Life as a migrant field worker through the pandemic

By: Michelle Cervantes Galicia, Audrina Vargas, Mia Acevedo, and Melissa Rosiles

Have you ever wondered what it is like to work through a pandemic like COVID-19? On January 19, 2021, the fourth-grade Migrant Journalism program class from Freedom Elementary School in Farmersville interviewed a parent farm worker, Rosa Nunez. We interviewed Mrs. Nunez about her experience working through the pandemic COVID-19. The parent shared some of the things she faces every day when she is working in the fields.

Rosa Nunez is a parent of a student at Freedom Elementary School in Farmersville. She usually starts her day at five o’clock in the morning. She gets ready for work by making food for her family and herself. Rosa started working in the fields last year as a field worker picking tangerines. As a field worker, some of her responsibilities are picking the fruit off the trees, checking whether it’s rotten, and if it is in good condition. Sometimes the fruit needs to be cleaned. One of the difficulties for Rosa is the cold weather, fog, and rain. Due to cold weather, you need to work more because you’ll end up working later than usual. A good experience from working in the fields is that you are able to work outside. Working in the fields will bring a lot of new friendships as well. Rosa stated, “The work in the fields is good, but I don’t recommend it one hundred percent because in the United States you are able to get an education and have better opportunities.”

The dangers Rosa faces in her work through a pandemic is COVID-19 and the risk of getting sick. Additionally, she includes other dangers such as carrying a heavy wheelbarrow full of grapes because you can hurt yourself. She also says that driving to work is dangerous too since they work early in the morning. A lot of people become tired even after work. Regardless of the struggles she faces, she has a coworker that she talks with and carpool with her.

At her work due to the pandemic, the hours for work have decreased for Mrs. Nunez and her coworkers. There are some jobs that have limited positions due to COVID-19 and social distancing guidelines. Right now Mrs. Nunez is not working a lot of hours. She works Mondays through Sundays, at least six hours a week or sometimes she’s off on Sundays. Being a farmworker through a pandemic, Rosa Nunez opens up to us to tell us that some of her family members got sick, but no one in her household got sick. The pandemic affected her family in various ways since students aren’t physically in school and they’re home, which can be very difficult. She explains to us that she would like to get an education and prepare herself for a better job to work less and get paid more. Mrs. Nunez explains that working in the fields is not sufficient because it’s hard work, the pay isn’t enough for the amount of work you do. She suggests that, “You need to make certain adjustments to not make some purchases you would like to make and you need to limit yourself.” Mrs. Nunez has other sources of income in order to help her family during the pandemic. Rosa has many talents that help gain income such as selling tamales, baking bread, selling curtains, and making bows for girls. Due to the pandemic, Rosa was forced to work in the fields to gain some extra income for her family.

Rosa Nunez advises students to not waste the opportunity they have to get an education. Students need to prepare themselves for a better job in the future rather than working in the fields. Working in the fields isn’t pretty and it’s really tough, complicated and you don’t get paid very well. Mrs. Nunez doesn’t have the best health condition, she has a thyroid. Even though she has these health conditions, she still works in the fields. Many students have perfect health and she suggests that students shouldn’t waste their opportunity of getting a free education.

A passionate teacher: Mrs. Mills

By: Erik Ramos, Kevin Flores, Leonel Mendoza, and Jose Acevedo

Can distance learning dim the light away from a teacher’s love of teaching? On January 19, 2021, the Freedom sixth-grade journalism students interviewed Mrs. Mills, a fourth-grade teacher.

Mrs. Mills has been teaching for 21 years for Farmersville Unified School District as a fourth-grade teacher. Before becoming an educator, she had a rental business. Mrs. Mills became a teacher because she witnessed how parents would bring their children to translate the rental documents. She said, “I realized I was on the wrong side of the counter. I needed to be over there helping these kids and keeping them in school by teaching them how to read.” However, on March 17, 2020, everything changed for Mrs. Mills. She needed to adapt and transition to distance learning.

Despite the pandemic, Mrs. Mills continues to be a passionate educator. She learned how to use the different media platforms such as Google Classroom, Google Meet, Jamboard, etc. Mrs. Mills changed one of her rooms in her home into an office to teach distance learning. Fortunately, she’s a fast learner and self-starter, as well as having colleagues help.

She feels distance learning changed her life because she spends more time teaching, lesson planning, and grading papers for long hours and during the weekends. However, she said, “Distance learning also changed my life for the good. I have met more parents and get to know more families than in all of my teaching years. I like that; it also taught me new things.” Overall, Mrs. Mills has been able to overcome and adapt to the challenges of distance learning. She continues to be a dedicated and passionate teacher to her students.
By Cecilia Corrales, Jesus Corrales, Cindy Murillo, and Valeria Osuna-Murillo, Violeta Ramos, Jorge Fabian Carillo

In January, Nurse Cindy talked to us about what is coronavirus. Coronavirus is a virus that can make us sick. It can cause fevers, cough, and difficulty breathing. For example, it can make us sick by just getting too close to others who are infected with the virus. We should not touch lots of stuff when we go somewhere because it can have germs. It’s harder for older people and people with health problems to fight it off. This virus can also make your whole body sick but you may not feel it when you have the virus. Furthermore, this virus has never been seen before. This is also why lots of scientists are also looking for a cure for the coronavirus. You should get tested if you think you have the virus and not just think you have the coronavirus. We should stay six feet apart. Nurse Cindy also mentioned not to carpool with other people not living in your home. We should try not to make big parties or gatherings. You should wear a mask if you go to someone’s home. In addition, Nurse Cindy also said that if we have COVID, we should stay home to stop the spread. We should drink plenty of water and get plenty of rest.

In order to stay safe, we need to constantly wash our hands. For example, Nurse Cindy said, “Getting the soap in between your fingers for at least 20 seconds and singing the happy birthday song twice while washing our hands can also help.” Some people do not wash their hands properly which can lead to more people getting sick.

As you can see, we can protect ourselves from the coronavirus. If we follow these strategies, we can help stop the spread.
By Josue Mendoza-Santillan, Roberto Velasco-Morelos

Have you ever wondered what it takes to run a school with 600 students? Dr. Emily Rodriguez, the principal at Freedom Elementary School in Farmersville, California, has over 600 students in 2021. The duties of a principal are endless.

Growing up, Dr. Rodriguez was a migrant student throughout her elementary and high school years. All of her older siblings did not go to college, so she did not know what to do. However, she went to Kings River Community College. Then, she went to California State University, Fresno to get her bachelor’s degree. Additionally, she had always wanted to work with kids so she got a master’s degree and a PPS (Pupil Personnel Services) credential along the way. Later on, she pursued and achieved her doctorate degree in education. Dr. Rodriguez said, “I want to encourage all of you to go to college and achieve your best.”

Everyday we go to school, but have you ever thought about how schools work? It is the responsibility of the principal to make sure that everything is planned out and running smoothly. Dr. Rodriguez oversees 30 teachers and over 20 classified staff members. Her responsibility is to not only hire, but also make sure that everyone has support to be a team. In addition, Dr. Rodriguez has to budget money in order to make sure that students and teachers have what they need to learn and teach. Events happen throughout the school year and we don’t realize this, but the principal is also the one who is responsible for organizing it. COVID-19 has also brought on new responsibilities for principals. Dr. Rodriguez’s number one priority is keeping every kid safe and healthy! She said, “I can do this by making sure that everyone follows the rules and procedures of COVID-19.” In addition, she supports the school by making sure that all students and staff have the correct equipment and supplies to keep our schools safe from the virus.

Having support is important because everyone needs help. For Dr. Rodriguez, the toughest part of being a principal is not being able to please everyone. However, as a leader she makes sure that everyone’s voice is heard and makes the best decision for everyone considering all the input she receives. For extra support, Mr. Ayers, the academic coach, assists Dr. Rodriguez. He meets with her to discuss teacher and student needs as well as find solutions to their issues. Outside of work, her family and her dog support her by being there for her on difficult days from work.

Dr. Rodriguez is passionate about being a school principal. She loves her students and is passionate about helping students from all backgrounds as she knows what it’s like to be a migrant student. She was one out of ten siblings of immigrant parents who were field workers from Mexico. Her parents were very supportive and encouraged her and her siblings to get an education and career. Therefore, she wants to help the community in Farmersville because there are many families like her own. She said, “I feel like I have a commitment to them and don’t want them to be let down.” Furthermore, she understands that all students have difficulties and wants to help them by being their principal. Her passion continues to grow as she wants to be superintendent and county superintendent in the future.

The truth about principals is that they are not too scary like everyone thinks. Instead, they are loving, caring, and just want the best for students. It takes hard work, determination, and passion to be a principal. Some advice Dr. Rodriguez has for young students is for them to work hard even though there will be challenges and to never give up. Not only does Dr. Rodriguez want students to achieve their best, but always to be safe and healthy.
How many people worldwide have contracted coronavirus? Almost one billion people to date have contracted the coronavirus worldwide. The coronavirus is a highly contagious upper-respiratory infection. It has spread across the world causing a global pandemic and has people worried about their health and safety.

In December of 2019 in Wuhan, China, a man contracted the coronavirus at an illegal wet market. A wet market is a market that sells fresh meats and other food that easily goes bad. This man purchased an infected bat at the market illegally. This bat had an illness that would later be known as coronavirus (COVID-19).

When coronavirus was first discovered, it was mostly a disease that affected animals. When the man in Wuhan, China ate the bat, it became a human disease. When this man had contact with other humans, it started to spread to others.

This disease spread all over the world in a matter of days. It became known as a global pandemic. This disease spread so quickly because people didn’t know that they had it until they started to show symptoms. The problem with that is that you carry the disease with you even before symptoms start.

Wear a mask to prevent getting and spreading COVID-19


**Dos**

- Wear a mask over your nose and mouth to help prevent getting and spreading COVID-19.
- Wear a mask in public settings when around people who don’t live in your household, especially when indoors and when it may be difficult for you to stay six feet apart from people who don’t live with you.
- Wear a mask correctly for maximum protection.
- Wear your mask under your scarf, ski mask, or balaclava in cold weather.
- Keep a spare mask to replace one that becomes wet from moisture in your breath, snow, or rain.
- Store wet reusable masks in a plastic bag until they can be washed.

**Don’ts**

- Put the mask around your neck or up on your forehead.
- Touch the mask, and, if you do, [hyperlink “https://www.cdc.gov/handwashing/when-how-handwashing.html”](https://www.cdc.gov/handwashing/when-how-handwashing.html) wash your hands or use hand sanitizer.

How to take off a mask

1. Carefully, untie the strings behind your head or stretch the ear loops
2. Handle only by the ear loops or ties
3. Fold the outside corners together
4. Be careful not to touch your eyes, nose, and mouth when removing and wash hands immediately after removing

Coronavirus: Where it started

By Yostin Alvarez, Adan Molina, Samuel Romero

How many people worldwide have contracted coronavirus? Almost one billion people to date have contracted the coronavirus worldwide. The coronavirus is a highly contagious upper-respiratory infection. It has spread across the world
The struggles of a college student during distance learning

By Jose Acevedo & Erik Ramos

Are college students thriving through distance learning? During an interview with Abraham Santiago, a former migrant student who attended Farmersville Unified School District and graduated from Farmersville High School in 2019. He is a sophomore at the University of California, Davis, majoring in electrical engineering.

One of the challenges for Abraham is that he is a visual learner. He said, “I’m a visual learner so not being in class in person makes it a little harder because you can’t stop and ask questions. It affects my grades. You have to work harder and study more.” He has to listen to his lectures and do his lessons online, making it difficult for Abraham to focus on his studies. Abraham Santiago had to be a self-learner.

Another challenge of distance learning is that he has a difficult time communicating with his professors for help, due to the lectures being recorded. Therefore, he decided to go back to UC Davis and live off-campus. “I have roommates and friends, and I could go and ask for help. It is a lot easier to ask for help on campus than me being at home and having no one to ask for help.”

The Coronavirus: How it affects us

By Yostin Alavez, Adam Molina, Samuel Romero

The coronavirus has many symptoms for some and no symptoms at all for others. This is what makes this virus unique. It affects everyone in a different way. A person can be carrying and spreading the virus and have no symptoms while another person can become extremely sick if infected. One symptom that is being reported is a fever. Other symptoms can include a cough, sore throat, and the loss of taste and smell. Also, you could potentially get muscle cramps, fatigue, nausea, and trouble breathing.

We interviewed Manuel Caceres, a retired paramedic, and asked him how COVID-19 can be treated. His response was, “There is no medication for COVID-19 at this point. Doctor’s recommend resting and keeping your body hydrated. If you have a fever you can take acetaminophen to help reduce your body temperature. You can take cough medicine if you have a cough. If your symptoms get worse you need to call your doctor for additional treatment.”

There are some ways to keep yourself and your family protected from this virus. According to Mr. Caceres we can protect ourselves and others from COVID-19 by keeping our masks on while we are in public places, keeping our distance from others that do not live in our household, washing your hands constantly after touching things and if you can not wash them at the moment using hand sanitizer. Also disinfecting things that we use and touch daily.

Recently another thing that has been offered are vaccines to help people build defenses or immunity to the virus. We asked Mr. Caceres who the vaccine is recommended for and what the cost of these vaccines was and his response was, “The vaccine is recommended for older people, immunocompromised people, and people that work in healthcare and education. The vaccine is free and provided by the government through taxes.”

We still do not have a cure for this disease and we probably won’t for a long time. It seems as though this virus is here to stay and will be a global problem for a long time.

Behind the scenes of a computer aid

By: Roberto Velasco-Morelos, Josue Mendoza-Santillan

Ever wonder what it takes to be a computer aide? In January of 2021, Mr. Adrian Espinoza was interviewed as a computer aide at Freedom Elementary School in Farmersville, California. There are many important tasks and responsibilities as a computer aide. However, the greatest part about being a computer aide is building relationships with students. Mr. Espinoza has been working with technology for the last 10 years for the Farmersville Unified School District. However, Mr. Espinoza believes that technology is rapidly changing. So, when Mr. Espinoza doesn’t know how to do something, he goes to YouTube and tries to learn it from someone else. He feels like sometimes you have to be self-taught.

He said, “One advice I would give to young students is to learn editing and communication skills. Also, for gaming I would refer students to use Twitch so they can stream and create a following.”

Being a computer aide not only has responsibilities to assist students in computers, but also assist teachers, academic coaches, and the principal. One important responsibility that Mr. Espinoza has is to research different types of technology programs for students. For example, he researches typing programs, math programs, Google applications, and coding programs. Not only does he have responsibilities as a computer aide, but almost everything that has to do with technology. He sets up equipment for assemblies, Friday circle, sport events, dances, open house, and back-to-school night.

COVID-19 has brought many different responsibilities for Mr. Espinoza. Some new responsibilities are troubleshooting computers and solving technology problems for students and parents at home. Also, he has to help teachers with their technology for distance learning. In addition, Mr. Espinoza has to enroll students to school in English and Spanish and create surveys for parents. Distance learning is challenging for everyone, but Mr. Espinoza is always willing to help others.

Mr. Espinoza has always liked being around students. So, he pursued a career in helping students grow. Also, Mr. Espinoza always wanted to help other students like himself, who struggled in school. He always likes to meet new students and build a strong relationship with each of them. He said, “Working with students is my favorite part of my job.” Mr. Espinoza always likes to teach students new things and help them find a passion of their own.

Being a computer aide is hard work and complicated. Behind the scenes the computer aide is working on many projects for everyone. However, Mr. Espinoza makes it look easy because he always has a big smile on his face. Most importantly, he really enjoys working with the students and helping other staff.”

Overall, it has been overwhelming for him sitting long hours in front of a computer. However, Abraham has learned to manage his time and is taking fewer units this semester to have better grades.
COVID has affected everything around us. However, COVID has hit schools really hard. In January, we had a conversation with Laura Voshall to discuss how COVID has impacted schools.

Who has been affected the most from COVID?

When we interviewed Laura Voshall, director of Curriculum and State and Federal Programs, we asked her who has been affected the most from schools shutting down and she said, “The students have been the most affected due to schools closing down. Schools cannot open because it will put everyone at risk.” Also, she said, “Students’ parents have also been affected because parents had to decide to either stay home to help their children or go to work.” In addition, COVID has also impacted teachers. The teachers had to learn to do online classes and learn new platforms. We have learned that students and teachers are much tougher than anyone expected.

How did COVID affect schools?

The virus has forced schools to close. It has affected students by forcing them to do distance learning. We can’t do certain activities because of this virus. In addition, Laura Voshall said that kids and teachers have been affected the most by the virus. Parents have also been affected by the virus because they have to choose between working or staying at home to help their kids. This is a problem because parents have to leave work but also make sure to take care of the kids. I think that fathers should work and the mothers should stay home to help the kids. Meanwhile, the mothers are at home and they can clean up and do the cleaning. This is how COVID has affected schools.

What are schools going to look like?

From talking to Laura Voshall, director of Curriculum and State and Federal Programs at Earlimart School District, we found out school will look very different than it did before. In our conversation, Mrs. Voshall said, “The school will have circles on the floor reminding you to stay six feet apart and arrows that say stay six feet apart. Teachers will also remind you to stay six feet apart. Students desks will have plastic shields on the front and on the sides. Recess will be different but it will still be fun.” In addition, students that ride the bus will have markers that indicate you are sitting six feet apart, but if you have a sibling you can sit next to each other because you live in the same house. Lunch will be different because it was always super crowded in the cafeteria. However, if we go back, we will probably have to be six feet apart on the seats. In addition, Laura Voshall said, “There will be multiple hand sanitizer stations all around the school.”

What have we learned from COVID?

The thing we have learned from COVID is that kids are better at using technology. Kids are safer and have a lower chance of getting the virus. In addition, we learned that kids can use technology such as Google Classroom, Zoom, and other apps. This shows that kids will be better prepared for the future. We have also learned that you need to have good equipment. The most important thing that we have learned has been to stay safe and take care of ourselves.

From talking to Mrs. Voshall, we learned that everyone can handle a lot. As you can see, students, parents, and teachers have learned a lot from COVID. We are hoping to continue to learn from this experience and continue to be positive during this time.
Ms. Lozano started teaching 24 years ago in Farmersville, California. When Ms. Lozano started her teaching career her parents were supportive of her becoming a teacher. They were very excited because they decided to become a teacher at an older age. Ms. Lozano stated, “My mom inspired me to teach. She used to teach us how to write and read.” One of Ms. Lozano’s talents is writing. She loves to write and has a lot of ideas about how to encourage students to write. She loves to write about everywhere she goes and often articles about people’s lives. She is a teacher in Farmersville since 1993 and she is one of the Mexicanos and the migrant working families. She loves sharing her story on how the families and the children. Farmersville has a lot of nice families and Ms. Lozano is pleased with them.

We asked her, how has her teaching life changed through this pandemic? She told us that there are a lot of responsibilities teachers have and you get new students every day. You need to take care of your students and make sure they are learning. If students are not learning, you need to find out why they are not learning. You need to find out how you can help them and see if they are having problems at home. As a teacher you need to make sure your students are okay, safe, healthy, and ready to learn. Some of the new responsibilities because of COVID-19 are communicat- ing with parents more than before. Before the pandemic, teachers were able to see what students were struggling with because they were able to see student work. However, now it is difficult to see how students are doing because they are not at home. Ms. Lozano has to make more calls during the weekend when parents have more time to talk. She is able to meet with parents on Google Meets and usually checks up on the students to see how they are doing. She usually makes the calls to be able to give support to the students.

Given that Ms. Lozano has been a teacher for 24 years, she provided us with advice for someone who would be interested in becoming a teacher. Ms. Lozano emphasizes that you need patience around the students, and you need to be a teacher who pays attention to the students. Even teachers who have taught for many years, still face some struggles and difficulties when teaching. Ms. Lozano explains that one of the most difficult things about being a teacher is the struggle you face when a student is having a hard time and you do your best to do everything possible for them to do better but it doesn’t work. She also includes that it is sometimes hard to reach and get a hold of a student to help him or her. Although these difficulties occur for a teacher, Ms. Lozano continuously says, “We never give up, we can’t give up.” Additionally, Ms. Lozano has some co-workers near her for help when she’s struggling like Mr. Santillan and her son. She also prays a lot when shefaces obstacles when teaching.

Regardless of the struggles Ms. Lozano faces while teaching, she absolutely loves her job. When she was asked what she likes about being a teacher, she re- sponded, “I don’t know? I don’t like it, I love it!” Ms. Lozano loves all her students and the way they learn. She says that she gets to the little “Please clarify” little and it fills her heart with love. She appreciates it when the students come to her class and they are scared and worried that they won’t learn anything and in the end of the school year, they’re so impressed on how much they accomplished. Mr. Santillan, one of her co-workers, used to be one of her fourth-grade students and now she sees him teaching as well. She loves to see her students succeed and that is also what she loves about being a teacher when her students are succeeding.

We can’t travel back in time to see what it actually looked like or how people reacted. However, there are people who lived through such hardships and are able to share their experiences with us.

By Michelle Cervantes Galicia and Melissa Rosiles
Acknowledgments

It takes huge effort to implement new educational projects such as the Journalism Writing Project. We couldn’t have done it without the support of Tim Hire, Tulare County Superintendent of Schools; Earlimart School District, Farmersville Unified School District, Pixley Union School District; resilient teachers, patient and understanding interviewees, parents and other dynamic support staff. This project was invaluable to migratory children and we believe that it was a success.

Our migratory children thank all of you and appreciate you taking the time to lend a helping hand. As a result of everyone’s efforts, we may see these students as future journalists.