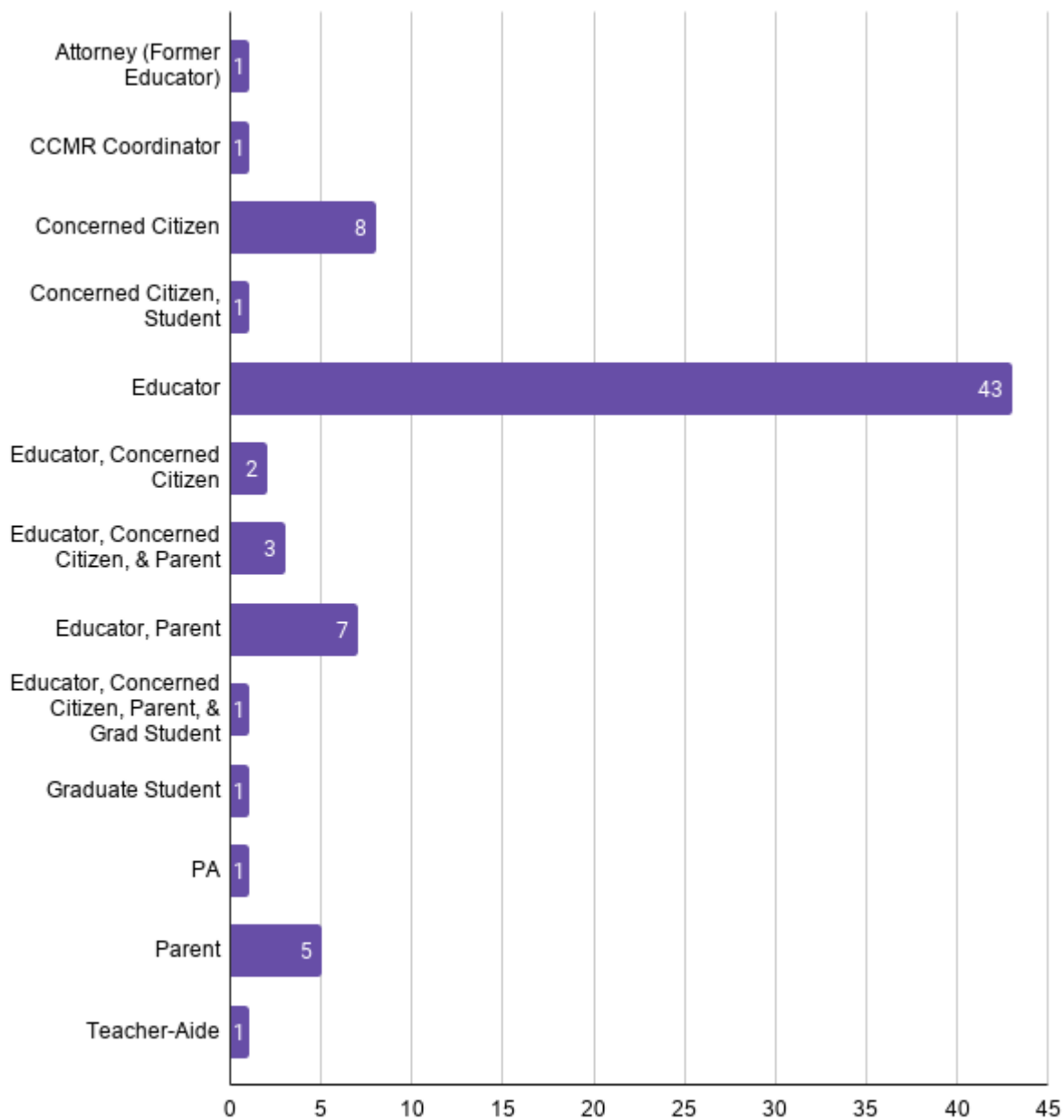


*Note.* Two participants responded only with the name of their state or country.

### Appendix D

**Figure 4**

*Participants' Occupation/Title*



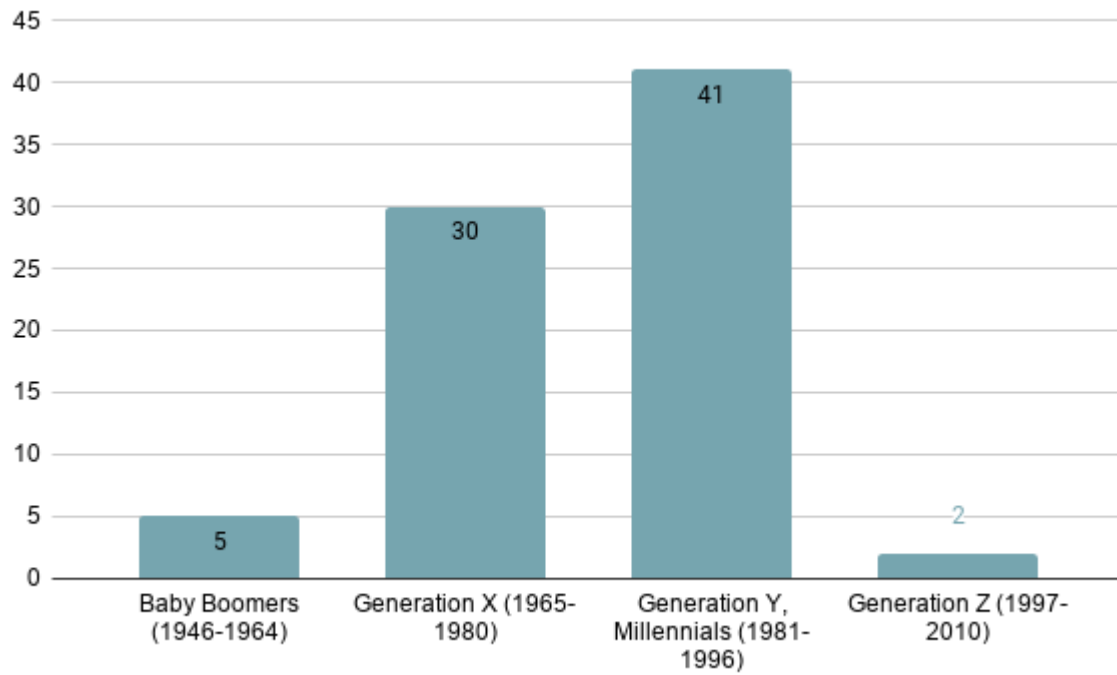
*Note.* College Career and Military Readiness (CCMR) Coordinator; Physician Assistant (PA)



## Appendix E

**Figure 5**

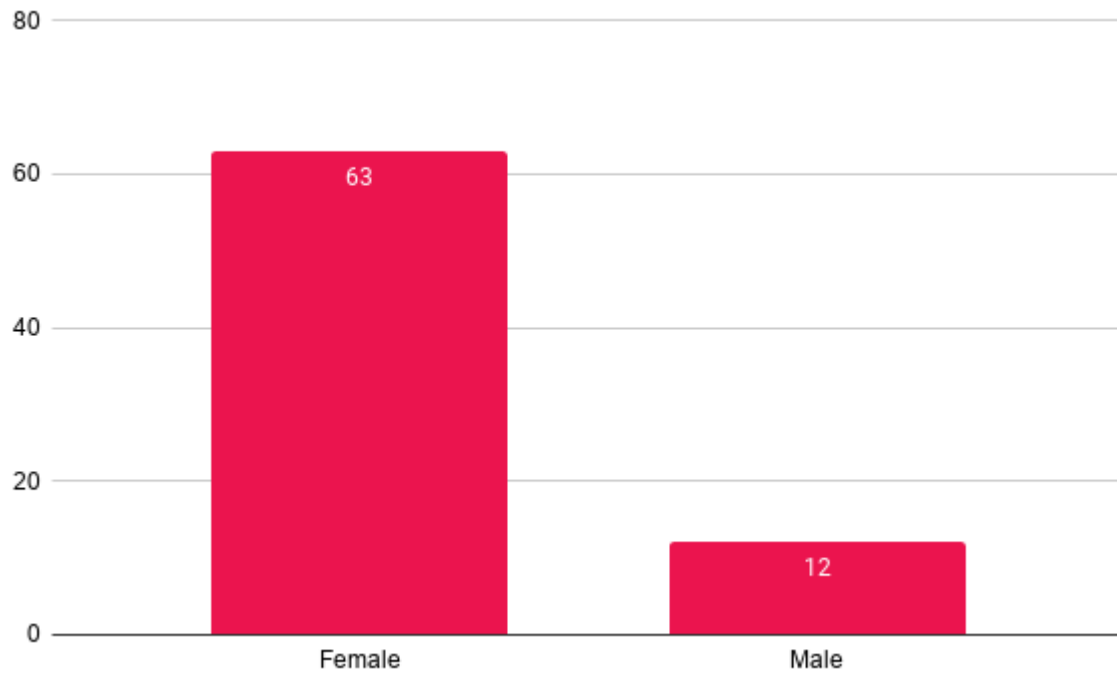
*Generational Identification*



## Appendix F

**Figure 6**

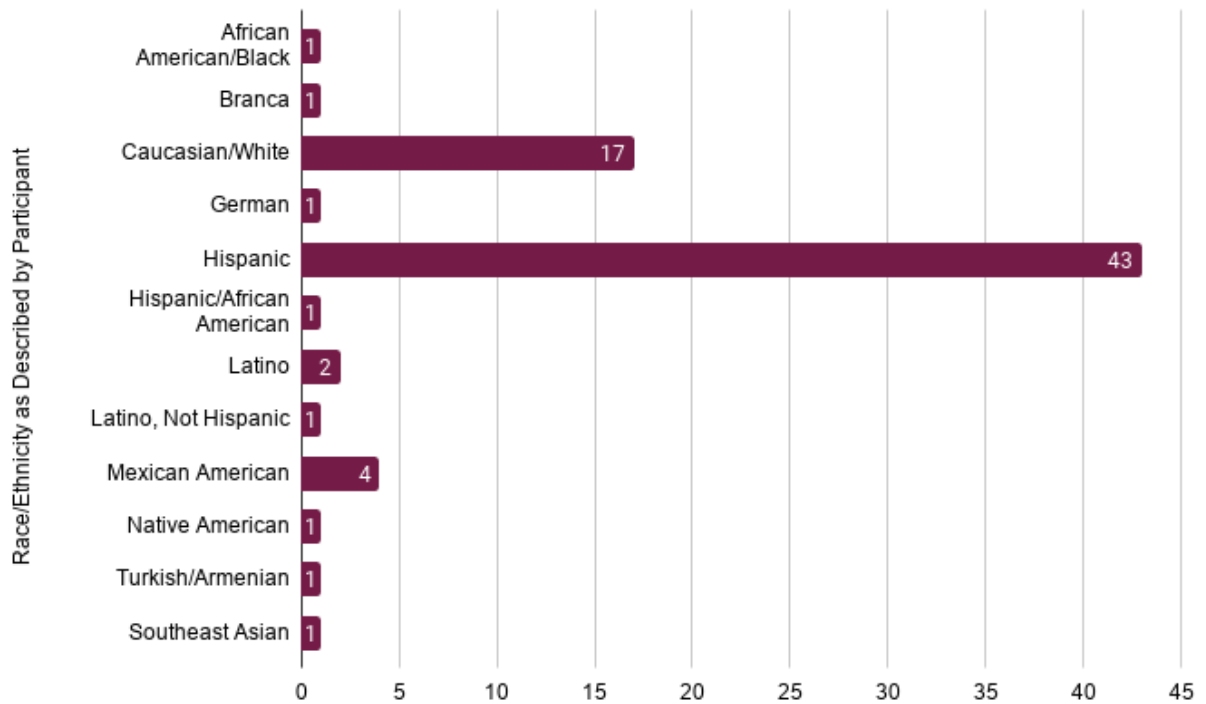
*Gender Identification*



## Appendix G

**Figure 7**

*Racial/Ethnic Identification*



*Note.* Participants were given the opportunity to identify their race/ethnicity. *Branco/a* is a Brazilian identifier for race.

## Appendix H

### Figure 8

#### *Voices Reflecting on Mental Health and Social Emotional Development*

Unfortunately, the pandemic exacerbated an already stressful work environment. Most certainly, the new modes of teaching were a significant source of stress.

(Educator; South Korea)

I let myself go physically, spiritually, and emotionally. It's been a struggle trying to reach some sort of normalcy.

(Michelle Devally, Concerned Citizen; San Antonio, Texas)

It was frustrating to feel like a failure every day because so many kids are failing and to have that blame placed on you because parents don't want to take responsibility for their children.

(Amanda Dexter, Educator; St. Joseph, Missouri)

I'll start with life. I don't think I've ever felt this much stress before. I've been stressed worrying about getting sick or about my husband and our families getting sick. I've been stressed about work. I'm a dyslexia teacher at an elementary school, and I've had students who have just completely shut down because they don't like virtual classes. I had a student who wouldn't stop crying. It made me want to cry because I felt like I couldn't do anything to make it better. I couldn't hug the student. I couldn't change the situation. This pandemic has definitely made me feel powerless, which has just led to stress.

(Mary Romero, Educator; Laredo, Texas)

Depression, anxiety, feelings of ineffectiveness as a teacher, lack of connection with students, now teaching different subject matter in order to keep students at least 6 feet apart at school, poor communication from certain admin, last summer's college courses for PD canceled, have considered leaving this profession.

(Educator; Milton, Vermont)

The pandemic affected my family directly and changed the routines of daily life. It is a constant fear of what direction COVID-19 will take. The stress is obvious in the lives of my children, and I feel helpless in making things better for our family.

(Sara Abi Villanueva, Educator, Parent; Laredo, Texas)

Because of my very busy schedule, I have been extremely stressed and started experiencing insomnia. I've tried many things to help like massages and herbal teas without caffeine and even aromatherapy. This has affected my focus during the day while working and will make me irritable at times.

(Amanda, Parent; McAllen, Texas)

It has caused me stress and anxiety, plus depression.

(Cynthia C. Chapa, Educator; Laredo, Texas)

Added stressors of raising children while attending virtual classes and working from home.

(Monica Lara, Parent; Marrero, Louisiana)

**Figure 8 (continued)**

My school-aged child had to be homeschooled and hasn't been able to be active with other children. It has caused our family to be filled with anxiety and depression.

(Alicia M. Cano, Parent; Hammond, Illinois)

It caused [stress] and depression in my life. In education, as well, and even anxiety.

(Martha A. Lozano, Teacher-Aide; Laredo, Texas)

The pandemic has negatively impacted my life as an educator. We have been asked to continue teaching as a typical school year. Teachers are overwhelmed, stressed, overworked, and anxious. We are trying to comply with everything that the state and the district are asking us for. However, we are forgetting that educators and students are human beings.

(Elena D. Pecina, Educator; Laredo, Texas)

Movement was challenging. The limitations of physical distancing were mentally [debilitating] at times. When I moved around public spaces, the indirect reaction of others to move away was [disconcerting] at times. I realize it was important to be distanced physically, but to have people not even acknowledge each other with a hello or a knob was very uncomfortable. Living in the southern region of the USA, the culture of social interaction can include a hug, shaking someone's hand, smiling, and exchange words, to offer a blessing for a good day. All of these social nuances were minimized, and my fear for the very young who are growing up in this environment is they will miss learning the value of these behaviors while in their impressionable years.

(Lucinda N. Sohn, Ph.D., Educator; San Antonio, Texas)

Even though I did not have any financial losses, as I am employed by the state, I notice that the pandemic emotionally wears you down through less social contacts and less presence in school.

(Educator; Koblenz, Germany)

The pandemic has kept me away from my family. The last time I was able to give my parents a hug was on February 13, 2020. I also fear that the pandemic may have lasting [effects] on how I interact in a group setting once it is safe for us to be around one another again.

(Liz Rubio, Concerned Citizen; Austin, Texas)

It is heartbreaking to see how 5th-grade students are putting their mental health at risk. Everyone in this pandemic is grieving; we have lost our routines, social contact, family members, and so much more. As a society, we need to learn how to take care of our mental health in the "new normal."

(Elena D. Pecina, Educator; Laredo, Texas)

It has led me to be less social with others and has made me feel lonely at times.

(Barbara Buitron, Concerned Citizen; Laredo, Texas)

**Figure 8 (continued)**

It forced my Ph.D. program to go completely remote, which eliminates any and all types of social and emotional support we get from interacting with other students and professors in person. It made conferences go online.

(Daniela A. Beckelhymer, Concerned Citizen, Student; Laredo, Texas)

Without a doubt, this pandemic has negatively impacted people at all levels. As I mentioned previously, it has brought out the worst in some, especially when people's nerves and emotions are all on edge. Unfortunately, domestic violence, child abuse, and divorce cases have increased. In a society, where we are so accustomed to our 8:00-5:00 pm office space and kids' soccer practice/ballet class pick-up time at 7:00 pm, it is only normal to have some emotional outbursts after prolonged confinement.

We are dealing with all sorts of emotions and trying to make things happen at the same time--from working remotely and homeschooling simultaneously to caring for a loved one while trying to stay healthy.

(Lizette Mendive-Gonzalez, Educator; Laredo, Texas)

Constantly having to worry about the stability of my job.

(PA, Austin, Texas)

...I worry about my daughter's emotional state.

(Lucero, Laredo, Texas)

For my mental health, I had to give up a well-paying K-8 job to know that I'd be safe at home this year and not ride the are-we-returning-in-life-threatening-ways roller coaster.

(Angela Knight, Educator, Detroit, Michigan)

Fears of sickness, death, and losing loved ones. While the educational aspect was good for most of my students, there were far too many who struggled with virtual classes, which added to their anxieties about the pandemic.

(Deena Alexander-Garza, Educator, Hebronville, Texas)

I am exhausted thinking about my children's needs, cooking, cleaning, preparing my lessons, correcting, marking, and teaching online. I have to juggle work commitments and also a hectic family life simultaneously.

(Educator, Istanbul, Turkey)

## Appendix I

### Figure 9

#### *Voices Reflecting on the Perception of Time During COVID-19*

My pace-life has slowed down significantly.

(Brenda L. Escudero, Educator; Laredo, Texas)

I have been forced to slow down in life and carefully assess and examine that which I place importance and meaning on.

(Ramiro Hernandez Jr., Concerned Citizen; Laredo, Texas)

And just like that, time stopped. Before the pandemic, my life roared with the force of a runaway train. Just as I was ready to leap into an unknown rabbit hole, God reached for my hand as if to say "wait". By chance, the shiny new grad program I was about to begin became a sitting box on a shelf in some fancy department store. My mind kept saying "let's go", but my heart knew better. I was pregnant. I was over the moon until news of the pandemic spiraled closer and closer to Texas. As panic set in and ideas of what my pregnancy would look like during the pandemic, time stood still. The one thing I had always asked the Universe for was to stop time... and it finally worked. Time came to a complete stop and I soaked in every living moment that I forgot existed. Eating breakfast was no longer a luxury and cooking went from non-existent to epic survival. Being able to watch my son grow, that's the takeaway. The pandemic gave me time. Time to bask in caring for my children, my husband, and myself. Time made me ask myself if the pursuit of education was for my enlightenment or for the boastful arrogance that came with it.

And was this next step in my education my calling? Living through the pandemic has allowed me to pay attention, listen, and slow down.

(Clarissa Murillo, Educator, Parent, Concerned Citizen; San Antonio, Texas)

*The pandemic positively provided me with time to reflect. The pandemic slowed my fast-paced teaching life to a more fulfilling life.*

(Regina J. Bustillos, Educator, Parent, Concerned Citizen; Chamberino, New Mexico)

Since I have a job not affected by it, life had only become quieter and therefore less stressful. I had the chance to spend more time with my family and my horses. There were fewer places to be and events to attend, which wasn't entirely bad for me personally.

(Maryam Stock, Concerned Citizen, Koblenz, Germany)

Since the pandemic, we have slowed our pace of life a lot and now have dinner together in the dining room talking about the day's events or any topic of interest to our daughters. We have connected more as a family and have improved our communication skills. I have also been able to resume my degree courses online since I'm working from home which has been a blessing.

(Amanda, Parent; McAllen, Texas)

Positively, I think it slowed things down. Before the pandemic, it seemed that something was always going on/happening.

(Educator; Laredo, Texas)

**Figure 9 (continued)**

It has given me more time to dedicate to my academic goals.  
(Barbara Buitron, Concerned Citizen; Laredo, Texas)

Mais tempo para estudos específicos, que antes não teria.  
I have more time for specific studies which I did not have before.  
(Missila Cardozo, Educator; São Caetano do Sul, SP, Brasil)

I SPENT MORE TIME STUDYING FOR UNIVERSITY BECAUSE I SPENT LESS TIME WITH FRIENDS AND FUN ACTIVITIES. I ALSO ATTENDED MORE UNIVERSITY CLASSES BECAUSE ZOOM CALLS ARE LESS OF A HASSLE THAN TAKING THE TRAIN TO UNIVERSITY. SO ALL IN ALL MY UNIVERSITY EDUCATION BENEFITED FROM THE PANDEMIC.

(Charlotte Daub, Educator; Wiesbaden, Germany)

**I was completing my education degree online. Covid shutdown allowed me to focus solely on my degree and I graduated a year and a half early!**  
(Educator; Seymour, Texas)

As an educator, I have taken this time to continue my education pursuing a Master's Degree in Curriculum and Instruction.  
(Liliana Gonzalez, Educator; Parent, Laredo, Texas)

School: Even though the pandemic led to many missed days of school (my first-graders only visited school 5x from March through August), I was able to maintain close contact through personal phone calls. In everyday teaching life, there is usually less time to talk about personal issues.  
(Educator; Koblenz, Germany)

THE PANDEMIC HAS BEEN A GIFT OF TIME FOR ME. IT HAS ALLOWED ME TO PLACE MORE FOCUS AND EMPHASIS ON AREAS OF MY FIELD THAT I HAVE BEEN WANTING TO LEARN MORE ABOUT. IT HAS HELPED ME TO REACH MY GOALS FASTER THAN I WOULD HAVE WITH THE DISTRACTIONS OF SOCIAL ENGAGEMENTS, ETC.  
(Liz Rubio, Concerned Citizen; Austin, Texas)

I got to spend more time with my family.  
(Educator; Laredo, Texas)

It has given me more bonding time with my family.  
(Mayra Garcia, Educator, Parent; Laredo, Texas)

**The pandemic has at times isolated me, however, I have been able to manage my personal life in that I can spend time with my immediate family.**  
(Lucinda N Sohn, Ph.D., Educator; San Antonio, Texas)



**Figure 9 (continued)**

...I was fortunate enough to spend more time with my husband and children. We had just moved into a new home a few months prior and this gave us the opportunity to spend time together, as a family, in our new home.

(Sara Abi Villanueva, Educator, Parent; Laredo, Texas)

Every single conversation/meeting/getting together with friends and family gets more important and I appreciate the time which I can spend with them.

(Jule Daub, Educator; Koblenz, Germany)

**Positively-I have been able to spend a lot more time with my family. I feel it has brought us closer.**

(Jennifer Batey, Educator; Laredo, Texas)

I also feel like my husband and I have gotten closer in the pandemic because we spend so much time together.

(Mary Romero, Educator; Laredo, Texas)

**This pandemic experience has given me a lot of time to spend with my own family and pursue hobbies and interests. I would have not had time to do otherwise. It gave me an eye-opening revelation to the importance of spending more time with my family doing activities that are productive to building a solid relationship.**

(K. McCreight, Educator, Parent; Texas)

As far as teaching, I feel like I have no time off; I'm working 24/7!

(Jennifer Batey, Educator; Laredo, Texas)

Excesso de trabalho e de tarefas. Urgência na execução.

Excessive work and tasks. Urgency in executing them.

(Missila Cardozo, Educator; São Caetano do Sul, SP, Brasil)

**Teaching hybrid was like doing twice the work in an already overworked profession.**

(Amanda Dexter, Educator; St. Joseph, Missouri)

Although I enjoy working from home, I am a lot busier with cooking/cleaning/teaching/etc. I realize that it is difficult for teachers to retain the attention of 20-30 kids online especially the elementary kids. I see the messages in the morning 15-20 into class where the teacher is messaging the parents for missing students to join the zoom call. Therefore, if my daughters don't understand something, they will come to me while I am working and ask me for assistance. Because of my very busy schedule, I have been extremely stressed and started experiencing insomnia.

(Amanda, Parent; McAllen, Texas)

## Appendix J

### Figure 10

#### *Voices Reflecting on “A Better, Brighter You”*

##### PROFESSIONALLY

I am more empathetic to the choices my students have to make, to the community they live in, and to the chaos around them as they tackle the time to learn.

(Regina J. Bustillos, Educator, Parent, Concerned Citizen; Chamberino, New Mexico)

I was able to reacquaint myself with what I enjoyed about education; learning new things and genuinely reflecting on the why, and also how to apply/teach the insights without feeling rushed.

(Craig Stowers, Educator; Humble, Texas)

The pandemic allowed me to really value boundaries, empathy, and the impact of implementing technology.

(Selina Peña, Educator; Laredo, Texas)

The pandemic has allowed me to come up with creative solutions on how to communicate and reach out to my students and loved ones. I have learned so much in regards to technology, how to engage students, and apply it to my field of teaching which is science. It has allowed me to explore various ways to make a lesson more interesting and hands-on. In my personal life, it was further allowed me to teach my loved ones how to use technology and better connect with them.

(Cynthia Gallardo, Educator; Laredo, Texas)

It has made me a better teacher because I have discovered new innovative ways to teach.

(Rolando Mejorado Jr., Educator; Weslaco, Texas)

In education personally, has helped me learn so much about technology and it was like I had to relearn how I was going to teach. So I think I also grew as an educator.

(Educator; Laredo, Texas)

*The pandemic forced me out of my level of comfort into exploring the possibilities of teaching using technology.*

(Rocío Torres, Educator, Parent; McAllen, Texas)

But I no longer am scared to death of having to learn something new on the computer. This pandemic brought me to the confidence of pursuing my master's degree in education.

(K. McCreight, Educator, Parent, Concerned Citizen; Texas)

This pandemic has given me the chance to advance in my career, I do not think I would have made this decision if things would still be in their "normal" routine.

(Liliana Gonzalez, Educator, Parent; Laredo, Texas)

Additionally, I have learned to be more empathetic with my students. It is essential to respect and validate our students' feelings.

(Elena D. Pecina, Educator; Laredo, Texas)

I feel more empathetic for my students that have suffered grief either financially or personally. Other than being able to be more empathetic, I feel that I have been able to connect more with students and their guardians.

(Anna L. Gomez, Educator; Laredo, Texas)

**Figure 10 (continued)**

**PHYSICALLY & EMOTIONALLY**

I'm doing things to stay healthy like eating better and exercising.

(Jennifer Batey, Educator; Laredo, Texas)

**The pandemic made it once again clear to me that family and friends are the most important thing in life for me.**

(Jule Daub, Educator; Koblenz, Rheinland-Pfalz, Germany)

**I feel like this was a much-needed re-set in my life.**

(Cindy L. Dominguez, CCMR Coordinator; Laredo, Texas)

I've also been able to increase my physical activity by running 3-5 times a week in our neighborhood in the morning.

(Amanda, Parent; McAllen, Texas)

My wife and I got married a week before the pandemic started affecting work. We have used this time to grow closer, and help each other troubleshoot any and all virtual teaching headaches.

(J. Medina, Educator; Laredo, Texas)

It brought me closer to my parents [and] afforded me to save money, and spend more time at the ranch with my children or alone.

(Ricardo Flores, Parent; Laredo, Texas)

I have diligently reconsidered that which I value and the amount of value, which I bestow upon it. I believe that this has helped me take a different take on life and has altered my perspective for the best.

(Ramiro Hernandez Jr., Concerned Citizen, Laredo, Texas)

**Figure 10 (continued)**

### **SPIRITUALLY**

This pandemic has also [shown] me what is truly meaningful in my life.

(Mayra Garcia, Educator; Laredo, Texas)

It has helped us get closer to God! Our faith got stronger and we started having our own bible studies.

(Educator, Laredo; Texas)

Overall, I can say that this pandemic has allowed us to grow personally, spiritually, and emotionally. I have come to realize, even more, how much I am blessed, despite our circumstances. When this whole fiasco began back in March, I was happy to pick up "Grab-n-Go" school meals for a young mother of a toddler and two baby girl twins, [who] had just been abandoned by her husband. She would tell me "You don't have to go out of your way to drop off food; we are okay." However, even though I was not making the food nor buying it, it just felt good inside to devote some of my time (and gas) to share God's abundance. And I am not sharing this to flatter myself in any way but rather to emphasize the importance of [selfless] acts of kindness. As I watched the news at the beginning of this pandemic, sometimes I just wanted to tune off because of the alarming case numbers and devastation. However, touching stories of individuals going out of their way to help others inspired me to pay it forward in my own way.

(Lizette Mendive-Gonzalez, Educator; Laredo, Texas)

## Appendix J

**Figure 11**

*Responses to Question 3*

*How do you see your country recovering from the turmoil created by this pandemic?*



There is a very slim chance for higher education in South Korea to recover to pre-Covid-19 levels. The pandemic, coupled with declining demographics specific to South Korea, will make a possible recovery very difficult.  
~Educator; South Korea

I'm worried about schools promoting students to the next grade who aren't ready. I'm also worried about trying to close whatever gap this pandemic has caused in education once we go back to normal schooling.  
~Mary Romero; Educator; Laredo, Texas, USA

Not well and not quickly. It is not just education but our society as a whole now has even larger inequities that will take a lifetime to fix, if we're lucky. I'm not optimistic about fixing the harm that has been done to students, families, and people because of the lack of leadership on so many levels in the United States.  
~Educator; Austin, Texas, USA

By finding a treatment, I believe our community will rise and overcome the challenges this year brought as well as appreciate the important things in life.  
~Educator, Parent, and Concerned Citizen; Laredo, Texas, USA

Vietnam is a model of recovering and overcoming the situation. Life is normal here since April 2020. Live music, clubs, restaurants, events, concerts, Schools, etc. are in session since May 2020. We had relatively very few cases proliferate due to the [government] leadership and restrictions early on. There were two small outbreaks since then, but they were very small and completely contained.  
~Alfred Daniel Olivas; Educator; Hanoi, Vietnam

Figure 11 (continued)

*How do you see your country recovering from the turmoil created by this pandemic?*



Slowly...however, there is no way we, as a country, SHOULD ever return to what we were doing, or how we were living life prior to the pandemic.  
~Sara Abi Villanueva;  
Educator and Parent;  
Laredo, Texas, USA

My country needs to focus on the positive and bridge the divide that so desperately needs repair.  
~Selina Peña; Educator; Laredo,  
Texas, USA

**Com imensa dificuldade.**  
With immense difficulty.  
~Missila Cardozo;  
Educator;  
São Caetano do Sul, SP, Brazil

I see most people learning to value things they took for granted.  
~Brenda L. Escudero;  
Educator;  
Laredo, Texas, USA

I'm not sure total recovery is possible.  
~Educator;  
Weslaco, Texas, USA

Figure 11 (continued)

*How do you see your country recovering from the turmoil created by this pandemic?*



To recover from the turmoil, more specifically, from the learning gaps, everyone from parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, neighbors, guardians, and more need to support one another. This is not a time to be shy anymore, but to act together to fight this.

~Regina J. Bustillos; Educator, Parent, and Concerned Citizen; Chamberino, New Mexico, USA

We are not doing as well as other countries that have embraced the lock-downs better. We are a large and strong country and I have no fear that we won't recover but I know that recovery will look different for people from different socio-economic statuses and for different races, especially those whom the pandemic has hit the hardest.

~Elizabeth DeZouche; Educator; Laredo, Texas, USA

My country can only [recover] with love and compassion. For example, educators need to be more compassionate for families affected by COVID-19 instead of missing assignments.

~Maricruz Vasquez; Educator and Parent; Laredo, Texas, USA

Since the whole world is in this together I think countries have the chance to work together and find solutions.

~Maryam Stock; Concerned Citizen; Koblenz, RLP, Germany

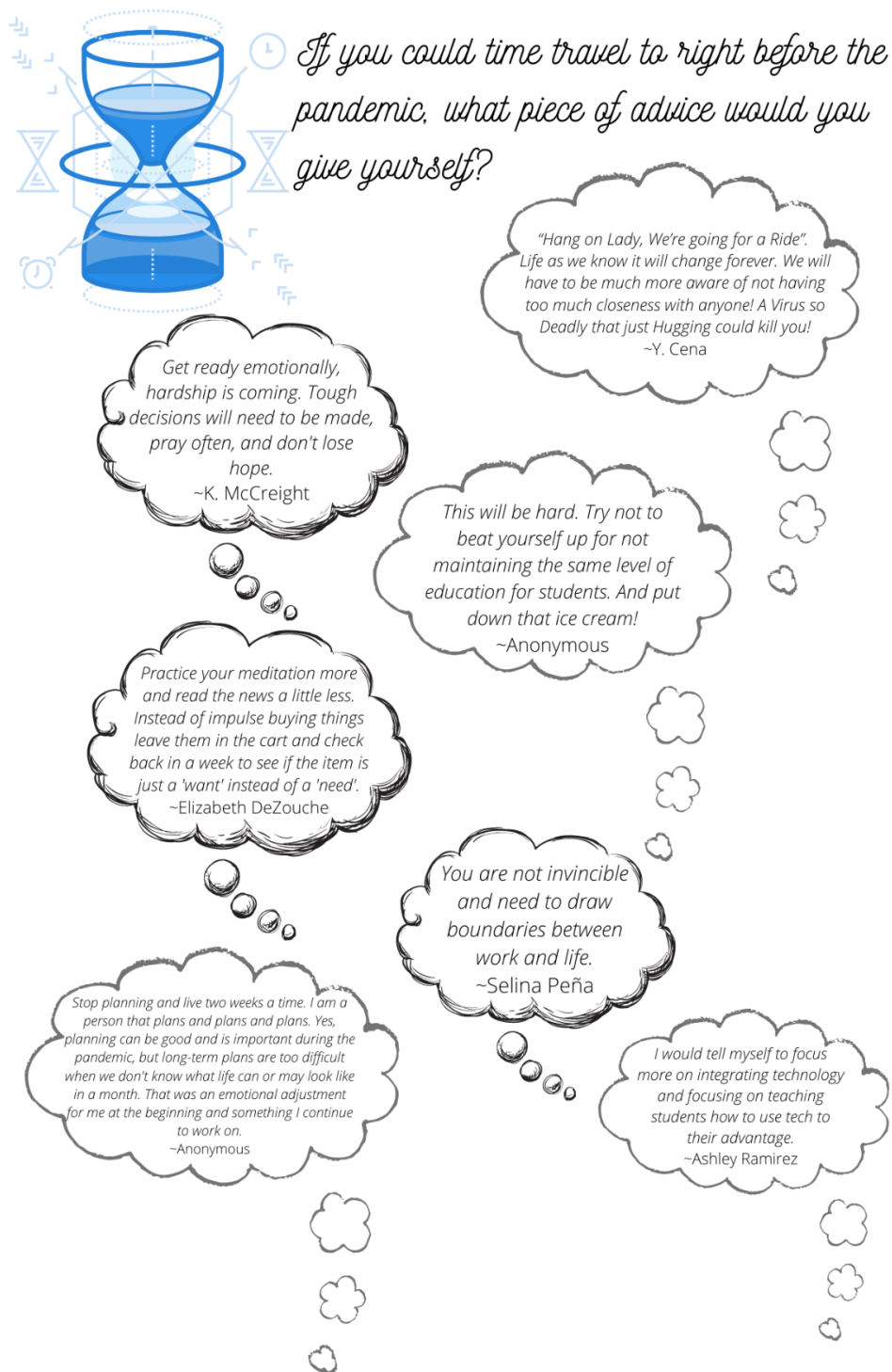
By finding a treatment, I believe our community will rise and overcome the challenges this year brought as well as appreciate the important things in life.

~Educator, Parent, and Concerned Citizen; Laredo, Texas, USA

## Appendix K

**Figure 12**

*Responses to Question 4*





## Appendix L

### Figure 13

#### Responses to Question 5

*How have you occupied yourself during lockdowns?*

*I spend most of my time with my family in a variety of activities, including playing, learning, reading, watching TV, arts and more*

**Anonymous**

*Cleaning, exercising, cooking, reading, praying, listening to daily mass, making puzzles, watching Netflix, and playing games.*

**Martha A. Lozano**

*Going for long rides and walks with my horses. Visiting my parents and some friends outside. Often went for walks with friends instead of meeting in town. Also cleaning the house thoroughly, like wiping down cupboards, defrosting the freezer, organizing the wardrobe... Things I usually can't make time for.*

**Maryam Stock**

*Exercise, getting outdoors and rearranging my home. I did get into counseling, which is something I find hard to consider, but now, I look forward to talking with my counselor once a week. It is hard to pull away from the computer and make time for personal life. But I have increased my opportunities to workout, getting my body into shape and not giving into the craving to eat and use food and drink to make me feel better.*

**Lucinda N. Sohn, Ph.D.**

*Read all of Toni Morrison's novels to really understand social injustices, binged on Grey's Anatomy (all 16 seasons) and these episodes motivated me to live in the moment and not to feel any shame after expressing strong opinions, and managed remote learning at work, but also the learning of my 4 children (oldest in college, youngest in pre-k) at home.*

**Regina J. Bustillos**

*...I was taking classes for my graduate studies, so I occupied myself with homework, research, and trying to publish. Now that I've graduated, I have a list of must-read books I want to get through. As for my family, we've had more game and movie nights at home.*

**Sara Abi Villanueva**

*Cats! I finally fulfilled my wish and adopted two cats. They keep me company and entertain me. A lockdown is the perfect opportunity to get a pet. Since you have to stay home anyway, you can dedicate a lot of time to them.*

**Alexandra Daub**

*I started doing home-workouts five times a week, I go for long walks, I've read all the books that have been on my shelf for far too long, I played online video games with friends...*

**Charlotte Daub**

**Figure 13 (continued)**

*How have you occupied yourself during lockdowns?*

*I have occupied myself by getting closer to God, by writing more, and by singing as it is one of my passions.*

*I also coordinate a single mom's group through church, and that has helped me tremendously.*

**Angie Ramirez**

*I have built LEGO buildings; watched way too much tv; read books; worked out (lots of running and cycling); learned how to make margaritas, cosmopolitans, and espresso drinks; cooked homemade meals; watched Michael's (the store) Zoom classes; and used my planners.*

**Mary Romero**

*I keep constant communication with my family and friends through ZOOM calls, Facetime, and even WhatsApp video calls. All my pre-pandemic hobbies intensified.*

*My gym workouts became home workouts. I am now an improved cook and recently became a rookie baker.*

**Anna L. Gomez**

*I tried to really take care of myself mentally and spiritually. Sometimes I would catch up on books I left unread, try to keep sane by doing Yoga, FaceTime my loved ones, puzzles. I started writing a journal of everyday during this pandemic to further read in my future.*

**Rocio Villarreal**

*Because of the multiple surfaces that live in my apartment, I have kept a steady hand on wiping them down DAILY. However, when I am not combatting germs, I spend every minute with my family. My son and I are experts on all things pancakes, pumpkin bread, and Pokemon. My daughter has learned to roll over. My husband and I are absorbing every family moment that jumps at us.*

**Clarissa Murillo**

*My six kids, learning how to teach virtually, and being a student in graduate school are definitely taking up all of my time right now. On the occasional outing, my husband and I go to the beach when we predict there will be little people there, we go on hikes, and go frequently on runs in the park. At home, I have taught myself to sew and I have been helping my husband construct a tiny house in our backyard for our teenage boys. That has been an amazing learning experience because I build something from the foundation to the roof and it reminds me of how we can accomplish anything we set our minds to.*

**Rocío Torres**

*Well, I can say that I revived the inner chef in me when attempting to cook around-the-world recipes. In fact, I will never forget when this past summer I realized my taste was gone after eating half a dozen of Argentinian empanadas I had baked. I kept asking my husband, "Babe, are you sure they don't need more salt?" Being the salty eater of the family, he reassured me the saltiness of the empanadas was just fine. "Oooh Oh...I have COVID!" It hit me right there and then. Indeed, I did test positive but was fortunate to only have that mild symptom.*

**Lizette Mendive-Gonzalez**

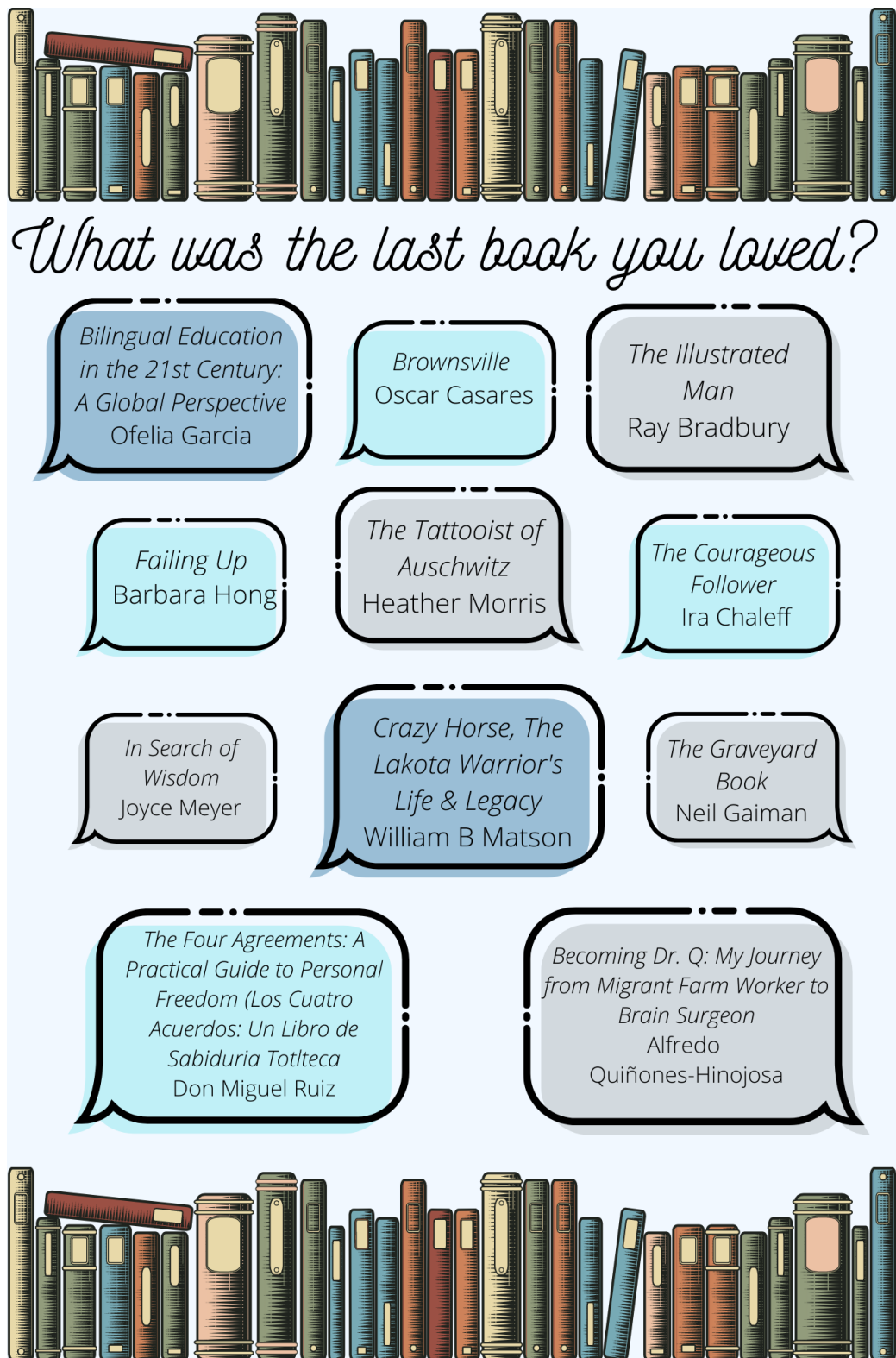
## Appendix M

Figure 14

Responses to Question 6



Figure 14 (continued)




## Appendix N

Figure 15

Responses to Question 9

*What should educators read next?*

Participants shared the following suggestions for educators:



● ...it is vital that educators read more about mental health. We need to learn how to identify signs and symptoms when students are struggling. In this manner, we can refer them to the school counselor. Nowadays, it is essential to teach our students how to cope with certain situations or to ask for help.

● ~Elena D. Pecina

● Plato's Republic and Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *Émile* to understand the interaction between good/ideal/responsible citizen and education.

● ~Anonymous

● ...I believe that educators should read more on diversity and equality to be able to teach and transmit the most basic humanistic values such as respecting other people different from you (beliefs, race, gender, etc).

● ~Anonymous

● Honestly, I recommend educators reading anything that inspires them to be a better person, whether it be a novel or self-help book. Because if we devote ourselves to be better individuals, we can amount to be better teachers, students, parents, spouses, coworkers, etc.

● ~Lizette Mendive-Gonzalez

● I really do believe that reading the book "Becoming Dr. Q: My Journey from Migrant Farm Worker to Brain Surgeon" is an inspirational book for educators and also to share with their students as it talks about resilience, adaptability, and being proud of who you are, where you are from, and where you are going. Dr. Q's story is relatable to many and it truly has an impact upon readers. Among the many lessons from his story is to be proud of who you are, where you are going, and to have and keep faith.

● ~Cynthia Gallardo

● Esperanza Rising or any story that brings to light the unknown suffering that students have to hide to survive in school. Being aware of the perspectives of our students can help us meet their needs on a deeper level and provide for them what they can't and probably will never get anywhere else.

● ~Rocío Torres

● A book that they never dared to.

● ~Maricruz Vasquez

● Coisas que os distraiam. É preciso desacelerar. Entertaining books. It is necessary to slow down.

● ~Missila Cardozo

● Something that entertains them. They need to step out of reality for a while.

● ~Cindy L. Dominguez

● If I could suggest any read, I would invite educators to read anything that has humanity, love, random kindness, and selfless deeds as a theme. We could all learn a little about these concepts in these hard times. We could even use this in our classrooms to teach our students a little more than just what a state test covers .

● ~Angelica Ramirez

## Appendix O

**Figure 16**

*Responses to Question 10*

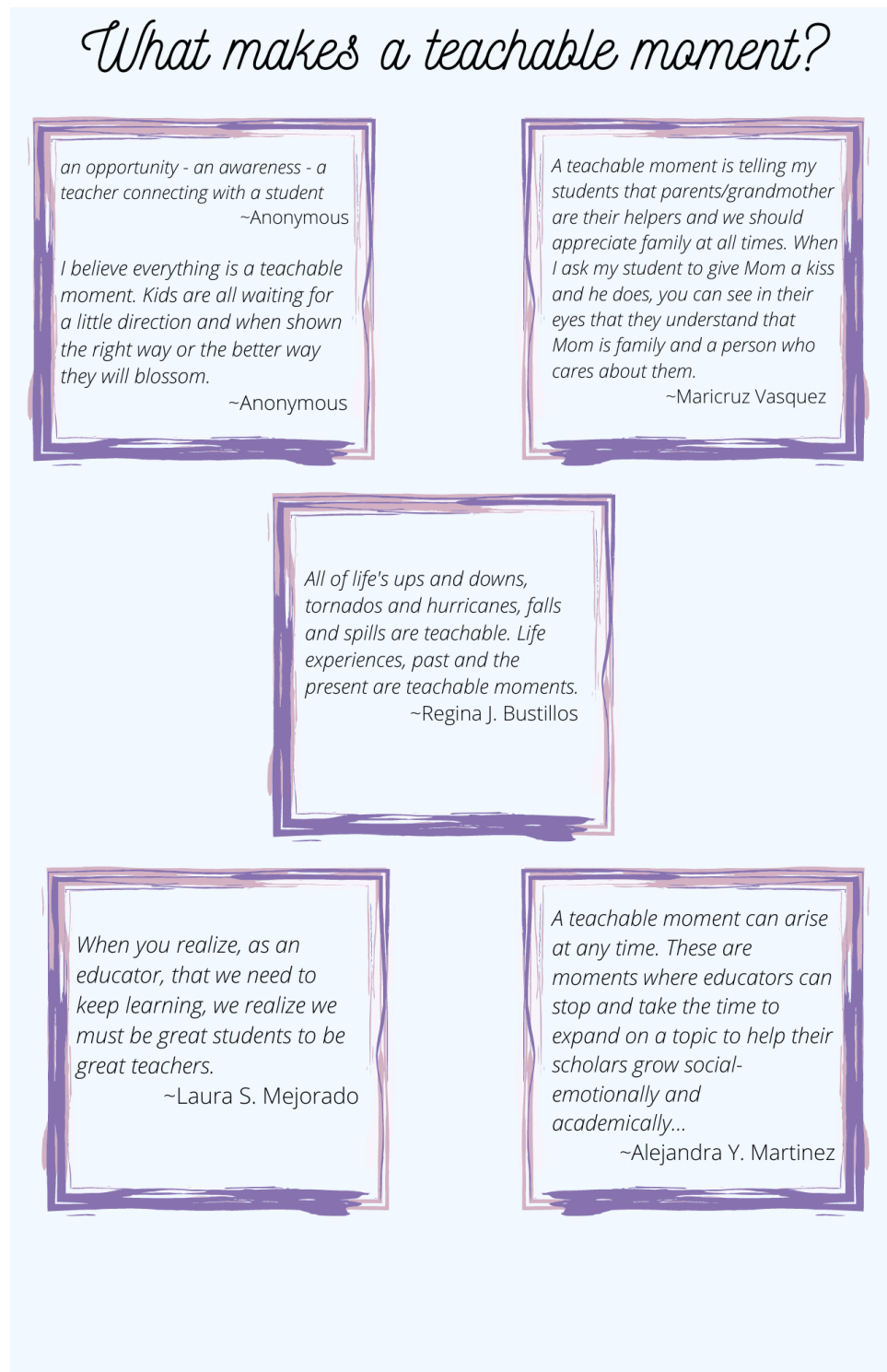
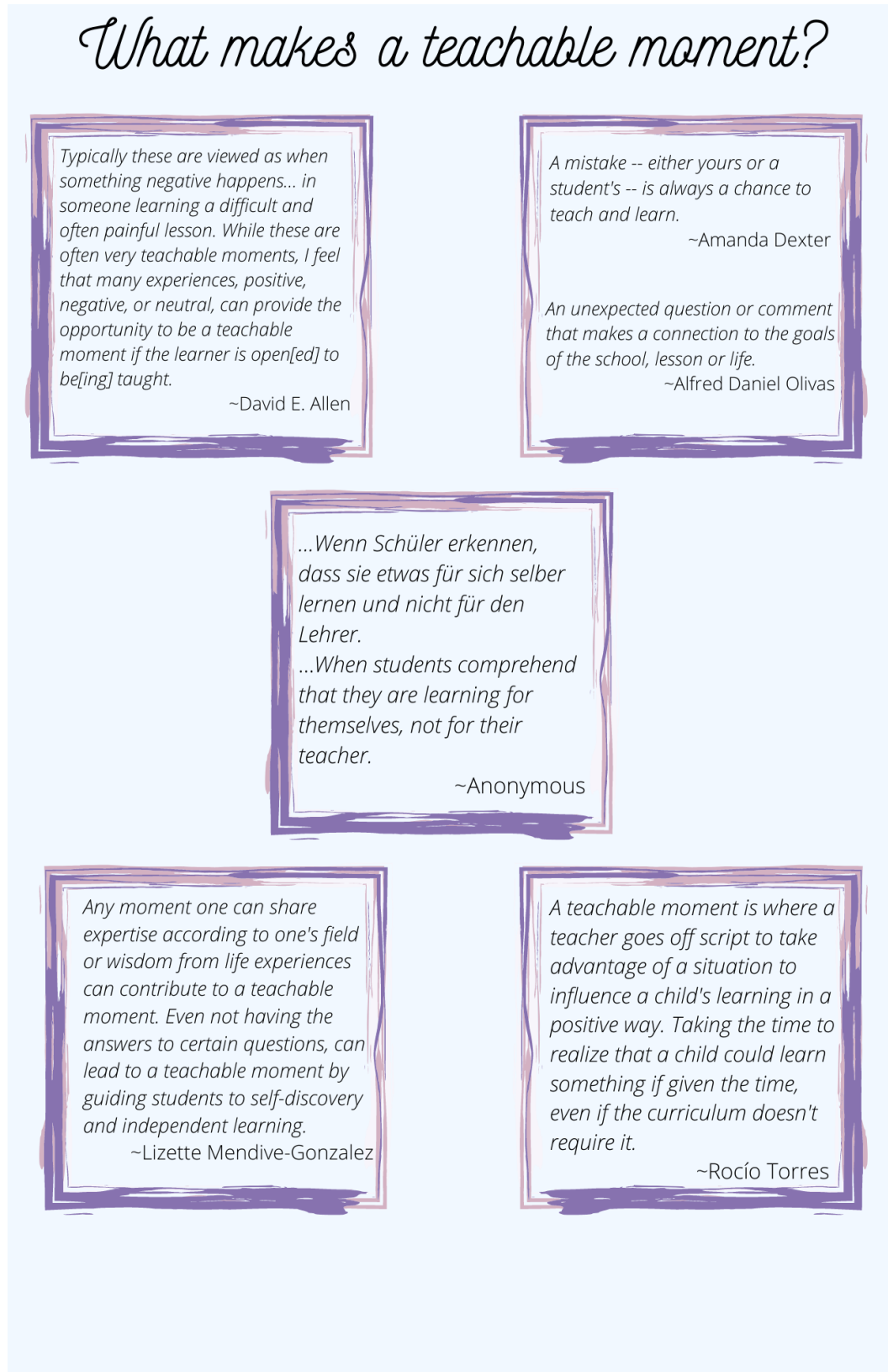


Figure 16 (continued)



## Appendix P

**Figure 17**

*Responses to Question 11*

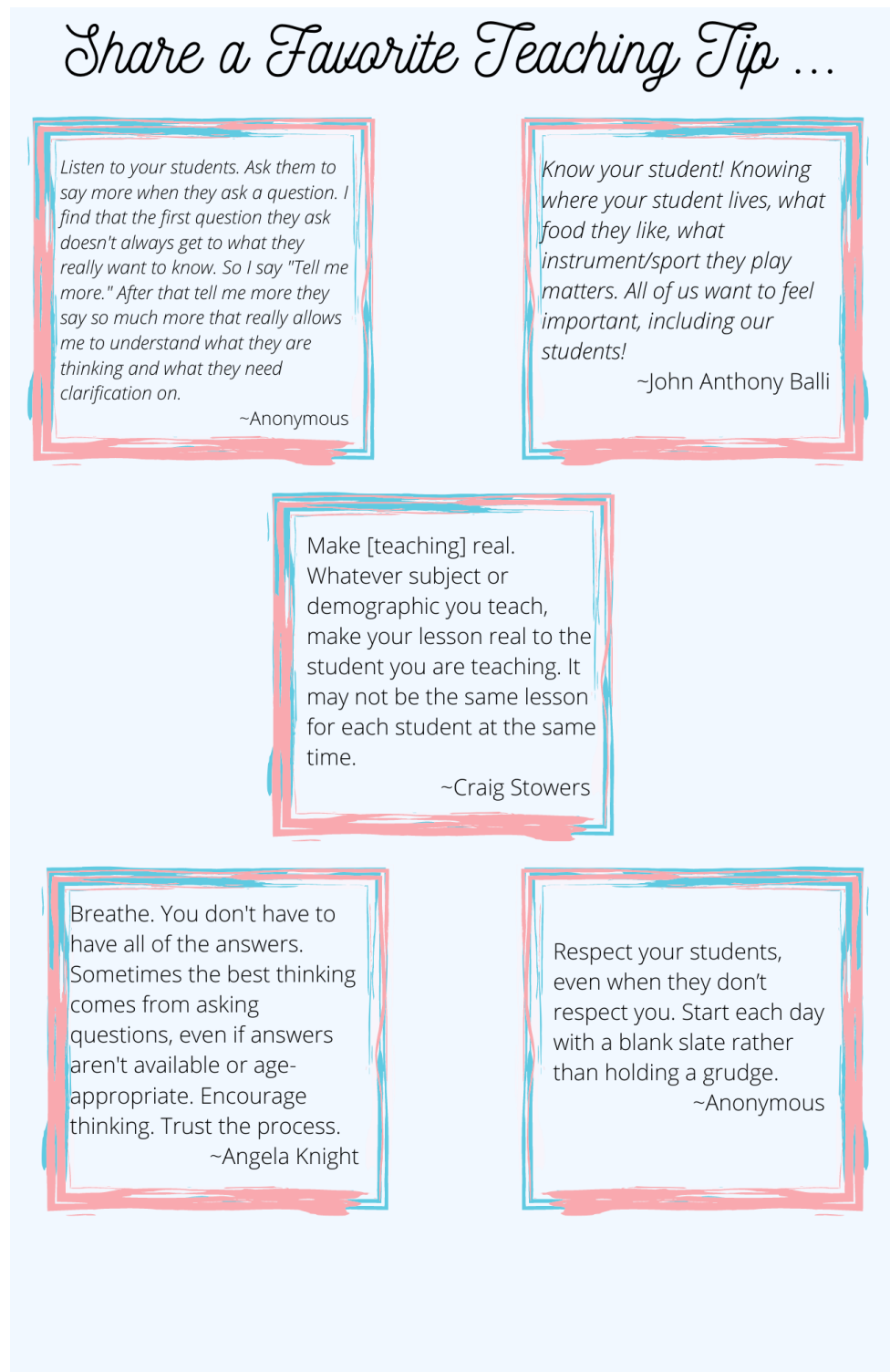
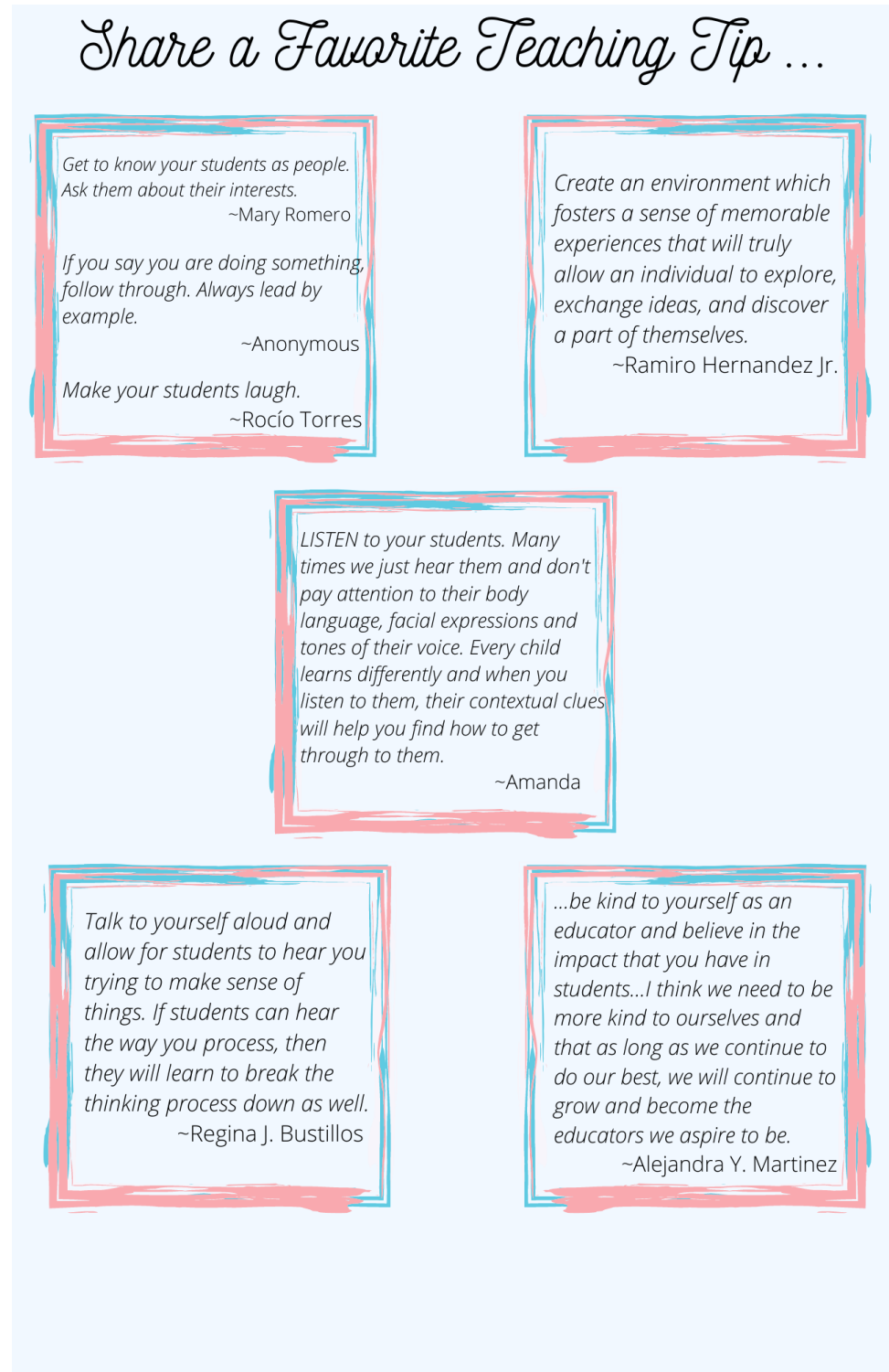




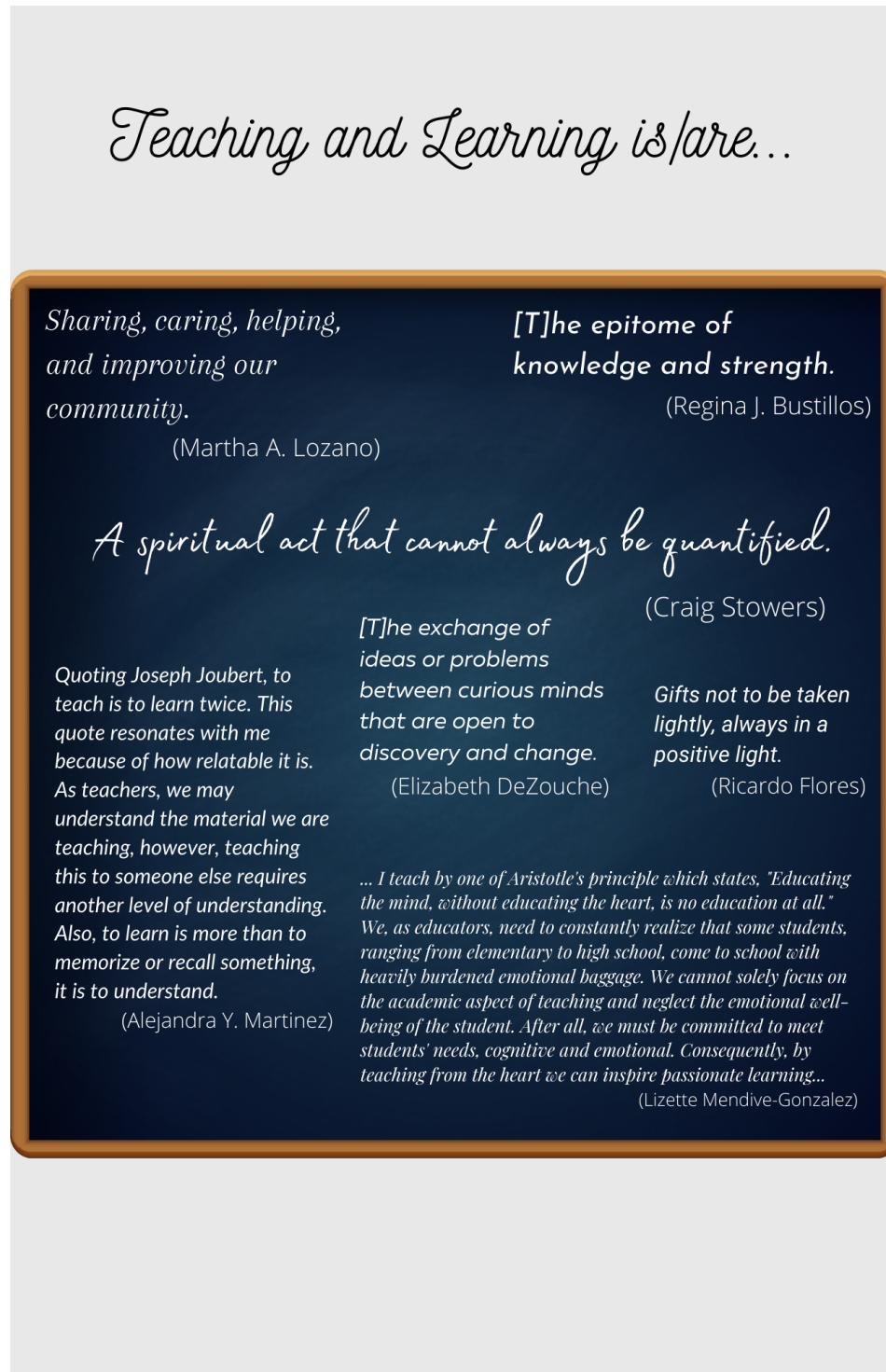
Figure 17 (continued)



## Appendix Q

**Figure 18**





*Responses to Question 12*



## Appendix R

Figure 19

### Responses to Question 13

<p>"Bittersweet Symphony" by The Verve - Everything that we've experienced in 2020 is all in this song, figuratively speaking. The pandemic forced us out of our daily routines and comfort zones. At times I felt that I couldn't handle the changes mentally and emotionally; however, when I focused my energy on the positive it has brought to me and my family, I was able to savor those moments, and I knew that I would thrive. It is hard to break cycles we create especially as adults but we have to learn to be as fluid as kids are and embrace the possibilities that come with change. Even though I miss walking into stores without a mask or going dancing with my husband, I am grateful for the happy and full dinner table every evening and the laughter of my family when I can take my laptop outside and watch them play while I'm still working.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">~Amanda</p>	 <p>As an environmental scientist, my 2020 experience is one of seeing an increase in a new type of discarded waste: masks, rubber gloves, etc. all associated with the pandemic. Please discard your objects into a trash can and not in the parking lot. Hence the photo of the mask in the parking lot.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">~David E. Allen</p>	<p>Song: Miley Cyrus - wrecking ball-&gt; Corona came in like a wrecking ball</p>
<p>I love food! And really who doesn't?! I would definitely describe my 2020 classroom experience as a "capirotada," a popular Lent dish in most Hispanic cultures composed of a mix of bread, peanuts, cheese, raisins, piloncillo, and more ingredients.</p> <p>It was a chaotic experience at first, with my 2-year-old yelling at the top of her lungs..."I need to pee!" while I was teaching. But in the end, and after establishing my other daughter's kinder online routines, it was something sweet to remember!</p> <p style="text-align: right;">~Lizette Mendive-Gonzalez</p>	 <p>Countless Zoom meetings and little change of scenery. At least I have someone to keep me company.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">~Alexandra Daub</p>	<p>Schule: Das einzige was sich in Sachen Digitalisierung an deutschen Schulen geändert hat, ist, dass Lehrer jetzt eine Email Adresse haben.</p> <p>School: The only thing that changed in regard to digitalization at German schools is that teachers have an email address now.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">~Anonymous</p>
<p>"The Climb" by Miley Cyrus is a song that emulates my 2020 experience. We may have plans sometimes, but it's important to not only enjoy the destination but also the journey and how we got there. Most importantly, keep the faith because you never know who you are inspiring and what you may accomplish.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">~Cynthia Gallardo</p>	 <p>Virtually teaching Cookie/Ding Dong Mining lab activity before Christmas break and students doing the activity at home. Hot chocolate was brought to enjoy the cookie afterwards.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">~Veronica R. Villarreal</p>	<p>I would say it's like a marching band where sometimes there are flutes playing quiet, serene music and sometimes there are symbols being slammed so hard against each other that your ears begin to hurt! Somehow, at the end of the performance you are satisfied with the overall experience of the marching band.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">~Rocío Torres</p>
<p>Missing my friends and brunch we decided to have virtual brunch and I decorated with a cactus streamer, naming my space the "Quarantine Cutie Cafe."</p> <p style="text-align: right;">~Elizabeth DeZouche</p>	 <p>The image is of me and a fellow teacher at a teacher workshop in Colorado from 2012. We are visiting the National Ice Core Laboratory. I miss these educational experiences.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">~Lucinda N Sohn, Ph.D.</p>	<p>I am certainly someone deeply entertained by music. I especially hold a strong appreciation for the compositions of John Williams. In such respect, the Theme from Jurassic Park is a number that I believe to be exquisitely written and which just amazes me. It is incredible to think that something invisible can be so eloquently composed. Thus, I hold a hope that while the ambiguity of our future is so overwhelming, we might hold solace for that which is exquisite and not visible.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">~Ramiro Hernandez Jr.</p>