

An Interview with Felicia Ortiz

Perspectives from the COVID-19 Pandemic: Leadership and Learning in Nevada

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Each interviewee had the opportunity to review their transcript. All measures have been taken to preserve the style and language of the interviewee. This interview features Felicia Ortiz, President of Nevada Department of Education, and was conducted on 1/13/22 by Kelliann Beavers and Magdalena Martinez. This interview covers topics including reflections on leadership, organizational challenges, and opportunities for collaboration.

Interview with Felicia Ortiz – Elected (Education)

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SPEAKERS: Magdalena Martinez, Felicia Ortiz, Kelliann Beavers

Magdalena Martinez [00:02]

Thank you so much, Felicia Ortiz, for taking some time to chat with us today. Let's start off by having you introduce yourself, and describe your position within the Board of Education, and then the other positions that you hold, your professional position.

Felicia Ortiz [00:20]

Hi, thank you for having me. My name's Felicia Ortiz. I am currently the President of the Nevada State Board of Education, that is an elected position. I represent a congressional district. I've been in the position now going on six years.

Magdalena Martinez [00:37]

Hmm. And how do you see your role on the board during the pandemic?

Felicia Ortiz [00:43]

Well, two-fold. So I represent many special interest groups. Number one, I'm also a small business owner, so I own a couple of small businesses. And I'm a rural kid (laughs), I grew up in rural America. And so, I have a special place in my heart for rural kids, so I tend to make sure that their voices are heard. But most importantly, I'm Latina, and so my people like to call me an "equity warrior." That is my number one priority in the work that I do in urban education is making sure that equity is top of mind for everyone.

Magdalena Martinez [01:28]

So, can you describe some of the biggest challenges in your line of work and the people that you represent that have been posed by the COVID recession?

Felicia Ortiz [01:38]

Where to begin. (laughs) So I'm going to start off with the one that is always top of mind for me, and that's the safety of our children, both from a personal and emotional perspective. So, for a lot of our kids, school is their safe space, and not being able to come to the school building is concerning for some of our kiddos. It is also the place where some of our kids get their meals.

And so, that was a huge concern when we shut down schools during the beginning of the pandemic. The loss of learning, but more so, the loss of social interaction, and the friendships, and the social development of kids has been a major concern of mine. And as well, the emotional toll that it has also taken on our teachers and our educators. Because they put their whole hearts into what they do, and not being able to see their kiddos, their students, or interact with their peers has also taken a toll on them.

And then of course, putting my business hat back on, this has had a major impact on our economy, especially here locally. Because many, many, many of our families are dependent on schools for their childcare, and their ability to participate in the workforce as well. There's also been an obviously huge impact on the number of jobs. A lot of people lost jobs during the pandemic, or are still losing them, or are not back to work yet, so that's a major concern. Obviously, that has a direct impact on our financial situation for us as a state as well. Because we depend heavily on the tourist industry, and with the pandemic, we've lost a good chunk of revenue from people not coming to Vegas, or Nevada in general. So, yeah. There's impacts all around. (laughs) It's heavy stuff right now, a lot happening.

Magdalena Martinez [03:53]

In regards to your own business, what has been the impact of COVID?

Felicia Ortiz [03:59]

So that's an interesting one; because I have actually had the best year I've ever had in 2022 – or 2020. 2021 was even better. 2022 is looking even better. So here's the thing: so I have a boutique consulting firm that specializes in implementing project management software for construction projects. My clients, when the pandemic hit, were in New York Presbyterian Hospital, NIH, and a pharmaceutical company. I couldn't have asked for better clients during a pandemic. So I stayed super busy. My team stayed super-busy, and I've grown my team, luckily.

I have to say that I'm ridiculously blessed to be in that position, and I'm hoping to continue to grow the business, and I've actually started another one just a couple of months ago – a totally separate, different business. Oddly enough, it is actually wholly because of the pandemic that I was able to start this other business. The car rental companies are out of inventory. There's not enough chips for the car makers to make cars. So I picked up a couple of used cars, and I'm renting them on Turo. So my friend and I, we have a fleet of four right now, but we're potentially going to grow that. So that's a side hustle. But yeah, it wouldn't be possible if not for the pandemic because of the impact it had on the car rental companies.

Magdalena Martinez [05:32]

Oh, wow. So what I'm going to do here is, I'm just going to post in the chat there the questions for you because some of them might be a little bit lengthier, just so that you can look at them.

The next question we have for you is, which groups do you believe were hardest hit by the COVID recession?

Felicia Ortiz [05:51]

And this is personal experience. Honestly, it's been – our communities of color, especially the communities in low economic – what's the word I'm looking for – I don't want to – I hate to use the word "poverty." (laughs) Low socioeconomic status. And so I've seen that they were hardest hit because they could least afford to take time off of work. They could least afford to find childcare for their children. They were also hardest hit by the actual virus itself. I stopped counting how many friends and family I knew that have lost someone. I personally lost three friends. And so, it's just such a huge – so I have employees that are from higher socioeconomic backgrounds, upper-middle class. Not racially diverse, so they're white. And they, for the longest

time, I think even to this day, don't know anyone that has gotten severely ill or died from the pandemic. Major, like a different experience.

And so it's been front and center for me. And as I know [for] many, many, immigrant families, it's been even harder for them because they don't have the flexibility of going after other jobs, for going to the doctor and checking if they're okay. And no sort of benefits because oftentimes, businesses will forego those to pay lower wages, or you know, and they can get away with it. (laughs)

So it's just been a massive hit. Let me look at your next question.

Magdalena Martinez [07:48]

Well, before we do that, can I ask you a follow-up question on that?

Felicia Ortiz [07:53]

Of course.

Magdalena Martinez [07:54]

In terms of your work with the Board of Education, how do you think the organization's goals have changed to accommodate the groups that have been hardest hit?

Felicia Ortiz [08:04]

We've focused even more on closing the gaps. So our primary focus is ensuring that all students are improving their achievement; they're at the same level. And at the same time, closing any gaps that exist between subgroups. And we've shone a really bright light on where those inconsistencies exist, and we're measuring frequently, like if that's improving or not. And we've made that actually one of the major factors in schools are rated. So if they're not improving subgroups at the same rate, they cannot achieve higher than a three-star status in our ratings. So we've made that equity issue top of mind for all, and we've also been wholly focused on ensuring that the most qualified and experienced teachers are teaching our children that need it the most.

Magdalena Martinez [09:04]

Mm-hmm.

Felicia Ortiz [09:07]

It's been a bit of a challenge with our existing collective bargaining agreements and things like that, but we're working towards that goal.

Magdalena Martinez [09:17]

It really sounds like an important goal, an ambitious goal. Can you talk a little bit about the degree to which, or if this has been a collaborative effort with other agencies or governmental groups?

Felicia Ortiz [09:33]

It has. I'll give you a couple of examples. So, one of the first things that the state did is work with OSIT – That's the Office of Science Information and Technology – to figure out where else we

could pull funds to help deal with the technology gaps. Because that was one of the major issues when we went to distance education. Not all of our students had access to technology, and/or the broadband network.

Then there was a partnership that was created between our then-president, Elaine Wynn, and her foundation, the Public Education Foundation, communities and schools, and the Department of Ed, to ensure that every child had a device in their hands, and connectivity. It was a massive effort. It was an amazing public-private partnership, and to make sure that that happened by the beginning of the 2021-22 – or no – 2020-21 school year. Well, technically, on paper, we accomplished. I'm sure that there were still students that we couldn't get ahold of, or families that didn't respond, that may not have had that access. But we did try to contact every single kid that we had contact information for.

Magdalena Martinez [10:55]

That's really helpful. Thank you.

Felicia Ortiz [10:56]

Yeah.

Magdalena Martinez [10:59]

So, moving on to the next question. In your opinion, what did different levels of the government do well and not well during the pandemic and during the COVID recession?

Felicia Ortiz [11:10]

I think one of the biggest failures across multiple levels of government has been communication. I think that, had the entire pandemic been communicated differently, it could have had a more positive impact on our country from a purely political perspective. I think it could have brought us together instead of splitting us apart. So from that federal level, I think that was a major failure. I think that not giving more clear direction at the beginning, on how to avoid the virus, and how to deal with the closures of businesses, and schools, and everything. And then taking the politics out of it I think would have been really, really helpful.

What I think was done well is the partnerships between private and public agencies, and even just people within the public, at the grassroots level, doing amazing work, to make sure that people were taken care of. Schools passing out food. Nonprofits passing out food. Working together that there were ways, places for kids to go, places for people to sleep. Ways to keep families and people safe.

So, I'll give you a perfect example there. One of the biggest things – well, one of the biggest organizations in town is SafeNest that takes care of women, and families, and domestic violence. They upped their game to make sure that women were safe.

There's just been a huge lift, primarily by nonprofit organizations, but working with the public. I think that has made me proud (laughs). But I wish it would have been handled a little differently. It would have made a lot of our lives easier.

Magdalena Martinez [13:23]

And I think you started to answer the next question a little bit, in terms of whether groups in the community or otherwise that helped the Board of Education and your role during the pandemic. And so, you were really highlighting the nonprofits. Were there others that you can think of?

Felicia Ortiz [13:39]

Yeah. I mean, a lot of organizations stepped up and really played a big role. Whether it was their Three Square helping to provide food or CIS; that their teams, even though they weren't in the schools, they were still contacting students and checking on them, I think JAG did the same thing. There are organizations like the PEF, or the Lynn Foundation, that literally put money, and effort, and staff to be able to help us make sure that our kids were accounted for and taken care of, all the way down to just grassroots groups. There's a parent group for CCSD "Padres y Madres", so it's Spanish-speaking-focused. And that we just started reaching out to friends and saying, "Hey, if you have an extra laptop or a computer, and you're willing to give it up for a kid, there's lots who need them." And so, we were just pairing families with donors. And so, some grassroots effort stuff. It was just, to me, the silver lining of all of this, is seeing people come together, and people that wouldn't normally work together, coming together to do the right thing for the community.

Magdalena Martinez [15:00]

That's really helpful. And the "Padres y Madres", is that the one that Valeria is involved in too?

Felicia Ortiz [15:03]

Mm-hmm, yeah.

Magdalena Martinez [15:06]

I do get her emails and Facebook messages.

Felicia Ortiz [15:10]

Well, so, her and I were on different sides of the fence about some stuff. But when it came to this, right, making sure that the kids have a device in their hands so that they could continue learning, we came together and made it happen. So that's, I think, just another example of, had this been communicated and messaged well, it could have brought more people together. That's a solid example of where things were positive.

Magdalena Martinez [15:38]

Yeah, that makes sense. Now, this may or not be relevant to your current role but may be for your private business. If you could describe the difference in your line of work, between the Great Recession and the COVID Recession. And I don't know that – you were *not* an elected official during the Great Recession. But just from your own observation, what can you glean from those two different recessions?

Felicia Ortiz [16:09]

There are some major differences. So in the Great Recession, the industry that I work in, which is construction, was hit really, really, hard, and so, there wasn't work. And we were all

super-concerned; there were multiple occasions where we thought we were all going to be laid off. I was a full-time employee at the time, and it hit the construction industry super hard.

This time, while it did impact the construction industry, it actually – there's been more. And I think that's because of the "Great Migration." (laughs) I'm throwing another "great" in there – which has happened because of COVID. So, several things: one, we've recognized that our facilities need to be upgraded, in the education realm and just in general, right? We need solid HVAC systems, HEPA filtration systems, etc., so that's an opportunity from a construction perspective.

The other thing is lots of companies have recognized that the work-from-home model actually works, and so they're allowing more and more employees to work from home. Which has meant that you don't have to live in one of the big metropolitan cities to make a good wage and work for a good company. So lots and lots of people are moving out of the big cities and into more affordable areas. I had an employee that did the same thing; he moved from New York to South Carolina. Is now in a six-bedroom house that fits his family wonderfully and is paying the same amount as he was paying in New York.

And so that has increased the residential construction, which has kept those people working. And because a lot of the construction is outdoors, depending on obviously, what you're building, they were able to continue working when other people weren't. So, big difference. And I have to say that even during the Great Recession, while my full-time employee job was impacted, I started my business on the tail end of that first business, and I went to work for an oil and gas company in Canada, so that was our first client. Different industry – was killing it – because that industry was not impacted. So the difference between the Great Recession is this: certain industries were impacted a lot more than others. COVID recession, every industry was impacted in one way or another. It just so happened that the construction industry bounced back a lot faster. So that's a major difference. And again, the work that I do is work from home, so it's all online-

Magdalena Martinez [18:51]

Yeah.

Felicia Ortiz [18:53]

-it's technology. So, none of our jobs were impacted, other than we didn't travel to our client's offices any longer.

Magdalena Martinez [18:58]

Right, and you've been doing that for a while, working from home.

Felicia Ortiz [19:02]

Seven years.

Magdalena Martinez [19:03]

Mm-hmm.

Felicia Ortiz [19:04]

Eight years almost. (laughs)

Magdalena Martinez [19:07]

So the next question then, I'll hand it over to Kelliann to do the next series of questions is, what were three to four big things, since the onset of the pandemic, that happened in your role or your role within the Department of Education? I think you've touched a little bit on that in the beginning. If you can maybe-

Felicia Ortiz [19:29]

I think the biggest is that we had to switch gears to focus on access; how are we going to make sure kids still had access to education, period, versus just improving the education they are receiving? On top of that, we had to really put a big focus on technology, and I think that that was a good thing, and was long overdue, frankly. Again, I worked in the technology industry, so I see how important those skills are. But those skills, to be very clear, were not already in place for a lot of our adults. So that was a major challenge, to ensure that we had proper professional development to help our adults come up to speed on teaching in a virtual environment. That is not something that was typically taught in a higher ed teacher prep program, so that has been a major change.

I sit on a couple of other boards, so I sit on a foundation for my alma mater and one for Nevada State College. And one of our major focuses, from the higher ed perspective, was retention because we didn't want to lose students, but also, how do we ensure that they're getting the same experience, or, at least, a somewhat similar experience when they're being virtual instead of on campus. Because for many students, the on-campus experience is one of the biggest selling factors of going to college. And so that was a major thing too.

And for us at the K-12 level, right, we still have to – because one of our goals is to make sure kids go to college. So we still had to make sure that they knew of the opportunities that existed, and how to get to those opportunities, even though they weren't in school and visiting with their counselors or whatever.

So, so many kinds of mindset shifts had to occur, and I think that it helped us. So we were already on the path of shifting mindsets, from it's all about graduation, it's all about test scores and stuff. Thank God we're getting past those (laughs), to more of a mindset about are we educating the whole child. Are we taking care of the whole child? So, from the social-emotional perspective to soft skills to ensuring that they have the agency to forge their path, and achieve all that they want to achieve, not what we expect them to achieve has been a mindset shift that we've been working on for a while. And I feel like the pandemic has helped that in some ways. It's also revealed to the education community that it's a lot more flexible than I thought it was. And so, I'm hopeful that that will remain true going forward, and that it will help us to continue to make that shift.

Magdalena Martinez [22:24]

Those are some really good insights, Felicia. The mindset shift, and what is possible, and what was perceived as possible, and what is possible.

And so, I'm going to turn it over to Kelliann, who will ask you a few more questions specific to education.

Felicia Ortiz [22:42]

Okay.

Kelliann Beavers [22:43]

Thanks again so much for sharing your perspective with us. And I think – let me put this question in the chat actually – that it is a follow-up to some of the things you were just speaking about. So the question is, in terms of employment for high school and college graduates, have efforts to find job opportunities changed in the wake of the recession?

Felicia Ortiz [23:05]

Absolutely. So I can give you a few major examples. One of the other major shifts that we've made from the State Department of Education is putting children on career pathways to careers that are high-wage, high-demand. In the past, we offered a lot of programs, especially in our Career & Tech schools, which are one of our longer successful programs. They have a much higher graduation rate and perseverance in higher ed. All of that is better for the students that go through Career & Tech, but they were some programs that didn't lead to a high-paid career.

So we kind of shifted, and we're making career paths that will allow kids to have not only the opportunity to do a more dual credit, so they're earning credit in high school for college, but also getting internship and externship opportunities within the high school space, so that they're getting that work experience early on, and able to transition into a work career quickly.

Just from a community perspective, it's been clear that a lot of the adults in the community are looking to upskill or reskill. And so, what I've been part of this group, another informal kind of board or whatever, that has been working with the Metro Chamber to – let me think; I don't even think they're called that anymore – Vegas Chamber, to put together a "one-stop shop" website that links you to all the things education or job – Workforce development-related. So you could go on there and say, "Hey, I'm looking for a job," or "Hey, I have a job to place," and it'll link you to CSN, or Workforce Connections, or Nevada State, or some tech schools, and it will kind of be the gateway to things. And eventually, they're going to develop it out to where it becomes more of – almost like a dating app, and "I have all these skills and interests," "Here's all the jobs and opportunities available," or "Here's careers that are available," "These are the skills you already have." "Here's the skills you need." "Here's where to go to get them," right?

And so, our goal is to make education and Workforce tightly connected, but also, a lifelong thing, so you're not just pre-K – I'm going to keep saying that until it's a reality for every kid. You're not just pre-K through 12, or 16, or 20, ideally, but it's lifelong, right? So you could come off the education pathway, and work a little while, like our CTE kids. They come out of high school with a certification many times. They could get a job, make some money, start college, get a degree, come out and work, come back on and get a master's degree, right? So it's a road that you're coming on and off of throughout your life and not just this road that you jump off of when you're 18 and you're done.

So that is our long-term vision for what we're working on, but we're working really strategically to try to break down some of the silos between industry and education, and then some of the government agencies like Workforce Connections, to make sure that everyone's talking and everyone's kind of singing to the same sheet of music and using the resources in the Collective Impact Model.

Kelliann Beavers [26:35]

Thanks for that. So the next question is, what have been the most innovative ways that schools and school districts have dealt with the challenges of the pandemic and recession? I know that in several of your questions, you've spoken toward this, but if anything else comes to mind that you'd like to share.

Felicia Ortiz [26:53]

I think – there's been so much – first and foremost has been encouraging parents and families to be part of the process. I think that contrary to maybe how a couple of us grew up (laughs), where parents were very much involved in the education, that has kind of gone away – not just because of economic factors, but also safety factors. So we weren't allowing families to just walk into the school and be part of their kid's education, right, because of safety issues. Well, if they're sitting next to them at home, that's a different scenario. So parents got to see, and feel, and kind of be really involved in their kid's education. And I think that was a really good thing that I'm hoping schools will continue to do going forward.

The other big thing that I saw is that again, the partnerships between agencies – so where schools worked with, here in Vegas, the City of North Las Vegas worked with the school district to put together this kind of "micro-school," where the kids could go – have the support of an adult, but they're still doing their schoolwork. And so it was an interesting partnership, and crazy enough, it worked really, really well, to the point where they're planning on keeping it going. Because the kids were all improving at a much more rapid pace than how they did in the traditional in-school model. So that's, I think hopefully something we will learn from and continue to take advantage of.

The other thing is, we were already doing this in some of our rural school districts, but we started putting Wi-Fi on school buses and having Wi-Fi hotspots at the schools. And so, it removes one of those access barriers for children from lower socioeconomic statuses. Or if they're on the bus for a long time, they actually have the opportunity to work on their homework. We were already doing that in our rural schools because they have long bus rides, but it turned out to be something useful for our urban schools as well.

Kelliann Beavers [29:12]

Wow, that's very interesting. And I want to make sure I understood you correctly about the micro-school program. That's something that unfolded during the pandemic?

Felicia Ortiz [29:20]

Mm-hmm.

Kelliann Beavers [29:21]

Wow, it's really interesting.

Felicia Ortiz [29:23]

Yeah, it was really cool because the City of Las Vegas initially – the idea came up because they wanted to provide an opportunity for the children of their employees, right? But then when they realized that they could create a space where these kids to continue learning, with adult supervision and assistance, that was still connected to the school and could be co-funded almost, the kids were doing so much better. It was small group instruction, so that was a big piece. It was competency-based, almost. It wasn't like the official competency-based model. But basically, kids were working at their own pace. And so they weren't – either getting bored because they were ahead of their peers or stuck behind because they weren't at the same level.

And so, that was a big eye-opener, I think for a lot of people, not that we didn't know that smaller class sizes were a good thing. (laughs) But it allowed us to have a really good use case for it.

Kelliann Beavers [30:36]

Absolutely. Okay. So the next question that is a combination of two aspects is, in what ways has housing insecurity affected students, schools, and staff, and then the same question about food insecurity?

Felicia Ortiz [30:53]

I mean that was the number one thing. When we shut down schools, I cried; because I knew that there was going to be kids that didn't have a home to go home to, or that were going to be going home to an unsafe place. And they didn't have that kind of safety net that a school often provides.

And so, beyond that, the recession that this pandemic has caused has also impacted the cost of housing tremendously. And so, where we had a huge number – I think at last time I checked, and it's probably really old data – that we were up to 15,000 kids that were considered homeless, just in Las Vegas. And that number has probably more than doubled, I would imagine since the pandemic. One of the things that made it very, very difficult for us is to even find the kids. To make sure they were okay; to make sure they had a way to get their computers and/or hotspot; to make sure they had a way to get food. So that made that extremely difficult.

Food insecurity was another one, right? We know for a fact that many of our kids get all of their meals at school, and so not having a way for them to get those meals was a really huge concern. So luckily, the school district stepped up in a huge way, and really, just made it happen by having pickup. But then you're still dependent on – are you close enough to a school where you can pick up? Are you walking two miles in 120-degree temperatures to try and get food, right? That's not realistic for some people.

So that was always still a concern. I was part of a Leadership Las Vegas class, and our class project was to work with The Just One Project. So we would, every month, go and work at one of the few distribution sites at a local school, and the lines were bananas, just bananas. But it was

also a blessing for a lot of these people, that they could get the food, and then use the money for other things like utilities that were must-haves.

And so, again, really grateful to the community for all that they stepped up to help. But it really – I mean, our support staff, many of them don't make more than \$11 an hour, so they couldn't afford it either. And a lot of them aren't in a position where they have a lot of time off built up and things like that. So it was awful. It still is.

Kelliann Beavers [33:34]

Right. And I think it speaks to how much the schools are support systems for many different things in addition to education.

Felicia Ortiz [33:42]

Well, they are a part of our social safety net. And I think the sooner we recognize that and make sure that they're funded properly, the better off we'll be.

Kelliann Beavers [33:50]

Yeah.

Felicia Ortiz [33:52]

I'm praying. So my big, hairy, audacious dream (laughs) from all of this is that our federal government will step up and – like they do for our military – recognize that teachers and nurses are essential to our communities and do student loan forgiveness for those two groups. That would be ideal.

Kelliann Beavers [34:13]

Mm-hmm. I do as well. I support that dream. All right. We have two more questions for you. One is, were there any policies that your institution, the state, or the federal government – and there are some examples there – CARES, HEERF – implemented, that you noticed impacted retention and/or completion, either positively or negatively?

Felicia Ortiz [34:38]

Absolutely. I think all of the financial support that we got from the federal government, and our ability to get a waiver on some of the testing and things like that really did make a big difference. It just seemed like the wrong time. Honestly, I would have skipped it last year, and potentially this year as well. To be asking teachers to get kids ready for testing, and they're asking kids to take tests; there's way too much other emotional baggage right now to even be focused on that.

However, I do think that between the Child Tax Credit and the ESSER money that we got from the federal government, and then as well, some of the longer-term unemployment, and additional support made it possible for some people to not only stay in the community, but for some families to maintain their livelihood through this pandemic and ensure that their kids were still getting an education. Had it not been for some of those things, I think we would have "lost," you know. Families moved back out of the country, out of state. A whole lot more kids and I think kids would have been further behind. Because let's be real: many of us, especially our high school students, they were the ones who went to work because their parents couldn't find work.

There was work that they could get, and they have to support the family. So that was lost instructional time while they were working, right? The support – social safety net – really helped to hopefully switch that back, to where the family's parents were doing the work, and the kids were back in school.

Kelliann Beavers [36:41]

Magda, I don't know if you have any other follow-up questions before we ask – the last question is just if you have any other people that you think we should talk to.

Felicia Ortiz [36:51]

Do you have Alex on your list? Alex Bybee? He works for Communities in Schools. So he's seen firsthand how they impacted – so they are probably one of the organizations that have the best "pulse," of education from a wraparound perspective. Not what's happening in the school or at the policy level, but really, what it's taking to keep kids engaged and at school. And what the difference was between what kids needed before the pandemic, and now, during – so it's not "after" yet. Someday we'll be post-pandemic.

Kelliann Beavers [37:34]

Right. It's very challenging to figure out what language to use, as we've been doing this for exactly that reason. It's certainly no longer – even to be imagined to be a thing of the past yet.

Felicia Ortiz [37:44]

Yeah. He would be a good one. I would love for you to get a teacher perspective.

Kelliann Beavers [37:53]

Mm-hmm.

Felicia Ortiz [37:57]

So, one of the teachers that were part of the CCSD Padres y Madres group, she has – her name is Silvena H. So she's a Ph.D. candidate at UNLV. She's hopefully going to be a doctor soon in Bilingual Education. But I get a lot of my anecdotal "what are you dealing with at the school level?" from her. And she's seen some interesting things from a teacher perspective, right, like how the kids have changed, how the impact on the culture of the organization, things like that, that I think would be interesting to hear.

And then, perhaps, talk to somebody from – have you guys talked to – I'm trying to think of who – God, I have so many people in my head, thinking. So, Sara Quintana, who runs the Career & Tech Ed., and the dual credit stuff at CSN. She can give you some higher-ed perspective. Same thing at Nevada State; maybe Shartriya.? She's in the education – she's the dean – no, not the dean – I don't remember her title – like second dean (laughs) whatever that is. But is the – I don't remember the name of. What is the title? When you're not the dean, you're below it.

Kelliann Beavers [39:38]

Associate Dean, maybe?

Felicia Ortiz [39:42]

Yeah.

Magdalena Martinez [39:48]

What is her name? Shartriya?

Felicia Ortiz [39:49]

Yeah. Dr. Collier.

Magdalena Martinez [39:52]

Okay. And then Sara Quintana. She's with CSN.

Felicia Ortiz [39:59]

Mm-hmm.

Magdalena Martinez [40:01]

Okay. And I do have Selvina contact info. Alex, I don't know, what's his or her last name?

Felicia Ortiz [40:09]

Bybee. His name is Alex Bybee. I could forward you his info. He's at Communities and Schools now. But super-great perspective on things and has really – (looking at screen for info) let me see if I have his school or his work stuff. I can think of who else would be good. Yep, here we go. I'm just going to forward you this email so that you have his contact info.

Magdalena Martinez [40:51]

Thank you.

Kelliann Beavers [40:52]

Yeah, thank you so much, and for the other as well.

Felicia Ortiz [40:54]

You're welcome.

Magdalena Martinez [40:56]

That's really helpful.

Felicia Ortiz [41:01]

I also would love – and this was just something I always strive for to get students' voice. We have a phenomenal student on our state board right now. And the previous student member, Alex Gallegos, was also awesome. I think he's at UNR now. So – love to get their perspective. I think it's imperative that we hear from kids and understand how it's impacted them directly.

And then, as far as business goes like I said, I have a pretty unique experience, but there's obviously varying experiences across the board. And again, super-blessed. But obviously, that's not always the case for everyone.

Magdalena Martinez [41:52]

Super-helpful, Felicia. Thank you so much. And just because we didn't capture it before we started recording, do I have your consent to opt-in to use your identity in your quotes?

Felicia Ortiz [42:02]

Yes, you do.

Magdalena Martinez [42:05]

And we had your consent to record?

Felicia Ortiz [42:06]

Absolutely, yeah.

Magdalena Martinez [42:07]

Thank you so much.

Felicia Ortiz [42:09]

You're welcome.

Magdalena Martinez [42:11]

And we will share the transcript with you when we transcribe it.

Felicia Ortiz [42:13]

Okay, cool. Thanks.

Magdalena Martinez [42:14]

Have a great day. Bye.

Felicia Ortiz [42:17]

You too.

Kelliann Beavers [42:18]

Thank you.

Magdalena Martinez [42:19]

Kelliann, will you stay on for a sec?

Kelliann Beavers [42:20]

Sure.

Magdalena Martinez [42:23]

Let me just stop recording.

End of audio: 42:25