

# ED286700 1986-03-00 Migrant Student Record Transfer System: What Is It and Who Uses It? ERIC Digest.

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## Migrant Student Record Transfer System: What Is It and Who Uses It? ERIC Digest.

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TEXT: When the federal Migrant Education Program was created in 1966 to provide supplemental educational and supportive services for eligible migrant children, it included the requirement that the records of migrant children be transmitted from school to school. This task was impossible without an effective communications system for tracking these students. Therefore, in 1969, the Migrant Student Record Transfer System (MSRTS) was created to provide schools with a method to continuously maintain records on migrant students. This digest will provide a brief description of the Migrant Student Record Transfer System.

## WHAT IS THE MIGRANT STUDENT RECORD TRANSFER SYSTEM?

The MSRTS is a nationwide computerized information network which maintains and transfers education and health data from school to school as migrant children move with their families, so that continuity of services can be provided. The federally funded system operates under a contract between the United States Department of Education and the Arkansas Department of Education.

From its base in Little Rock, Arkansas, the MSRTS records, maintains, and rapidly transfers educational and health information on more than 750,000 identified migrant children in 49 states in the United States, and in the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico. When a child moves, his or her records are forwarded to the enrolling school after MSRTS receives notification. The school can then concentrate on serving the child's needs rather than identifying those needs.

## WHY WAS THE MIGRANT STUDENT RECORD TRANSFER SYSTEM CREATED?

Prior to 1968, there was a lack of continuity in the educational program for migrant children throughout the states. In that year, representatives from 37 states held a conference to discuss this lack of continuity and other problems, including the transfer of educational information about migrant children from one state to another and one teacher to another.

The Record Transfer Committee, established out of this conference, was charged with two responsibilities: (1) to design an appropriate student record, and (2) to design a transferral system. The conference also asked the United States Office of Education to serve as the contracting and monitoring agency for the system.

Since its inception, the system has coordinated its efforts with local and national migrant programs, medical facilities, and countless other entities directly or indirectly responsible for serving the migrant population.

## HOW ARE COMPUTERS USED IN THE OPERATION OF THE MSRTS?

The MSRTS uses computers in all areas of operation. Most often, a communications center will accommodate several schools. The local schools may transmit critical data on the child by telephone to the communications center. Routinely, however, data are transmitted by mail, courier or telephone.

Computers are used by data entry specialists to enroll new students, to withdraw students when they leave a school, to update data on a student's record, and to inquire about student's health and educational history.

## WHO ARE MIGRANT STUDENTS?

A migrant student is a child whose parent or guardian is a migratory agricultural worker or fisher who has moved from one school district or school administrative area to another during the regular school year. The child must have had his education interrupted as a result of this move. The move must have been to enable the child, the child's guardian, or a member of the child's immediate family, to obtain temporary or seasonal employment in an agricultural or fishing activity.

#### WHAT ARE THE UNIQUE PROBLEMS OF MIGRANT STUDENTS?

The migrant child who travels constantly with his family is almost always confronted with other critical problems. Poverty and deprivation have become a way of life for many of these children. The family is usually isolated from the community by distance, language barriers, and cultural differences. Thus, educational discontinuity is a problem that often is intensified by the presence of emotional and physical problems.

On the average, migrants are 1 year older than their classmates. As they fall increasingly behind classmates, their drop-out rate begins to accelerate by the time they reach the eighth grade. Their needs include not only compensation for missed schooling, but often bilingual or English language instruction. High schools face a different but related problem: keeping track of whether a migrant student is accumulating enough credits in the right courses for graduation. Today, the graduation rate for migrant students is estimated to be between 10% and 20%, up from the nearly 0% rate before the inception of MSRTS.

If educational continuity in the migrant child's program is to be achieved, there must be regional and interstate cooperation and planning. Through increased coordination, every new classroom the migrant student enters can be a true home room.

#### WHOM DOES THE MIGRANT STUDENT RECORD TRANSFER SYSTEM SERVE?

Any school, agency, or organization that serves migrant children is eligible for the services of the Migrant Student Record Transfer System. The MSRTS has been implemented in approximately 25,500 schools throughout the country. The system provides school officials, administrators, principals, teachers, nurses, and others with up-to-date information on migrant students.

In addition to transmitting student records, the system also provides management reports and reports in other program areas to state program administrators upon request. These reports are used by program administrators to evaluate and assess program effectiveness and needs.

#### WHO USES THE MIGRANT STUDENT RECORD TRANSFER SYSTEM?

The MSRTS is used by approximately 30% of the public schools in the United States, District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico, as well as by countless health facilities which are

subcontracted to provide health services to migrant students. State migrant education programs use the system's data retrieval capabilities. Many states request and receive various management reports created and produced by the MSRTS.

## WHAT IS THE MSRTS TRAINING PROCESS AND WHO IS TRAINED?

Training is the most important element in the operation of the MSRTS. The success of the program over the years can be attributed to effective training by the MSRTS personnel-- training to make appropriate personnel aware of the MSRTS process and how to effectively implement it locally.

MSRTS training is done through regular workshops held either at the MSRTS headquarters or at a specific local site. These training sessions may be billed as regional workshops, local site training, stream conferences, national conferences, or MSRTS quarterly workshops.

Training is done most often by MSRTS personnel (i.e., regional supervisors or coordinators, managers, or data processing staff) in Little Rock, Arkansas. Participants in training sessions usually include MSRTS personnel such as teachers, clerks, aides, data entry specialists, health personnel, and program administrators.

The training curriculum during these sessions may include any of the following items of information: the MSRTS Health Record, the MSRTS Education Record, the Data Entry Specialists Operations Manual, and training in computer and programs operations.

## HOW DOES THE MSRTS SERVE AS A LINK BETWEEN MIGRANT EDUCATION AND MIGRANT HEALTH?

While the MSRTS provides both health and educational histories of the migrant student, the complete profile given is what makes the program invaluable. The child's health will almost inevitably affect his or her educational well-being. Therefore, it is of great importance that information sharing be an intricate part of all school and health facilities.

Upon enrollment in a new school, the child's academic data, such as participation in special programs, special interests, or skill levels, are used to place the child. The child's physical exam results, inoculations, dental services, and any other health information unique to the child are also necessary.

The collaboration between the health and education entities removes the possibility of providing needless health services to the migrant child while bringing any critical problems the child has that may affect learning capabilities to the attention of school personnel. Often, such information is in the form of a critical data message which accompanies the child's educational data. This message contains information considered vital to the initial placement and care of the child.

## HOW AND WHERE CAN MORE INFORMATION BE OBTAINED ABOUT THE MSRTS?

Additional information about the MSRTS may be obtained in any one of the following ways:

--contact the local migrant program office in your school district; --contact your state's migrant education program under the auspices of the state's education department; --contact the Migrant Student Record Transfer System by writing to: Migrant Student Record Transfer System Arch Ford Education Building Little Rock, Arkansas 72201 (505) 371-1850

### FOR MORE INFORMATION

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