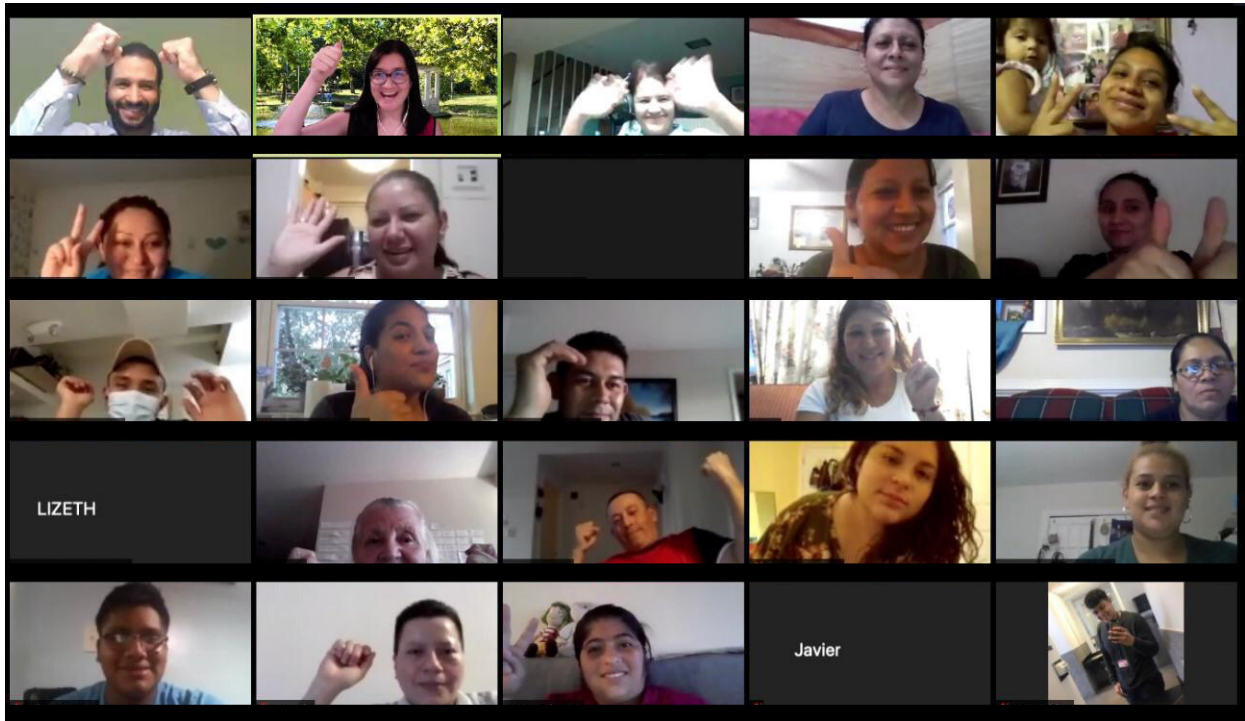


REMOTE ESOL CASE STUDY:

Holistic Remote Instruction Through Standardized Technologies and Integrated Support Services

Carlos Rosario International Public Charter School
Washington, D.C.



ESOL Program:

Carlos Rosario International Public Charter School ESOL Program

Website: www.carlosrosario.org

Reach: Urban

Number of ESOL students served per year: 2,500

Student population:

Immigrants and refugees, most of whom speak Spanish, Amharic or French

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Photo: *Carlos Rosario School ESOL students*

Program Description

The Carlos Rosario International Public Charter School (Carlos Rosario School) is a Local Education Agency (LEA) funded by the District of Columbia. It is one of nine adult public charter schools in Washington, D.C. Its mission is to deliver high-quality education, career training, and support services that enable adult immigrants to realize their dreams while strengthening the community and economy. Its Harvard Street Campus is primarily dedicated to ESOL, digital literacy skills development, and high school equivalency, taught in Spanish, while the Sonia Gutierrez Campus hosts the school's career programs, advanced ESOL classes, high school equivalency preparation in English, and transition to higher education. The Carlos Rosario School uses a three-pronged approach: 1) foundational skills, including ESOL, literacy, and high school diploma equivalency, along with computer literacy and citizenship; 2) career certification training in high-growth, high-demand sectors; and 3) comprehensive supports for student persistence. All services are provided in ways that are linguistically and culturally appropriate.

ESOL services include instruction from beginning ESOL literacy through advanced ESOL levels. Other services include English and Spanish GED (General Educational Development), citizenship, and hands-on career training programs, including culinary arts, information technology, and nurse's aide programs. Carlos Rosario School also has a small business program that includes weekly classes addressing the various stages of business development, from idea generation to developing a business plan to network development. Except for grant-funded special programs supporting services for Maryland and Virginia residents, students must be D.C. residents. Between 90 percent and 95 percent of Carlos Rosario School funding consists of local D.C. dollars. The allotment is approximately \$10,000 per student. The school also receives a facilities allotment to find, run, maintain, and secure buildings. Carlos Rosario School supplements this funding through various fundraising efforts to be able to provide student supports, including college scholarships to students.

Notable, Innovative Practices

The Carlos Rosario School approach to distance learning is motivated by inclusion of all learners and is designed to meet students' expressed needs, especially those facing the greatest barriers to online learning, starting with a multi-faceted and differentiated digital literacy onboarding. The school fully redesigned its previously in-person program and created a remote learning program from onboarding to instruction and assessment, digital skills and devices, and student supports. Key practices were: providing flexible class scheduling and open access to class materials and content, to engage students as their schedules allowed; standardizing technology, by providing students (at no cost) with high-quality laptops that came with internet, data, and all necessary apps, so students only needed to learn how to use them; viewing digital capability as a foundational life skill; offering training, onboarding, and persistence supports in various languages and via multiple tools; expecting cross-organizational collaboration of the academic, operational, and technology teams as they designed their approach; providing intensive professional development; and transitioning integrated support services into remote delivery.

Remote ESOL Program Design

Carlos Rosario School developed and memorialized its *School Approach to Educational Equity* during COVID to ensure that "All students will have equitable access to their educational materials, synchronous classes, and asynchronous learning." Since March 2020, Carlos Rosario School has provided synchronous and asynchronous ESOL instruction - using differentiated tools - and supports for 2,500 adults 12+ hours/week. Delivery switched from set three-hour classes in person to a combination of synchronous (90 minutes) and asynchronous learning. The schedule was flexibly adjusted to create options for students so they could attend classes at any time if they had scheduling conflicts and also have access to virtual teacher office hours.

Criteria for student promotion were also altered, as the school did not have the ability to use CASAS (Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System) for all students nor to implement in-house assessments virtually in a systematic way within one semester. As of May, 2021, staff are still working on these shifts and adaptations and continue to work with students on student goals. Carlos Rosario School is also offering intensive, virtual support services as described below.

Student Onboarding and Persistence Supports

School leadership realized early on that student and teacher supports would be essential in ensuring a successful onboarding process. There was a great student need for training on how to use devices and tech tools. The team created written manuals and videos in students' primary languages to help students learn to use the tech tools. Teachers also created video tutorials in multiple languages. Teachers coordinated onboarding by levels and worked together to creatively engineer plans to support students at the beginning of the semester as they distributed devices to students. Help Desk Support provision was also critical. Information technology became an integral part of the success of distance learning in the fall. Staff also support students in their native language to troubleshoot or replace devices.

Instruction

Both synchronous and asynchronous instruction is designed to foster active engagement and belonging within a learning community. This includes celebrating and marking progress toward learning goals. Synchronous instruction takes place on Zoom, and Google Suite is used for email and class documents.

The team at Carlos Rosario tries to always be in tune with students' needs and aspirations, and guides and shapes everything it does, from curriculum design to student government, using student voices. The curriculum, for instance, captures student voices through an embedded goal-setting practice so that it reflects and addresses students' expressed goals. Student government advises the school on unmet student needs (e.g., issues with parking tickets or childcare issues interfering with persistence) and meets with the CEO and principals remotely to solve for these needs (e.g., create a childcare center, which was underway pre-COVID-19).

Digital Learning Supports

Pre-pandemic, the school had used anything and everything in terms of devices and materials. Then the school held focus groups with students. Students said they wanted to see each other and be in a virtual classroom together. As it was learning from its spring 2020 experience, the school put these technology solutions in place:

- **Devices:** Carlos Rosario School ordered 1,500 laptops with data cards connected. The associated costs were considerable. Laptops cost \$1.6 million. Data costs were \$955,000. The school pulled off the financing for these solutions through a combination of sources. Carlos Rosario School was able to advocate in coalition with peer adult charter schools for adult schools to be included in the federal relief funds to D.C. The school also used its per-pupil allotment dollars and was able to secure a local equity grant from private philanthropy to support access to technology for K–12 charter families and advocated to get adult charter schools included. The school also experienced some savings resulting from not being in person and was able to reallocate some of the resources (e.g., savings in campus security costs).
- **Desktop:** Carlos Rosario School designed the image of the desktop to make the most frequently used tools easily accessible for students, including the creation of Google folders for each campus that linked websites that were commonly used by teachers, and the installation of icons or software on the desktop of four tech tools the school standardized. As the Chief

Financial Officer put it: “You need a device with a robust operating system, which many devices, such as Chromebooks, don’t have. Internet access is key, as well as figuring out the data use, as videos and other media use a lot of data. Our vision was to select a device that would not only be a good tool for online learning for school but would also create the opportunity for computer use beyond school.”

- **Tech tools:** Carlos Rosario School chose four pieces of technology to standardize its distance learning programs: 1) Schoology learning management system; 2) Remind, a school-wide communication system which allows two-way communication between staff and students without revealing phone numbers, captures and stores all communications, and translates messages into multiple languages; 3) Zoom video conferencing tool for synchronous classes and “in-person” communication; and 4) Google Suite for email and class documents.

The school created and piloted a tech curriculum and offered it in three languages and received feedback from students that two hours were not adequate. Subsequently, the school rolled out the tech curriculum over a three-week period almost in bootcamp style.

“We distributed the laptops, teachers called students at home to help with getting going, we provided tech support in the students’ native languages. We made YouTube videos in different languages and organized 45-minute practice sessions which were one-on-one for every student. . . . We needed to keep it simple and consistent. . . . We also had to acknowledge that language and digital proficiency do not necessarily develop at the same time, and that first-language support is tremendously important.”

–HollyAnn Fresno-Moore, Principal

Support for Students’ Basic Needs

“I am 100 percent for the Carlos Rosario School education. I didn’t know anything about technology. I have learned a lot. My health insurance was expired. I got insurance through D.C. Health Link [with the help of the school].”

–Carlos Rosario School student

Student support services were the heart and hub of the school pre-pandemic. Student barriers to participation and persistence were amplified by the pandemic. Continuing support services remotely was critical:

“We used Google Voice in the beginning, but then went to Zoom one-on-one sessions, as they provided the privacy these relationships require. We continued to provide food assistance, housing supports, employment supports, UI [unemployment insurance] benefit supports. We did eviction monitoring. We offered services 24/7, including weekends. We worked on addressing increases in domestic violence. We leveraged local funding to help undocumented residents. We set up a community health education effort using direct communication with students, social media, videos in multiple languages, etc. We completed a heavy lift to get an adult learner transportation benefit of \$70 on Metro cards from the City.”

–HollyAnn Freso-Moore, Principal

To address food shortage and insecurity, distinct partnerships with U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Farmers to Families program and the D.C. Mayor’s Office on Latino Affairs allowed Carlos Rosario School to distribute more than 1,000 boxes of fresh produce and other foods to its student community. The school raised and continues to operate an emergency fund of approximately \$60,000 to assist students who are food insecure or are under threat of losing their housing, as well as an annual \$150,000 scholarship fund for students who go on to postsecondary education or training.

Support for Teachers and Staff²

Carlos Rosario School developed and provided a comprehensive, five-week, full-time professional development program to teachers and staff in summer, 2020. It was a mix of helping people engage with concepts of distance learning, building curriculum and instructional modules, receiving feedback, considering the whole student (social–emotional needs as well as skills), and training on tech tools. School leaders found that this professional development was helpful in shifting the mindset towards remote delivery and getting staff comfortable with the tech tools and also that adaptations would need to be made to modules once the semester started in response to external factors and learning from the students and their needs. [Here](#) is a link to the professional development curriculum and schedule. Also notable is that rather than laying off the staff whose jobs were affected by COVID-19, the Carlos Rosario school created a supplemental staffing pool and cross-trained them to help in various areas such as providing supports to learners.

Partnerships

Carlos Rosario School has numerous partnerships with community organizations, employers, and government agencies, but the relationship with its peer adult charter schools is critical. At this time, the D.C. adult charter school consortium is focused on the policy and practice of measuring impact in this pandemic-triggered remote learning environment with a specific interest in how to measure digital literacy across the District. One concrete activity of this consortium was two coordinated adult learner surveys at the beginning of the pandemic and one year later. This partnership has also been critical to ensure that any resources that became available for Pre-K–12 charter schools would also be available to adult charter schools.

Leadership

The CEO charged principals to adapt the school model and figure out how to enroll and retain everyone, which created space for creativity, gave freedom to experiment, instilled a “can-do”

attitude, and created a sense of being in this together. She expected cross-organizational collaboration of the academic, operational, and technology teams. She advocated to include adult charter schools in any additional emergency resources that became available from the federal or district government and secured additional resources. Holding the belief that everything is possible and can be solved put tremendous time, pressure, and importance on iterating and communication. The CEO shared that, in retrospect, it would have been helpful to have a checklist of what was needed to put in a remote program plan. The CEO also wished she would have been able to attend to the stress of this pandemic and transition sooner and along the way. The school eventually did set up a wellness task force for staff and provided services (e.g., meditation) and resources to assist with stress management.

Indicators of Effectiveness

“For my part, these classes have been a huge help because I have been able to help my children and my nieces and nephews because with the help of the computer classes I have learned a lot.”

–Carlos Rosario School student

The transition to remote learning changed the way Carlos Rosario School leaders think about attendance and success, as the remote program created new avenues for students to participate, persist and, in some instances, provided more learning opportunities and achieved greater gains in a shorter period of time. Key effectiveness questions of interest have become: How are students engaging? Do we know where students are? Do we know how students are participating (in classes, meeting with counselors, etc.)? Are we meeting students' social-emotional needs and how do these needs impact their ability to learn? The inclusion of digital literacy skills — not just to facilitate remote class participation/learning but for workforce development purposes — is a second practice/change Carlos Rosario School has adopted and will sustain post-pandemic as a critical part of its offerings. A big evolution was the idea of capturing digital literacy as a measure of success. Early performance data are positive and support the association of outcomes with higher levels of investment compared to other programs. [Click here](#) for Carlos Rosario School's performance report cards over time.

Additional Documentation:

- [The impact of COVID-19 on D.C.'s adult learners: Results from a Spring 2020 survey](#)
- [D.C.'s adult learners during the pandemic: Results from a Fall 2020 survey](#)

² Carlos Rosario School's staff reflects its student communities. Its staff model and diversity have shifted and adapted over time, as the school's student body reflects global migration patterns. Because of growth in its Ethiopian student population, for instance, the school now has highly qualified Ethiopian staff members, including trained counselors, case managers, and faculty. Several administrative staff are former students. geographies.



ABOUT THE REMOTE ADULT ESOL PROJECT

This case study is part of the Remote Adult ESOL¹ (English for Speakers of Other Languages) Project led by World Education, Inc. The project's goal is to document and disseminate viable remote adult ESOL program models and practices so that ESOL instruction can be done at scale efficiently and effectively in a variety of settings. The impetus for the project was to identify strategies for meeting the current interest and unmet demand as well as meeting potential demand prompted by English language requirements for U.S. citizenship under immigration reform. During winter and spring of 2021, the project investigated selected ESOL programs' and learners' needs, experiences, and promising instructional and learner support practices that rely predominantly on technology-rich strategies and tools deployed remotely.

This case study is one of eight full program profiles selected for its innovative program design and promising practices. The eight case studies of programs from across the U.S. are complemented by:

- *Policy and Practice Brief* that presents policy considerations and recommendations;
- *Creating Equitable Access to Remote ESOL and Supports in Multiple Contexts and for Distinct Populations and Purposes*, a cross-case analysis of remote adult ESOL delivery through the lens of the varied organizational settings in which they operate and the supports needed to engage distinct ESOL populations; and
- *Promising Remote ESOL Practices*, a document that highlights specific practices and innovations of selected, nominated programs from onboarding to instruction, digital skills development, and student and teacher supports.

¹ We use the term English for Speakers of Other Languages or ESOL rather than English as a Second Language (ESL) out of recognition that many English Learners already speak more than one language, just not English.