

Feb. 1, 2021

To the Judges:

“Education Interrupted” represents the culmination of EdSource’s work to chronicle how families and students in California were coping with the Covid-19 pandemic from Pre-K through college.

From one end of California to the other, EdSource engaged families who allowed our team of reporters to follow them as they faced the grim reality that schooling in the fall of 2020 would continue for most students as the virtual schooling that began in the spring. As the pandemic raged across the state, the EdSource team overcame many logistical challenges to tell the stories of the families and students most affected by the pandemic. Their reporting captured the frustration and challenges of distance learning for students of all ages as well as their determination to make it through.

And while the future remains uncertain, the families and students are fighting hard to not give in to the loneliness and even depression that some admitted to our team that they were feeling. While a few independent learners looked for opportunities for new learning, there were more children who faced computer and technical difficulties and frustration.

For one middle-school boy in Los Angeles Unified School District, the first six weeks was a distance learning nightmare of virtual dead ends. When he finally got through the technology hurdles, the boy faced mountains of lost class work and homework and report cards filled with absences and Fs. With his father, a proud African American, who insisted that his son was among the Black lives that mattered, the boy’s struggle continues.

Among college students we focused on a most vulnerable group – Latino high schoolers who were on track for college until Covid-19 ripped their families from their jobs leaving to these students the job of feeding their families. They had no choice but to put off college.

As a newly published national study has concluded, incoming freshmen have felt the brunt of the pandemic and most affected among them are low-income Black and Latino students. While in 2019 the drop off of high school graduates headed to college was less than three percent, in 2020 the drop off was nearly 22%.

The video captures the plight of three students – Jesus, Edward and Maria – all whose college careers were put on hold because of the pandemic.

Taken together all of the voices offer a vivid portrayal of the deep costs of the pandemic well beyond the more than 450,000 lives lost in America. While these voices came from California, they describe the dilemma facing families across the United States. And, the mini-doc foreshadows the challenges ahead once the pandemic subsides and educators start to evaluate the deep costs of the interrupted education caused by this historic health crisis.

EdSource is proud to submit this entry for your consideration in the Video Journalism-Other Category.

Thank you for your consideration.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Rose Ciotta". The signature is written in black ink on a light-colored background.

Rose Ciotta
Investigations and Projects Editor
EdSource