

# ED286702 1983-02-00 Utilizing Available Resources at the Local Level. Fact Sheet.

ERIC Development Team

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## Table of Contents

If you're viewing this document online, you can click any of the topics below to link directly to that section.

[Utilizing Available Resources at the Local Level. Fact Sheet.....](#) 1



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TEXT: It is an unfortunate but undeniable reality that our educational system has been developed for, and geared toward, the permanent community resident. Until 15 years ago, little or no provision had been made for the education of children of migrant workers. Fortunately, there is now a concentrated effort at all government levels to change this situation.

The migrant student poses a very challenging problem for our educational system today. Educators and administrators are beginning to realize that migrant students need more from education than the basics. They need an education that can be related to

everyday life, an education that will give hope for a brighter future.

In addition to the regular classroom curriculum, it is important for migrant children to become acquainted with their community, however temporary it may be. They should learn what the community represents, the services that a community offers, and how their lives can be improved by making use of those services. Migrant students should be provided an opportunity to learn career and vocational skills which will increase their employability. And they should have an opportunity for involvement in extracurricular activities where they might develop special talents and social skills.

By adding these components to the basic educational plan, migrant children will gain a better understanding of how education can lead to an improved lifestyle.

#### HOW CAN THE MIGRANT STUDENT'S ADJUSTMENT TO NEW SURROUNDINGS BE EASED?

The first step in educating migrant children is to assist them in adjusting to their new environment. Many children experience the transfer from one school to another during the span of their education. The adjustment period is often difficult and may take a temporary toll on the child's progress. Imagine, then, the problems migrant children must face as they shift from one school to another--perhaps as often as three times a year. Very often migrant children do not use English as a primary language; they are not accepted readily by their classmates because they are "different"; educational approaches and textbooks tend to vary from school to school; and many times instructors are not willing to bother with a student who will be in the classroom only a few weeks. The result is a child with little confidence and low self-esteem. The high percentage of drop-outs among migrant students, especially at the secondary level, is in many cases due to the student's feelings of isolation, of not being an accepted member of the group. Taking all of this into consideration, it is little wonder that migrant students are often evaluated as being well below the level of their peers.

It is necessary for migrant children to adjust to their new surroundings as quickly as possible in order to avoid further delays in their education. The Jackson County Migrant Education Program in Oregon has produced a handbook which deals with this problem. Entitled MIGRANT EDUCATION--HARVEST OF HOPE, the book covers several topics including basic knowledge of children for whom English is a second language (the ESL child), how migrant students relate to their teacher and suggestions for meeting the needs of the ESL child. But most important is the book's underlying message--that the migrant student needs understanding, respect and encouragement.

#### WHAT COMMUNITY SERVICES ARE AVAILABLE TO MIGRANT CHILDREN AND THEIR PARENTS?

Migrant families are often considered to be non-residents of the communities where

they settle during a particular season, and historically, migrants have been denied many community services such as use of health services, public libraries, and even recreational facilities. Thanks to federal and state legislation, many local services are now available to the migrant family.

Education of the migrant child has become a primary concern in most areas. Many communities offer Headstart programs for preschool age children as well as a variety of special elementary and secondary school programs. Local school districts in some states (including Colorado, Oregon, and Iowa) provide summer school programs for migrant students. Florida school districts waive non-resident tuition payments for migrant students.

Local health departments provide migrant families with a wide variety of diagnostic, therapeutic, and follow-up medical and dental services at low or no cost. In California, migrants may take advantage of mobile health clinics which are able to locate near the people they serve.

Local welfare departments offer assistance through the food stamp program, emergency assistance, and employment training and placement.

In many communities, help for migrant children and their parents can be obtained from clubs, volunteer organizations and church groups in the form of child care, food, and clothing.

All of these services are available to migrant children and their parents, but they do no good if migrant families are unaware of the existence of such services. There are many good publications available on locating and utilizing community resources. Two such works are worthy of special note: the REFERRAL HANDBOOK OF COMMUNITY SERVICES, published by the Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University; and the GEORGIA MIGRANT EDUCATION SUPPORT SERVICES MANUAL, 1981-82, sponsored by the Georgia State Department of Education.

#### HOW CAN COMMUNITY SERVICES BE USED AS EDUCATIONAL AIDS?

The migrant child's understanding of his or her community can be dramatically increased by direct contact with community resources and programs. Not only will children better understand the role they can play in the community, but this is often an excellent way for community groups to become aware of the needs of migrant children.

Many instructors have found that the best way to familiarize students with the community is through the implementation of field trip programs. The Vermont State Department of Education has printed a very informative book on the planning of field trips, and possible sources for trips. In many cases, however, it may be easier to bring the community to the school. Often personnel from local services such as health or welfare departments are more than happy to come into the classroom to give

presentations of their services.

Migrant students at the secondary level benefit greatly from community-involved vocational programs. A book dealing specifically with this subject is available through the Indiana State Department of Public Instruction. Entitled COMMUNITY RESOURCES GUIDE--A BIBLIOGRAPHY AND GUIDELINES FOR USE OF COMMUNITY RESOURCES, this handbook offers a wealth of information on developing community-focused career education programs, and includes a bibliography of community resources.

#### WHAT DO EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES OFFER THE MIGRANT CHILD?

Involvement in a school's extracurricular activities can be an important learning experience for the migrant child as clubs and organized activities often teach the basic concepts and values of society as a whole. Participation in extracurricular programs gives migrant children opportunities to develop special skills and talents and promotes more positive attitudes about themselves and school in general.

Many migrant children are deprived of participation in extracurricular activities due to transportation problems, home activities, after-school responsibilities, or simply because the parents are not aware of the extracurricular programs available. Some of these difficulties can be overcome by offering activity programs during school hours, by increasing the availability of after-school transportation, and by developing ways of informing parents of extracurricular activities.

In some areas, recreation programs are sponsored by clubs, organizations or the local office of parks and recreation. In Florida, the Dade County Park and Recreation Department has developed a recreation program aimed directly at migrant children. The facility, which is located close to a migrant camp, offers plenty of adult supervision and activity coordination, including bilingual explanations for games and activities. The program's main goal is to contribute to the mental, physical, and social well-being of the children regardless of language, skin color, or physical limitations.

#### CONCLUSION

In the past few years, great strides have been made in migrant education, and due to a concentrated effort, the enrollment of migrant students has been dramatically increased. The challenge, now, is to make a drastic cut in the number of migrant student drop-outs. By providing migrant students with opportunities for career education, community involvement, and interaction; and by offering the encouragement and support that they need, this will be accomplished.

#### FOR MORE INFORMATION

AFTER TEN YEARS OF PROGRESS, THEN WHAT IN MIGRANT EDUCATION. The

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