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ABSTRACT

This book examines the challenges faced by migrant students and their families and by the educators, recruiters, and other professionals involved in helping these children succeed. Sections focus on the history of advocacy and legislation in migrant education, identification and recruitment, coordination of services, early childhood education, secondary education and credit accrual, parents' influence and participation, technology and distance education, and culturally and linguistically appropriate practices. Special attention is paid to the implications of No Child Left Behind for migrant education. Following a foreword by Leonard Baca and a preface, "Making Migrant Children and Migrant Education Visible," by Cinthia Salinas and Maria E. Franquiz, the chapters are: (1) "A History of Advocacy for Migrant Children and Their Families: More Than 30 Years in the Fields" (Angela Branz-Spall, Al Wright); (2) "The Legislation of Migrancy: Migrant Education in Our Courts and Government" (Eleni Pappamihiel); (3) "Identification and Recruitment: Trends and Issues" (Susan Duron); (4) "Ideas and Strategies for Identification and Recruitment" (Tom Hanley, Ray Melecio); (5) "Migrant Service Coordination: Effective Field-Based Practices" (Priscilla Canales, June Harris); (6) "Casa de la Esperanza: A Case Study of Service Coordination at Work in Colorado" (Maria E. Franquiz, Carlota Loya Hernandez); (7) "An Integrated Approach: Even Start Family Literacy Model for Migrant Families" (Patricia A. Ward, Maria E. Franquiz); (8) "Scholastic Demands on Intrastate and Interstate Migrant Secondary Students" (Jorge J. Solis); (9) "Graduation Enhancement and Postsecondary Opportunities for Migrant Students: Issues and Approaches" (Cinthia Salinas, Reynaldo Reyes); (10) "Bringing the Mountain to Mohammed: Parent Involvement in Migrant-Impacted Schools" (Gerardo R. Lopez); (11) "Against All Odds: Lessons from Parents of Migrant High-Achievers" (Roberto E. Trevino); (12) "Making Connections: Building Family Literacy through Technology" (Rosario

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# Scholars in the Field

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# The Challenges of Migrant Education

Edited by
Cinthia Salinas
María E. Fránquiz


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# Dedication

**Ironies and Dilemmas**

It is ironic that a lifestyle that marks us as "culturally disadvantaged and severely at-risk" and encumbers us with the low expectations of a deficit-thinking society, is also the lifestyle that enables us to become resilient and invulnerable.

Many children of migrant farmworkers have overcome the stress associated with the migrant lifestyle. They beat the system precisely because of—not in spite of—lessons learned as members of a migrant farmworker family. The migrant lifestyle offered us the basic lessons for survival, and we took advantage of the opportunities to learn from the real-life situations we encountered. In this natural setting, we developed social competence, problem-solving skills, autonomy, and a sense of purpose and hope—the qualities and attributes of resiliency.

We grew up in families that taught us respect and pride. Our parents modeled a strong work ethic as we watched them work in the fields without complaint, day in and day out. Though resources were limited, there was always enough for all of us. We worked together in the fields for one common cause and purpose. We could make concrete connections between hard work and the food on our tables. Though we were poor, there was always a sense of pride. We learned to respect others, but especially ourselves. This sense of pride helped us cope with the pain of cruelty when others made fun of the way we dressed, our language, and our family.

Our parents had little formal schooling yet they valued education highly. They encouraged us to break away from their way of living without making us feel shame. Our parents were proud of who they were, but they had high expectations for all their children. There was never a doubt that we were expected to graduate from high school and go to college. A strong sense of family support kept us from falling through the cracks while we established a support system within the schools. This gave us time to learn the rules of the game we were expected to play. In the process we found caring teachers who encouraged us to "break the cycle of migrancy" without making us

feel inferior about our way of living. They dignified our lifestyle while we were living it and maintained and raised our sense of self-worth.

However, what is at stake when we succeed? Successful children assimilate at the risk of losing what helped them break the cycle in the first place. It is almost like we lose by succeeding. The system is justified because we become part of it. It is overwhelming because either we succeed and fall into the trap of helping to perpetuate it, or we fail and it succeeds by locking us in the subordinate roles assigned to us by the hegemonic culture. In this sense, schools are indeed systems of social reproduction.

Those of us who have been fortunate enough to maintain a legitimate sense of self also remain firmly grounded in our strong sense of culture.

— Encarnacion Garza, Jr., Assistant Professor
Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies
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# Contents

# Foreword

BY LEONARD BACA

It has been said you can tell the quality and humanity of a society by the way it treats its most vulnerable members. The migrant workers and their families who harvest our nation's food can certainly be counted among the most vulnerable. Their migration patterns throughout the United States include eastern, central, and western streams, and their presence in our economic landscape spans the labor areas of crop production, livestock, forestry, fishing, and horticulture, to name just a few. Though demographic data fail to put a sharply defined face on the migrant community, we can safely assume that migrants experience greater poverty than any other group in this nation. Yet, their children faithfully attend public schools in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico in hopes of attaining educational goals that will better their lives.

This foreword offers me an opportunity to reflect on my own experiences as a migrant educator. For more than 20 years, the BUENO Center at the University of Colorado at Boulder has operated a migrant high school equivalency program (HEP), enabling hundreds of young migrants to earn GEDs. Significantly, the number of graduates in this program increases every year. While this could be considered a positive outcome, it also is a sign of a deeper problem. Every year, more and more migrant students leave school without a high school diploma.

The complex and dynamic lives of migrant families represent one microcosm of life in the United States. Migrant children are first and foremost affected by the poverty and health problems related to low wages, poor living conditions, and transience. In the course of a school year, many migrant children relocate from their home bases, or sending schools, to districts with different curricula, credit accrual, and testing requirements. In the past, migrant children and their families have been forced to confront these challenges on their own; however, a new paradigm in migrant education demands advocacy

and innovation on the part of school personnel, administrators, and teachers at every level.

The challenges and issues surrounding migrant education are daunting. Educators should consider the importance of migratory work and help create schools that benefit all children. Officials in all public sectors should strive to reform the education system to be more responsive to and effective for all students. President George W. Bush has said we "should leave no child behind." Perhaps more than any other group, migrant children today are at great risk of being left behind.

As early as 1962, policymakers and Congress formally recognized the need to address migrant education. A few years later, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) made resources available to migrants and their children through Title I programs. Much of the early concern of migrant educators, aside from social and health issues, focused on the difficulty of coordinating records as children moved from one school to the next. In response, the Migrant Student Records Transfer System (MSRTS) was established in 1969, although Congress dismantled it in the 1994 reauthorization of the ESEA. Technology advances and widespread Internet accessibility now make it easier to monitor a migrant student's progress and forward school records; however, a national comprehensive system has yet to replace the MSRTS. Though not available in all schools, Internet technology also can allow migrant high school students to take specialized courses. I strongly believe these technological innovations hold great promise for capable and resourceful educators and, consequently, their migrant students.

I applaud my colleagues who have labored to improve migrant education and share their understandings in this book. Their experiences illustrate how migrant education has evolved over time, how it is working and not working, and what remains to be done. The various programs and strategies discussed in this book are promising practices for improving migrant education. My colleagues Cinthia Salinas and María Fránquiz are to be commended for assembling an impressive collection of scholars and practitioners with direct experience in migrant education. This book should challenge educators and policymakers to design programs and services that ensure migrant children have equal access to the highest quality education.

# Preface
# Making Migrant Children and Migrant Education Visible

BY CINTHIA SALINAS AND MARÍA E. FRÁNQUIZ

One must live the life of a migrant child or parent even to begin imagining the complexity of their lives. Frank Contreras, former director of the Texas Education Agency Migrant Education Program, recalls his own childhood experiences as a migrant:

> I remember having to leave home and live in chicken coops. My mother would pull out the weeds and water the dirt floor and pack it down. It was very difficult to enter [school] in December. You had to make up the work all along feeling the embarrassment—the stigma of being a migrant. I perceived that it was not an acceptable kind of work.[1]

Torn between a yearning to make their lives better and the demands of survival day to day, nearly 800,000 migrant children and their families journey across the United States each year. Guided by the seasons, the harvest, and an array of powerful yet rarely acknowledged values and understandings about education, migrants remain an *invisible minority* who need our vigilant and concerted commitment.[2]

Migrant students enroll and withdraw from our public schools every day. Collectively, they are a portrait of American cultural, linguistic, economic, and academic diversity. Of equal importance and complexity is the interaction between the individual lives of migrant students and their schooling experiences. This book takes a thought-

[1]James Scheurich and others, *The Labors of Life/Labores de la Vida* (Austin: The University of Texas, Educational Administration, 1999), videocassette.

[2]Judith Gouwens, *Migrant Education: A Reference Handbook: Contemporary Education Issues* (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2001).

ful look at some of the challenges faced by migrant students and their families, as well as the challenges confronting educators, recruiters, and other professionals involved in helping these children succeed in their educations.

## What the Next Five Years Should Bring

About every five years, Congress reauthorizes the federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). The No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001, signed into law January 8, 2002, is the most current reauthorization of the ESEA. NCLB redefines the federal role in K-12 education with the goal of closing the achievement gap between disadvantaged and minority students and their peers. The new law continues to focus educators' attention on the vast array of education needs unique to migrant children.

In general, the NCLB legislation puts forth four key principles:

1. accountability for results
2. flexibility and local control
3. enhanced parental choice
4. scientifically based teaching methods

Undeniably, each principle has considerable implications for migrant education programs. High-stakes testing will play a major role, primarily through the federal Reading First initiative, which directly links to NCLB's goal of improving every child's reading skills. Each state is charged to construct assessments that measure what children should know and learn in reading and math in grades three to eight. Annual tests will measure student progress and achievement. Statewide reports will include performance data disaggregated according to race, gender, and other criteria, meant not only to demonstrate how well students have achieved but, also, to track the achievement gap between disadvantaged and other students. The initiative clearly places a strong emphasis on performance at every level.

The law also states specifically that migrant education services are a priority for students whose school year has been interrupted and who are failing, or most at risk of failing, to meet state content and performance standards. NCLB delivers a notable message to educators—migrant children must be part of the national education reform movement.

Part C of NCLB defines a migrant as anyone

> who is, or whose parent or spouse is, a migratory agricultural worker, including a migratory dairy worker, or a migratory fisher, and who, in the preceding 36 months, in order to obtain, or accompany such parent or spouse, in order to obtain, temporary or seasonal employment in agricultural or fishing work— (A) has moved from one school district or another; (B) in a State that is comprised of a single school district, has moved from one administrative area to another within such district; or (C) resides in a school district of more than 15,000 square miles, and migrates a distance of 20 miles or more to a temporary residence to engage in a fishing activity.[3]

As in previous legislation, the law commendably retains important language that would "help migratory children overcome education disruption, cultural and language barriers, social isolation, [and] various health-related problems." In addition, it retains and emphasizes earlier reauthorization language (the 1994 Improving America's Schools Act, PL 103-382) that described the importance of migrant programs in providing "challenging academic content and student academic achievement standards."

## Guiding Premises to Consider in Migrant Education

Our primary premise for creating and implementing worthwhile migrant education programs is rooted in the work of multiculturalists. Sonia Nieto, for example, argues that educators should guarantee equal educational opportunities for all children. However, in doing so, educators need not take an assimilationist approach that forces all children into the same mold. To achieve a view of the United States that encompasses multiple perspectives, multiculturalists encourage us to *embrace culturally responsive or congruent teaching methods that address different ways of knowing.* The standard curriculum delivered using traditional methods unrealistically assumes children will come to school with mainstream skills and attitudes, including a command of standard English, motivation to attend and perform in school, curiosity and willingness to explore their environment, and

[3]*No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, U.S. Code*, vol. 20, sec. 1301 (2002), http://www.ed.gov/legislation/ESEA02/pg8.html/ (accessed January 8, 2003).

proper school behavior. We need to convene schools that help all students achieve to high standards by building upon the foundational strengths children from diverse cultures and languages bring to the classroom.[4]

Educators have the capacity to create inclusive curricula and negotiate positive social relationships between schools and migrant children and their families. José Cárdenas and Blandina Cárdenas prompt us to (re)consider how we address the unique needs of migrant students. In developing the "Theory of Incompatibilities," they established a matrix of elements, such as policies, curriculum, and community involvement, that are now well entwined into many migrant education policy frameworks at the national, state, regional, district, and campus levels. Included in the priority of services matrix are the guiding considerations of culture, language, and mobility. Migrant education policymakers also should recognize that migrants possess distinct histories and perceptions of schooling that can be valuable resources for learning.[5]

The implications of NCLB and the importance of language and culture raise several questions. How can educators ensure migratory children are not penalized by disparities among the states in curriculum, graduation requirements, and content and academic achievement standards? More important, how do we ensure migratory children meet challenging content and achievement standards in the face of English-only initiatives (Proposition 227 in California, Proposition 203 in Arizona, Question 2 in Massachusetts), which prohibit or restrict the use of bilingual education? These questions require reflection and careful planning on the part of all of us committed to migrant education.

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[4]Sonia Nieto, *The Light in Their Eyes: Creating Multicultural Learning Communities* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1999); and James Banks, *Cultural Diversity and Education: Foundations, Curriculum, and Teaching,* 4th ed. (Boston: Allyn & Bacon, 2001).

[5]María Fránquiz and María de la Luz Reyes, "Creating Inclusive Learning Communities through English Language Arts: From *Chanclas* to *Canicas*," *Language Arts* 75, no. 3 (March 1998): 211-20; and José Cárdenas and Blandina Cárdenas, "The Theory of Incompatibilities: A Conceptual Framework for Responding to the Educational Needs of Mexican American Children," in *Multicultural Education: A Generation of Advocacy,* ed. José Cárdenas (Needham Heights, MA: Simon & Schuster Custom, 1995) (original publication available from ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 174 383).

## Personal Notes and Acknowledgments

This project originated from two personal experiences. First, Cinthia's experiences at the Texas Education Agency (TEA) Division of Migrant Education helped organize the book's major themes. Second, María's work with César Chávez in California and a migrant community housing project in Colorado prompted a broad look at the historical, social, political, and academic issues that impact migrant education.

During Cinthia's tenure (1994-99) at TEA, she realized the need to provide an umbrella of approaches and considerations while creating policy and interpreting law relevant to migrant students and their families. The working framework advanced by the TEA staff and Texas migrant educators is known as the *Seven Areas of Focus:* (1) migrant service coordination, (2) early childhood education, (3) New Generation System (an Internet-based record transfer system developed after the demise of the Migrant Student Records Transfer System [MSRTS]), (4) parent involvement, (5) identification and recruitment, (6) graduation enhancement, and (7) secondary credit accrual.

Each component is rooted in the ESEA legislation and more than 30 years of policy development related to social and academic services as well as a decentralization of migrant services in Texas. In addition, the Seven Areas of Focus value multiculturalism and encourage the infusion of diverse languages and cultures into migrant education programs. We have altered the seven focus areas somewhat due to the national scope of this project. For example, the New Generation System was broadened to include various uses of technology, graduation enhancement and secondary credit accrual were collapsed into one general section on secondary education, and chapters on the history of migrant education and the current waves of education reform were added.

This book is about the lives of Americans who make a living by farming and fishing and logging. In doing so, they provide all of us with the organic sustenance of our lives. The authors are a well-balanced combination of practitioners and academics who have dedicated their professional careers to migrant education and to researching and writing more about the lives of migrant students and their families.

Part I includes two chapters on the history of advocacy, legislation, and judicial rulings in migrant education. A historical awareness

of education policy and advocacy is key in understanding how we arrived at the current state of policy and practice. While migrant education existed long before 1965, we begin essentially with passage of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA). Angela Branz-Spall and Al Wright survey the history of migrant education since initial passage of the ESEA. In particular, they provide an insider's perspective of the early migrant educators' vision and decision making. Eleni Pappamihiel looks at three decades of federal migrant legislation and significant court cases. This chapter also analyzes the evolution of the ESEA up to the current No Child Left Behind (NCLB) reauthorization.

Part II focuses on the intricacies of identifying and recruiting migrant students and their families for appropriate education and social support services. Educators with national roles in migrant education examine ways to institutionalize identification and recruitment practices. Susan Durón provides insights on trends and issues in our schools. She describes identification and recruitment as the "cornerstone" of migrant education and lays out responsibilities and implementation models that can aid migrant educators. Thomas Hanley and Ray Melecio furnish multiple approaches for finding and enrolling migrant students. They stress a need to understand the nature of migratory work before developing a comprehensive recruitment plan and evaluation component.

Part III explores migrant service coordination. Educators should become more aware of the plethora of federal, state, and local funding and programmatic opportunities available. Priscilla Canales and June Harris describe six practices commonly found in effective models of migrant service coordination. María Fránquiz and Carlota Loya Hernández offer a single case study of a collaboration between The University of Colorado at Boulder and the community center at a farmworker housing facility. This multiyear relationship has yielded several impressive endeavors that address both the academic and culturally relevant needs of many young migrant students in the small community of Longmont, Colorado. These chapters demonstrate that collaboration can produce better education programs and address the social and academic needs of migrant students more effectively.

In Part IV, Patricia Ward and María Fránquiz provide an in-depth review of research literature surrounding early childhood education

and discuss literacy practices most appropriate for migrant children. In recognition of the importance of emergent literacy for English second-language learners, NCLB reauthorized the William F. Goodling Even Start Family Literacy Program to continue integrating early childhood education, adult literacy or adult basic education, and parenting education into a unified family program.

At the other end of the continuum, Part V examines powerful secondary educational experiences for migrant students. Jorge Solís provides a broad view of secondary education issues that relate directly to interstate and intrastate education and scholastic demands. He offers valuable insights into the day-to-day challenges secondary migrant students and educators face. Cinthia Salinas and Reynaldo Reyes use hypothetical scenarios to highlight three concerns for secondary education: challenges of credit accrual, drop-out prevention, and postsecondary transition.

No discussion about migrant education would be complete without an examination of parent involvement. In Part VI, Gerardo López argues that schools must be more proactive in meeting the basic needs of migrant parents. Roberto Treviño continues with a case study that exemplifies outstanding migrant parent involvement. He identifies key migrant cultural resources educators can incorporate into the classroom.

As migrant educators seek new and innovative approaches, technology takes center stage in several efforts. The flexibility of NCLB should enable educators to integrate technology and literacy more easily. In Part VII, Rosario Carrillo describes a family literacy program that incorporates technology tools and the language and culture of the participants. Patricia Meyertholen, Sylvia Castro, and Cinthia Salinas trace the development of Project SMART, one of the most comprehensive distance-learning programs for migrant students.

Part VIII explores culturally and linguistically appropriate strategies and practices in migrant education. Sylvia Celedón-Pattichis reviews the many math curricula options available to migrant students, as well as relevant pedagogical approaches, and places noteworthy emphasis on the powerful role of language acquisition in the teaching and learning of mathematics. Iliana Alanís identifies reading approaches and practices that can best facilitate language and literacy development for linguistically and culturally diverse migrants.

In Part IX, the personal stories of migrant educators portray obstacles to change and discuss assets-based models for improving migrant education. Scott Beck's narrative reveals one educator's struggles with the power structure that impedes enforcement of regulations and silences migrant advocates. He implores us to step on toes occasionally on behalf of migrant families and children. Blandina Cárdenas concludes the book by observing how migrant education has evolved since she and José Cárdenas wrote the landmark "Theory of Compatibilities" more than 30 years ago.

Our goal in this book was to compile the most comprehensive overview of migrant education to date. Though we included the components most commonly associated with the subject, it would have been impossible to detail all the issues, challenges, and opportunities migrant children encounter. While featuring many programs that benefit migrants, we omitted a number of other significant programs, including the *Building Bridges* early childhood curriculum, High School Equivalency Program (HEP), and College Assistance Migrant Program (CAMP). NCLB is a major focus of the book; however, future studies will need to examine the legislation's impact on migrant education in terms of schoolwide programs, training of teachers and paraprofessionals, and high-stakes testing. In sum, there was too much to say in a limited amount of space.

We would like to acknowledge our dear colleagues Robert Lynch, director of the BOCES Geneseo Migrant Education Center, and Jose Velasquez, formerly of AEL, who participated in initial conversations about this book. Their support and contributions were most valuable. We also acknowledge the dedication, patience, and support of Patricia Cahape Hammer, director of the ERIC Clearinghouse on Rural Education and Small Schools. Despite many bumps in the road, Pat and her dedicated staff championed our efforts, offered expert advice, and provided precious guidance. We are truly indebted to all the authors who generously gave of their time, expertise, and abilities; and to two anonymous reviewers who offered excellent guidance in improving the final draft. Most importantly, this book is about and for the many migrant students who grace our classrooms and their families. These invisible minorities should be dignified with prominence in our linguistically and culturally diverse American landscape.

# PART I

## A HISTORY OF ADVOCACY AND LEGISLATION IN MIGRANT EDUCATION

CHAPTER 1

# A History of Advocacy for Migrant Children and Their Families: More Than 30 Years in the Fields

BY ANGELA BRANZ-SPALL AND AL WRIGHT

Many Americans were deeply stirred by the 1960 Edward R. Murrow documentary *Harvest of Shame*, which documented the strenuous toil, pathetic living conditions, wrenching health and nutritional needs, and miserable poverty of migrant farmworkers in the United States. Prior to the telecast, there was only a small contingent of advocates for migrants. In its wake emerged a phalanx of articulate and determined advocates who campaigned for prompt government intervention to improve conditions. Living and working in third-world circumstances, migrants clearly needed assistance in many forms, but the most basic needs had to be addressed first: health, food, and shelter.

The first action was in 1961, when Congress enacted a program establishing migrant health centers. In the initial years, addressing the problems of migrant education took a back seat to addressing urgent heath issues such as the high incidences of diabetes, tuberculosis, and illnesses caused by pesticides and insecticides. Yet, there *was* an education challenge because so many migrant families traveled with school-aged children. During the harvest season, migrant children were more likely to be working alongside their parents in the fields

than attending school. Well-meaning groups and individuals sometimes established impromptu schools for migrant children, using church facilities more often than not. The educational establishment rarely extended a hand to migrants, who were viewed merely as temporary residents of an area. Some school systems effectively barred their doors to migrant children. The schools that admitted them were at a loss to provide anything in the way of relevant education, largely because of the language barrier. Consequently, only one of ten migrant children in the 1960s could expect to graduate from high school.

A new day apparently had dawned in 1965, when Congress passed the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), the key educational component of President Lyndon Johnson's Great Society program. Title I of ESEA promised special educational help for children disadvantaged by poverty. Although Title I did not specify migrant children by name, Congress's intent was clear. Title I established a national policy to provide special educational assistance to children whose opportunities for learning had been diminished by poverty and cultural deprivation.

While the policy was a good beginning, the mechanism for implementation was ineffective for migrant children. ESEA Title I focused on individual schools and their full-time students; migrant children fell through the cracks. At the time, support for migrant education was scattered and unorganized, but, fortunately, an advocate emerged in the most propitious of locations—Capitol Hill.

Congress passed an amendment to ESEA in November 1966, creating the Migrant Education Program as a component of ESEA Title I. The number of migrant advocates who called for this amendment cannot be determined. The folklore of the Migrant Education Program attributes the entire action to the bill's author, a young Michigan congressman named William D. Ford.[1] Ford, who served long enough to become a powerful chair of the Education and Labor Committee before retiring in 1994, became sympathetic to the plight of migrant workers when he saw them harvesting cherries in his home state. For almost 30 years, Ford was the steward for the Migrant Education

[1] William D. Ford was not related to the automotive Fords.

Program on Capitol Hill, remaining its staunchest advocate while limiting criticism and discussion of issues in the interest of maintaining a united political front. Hundreds of congressmen and senators deferred to Ford on migrant education issues until his retirement.

The 1966 amendment to the ESEA gave the educational establishment a practical reason to become concerned with the schooling of migrant children. Administrators eager to tap the flow of federal funds had one more categorical program to choose from. But it would not be a gold mine; funds for migrant education were not appropriated until 1967, and the amount was a modest $9 million. Virtually no one knew how to apply those dollars effectively to make a difference in the lives of migrant children. The U.S. Office of Education, then part of the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, asked the states to send representatives to a meeting in Phoenix in early 1968 to work out strategies for implementing the new program.

This meeting was the real starting point for the Migrant Education Program and is considered the first of the program's annual national conferences, which continue to this day. The success of this initial meeting hinged on the states selecting the right delegates. More specifically, it depended upon whether their primary interest was in simply bringing more federal funds into their states or in the educational well-being of migrant children.

Fortunately, the 38 delegates included a rock-solid core of committed advocates for migrant children and families. They formed the leadership cadre that transformed the 1966 amendment into an array of services to migrant students. Prominent in this group were Leo Lopez of California, Larry Jazo of Illinois, Dr. J. O. "Rocky" Maynes of Arizona, Vidal "Vic" Rivera of Arizona, Ardis Snyder of Idaho, Camille Jacobs of Delaware, and Winford "Joe" Miller of Arkansas. Their passion and zeal were infectious, spreading in varying levels of intensity to their colleagues from other states and in their own states. They planted the seeds for a broad and imaginative nationwide effort and built a basic framework for coordination of services throughout the states.

Migrant education was ideally structured for migrant child advocates, especially those at the state level. Congress established the Title I Migrant Education Program as a series of state education agency programs (because the original focus was on students moving from

state to state). The law granted states unusual flexibility in designing and administering programs for migrant students, which ultimately promoted tremendous innovation and creativity among migrant education programs. Ford's initial provisions regarding program flexibility remain basically intact. This is as important today as it ever was due to the highly mobile migrant population.

The primary defining characteristic of the children served by the program is, of course, their migrancy. The program technically is named "Programs for Migratory Children," intended for children who arrive at schools late in the school year and leave early due to the mobile nature of their families' working lives. If a family makes a succession of moves, children may or may not enroll in school. This mobility, driven by the economic necessity of earning a living from agriculture or related businesses such as migratory fishing, is the defining element in the lives of these children and their parents. They also are characterized by poverty, often extreme, and isolation from mainstream communities and services, especially when moving. Situations differ across the nation, and approaches and strategies that work in California may be completely inappropriate for Minnesota or New York.

The Phoenix meeting signalled the willingness of the federal government to let the states determine for themselves how best to assist migrant children. It was the beginning of a highly productive federal-state partnership in which the partners were on the same page. This would not always be the case, although relations never became so strained that migrant children were placed at risk. Beyond doubt, the partnership was most effective when leadership at the national level promoted genuine advocacy for migrant children. This ideal circumstance became a reality shortly after Phoenix and led to the initial years of the Migrant Education Program becoming a kind of golden age.

The single action that had the greatest long-term impact on the Migrant Education Program was the selection of Arizona's "Vic" Rivera to direct the national office. There would never again be such an admixture of advocacy and commitment to flexibility and innovation on the national scene. Rivera was not a born advocate for migrant children but was a passionate individual who fought ferociously for the things he believed in or the causes he adopted. Born a second-

generation Mexican American in Los Angeles, Rivera had no direct experience with the migrant life. A teaching career led to his attachment to the Arizona Department of Education at precisely the right time to become a champion of migrant children and families. Rivera was a creative artist by training and temperament. His creative forces were challenged to the limit as he sought to develop policies, broaden support, and keep the states focused on the task at hand.

Rivera served as director of the national Migrant Education Program for 16 years before downsizing during the Reagan administration led to his departure in 1984. Rivera practically invented migrant education. Regulations for the program were not enacted until 1978, so Rivera worked cooperatively with state leaders for a decade. On many occasions, he fought federal bureaucrats to design effective programs and services for migrant children, develop processes for identifying children, and build interstate structures to address the issues of mobility. Rivera was instrumental, along with Ford, in expanding eligibility definitions for migrancy and increasing funding. During his tenure, Rivera saw the annual appropriation increase from $9 million to $256 million, and the number of children served rise from a few thousand to more than a half million.

After leaving federal government, Rivera became more of a grassroots advocate while consulting for several state programs. Equally at home with a congressman or a strawberry picker, he enjoyed working with migrant parents more than any other aspect of his endeavors. His field visits were interrupted when, with the backing of Congressman Ford, he was named executive director of the National Commission for Migrant Education in 1990. The National Commission on Migrant Education was established in 1988 by the Hawkins-Stafford Act (Public Law 100-297) to study the issues related to the education of migrant children and report its findings to the Secretary of Education and Congress. The Commission's first report addressed the status of the Migrant Student Records Transfer System and was released in 1991. Rivera served only one year before resigning under pressure from Commission chair Linda Chavez, who felt Rivera was too sympathetic to the views of state directors of migrant education. Rivera returned to consulting work and remained active until his health declined. He died in 1998.

During his tenure, Rivera nurtured a profitable partnership between the federal government and states, producing a number of significant innovations, many of them far-reaching interstate efforts to coordinate services. These included teacher exchanges among the states, advance notification systems to aid in identifying migrant students, Portable Assisted Study Sequence (PASS) courses providing alternative means for earning credits, mentoring programs such as Goals for Youth and Mini-Corps, and national programs for secondary credit accrual. The migrant program succeeded in getting migrant children into school and keeping them there. As a result, the migrant graduation rate rose from 10 percent in the 1960s to about 50 percent when Rivera left office in 1984.[2]

The most significant innovation of the Migrant Education Program proved eventually to be the most controversial. Rivera was present at the creation of the Migrant Student Records Transfer System (MSRTS), a national student database that stored critical educational and health information for migrant children whenever they moved. He was gone from the scene when an advocate-starved U.S. Department of Education pulled the plug on the system in 1994, with the approval of Congressman Ford, in a final ironic act ending Ford's long involvement with migrant education. Rivera had been succeeded in office by a succession of career civil servants with bureaucratic rather than personal interest in migrant children. The federal-state partnership suffered; however, Francisco Garcia, himself a former migrant, assumed the directorship of the Office of Migrant Education in 1998 and has given the program new life.

The MSRTS was the first great accomplishment of the Migrant Education Program. Participants in the original Phoenix meeting had identified a critical need to maintain educational and health data on migrant children. A follow-up meeting in Denver produced a broad design for what would become MSRTS. The Migrant Education Program was a pioneer in education technology, planning and implementing a national system for electronic data storage and transfer long before the Internet era. MSRTS became operational in 1971, designed to specifications and expectations set forth by state directors and their

[2] State University of New York Oneonta Migrant Programs, *Migrant Attrition Project: Executive Summary* (Oneonta, NY: MAP Project, 1987).

staffs. Throughout its existence, MSRTS was unique among national databases in that it was always state controlled and not a federal system. MSRTS was connected to almost 100 terminals throughout the nation, collected and maintained academic and health records on nearly 800,000 children, and facilitated the transfer of records among school districts in different states.

The MSRTS helped promote educational sequence and continuity for migrant children regardless of how often and where they might have moved. The records included information about the child's family, schools previously attended, skills mastered, test scores, high school credit accrual, and basic health information such as immunization records. Maintaining the massive system, however, required an enormous investment in equipment and staffing. Eventually, many came to doubt its efficacy as a device for transferring student information. Beginning in 1989, hearings of the National Commission on Migrant Education produced reams of negative testimony on the system. The gist of the criticism was that the system was not working as intended, although stronger enforcement of timely, accurate, and comprehensive data entry would improve its performance. The commission's 1991 report on MSRTS recommended a series of federal and state actions to rectify the problems. Nevertheless, the findings shook Congressman Ford, who had believed the system was working as planned. Perhaps as a result of embarrassment or disillusionment, Ford withdrew his support for MSRTS and drafted the 1994 reauthorization that enabled the U.S. Department of Education to eliminate the system.

During this period, it was evident that advocacy for migrant children had slipped at both the federal and state levels. On the whole, the new generation of state leaders was more inclined to be pragmatic than idealistic. For many years, MSRTS was the glue that held migrant education together, but the new state leaders had lost faith in the system and declined to defend it from its detractors.

Even in its absence, however, states remain obligated to exchange student records. The Improving America's Schools Act of 1994 called upon states to maintain their own methods for transferring these critical records. Most states now use either an Internet-based interstate network called the New Generation System or the state-customized MIS2000 system developed by former MSRTS employees; however,

the long-term solution for keeping migrant student records is not yet at hand. The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 calls for the U.S. Office of Migrant Education to move toward a national system, which, so far, has been limited to the challenging goal of linking existing systems. Still, resistance is widespread to developing a single national database on the MSRTS model.

The falloff of support for MSRTS and the lack of enthusiasm for any kind of replacement national system might suggest that advocacy for migrant children is declining at the state level. It could be argued, however, that the advocacy has been merely redirected. Instead of focusing on widespread efforts to serve all migrant children nationally, many state-level advocates have concentrated on specific programs to serve migrant children in their own states and in the states to which they migrate. Such efforts have produced the most significant applications of technology since the creation of MSRTS three decades ago.

As the MSRTS experience suggests, appropriate applications of technology are the most promising routes to interstate coordination of services to migrant students. Interstate coordination makes it possible for states to work together on appropriate placement of children in education programs, as well as to design programs to assist with credit accrual, continuity of instruction, records transfer, and other successful interventions that address the effects of migrancy. For example, arrangements for out-of-state student testing make it possible for Texas migrant students who travel to another state to meet the credit accrual requirements of their home-base state.

Long-time migrant advocates such as retired Texas state director Frank Contreras and Brenda Pessin of the Illinois Migrant Council lent their considerable influence to support development of two of the best technology-based programs to emerge in the 1990s. The SMART (Summer Migrants Access Resources Through Technology) Program brings distance-learning courses to approximately 40,000 Texas-based migrant students in 16 states for 8 weeks each summer. Project ESTRELLA places laptop computers in the hands of migrant students moving among several states. For details on these programs, see chapter 13.[3]

[3]*Note from the editors:* Angela Branz-Spall, coauthor of this chapter, played a major role in both Project SMART and Project ESTRELLA. Branz-Spall persuaded

These two projects epitomize the major themes running through the rich history of migrant education. Since 1966, the Migrant Education Program has prioritized intrastate and interstate efforts as well as ingenious instructional approaches, such as Projects SMART and ESTRELLA. Beyond the signature programs, hundreds of educators have contributed to the evolution of migrant education and the improvement of educational opportunities for migrant children and their families. Advocacy at the local level remains a key ingredient in the day-to-day delivery of services to migrant children.

With the question of student records transfer still unresolved and with the blurring of lines among various federal programs, effective advocacy continues to be needed. Our nation's migrant children deserve educational equity, including a fair distribution of resources among schools, districts, and states. They deserve access to technology, linguistically appropriate instruction, and developmentally appropriate early childhood programs. To ensure this access, it is important for state-level advocates to continue intensive collaborations to inform local school staff about the needs of migrant children, children who are often invisible. Better informed school staff are better prepared to plan educationally sound programs; provide high-quality instruction; assess outcomes; and be accountable to local, state, and federal decision makers.

Coordination and collaboration are critical to achieving these important objectives. Schools must initiate contact with each migrant student's previous school and with the new school once the student leaves. This collaborative process may involve telephone calls, a translator or interpreter, e-mail, and written or faxed communications. All schools attended by migrant children bear a collective responsibility for assuring that each educational component blends into a cohesive whole for our nation's children of the road.

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the TEA Migrant Division to underwrite a portion of the "Highways in the Sky" pilot (later known as Project SMART) under the direction of Frank Contreras. They conducted the pilot with students migrating between Texas and Montana during the summer of 1990. In addition to Branz-Spall and Contreras, those involved in writing the operational guide and most of the curriculum for the pilot included Sheila Nichols of Region XX, Dr. Sylvia Castro, and Dr. Tadeo Reyna of Texas A&M. All of the local staffing for the pilot was provided in Montana by the Montana Migrant Education Program. Later, Branz-Spall piloted the "Big Sky to the Lone Star" laptop project, which was the precursor to Project ESTRELLA.

CHAPTER 2

# The Legislation of Migrancy: Migrant Education in Our Courts and Government

ELENI PAPPAMIHIEL[1]

In recent decades, our schools have become increasingly diverse. As educators and other policymakers have increased their focus on minority issues, the challenges facing migrant students have become more visible and important in mainstream deliberations.

Historically, migrant children have been present in our communities at least since the 1920s.[2] Yet, their educational needs rarely were considered in the formulation of school policies or in making educational decisions until the late 1960s. Migrant students most often were an afterthought, if they were considered at all, even though they were more at risk than most students. Since the 1960s, migrant parents and other concerned parties have sought redress in our court systems, and Congress has passed legislation aimed at providing valuable supports for migrant education.

Federal efforts began in the wake of the civil rights movement of the 1960s. During this time of sweeping advances for many minority

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[1]The author would like to thank Roger Rosenthal of the Migrant Legal Action Program for his help and information regarding migrant issues.

[2]Philip Martin, *Promise Unfulfilled: The Agricultural Labor Relations Act, Unions, and Immigration in California* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2003).

groups, members of Congress, such as William Ford of Michigan, determined that migrant students had special educational needs that were not being addressed adequately at the state or local level.

The federal government's growing role in education has been met with mixed reactions. Proponents of federal involvement with state education systems have applauded congressional action to improve education around the country. They see the unaddressed educational needs of underserved populations as calling out for federal involvement and funding. On the other side of the issue, some individuals have opposed any effort by the federal government that could potentially restrict the states' freedom in determining their own educational paths. However, in the case of migrant students, there has been relatively little resistance to federal involvement. Migrant students' mobility makes their educational needs uniquely national, preventing any one state from addressing these needs fully. Providing an adequate education for migrant students demands interdependence among states and education systems around the country.

Perhaps the most significant piece of federal legislation for migrant students was the 1965 Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), which grew dramatically in scope and size through a series of reauthorizations. In the 2001 reauthorization of ESEA, the federal government will spend approximately $29.6 billion, a portion of which has been earmarked to meet the particular educational needs of migrant students. This chapter describes the impact of recent reauthorizations of the ESEA on education practices. The chapter also examines how the U.S. court systems and the Bilingual Education Act have affected the migrant community.

**Table 1. Time Line of Events Affecting Migrant Education**

| | |
|---|---|
| 1965 | Congress passes the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). |
| 1966 | The Migrant Education Program is created. |
| 1968 | Congress passes the Bilingual Education Act. |
| 1974 | Congress passes the Equal Educational Opportunity Act. |
| 1983 | The *Valdez v. Grover* decision provides support for parent advisory councils. |
| 1984 | The *Zavala v. Contreras* decision eliminates cut-off dates for migrant student enrollment. |
| 1994 | Congress reauthorizes the ESEA under the Improving America's Schools Act. |
| 2001 | Congress reauthorizes the ESEA under the No Child Left Behind Act. |

## ESEA, Yesterday and Today

The ESEA has been reauthorized about every five years since its original passage in 1965. While the ESEA has undergone many changes, the programs that specifically address the needs of migrant children have remained relatively constant. Amazingly, as other programs have come and gone, migrant funding has remained comparatively stable.

This important piece of legislation has been a major force in shaping education in the United States and provides a framework for states to receive federal funds. Since the first inclusion of migrant children in Title I of the ESEA in 1966, the Migrant Education Program (MEP) has been an important portion of the act. Additionally, migrant children are eligible for other funds under other provisions, such as Title VII (the Bilingual Education Act, now known as Title III) and Title I Basic. Altogether, states receive millions of dollars every year to serve migrant students. Under Titles I and III, the federal government provides funding for programs designed and implemented through state education agencies (SEAs) and other agencies. According to Kris Anstrom and Anneka Kindler, the overall purpose of the MEP is to "meet the complex needs of migrant students and to facilitate interstate coordination of services."[3] Language in section 1301 of the most current ESEA, the No Child Left Behind Act, defines this important mission in greater detail:

> SEC. 1301. PROGRAM PURPOSE.
>
> It is the purpose of this part to assist States to
>
> (1) support high-quality and comprehensive educational programs for migratory children to help reduce the educational disruptions and other problems that result from repeated moves;
>
> (2) ensure that migratory children who move among the States are not penalized in any manner by disparities among

[3]Kris Anstrom and Anneka Kindler, *Federal Policy, Legislation, and Education Reform: The Promise and the Challenge for Language Minority Students*, NCBE Resource Collection Series No. 5 (Washington, DC: National Clearinghouse for Bilingual Education, 1996), http://www.ncbe.gwu.edu/ncbepubs/resource/fedpol.htm/ (accessed November 7, 2002), 13.

> the States in curriculum, graduation requirements, and State academic content and student academic achievement standards;
>
> (3) ensure that migratory children are provided with appropriate educational services (including supportive services) that address their special needs in a coordinated and efficient manner;
>
> (4) ensure that migratory children receive full and appropriate opportunities to meet the same challenging State academic content and student academic achievement standards that all children are expected to meet;
>
> (5) design programs to help migratory children overcome educational disruption, cultural and language barriers, social isolation, various health-related problems, and other factors that inhibit the ability of such children to do well in school, and to prepare such children to make a successful transition to postsecondary education or employment; and
>
> (6) ensure that migratory children benefit from State and local systemic reforms.[4]

The Office of Migrant Education (OME) provides funds to SEAs and other agencies to support these efforts. As a result, many states offer year-round services for migrant students.

Reauthorizations of the ESEA have not changed the MEP's regulations dramatically over the years. However, the reauthorizations have made the ESEA a more comprehensive document, reflecting broadened realizations and understanding of the migrant experience. For example, in the Educational Amendments of 1966, SEAs were allowed to use grant funds for programs of interstate coordination, realizing the importance of providing seamless services for migrant children. In the ESEA Educational Amendments of 1972, the federal government expanded the eligibility of some services to include preschool migrant children. A critical addition in 1978 required programs using ESEA

[4] *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, U.S. Code*, vol. 20, sec. 1301 (2002), http://www.ed.gov/legislation/ESEA02/pg8.html/ (accessed January 8, 2003).

funds to establish parent advisory councils (PACs). This modification increased parent involvement in schools. In the most recent reauthorizations of the ESEA, programs serving migrant students have retained their PACs. Additionally, in the Hawkins-Stafford Elementary and Secondary School Improvement Amendments of 1988,[5] the age range at which funds could be distributed for migrant students was extended from 5-17 to 3-21, recognizing that migrant youth often need services beyond age 18. While this change did not alter eligibility to participate in a program, it did modify the age at which a child could generate funding within a program.

Over the years, certain patterns have emerged. A pattern during the past decade has been to transfer oversight responsibilities from the OME to individual states. Decentralization of the Migrant Student Record Transfer System (MSRTS) is a primary example. The states designed the MSRTS as a national system of tracking migrant students, incorporating not only academic credits but also such records as health care and immunization charts. The MSRTS was funded by earlier authorizations of the MEP and managed by the Arkansas Department of Education with oversight by the state directors of migrant education and the OME.[6] The system was terminated by the OME and not included in the 1994 reauthorization of the ESEA. The states assumed responsibility for transferring records of migrant students, with the federal government facilitating the process. In the most current reauthorization, the federal responsibility is to "ensure the linkage of migrant student record systems for the purpose of electronically exchanging, among the States, health and educational information regarding all migrant students."[7] Hence, in ESEA-No Child Left Behind, the federal obligation is to facilitate the process of record exchange but not to keep records. While seen by some as a money-saving measure, the elimination of this record system has resulted in

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[5] *Hawkins-Stafford Elementary and Secondary School Improvement Amendments of 1988*, Public Law No. 100-297. Summary: http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/bdquery/z?d100:HR00005:@@@L|TOM:/bss/d100query.html|#summary (accessed May 22, 2003).

[6] Al Wright, *Reauthorized Migrant Education Program: Old Themes and New* (ERIC Digest) (Charleston, WV: ERIC Clearinghouse on Rural Education and Small Schools, 1995) (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 380 267).

[7] *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001*, sec. 1308.

incomplete records and contributed to inconsistent treatment of migrant students, multiple immunizations, and tracking problems as students move from state to state.

One of the most controversial aspects of the various amendments and reauthorizations of the ESEA is the evolving definition of a migrant student and the subsequent counting of these students. The original definition has broadened over the first two decades. The 1994 reauthorization of the ESEA[8] enacted certain changes, namely restricting migrant eligibility to students who had made a migratory move within the past 36 months, as opposed to the previous threshold of six years. Eligibility was expanded in 1994 to include spouses, and in 2002 to include independent migrant students who are no longer dependents of parents or guardians. Section 1309 of the No Child Left Behind Act, signed into law in January 2002, defined a migrant child as follows:

> The term migratory child means a child who is, or whose parent or spouse is, a migratory agricultural worker, including a migratory dairy worker, or a migratory fisher, and who, in the preceding 36 months, in order to obtain, or accompany such parent or spouse, in order to obtain, temporary or seasonal employment in agricultural or fishing work–
>
> (A) has moved from one school district to another;
>
> (B) in a State that is comprised of a single school district, has moved from one administrative area to another within such district; or
>
> (C) resides in a school district of more than 15,000 square miles, and migrates a distance of 20 miles or more to a temporary residence to engage in a fishing activity.[9]

However, the most current reauthorizations do not treat all migrant students equally. In some instances, former migrants who have settled permanently are excluded from services. Many view this development as unfortunate because former migrant children continue to suffer lingering disadvantages of migrancy long after settling in one place.

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[8]*Improving America's Schools Act of 1994*, Public Law 103-382. Full Text: http://www.ed.gov/legislation/ESEA/toc.html/ (accessed June 3, 2003).

[9]Ibid., § 1309.

The mobility of migrants and the different recordkeeping systems used by states often make it difficult for the OME to produce an accurate count of migrant students. However, recognizing that all migrant students do not follow traditional academic tracks, the ESEA emphasizes the inclusion of consortium programs that involve SEAs and other agencies providing after-school and summer programs for migrant children. These collaborative efforts help ensure that most migrant children have access to some services.

Another ESEA shift during the past decade relates to the accountability movement. The Improving America's Schools Act emphasized accountability for all students and charged the MEP with helping to ensure that all migrant students meet challenging content and performance standards. Both the Improving America's Schools Act and the No Child Left Behind Act have given priority to children at most immediate risk of failing to meet state content and performance standards. This requires that school districts become more involved in tracking and keeping records on migrant students so funds can be distributed in accordance with ESEA guidelines.[10]

No Child Left Behind strengthened accountability through testing requirements. States now must administer mathematics and reading tests in grades 3 through 8 to assure that high standards are being met. This particular requirement presents a problem for migrant students moving from one district or state to another. Since testing times are not standardized among states, migrant children could conceivably take one state's test in February and another state's test in April. A more likely scenario is that migrant children would miss a testing date in the district where they had received the most instruction, then be tested in a district to which they had recently moved. Either situation could result in questionable data as well as little actual instruction. Different states often base their tests on different standards, meaning that migrant students are sometimes held accountable for information they have not been taught. Such an instructional deficit places unusual pressure on children as they sit down to demonstrate mastery of unfamiliar content and skills.

The national move toward stricter accountability has also resulted in the use in some states of high-stakes tests, which become the sole

[10]Angela Branz-Spall, personal communication with author, January 31, 2002.

determining factor in graduation and grade matriculation decisions. While success on the test does not guarantee either graduation or matriculation, failure on these critical assessments can result in denial of a high school diploma or of promotion to a higher grade. Even students who are able to accrue credits may not graduate if they are unsuccessful on the state standardized test. Critics of such tests charge that some high school students drop out when they realize they will not pass the test and cannot graduate regardless of their success in class.[11]

Statewide school accountability systems also put pressure on administrators and teachers. Currently, federal law includes provisions for allowing parents who have children in schools with low accountability records to take their children to other schools, reducing the funding received by the original school. This pressure has led some schools and districts to use less-than-ethical practices to boost their accountability ratings. In Texas, principals have admitted to tampering with test scores and graduation rates to make their schools look better.[12]

## Court Battles and Legislative Achievements

In the past several decades, only a few groundbreaking court cases have related directly to migrant students.

### Valdez v. Grover[13]

The 1983 *Valdez v. Grover* decision reinforced the participation of significant numbers of migrant parents in their children's education. Shirley Valdez, on behalf of her minor children Celia, Antonia, and

[11]Alexandra Beatty and others, eds., *Understanding Dropouts: Statistics, Strategies, and High-Stakes Testing* (Washington, DC: The National Academies, Board on Testing and Assessment, 2001), http://www.nap.edu/books/0309076021/html/ (accessed October 30, 2003).

[12]Michelle M. Martinez, "District Fined for Altering Test Data; Austin school district Pleads No Contest to Tampering with TAAS Reports, Will Pay $5,000," *The Austin American Statesman,* January 9, 2002, A1.; and Diana Jean Schemo, "Questions on Data Cloud Luster of Houston Schools," *New York Times,* July 11, 2003, http://www.nytimes.com/.

[13]*Valdez v. Grover,* 563 F. Supp. 129 (WI.W.D.C., 1983).

Raquel, sued Herbert Grover as Wisconsin state superintendent of public instruction and Donald Anderson as chief of the Special Needs Section of the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, among others. The suit argued that the defendants had violated the Education Consolidation and Improvement Act of 1981, which required appropriate consultation with parent advisory councils in the planning of migrant education programs. Valdez and her lawyers pointed out that Grover had disbanded the previously existing state parent advisory council in May 1982, replacing it with the Wisconsin State Superintendent's Advisory Council on Migrant Education. In this new body of 14 members, only 4 were the parents of current or former migrant children. At the first meeting, the council recommended a membership change to reflect a simple majority of migrant parents and students; Grover refused. Membership terms were from one to four years, and Grover contended that no membership changes could be made until a resignation or term expiration.

The defendants argued that parent advisory councils were permissible but not required and that the councils requested by Valdez would be unnecessary "administrative burdens." The court disagreed and found that the defendants had violated federal statutes and regulations regarding migrant parent involvement. Additionally, the court noted that the effectiveness of a migrant education program was improved by the participation of a majority of migrant parents.

While no federal regulation requires that the parents of migrant children must constitute a majority in parent advisory councils, this case is critical because it asserts the importance of migrant parent involvement. Migrant parents face various obstacles that impede their participation in their children's education. Work schedules and transportation problems prevent migrant parents from meeting with teachers and school administrators; however, social relationships can be just as discouraging. Skewed power relationships between migrant parents and school officials often result in a lack of parent involvement. Educators must recognize that migrant parents, particularly undocumented workers, may be intimidated by administrators and others who wield power. According to Donald Macedo and Lilia Bartolome, even the word migrant conjures an image that allows society to look down on an entire group of people:

Thus, we can begin to see that the term "migrant" is not used to

> describe migration of groups of people moving from place to place. . . . "Migrant" not only relegates Hispanics to a lower status in our society but it also robs them of their citizenship as human beings who participate and contribute immensely to our society.[14]

Additionally, the parents of Spanish-speaking migrant children are often blamed directly for their children's lack of progress.[15] Therefore, it is not enough to provide equal involvement opportunities to all parents. The rights of migrant parents to be involved significantly in their children's education must be protected and advocated.

## Zavala v. Contreras[16]

By far the most significant court case involving migrant education was the 1984 *Zavala v. Contreras* decision. On behalf of their son Samuel Zavala, Jose Luis and Maria Zavala sued the Harlingen Independent School District, Dan Ives as the district superintendent, and Frank Contreras as director of the Migrant Education Division of the Texas Education Agency. Samuel had enrolled in the district on October 21, 1983, and wanted to participate in an extended-day program to make up work he had missed through his migrant moves. Without this program, Samuel would not have been able to make up enough work to be eligible for academic credit in his classes. Unfortunately, a school district regulation restricted eligibility for the extended-day program to students who had enrolled in the district on or before October 17. Samuel was allowed to attend regular classes but prohibited from participating in the extended-day program or earning academic credit for his fall classes. The suit alleged that the school district, by imposing the cut-off date, had failed to provide for Samuel's special educational needs as a migrant student.

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[14]Donald Macedo and Lilia I. Bartolome, "Dancing with Bigotry: The Poisoning of Racial and Ethnic Identities," in *Ethnic Identity and Power: Cultural Contexts of Political Action in School and Society*, eds. Yali Zou and Enrique T. Trueba (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998), 362.

[15]Jim Cummins, *Negotiating Identities: Education for Empowerment in a Diverse Society* (Ontario, CA: California Association for Bilingual Education, 1996).

[16]*Zavala v. Contreras*, 581 F. Supp. 701 (TX.S.D.C., Brownsville Division, 1984).

The court decided the cut-off date had been determined in an arbitrary manner without giving consideration to the special circumstances of migrant students. Indeed, the cut-off date was exclusionary and denied services to the very population that federal migrant education dollars were slotted to help. Finally, the court ordered that all eligible migrant students who had registered after the October 17 cut-off date be allowed to make up work and receive academic credit for classes.

This case is particularly critical given a national drop-out rate of about 50 percent among migrant students.[17] It is crucial that all migrant children be given every opportunity to acquire academic credits toward graduation, especially in light of increasingly strict graduation requirements.

Overall, *Zavala v. Contreras* supported the cause of migrant education but also led to controversy in defining the complex term "special educational needs." The court stated that the term is difficult to define or regulate:

> Indeed, it would be a difficult, if not an impossible task, for any court to determine which one of two programs most effectively assisted migrant students in their schooling. Of course, the Court does not mean to imply that defendants can do no wrong; only that when a program is developed that arguably addresses the "special educational needs" of migrant students, defendants should not be held in violation of Title I . . . or the regulations promulgated thereunder.[18]

While accepting the fact that *special needs* is difficult to define, the court underscored that states cannot make only superficial attempts to comply with the law. In other words, the districts cannot use the lack of specificity in the definition of special needs to advocate discriminatory practices.

Along these same lines, it is critical that students are not punished for their lifestyles. Migrancy, by definition, indicates that students will not be able to adhere to the traditional August-to-June academic calendar. While this country accepts the economic need for migrants,

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[17]Wright, *Reauthorized Migrant Education Program.*

[18]*Zavala v. Contreras.*

we cannot take advantage of their willingness to relocate continually and then punish their children for an inability to be in one place for an extended period of time.

## Lau v. Nichols[19]

Given that many migrant children are also English language learners (ELLs), it would be incomplete to discuss legislative and court battles without giving mention to the landmark 1974 court case of *Lau v. Nichols.* This case was a class-action suit brought on behalf of 1,800 Chinese children who were enrolled in San Francisco schools. The plaintiffs argued that the school system had not accommodated the children's limited English proficiency. This landmark U.S. Supreme Court decision determined that providing students with materials, teachers, and instruction in English did not constitute equal education if the students did not understand English. Eventually, the decision resulted in a series of guidelines designed to meet the special needs of ELLs. Contrary to common belief, the *Lau* decision did not mandate bilingual education as a solution. Recognizing the need for flexible responses to the challenge of educating non-English-speaking students, the decision required districts to develop their own answers to this critical issue. Most districts turned to bilingual education. In 1975, the U.S. Office of Civil Rights distributed guidelines that became known as the *Lau* Remedies. Using these guidelines, schools and districts could (1) determine whether a school district was in compliance with the law and (2) seek guidance in the development of education programs that would protect the civil rights of language-minority students. Numerous state cases refined these programs. Yet, without the strength of a legal mandate, the *Lau* Remedies often were challenged in courts, with mixed results, and, in 1981, the U.S. Department of Education dropped the remedies.

[19]Gloria Stewner-Manzanares, "The Bilingual Education Act: Twenty Years Later," *New Focus* No. 8 (fall 1998) (Washington, DC: National Clearinghouse for Bilingual Education) (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 337 031), http://www.ncela.gwu.edu/ncbepubs/classics/focus/06bea.htm/ (accessed November 7, 2002).

## Equal Educational Opportunity Act

Of equal importance during this time was the passage of the Equal Educational Opportunity Act of 1974, which specifically mentioned that language barriers must be recognized and overcome through instructional strategies. While the *Lau* decision had an impact on districts receiving federal funds, the Equal Educational Opportunity Act required all schools and districts, regardless of funding sources, to take responsibility for helping non-English-speaking students learn. This act shifted the responsibility of overcoming language challenges from the students and their families to the schools and districts.

## Bilingual Education Act of 1968[20]

The Bilingual Education Act provided federal funding to local districts and schools for incorporating bilingual education into the classroom. The funds were in the form of competitive grants to schools and districts. These funds were intended to provide resources for students, parent involvement programs, teacher training, and the development and dissemination of materials.

Originally designed to meet the needs of native Spanish speakers, the Bilingual Education Act was eventually consolidated with 37 other bills that became known as Title VII and, in the No Child Left Behind legislation, as Title III. Many migrant students also are considered to be ELLs or the children of ELLs and are eligible to receive services under both Title I and Title III of the ESEA.

The impact of the Bilingual Education Act on ELLs cannot be overstated. The act gave official legitimacy to the use of a child's native language in an educational setting. After Title VII, Spanish was supported financially through government funds. The Bilingual Education Act did not call specifically for bilingual education but for new ways of teaching English, which implicitly encouraged the use of bilingual education. Unfortunately, the Bilingual Education Act did not solve all problems associated with limited-English-proficient children, and, in 1974, major changes were enacted.

The Bilingual Education Act has always been controversial. The public debate over the effectiveness of bilingual educational practices

[20]Ibid.

is unresolved. California's passage of Proposition 227 in 1998 limited even English immersion programs to one year, emphasizing the ongoing opposition to bilingual education. Nevertheless, research indicates that English immersion programs do not always provide the quickest route to English proficiency, especially for students with disruptions in their education. For example, the transfer of cognitive skills from one language to another is maximized when students have reached a particular threshold of proficiency in their native language.[21] This level of proficiency is contingent upon students' ability not only to understand and communicate in the second language, but also to reason and perform higher level thinking skills in that language. Consequently, recent challenges to bilingual programs around the United States could have a negative impact on migrant students' ability to learn English.

Other recent changes in the ESEA reflect the public's concerns about bilingual education. For example, the name of the federal office dealing with issues related to bilingual education has been changed. The Office of Bilingual Education and Minority Language Affairs (OBEMLA) is now called the Office of English Language Acquisition, Language Enhancement and Academic Achievement for Limited English Proficient Students (OELA). This change reflects a growing emphasis on English acquisition above native language maintenance.

## Conclusions

Migrant children have special educational needs that must be protected and supplemented through federal and legal interventions. There is no doubt that federal involvement has improved the education of migrant children and supported programs that potentially would not have existed without this aid. However, education continues to be primarily the responsibility of the states.

Educators, administrators, and lawmakers need to explore new methods to strengthen the federal-state collaboration to provide the most comprehensive education for all students, including transient and permanent residents. Migrant and other minority students test our education systems in ways that are not easily remedied. When we can

[21]Cummins, *Negotiating Identities.*

successfully educate children facing the most challenging situations, we can guarantee a meaningful education for all.

The decision to emphasize "No Child Left Behind" in the title of the latest ESEA reauthorization made a strong statement that all children will be given the opportunity to learn to their fullest potential. Even if some of them travel beyond our borders, we are not exempt from our pledge to educate every child.

# PART II

## IDENTIFICATION & RECRUITMENT

CHAPTER 3

# Identification and Recruitment: Trends and Issues

BY SUSAN DURÓN

This chapter examines trends and issues related to the identification and recruitment (ID&R) of migrant children and youth. Five trends show promise for expanding ID&R and enhancing the knowledge and skills of recruiters, who are responsible for connecting migrant families with school and community resources. The chapter also presents models for statewide, regional, and locally focused ID&R.

## Background

Given the vital importance of ID&R in the overall scheme of migrant education, it is not surprising that federal, state, and local agencies have regulated and closely monitored the legal requirements and definitions of eligibility. The 2001 reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), the No Child Left Behind Act, spells out specific information on establishing student eligibility for the Migrant Education Program (MEP). The Act states that a child or youth is eligible for migrant education services if she or he

- is younger than 22 (and has not graduated from high school or does not hold a high school equivalency certificate), *but* if the

child is too young to attend school-sponsored educational programs, is old enough to benefit from an organized instructional program; *AND*

- is a migrant agricultural worker or a migrant fisher OR has a parent, spouse, or guardian who is a migrant agricultural worker or a migrant fisher; *AND*
- performs, or has a parent, spouse, or guardian who performs, qualifying agricultural or fishing employment as a principal means of livelihood; *AND*
- has moved within the preceding 36 months to obtain, or to accompany or join a parent, spouse, or guardian to obtain, temporary or seasonal employment in agricultural or fishing work; *AND*
- has moved from one school district to another; OR in a state that is comprised of a single school district, has moved from one administrative area to another within such district; OR resides in a school district of more than 15,000 square miles, and migrates a distance of 20 miles or more to a temporary residence to engage in a fishing activity.[1]

The Improving America's Schools Act, the 1994 reauthorization of the ESEA, appropriately described ID&R as a cornerstone of the MEP. State education agencies are responsible for actively ensuring this cornerstone is solidly in place. Under Section 1304 of the act, each state agency *must* perform the following functions:

- determine the number of migrant children residing in the state and the areas of the state to be served
- identify and address the special educational needs of migrant children, including preschool migrant children, as outlined in a comprehensive plan for needs assessment and service delivery
- assure the delivery of services according to needs-based priorities that consider educational interruption
- determine the most effective types of services that respond to

[1] *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, U.S. Code* 20, § 1309 (2002), http://www.ed.gov/legislation/ESEA02/pg8.html/ (accessed January 8, 2003).

the special educational needs of migrant children and that assist them in meeting the same challenging state content and performance standards *all* children are expected to meet[2]

Each state's approach to these daunting responsibilities is influenced by local needs and local control. The differences are reflected in the variety of state plans, comprehensive needs assessments, program applications, and procedures and documents for verifying eligibility. For example, some states hire a statewide recruiter, other states charge local operating agencies with carrying out this function using MEP funds, and yet other states do both. Some states cluster local projects into a regional network to share the costs of ID&R and the benefits of a regional service center.

State ID&R practices have evolved in response to changing demographics and fluctuations in migration patterns, availability of qualified and trained personnel, competition among states for migrant education program funds, expanded or narrowed interpretation of student eligibility requirements, and shifting priorities of state and district administrators who administer a number of different federally funded programs. Complicating this evolution are the substantial staff turnover, restructuring, and resource depletion experienced routinely by state departments of education. Any number of these conditions can jeopardize the system, resulting in eligible migrant students being passed over during ID&R. While not all states have taken a strong initiative in ID&R, a number of trends show great promise.

## Trends in Identification and Recruitment

In spite of the many stresses placed on school systems, some promising trends should keep ID&R in balance as a strong support for the MEP:

- increased communication and interstate and intrastate resource sharing
- detailed clarification of eligibility criteria
- greater flexibility to support local school-based and district ID&R

[2] *Improving America's Schools Act of 1994,* Public Law 103-382, § 1304 (1994), http://www.ed.gov/legislation/ESEA/sec1304.html/ (accessed January 8, 2003).

innovation, coupled with greater responsibility for student performance

- more-streamlined processes that target those students most at risk of not achieving content and performance standards
- increased technical assistance and training on ID&R

**Increased communication and resource sharing.** Clearly, communication about the need for and ways to improve ID&R has expanded over the past several years, resulting in processes that enable the recruitment of larger numbers of eligible students. Vehicles that facilitate communication and interstate/intrastate sharing of information have proven to be viable tools (e.g., the National Migrant Education Hotline operated by ESCORT and the U.S. Department of Education's Web site at http://www.ed.gov). National conferences, such as the National Migrant Education Program Conference, dedicate time to allow recruiters to share information. The National Identification and Recruitment Forum is designed specifically for recruiters, recruitment coordinators, and other staff who recruit migrant students. Because budget constraints often prohibit more than one staff member from attending these conferences, those who do attend must communicate effectively and share materials with others in the field.

**Clarification of eligibility criteria.** As of 2002, to be eligible for migrant services, a youth or the youth's parent, guardian, or spouse must be engaged as a migratory agricultural worker or migratory fisher. Further, an eligible migrant child or youth must have moved within the past 36 months from one school district to another to obtain (or for the appropriate family member to obtain) temporary or seasonal employment in an agricultural or fishing activity. Initially, migrant eligibility was interpreted differently, limiting qualifying employment to a vague definition of eligible agriculture and fishing activities. Typically, conventional wisdom prevailed, as the states shared a common understanding of what constituted qualifying activities; however, the laws left many gray areas, subject to interpretation.

With the passage of the Improving America's Schools Act of 1994, the U.S. Office of Migrant Education (OME) began providing written guidance on student eligibility.[3] Subsequently, the OME defined specifics on qualifying employment for such activities as cutting firewood, stripping cedar bark, logging, operating mink farms, caring

for racehorses, unloading grain from railroad cars to make chicken feed for chicken processing plants, transporting milk from the farm to the processing plant, and fishing in coastal waters. In defining qualifying activities, the OME identified two constant factors:

- qualifying activities must be determined to be temporary or seasonal
- a migration of the target child himself or herself across school district lines in connection with qualifying work also must be documented for the child to be eligible to receive MEP services

During the last decade, the OME has initiated new programs and more detailed clarifications of qualifying activities in response to changing demographics and shifts in crop production. In addition, the U.S. Department of Education has sanctioned the alternative use of an industrial survey fashioned after a survey form first used in New York state for workers who performed specialized dairy work—a seasonal/temporary occupation with frequent turnover. The original industrial survey was expanded to document eligible qualifying employment in meat, poultry, and other processing plants in which workers are seasonal or temporary employees. While some states apply strict formulas to determine turnover rates based on the total days and total workers employed in a specific job, a number of states find the industrial survey to be a flexible and effective means for documenting temporary migrant employment.[4]

As migrant work evolved, or came to the attention of educators, new definitions were created to accommodate previously unforeseen circumstances. For example, due to unique situations in Hawaii, the Improving America's Schools Act expanded the definition of migratory child to include one who, "in a State that is comprised of a single school district, has moved from one administrative area to another within such district." It also expanded the definition to include a child

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[3]U.S. Department of Education, *Preliminary Guidance for Migrant Education Program, Title I, Part C, Public Law 103-382: Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) as amended by the Improving America's Schools Act of 1994 (IASA)* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, 1994), 36, http://www.ed.gov/offices/OESE/MEP/PrelimGuide/title.html/ (accessed June 4, 2003).

[4]Kansas Migrant Education Program, "Plant Site Industrial Survey" (handout presented at the Kansas Migrant Child Education Program, Topeka, 1995).

who "resides in a school district of more than 15,000 square miles, and migrates a distance of 20 miles or more to a temporary residence to engage in a fishing activity"[5] to allow for the identification and recruitment of eligible migrant students in the Pacific Northwest.

**Flexibility to support local innovations, coupled with responsibility for student performance.** More flexible application and reporting mechanisms encourage local school-based and district ID&R innovations. For example, the Consolidated State Application aligns all programs funded under the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 and consolidates administrative funds.[6] In addition to activities funded through the Basic State Formula Grant Program, the OME has funded consortium arrangements as an additional incentive for member states to work collaboratively on ID&R.[7]

Greater responsibility for student performance is reflected in a trend toward viewing ID&R in the broad context of a comprehensive statewide needs assessment, strategic program planning and implementation (including parent involvement, staff development, interstate/intrastate coordination, and other implementation features), and program evaluation. In the consolidated state plan or individual state application, each state provides a blueprint for meeting accountability requirements and pursuing strategies to improve student achievement.

**Streamlined processes to target students most at risk of not achieving content and performance standards.** Some of the activities designed to streamline processes for ID&R include flow charts and diagrams, basic sequential interview patterns for determining MEP eligibility, recruiters' tool kits, state-specific ID&R service directories, and "*how to*" manuals and publications such as the stand-alone booklet on identification and recruitment that comprises Section 2 of *Options and Resources for Achieving Credit Accrual for Second-*

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[5]National Archives, *Code of Federal Regulations,* Title 34, Vol. 1, Subpart C-Migrant Education Program, §200.40 (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2000).

[6]U.S. Department of Education, Office of Elementary and Secondary Education, *Consolidated State Application for State Grants under Title IX, Part C, Section 9302 of the ESEA (Public Law 107-110)* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, 2002), http://www.ed.gov/offices/OESE/CFP/conapp02.pdf/ (accessed June 4, 2003).

[7]*No Child Left Behind Act,* §§ 1301-09.

*ary-aged Migrant Youth*.[8] This publication was distributed nationally; however, processes and products most frequently are local, regional, or state specific.

Streamlining the processes and materials for ID&R has involved top-down, bottom-up, and horizontal efforts. From the top down, the OME annually sponsors an orientation meeting for new state MEP directors and a midwinter state directors' meeting, during which extensive materials are distributed to clarify issues and disseminate ways to best implement requirements mandating ID&R. Bottom-up grassroots efforts at the local and regional levels have led the way for migrant recruiters, educators, and administrators to share successful ID&R strategies and publish materials highlighting successful practices. Horizontally, interstate coordination grants with a focus on ID&R have enhanced understanding and cooperation by bringing states and programs together.

The U.S. Department of Education has promoted proper and timely ID&R of eligible migrant children and youth through *targeting*—i.e., identifying and focusing services on those students most at risk of not meeting state content and performance standards. Targeting services and an effective system of ID&R go hand in hand. At the National Recruitment Forum in 2000, U.S. Department of Education staff outlined strategies for effective targeting:

- the proper and timely identification and recruitment of all eligible migrant children, especially the most mobile
- the selection of students for services based on an assessment of their special educational needs in light of the "priorities" and the other services being received
- the provision of services at a sufficient level of quality and intensity so as to give reasonable promise for meeting the special educational needs of the students being served[9]

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[8]National Program for Secondary Credit Exchange and Accrual, *Options and Resources for Achieving Credit Accrual for Secondary-Aged Migrant Youth* (Edinburg, TX: Region I Education Service Center, 1994) (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 368 532).

[9]Alex Goniprow, "Program Targeting an Effective System of ID&R" (paper presented at the National Recruitment Forum, New Orleans, 2000).

Targeting those students in greatest need is a difficult concept for many educators. Students who are more difficult to find and recruit must not be overlooked in favor of students who are easier to identify and recruit. For example, active migrants are more difficult to recruit than those who are less mobile; older youth are more difficult to recruit than their younger siblings; and out-of-school youth whose education has been interrupted prior to graduation may be the most difficult of all to identify and recruit, particularly when traveling alone.

Hard-to-identify children and youth may be the individuals most in need of migrant education services. ID&R strategies for hard-to-reach and out-of-school migrant children include the following:

- establishing the trust of the family through reliable and helpful assistance
- asking about older youth in the family and having information about services ready
- leaving packets of information about ESL (English as a second language) and GED classes with families
- recruiting in groups so families and out-of-school youth do not feel singled out
- seeking information from community sources to determine places frequented by migrant families (i.e., service agencies, faith-based institutions, businesses)
- seeking information at employment sites (i.e., from crew leaders, growers, shift managers)

Clearly, *how* to target and *whom* to target are skills that can be learned with proper staff development and training, strategic technical assistance, and resource and material sharing. Classroom teachers and administrators, support staff, and recruiters need specific materials and strategies to assist in identifying the students with the greatest needs; recognizing unique educational needs that result from educational disruption; and providing rich standards-based curriculum, instruction, and support services that span all grades from prekindergarten through high school.

**Increased technical assistance and training.** More than a decade ago, the U.S. Department of Education commissioned intensive case studies of migrant services. Local and state project personnel

reported two major activities that promote ID&R: (1) managing state or regional recruiters and (2) facilitating ID&R activities through technical assistance and training.[10] These activities persist 10 years later as key vehicles for ensuring a continued focus on ID&R.

To build on these two activities, the U.S. Department of Education regularly sponsors national ID&R forums, as well as the Annual New Project Directors' Orientation Meeting, with specialty strands for recruiters. With the expansion of these activities to include key regional contacts, the OME should ensure that its initiatives are available to local recruiters and other contacts who could assist state directors in disseminating important information about ID&R.

New and emerging technology makes ID&R training accessible to more people. One example was a week-long national online forum in October 2000 titled "How Can We Improve the Identification and Recruitment of Migrant Students?" Through a live real-time chat and an e-mail follow-up, participants shared ideas for better ID&R communication and identified professional development needs to upgrade ID&R practices and procedures.[11]

In response to an OME question on ways for state and local projects to reduce barriers to ID&R and strengthen solutions, participants at the 2000 National ID&R Forum expressed a need for continued opportunities to receive training and technical assistance. Suggestions focused on the use of more intensive electronic and print methods for ID&R training and technical assistance, more consistent regulatory assistance, and increased communication and advocacy.[12]

At the 2001 National ID&R Forum, the OME dedicated sessions to these subjects: "Hotline Live—Real Calls Showcase," "Keeping Recruiters Connected and in the Loop," and "Process of Developing an

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[10]J. Lamarr Cox, Graham Burkheimer, T. R. Curtin, B. Rudes, R. Iachan, W. Strang, E. Carlson, G. Zarkin, and N. Dean, *Descriptive Study of the Chapter 1 Migrant Education Program: Volume I: Study Findings and Conclusions* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Policy and Planning, 1992) (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 355 085).

[11]Susan Durón, "Summary and Trend Analysis of the Online Forum on Identification and Recruitment" (report submitted to the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Migrant Education, November 2000).

[12]U.S. Department of Education, Office of Migrant Education, *Notes from the National Recruitment Forum, New Orleans, Louisiana* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, 2000).

Identification and Recruitment Handbook: Core Content Components." Town hall sessions offered an opportunity to discuss topics and issues that affect recruiters and learn about OME initiatives.[13]

## Knowledge and Skills Needed by Successful Recruiters

Individuals responsible for identifying and recruiting migrant children and youth need considerable skills. Under statutory and state-specific requirements and regulations, a recruiter must (1) determine whether or not eligibility requirements have been met and (2) document eligibility on a Certificate of Eligibility (COE). To be effective, recruiters must be knowledgeable in the following areas:

- basic MEP eligibility requirements and services offered by the local operating agency
- local growers and fishing companies, agricultural and fishing production sites, and food processing sites
- languages spoken by migratory workers
- cycles of seasonal employment and temporary employment
- local roads and locations of places where migrants typically live
- workings of the local school system
- other agencies that can provide services to migratory workers and their families, such as the Office of Migrant Health, Women/Infant/Children—WIC programs, and Migrant Head Start[14]

Successful school districts have identified key qualities in recruiters, including experience, compassion, persistence, and an understanding of the migrant families served.[15] Recruiters need a remarkable array of skills to canvass the migrant community intensively; communicate with families, educators, administrators, and workplace decision mak-

[13]ESCORT, "Forum Conference Guidebook" (National Identification and Recruitment Forum, Scottsdale, AZ, November 2001).

[14]U.S. Department of Education, Office of Migrant Education, *Migrant Education New State Directors' Resource Book* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, 2000), 6.

[15]Gerardo R. López, Jay D. Scribner, and Kanya Mahitivanichcha, "Redefining Parental Involvement: Lessons From High-Performing Migrant-Impacted Schools," *American Educational Research Journal* 38, no. 2 (summer 2001): 253-88.

ers; make complicated decisions; and maintain important records. Recruiters report being responsible for ID&R in addition to other duties assigned by local operating agencies: serving as home/school/community liaison, providing tutoring in the home, serving as advocate for migrant families, making instructional or support visits to the homes of migrant families, facilitating parent meetings, and serving as translator and interpreter for school staff.

Regardless of the multiple roles recruiters play, the U.S. Department of Education identifies their *primary* responsibilities toward the MEP to be (1) obtaining and interpreting information provided by parents, guardians, and others and (2) accurately and clearly recording information that establishes a child to be a migrant child in accordance with the current statutory definition.[16]

## Models for Identification and Recruitment

Various models and combinations of models depict the structure of ID&R operations and administration. These models can be clustered based on their locus of control: ID&R focused on a whole state, a region of a state, or a community, or external systems supporting local, regional, or state ID&R efforts.

**Statewide-focused ID&R.** Some states—especially those with relatively small numbers of migrant-eligible students—hire a recruiter or recruiters who are supervised by the state department of education and who work out of the state office, an educational service center, or a local operating agency. The statewide-focused ID&R model has been helpful for states that operate newly created migrant education programs, that serve mostly rural or remote local operating agencies with limited resources, or that fund migrant projects clustered mainly near the state education agency location.

**Regionally-focused ID&R.** Regionally-focused ID&R has been useful in states with intermediate educational units such as boards of cooperative education services (BOCES), educational service centers (ESCs), or regional centers already in place. Recruiters are housed in the intermediate unit and provide services across district lines, thereby reducing ID&R costs to each of the participating agencies operating

[16]U.S. Department of Education, *Preliminary Guidance.*

migrant projects. Communication among regional recruiters is often more efficient in states employing this model.

**Community-focused ID&R.** The most frequently used model is community-focused ID&R. Local operating agencies are well positioned to know their local migrant communities, resources, and the education and support systems available to migrant families. This type of ID&R is particularly effective because the recruiter often lives in or near the community and has an established reputation of being knowledgeable about services, systems, and ways to connect migrant students and their families with resources. Especially in small communities, the recruiter is more accessible in this model, taking less time to respond and solve problems that arise for mobile migrant families who may be unfamiliar with the local area. When the recruiter visits the migrant family's home, place of employment, or the community center, he or she is well-suited to share details on education and support services, community-based ESL and GED classes, and contact information about local businesses and agencies. Some states, such as Colorado, combine the regional- and community-focused models, assigning most recruiters to local operating agencies but designating others to provide ID&R services through a regional network.

**External systems to support ID&R efforts.** A network of external service agencies provides coordination and support to local, regional, or state agencies that identify and recruit migrant children and youth. For example, ESCORT receives funds from the OME to operate a national hotline to help migrant parents enroll their children in school and in migrant education programs, if eligible. Hotline specialists at a central site or in the target states help connect migrant families with local ID&R specialists.

Examples of other external systems include regional or state consortia, such as the Florida Heartland Educational Consortium and the state of Kansas as the lead state for the CAIR multistate consortium arrangement. Each of these external systems channels ID&R resources to benefit local operating agencies.

## Conclusion

The goal of ID&R is to ensure that all eligible migrant children and youth have access to appropriate program services that will help them learn and achieve to high standards. To accomplish this important

goal, recruiters need a clear understanding of eligibility requirements and their roles and responsibilities for ID&R. The keys to accomplishing this goal are increased communication and resource sharing among educators and service providers, greater flexibility to support local school and district innovations, greater responsibility for student performance, and more streamlined ID&R processes to target students most at risk of not achieving high standards.

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CHAPTER 4

# Ideas and Strategies for Identification and Recruitment

BY TOM HANLEY AND RAY MELECIO

Various factors affect the identification and recruitment (ID&R) of migrant children and their families, including a region's type of agriculture and geography, demographic characteristics of the workers, relationships with other agencies and organizations working with the target population, and program services. Therefore, every migrant program, whether at the state, regional, or district level, needs to make choices that meet its recruitment needs. This chapter discusses essential factors that affect the ID&R of migrant children by educators at the state, regional, and local levels.

## Why Recruit Migrant Children?

The ID&R process is an important element in the delivery of migrant services. Federal regulations currently require each state to find eligible migrant children residing within its borders. As stated in the *Preliminary Guidance for the Migrant Education Program, Title I, Part C, Public Law 103-382,* "The State Education Agency (SEA) is

responsible for the ID&R of *all* [emphasis added] eligible migrant children in the state."[1]

Although highly mobile migrant students could offer positive lessons on diversity and resiliency, they often have low academic achievement and high drop-out rates. Their constant mobility frequently translates to low school attendance, poor nutrition, high poverty, inadequate housing, and health problems, which all lead to academic deficiencies. Moreover, the children of families who move are more likely to have growth delays or learning disorders.[2]

Compounding the problem is the fact that individual schools usually have less time to work with children who move from place to place. Many eligible migrant students fail to receive timely services because educators and recruiters do not know they exist. Consequently, finding and recruiting migrant children plays an essential role in providing adequate and timely services to this population.[3]

Traditionally, funding for migrant education programs depended on the number of children identified and deemed eligible. However, the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 shifted the focus of funding from the total number of children recruited to the number of priority migrant children targeted and served. Services now are prioritized based upon the children most at risk of failing, each state's academic standards, and children whose school year has been interrupted due to migration. While the level of need determines the priority of

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[1]U.S. Department of Education, Office of Migrant Education, *Preliminary Guidance for Migrant Education Program, Title I, Part C, Public Law 103-382: Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) as amended by the Improving America's Schools Act of 1994 (IASA)* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, 1994), http://www.ed.gov/offices/OESE/MEP/PrelimGuide/title.html/ (accessed June 4, 2003), 2.

[2]Migrant Student Records System, *Identification and Recruitment Handbook* (Sunnyside: Washington State Migrant Education Program, 2001); and David Wood and others, "Impact of Family Relocation on Children's Growth, School Function, and Behavior," *Journal of the American Medical Association* 270, no. 11 (15 September 1993): 1334-38.

[3]U.S. Department of Education, *Preliminary Guidance*; U.S. General Accounting Office, *Elementary School Children: Many Change Schools Frequently, Harming their Education* (report to the Honorable Marcy Kaptur, House of Representatives, GAO-HEHS-94-45) (Gaithersburg, MD: U.S. General Accounting Office, 1994) (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 369 526), 10; and Shelley Davis, *Child Labor in Agriculture* (ERIC Digest) (Charleston, WV: ERIC Clearinghouse on Rural Education and Small Schools, 1997) (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 405 159).

services, identifying and recruiting migrant children continues to be necessary because the most needy families traditionally do not seek social and educational services. Federal funding for services correlates directly with the number of children a district identifies and recruits. While additional funding should not be a primary motivation for serving migrant students, effective ID&R is essential for a program's ongoing and seamless operation.[4]

Recruiters need to gather specific information to develop a realistic plan for finding and determining the eligibility of a state's or region's migrant population. One key to a good recruitment plan is understanding the area's agricultural processes and employment patterns. The best recruitment plans usually are developed by the recruiters and administrators most knowledgeable about a state's or region's agriculture and farm labor force.

## Understanding the Agriculture and Farm-Worker Labor Force of a State or Region

The first step is to get a current picture of a state's agriculture, processing, and fishing industries. State agencies involved with these industries can provide useful information for determining a state's migrant population. In addition, these agencies can be invaluable contacts and offer resources for future networking activities.

### Department of Agriculture

In each state, the department of agriculture will have up-to-date information on current land usage as well as the types of crops grown and processed. It can forecast harvesting trends, particularly expansions and reductions in specific industries, and provide information on the seasons and number of crops by region or county. In addition, the department may have maps on current land usage and forecasted trends, specifying the location and concentration of agricultural or fishing activities. These can be very helpful when making decisions on the deployment of recruitment staff.

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[4]U.S. Department of Education, *Preliminary Guidance*, 2; *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, U.S. Code*, vol. 20, secs. 1301-1309 (2002), http://www.ed.gov/legislation/ESEA02/pg8.html/ (accessed January 8, 2003); and Pennsylvania Migrant Education Program, *National Identification and Recruitment: Recruiter's Guide* (Harrisburg: Pennsylvania Department of Education, 1999), 5.

## Department of Labor

Another useful resource is the state department of labor, which usually can provide information on the whereabouts of farm labor. Farmers who use more than a specified number of farm laborers are required by law to report that information to their state department of labor, specifically to the monitor advocate. Some farmers employ labor under one of the federal government's guest worker programs, which invite adult farm laborers (usually males) from other countries to work on domestic farms. Some of these workers may be younger than 22 and eligible for migrant services. The monitor advocate can provide a list of farms currently employing farm laborers and can identify those farms or processing plants hiring through the various guest worker programs.

## Cooperative Extension Programs

The state's land-grant college and cooperative extension programs also can provide essential information. Every state has a college or university designated as a land-grant college, usually the largest or oldest agricultural school. In many states, historically African American and tribal colleges also have land-grant status. Land-grant institutions maintain specific information on the state's agriculture and have key contacts with up-to-date information on agricultural industries. Faculty members often specialize in agriculture and can provide valuable insight and information on harvesting trends, use of labor, mechanization of crops, and the human and political implications of agricultural changes.

Land-grant schools get much of their information from a network of field representatives known as cooperative extension agents. Every county has a cooperative extension agent (known as a county agent) who visits local farms and provides information on a variety of farm-related issues. County agents can be a valuable resource for recruiters.

## Recruitment Plan

A plan of action for ID&R should be developed after gathering data about the state's or region's agriculture and farm labor force and before sending recruiters to the field. The plan should be reviewed often, with input from those already working with the migrant population. The plan should provide for strategies at the state,

regional, and local levels, where applicable.[5] Three major aspects must be considered when developing a recruitment plan: (1) planning/logistics, (2) implementation, and (3) monitoring of success (or evaluation).

## Planning/Logistics

Attending to details and logistics increases the probability that a recruitment plan will succeed. Planning focuses on such areas as deploying recruiters; coordinating with schools, organizations, and other agencies; and informing people (including parents and community) about Migrant Education Program (MEP) services.

**Deciding where to recruit.** In a perfect world, a recruitment system would cover every county in the state, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year. However, migrant education programs have limited resources, making the strategic deployment of recruiters crucial for the efficient identification of children. Deployment, to some extent, should be driven by the need to identify and serve *priority* or *targeted* children.

As indicated earlier, the federal government identifies three areas of priority for migrant children: those failing to meet a state's academic standards, those at risk of failing, and those who have had their school year interrupted. Of these three categories, probably the most reliable data exist for identifying children who have had their school year interrupted. Initially, recruiters should rely on information from the state departments of labor and agriculture to identify potential areas for recruitment.

**Following protocol and regulations.** The next step is to contact school districts in these areas and obtain a list of families who have recently moved into the district. Surveying these families helps identify which ones have been engaged in agricultural or fishing activities, ultimately generating a list of potentially eligible families. When obtaining information regarding families from school districts and schools, recruiters should follow the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) of 1974. All public schools, as well as education agencies receiving federal funding, are subject to FERPA.

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[5]Leon Johnson and Vidal A. Rivera, *Recruiting Migrant Students: Administrator's Guide* (Harrisburg: Pennsylvania Migrant Education, 1989), 21.

This includes migrant education programs. The preliminary guidance for the U.S. Office of Migrant Education provides a summary of FERPA as well as special considerations that should be taken by MEP grantees.[6] Specifically, FERPA authorizes the disclosure of information to representatives of state and local education programs in charge of implementing federally funded programs. In the case of a migrant education program, the disclosure of records is necessary because of the requirement to promote interstate and intrastate coordination and the transfer of records.

To prioritize recruitment efforts, it is essential to determine where most migrants reside in the state. Traditionally, funding for local programs has been tied to the number of eligible migrant children identified, so finding significant numbers of migrant families offers the most return on the recruitment dollar.

**Targeting priority students.** Conflicts can arise between the missions of finding large numbers of eligible migrants and targeting priority students for service. Families who have signed up for a program but who are later ruled low priority may receive few of the services the recruiter offered. Trying to recruit these same families in the future may prove difficult and embarrassing. Some states have instituted minimum service standards to avoid this problem. Recruiters can provide referrals to social agencies and other free services as a way to offer basic services without making promises they cannot keep. In some states, recruiters are instructed not to promise service until the Certificate of Eligibility (COE) has been processed. The COE is considered the legal document of a migrant education program. Services can not be provided until a COE has been reviewed and approved.[7]

**Networking on behalf of families.** One of the most important strategies in ID&R is building a recruitment network. At the recruiter level, this entails making contacts with local organizations and people who have direct contact with the farmworker population. Schools, government agencies, churches, and employers are valuable contacts

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[6]U.S. Department of Education, *Preliminary Guidance,* 19.

[7]Ibid., 2; and Al Wright, ed., *Systematic Methodology for Accounting in Recruiter Training: SMART Manual* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana Department of Education, 1986), 36.

in any effort to identify migrant preschoolers, school-age children, and young adults. These organizations and people become the recruiter's eyes and ears in the field as well as the program's ambassadors.[8]

At the regional or state level, more formal contact is advised. MEP administrators commonly write introductory letters to school superintendents about the program and its benefits for the district's migrant students. Other efforts to reinforce recruitment include contacting the directors of various organizations that work regularly with migrants, establishing interagency councils of service providers, and hosting get-togethers to discuss common issues and problems.

**Knowing the program.** Recruiters are a program's front-line sales force. They not only *represent* the migrant program but also, in many cases, *are* the migrant program. At social service agencies, at school district offices, and in the community, the recruiter often is the only contact with the migrant program. Recruiters must have a detailed working knowledge of all program services. They may not be educators, but they should be able to explain the advantages of having a child attend a migrant summer program or receive special services. They may not be social workers, but they need to know how to help a family in need of housing, clothing, or food. Recruiters should have regular contact with their program's education staff as well as service agencies. This will ensure that recruiters remain aware of services the program can provide. Recruiters also should attend workshops on educational and social topics. A good salesperson must know his or her product.[9]

At the same time, it is important not to oversell the product. As many recruiters know, failure to deliver the services promised is the kiss of death in ID&R. This requires knowledge of the services

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[8]Leon Johnson, *Recruiting Migrant Students: Recruiter's Guide* (Harrisburg: Pennsylvania Migrant Education, 1989), 31; Migrant Student Records System, *Identification and Recruitment Handbook,* 17; Blair A. Rudes and JoAnne L. Willette, *Handbook of Effective Migrant Education Practices: Volume I: Findings* (report prepared for the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Planning, Budget and Evaluation) (Arlington, VA: Development Associates, 1990) (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 321 945), 14; and Pennsylvania Migrant Education Program, *National Identification and Recruitment,* 23.

[9]Wright, *Systematic Methodology,* 8; and Johnson and Rivera, *Recruiting Migrant Students,* 21.

offered in the district, honesty, and the ability to communicate clearly with families.

## Initial Training/Implementation

The quality of initial staff training is critical in the effective implementation of the recruitment plan. Recruiters need to be aware of their program's different regulations and intricacies. Training should help recruiters determine eligibility, assess families' needs, hire other recruiters, understand how culture impacts the recruitment process, and recruit out-of-school children and young adults.

**The Certificate of Eligibility (COE).** Perhaps the most important role of recruiters is to determine the eligibility of potential program participants. Recruiters and program administrators rely on many tools to determine eligibility. The COE requires recruiters to document basic demographic data, information related to a family's movement, and the type of agriculture or fishing work done by a family member or individual if under age 22. In many states, the COE also is used to inform parents of their rights under FERPA. A migrant family becomes eligible for program services if it meets all program requirements and a recruiter and a supervisor sign off on the COE.[10]

**To be or not to be eligible: A program's dilemma.** The federal government offers detailed guidance on the eligibility requirements in *Preliminary Guidance for Migrant Education Program, Title I, Part C, Public Law 103-382.* The section on ID&R states, "This guidance is intended to provide broad, guiding principles related to identification and recruitment and is not intended to cover every particular situation a recruiter might encounter."[11] A point of caution should be given regarding eligibility. The above guidance allows recruiters, and the states they represent, room to interpret eligibility guidelines in a liberal or conservative manner. A liberal stance could qualify families who may not really be eligible; on the other hand, a conservative approach could deny services to those who qualify. The U.S. Department of Education's decision to give recruiters leeway can empower

[10]Wright, *Systematic Methodology,* 23; U.S. Department of Education, *Preliminary Guidance,* 2; and Migrant Student Records System, *Identification and Recruitment Handbook,* 1.

[11]U.S. Department of Education, *Preliminary Guidance,* 2.

states to make their own eligibility determinations while exposing them to the possibility and liability of audit exceptions. The end result is that state determinations, or state interpretations, vary from state to state. These variations are best seen in the approaches taken by recruiters. States that take a conservative approach will require extensive documentation by recruiters (and migrant families) to avoid any possible audit exceptions down the road. States that take a more liberal approach tend to place decision making about eligibility in the hands of recruiters and their direct supervisors. Often, these different approaches lead to families qualifying in one state after not qualifying in another.

Throughout the interview process, a recruiter plays the pivotal role of documenting a family's history to determine eligibility. The state function, therefore, is to train and supervise recruiters adequately while ensuring a quality-control process that will stand up to any future audit. States that trust their staff are frequently the ones that have provided effective, ongoing training on ID&R issues.

**Assessing needs of children and families.** Federal guidance requires a formal comprehensive needs assessment to determine the educational and support-service needs of migrant families before any services can be provided. Although the education staff of a program usually conducts this assessment, recruiters can appraise the immediate needs of a family during the initial recruitment visit. Getting a quick fix on basic and social needs can speed the process of sorting out which services a family or students require: Do they have enough food, clothing, heat, bedding, and school supplies? Is there an apparent medical need? Is there a special education student? Do they know how to access local medical, dental, or social services? The formality of these assessments varies from state to state depending on the state's commitment, procedures, and training. Some states, for instance, have developed needs assessments geared toward the different populations served by the program, such as preschoolers, school-aged children, and out-of-school youth.[12]

Although migrant education programs have limited resources to address all identified needs, it is important for a program to

[12] *No Child Left Behind Act,* §§ 1301-09; and Pennsylvania Migrant Education Program, *National Identification and Recruitment,* 22.

profile a family's resources as quickly as possible. Programs can prioritize and meet these needs or refer the family to other agencies or organizations, if necessary. The recruiter can help a migrant family address its immediate concerns and make them feel truly welcome in the new community. A recruiter's effectiveness in this role depends greatly on training.

**Hiring recruiters.** Hiring the right recruiters is key. The qualities of a good recruiter are addressed in the National Identification and Recruitment Guides and many state recruitment manuals. Recruiters should have a desire to help families and should be self-starters, patient, down-to-earth, and willing to work flexible hours.[13]

The person with the most educational credentials is not necessarily the best fit for a recruitment position. The job requires a person who is not afraid to get his or her hands dirty. Driving back roads, working at night, knocking on doors in rural and poor neighborhoods, fending off barking dogs, entering residences alone, and, at the same time, soliciting personal information to fill out an eligibility form is not for the faint of heart. Recruiters, many times, are characterized as the "salt of the earth." Good recruiters are equally comfortable talking with a school principal at the central office and a recently arrived immigrant in a tomato field. Recruiters are the face of the MEP to many schools, organizations, agencies, and, most importantly, migrant families.

**Culture and language implications in the recruitment process.** Important aspects of training and implementation are the effects of culture and language on the recruitment process. Migrant education programs provide services to families from many different cultures and countries. Whenever possible, recruiters should be from the same cultural or language group as the families being served. When recruiters speak the language and understand the culture of the client, the recruitment process is more sensitive and, ultimately, will be expedited.[14]

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[13]Johnson, *Recruiting Migrant Students,* 7; Johnson and Rivera, *Recruiting Migrant Students,* 47; Migrant Student Records System, *Identification and Recruitment Handbook,* 1; and Kentucky Department of Education, Migrant Education Office, *Handbook for Identification and Recruitment* (Frankfort: Kentucky Department of Education, 1999).

[14]Johnson, *Recruiting Migrant Students,* 24.

However, hiring recruiters who speak the same language as the families is not always possible. Many recruiters must recruit within various language and cultural groups. In these cases, it is important to train staff in the basics of the cultures and languages of the migrants they are recruiting. This is especially true when recruiters visit the homes of migrant families. Can a male recruiter enter a house when the father is not at home? Is it appropriate to refuse food? Having a basic knowledge of the *do's* and *don'ts* of the culture can have a lasting effect, because recruiters act as the initial ambassadors for a program.[15]

**Community-based recruitment.** Identifying out-of-school youth is an increasingly important factor in implementing a recruitment plan. Many migrant children can be found at school during the school year. Checking with key school personnel (attendance officers, nurses, secretaries, bus drivers, etc.) can help identify many eligible families. Yet, a program serves children from birth until age 22, so school-based recruiters would miss families with preschool children or with eligible young adults who do not attend school. Also, some young adults travel without their families to seek farm work; these youth are less likely to enroll in school but are still eligible for program services. To identify these particular populations, recruitment efforts should be community-based.[16]

Checking with local Head Start programs, churches, and social service agencies are just some of the avenues for identifying out-of-school youth. Other community-based recruitment efforts include visiting traditional farmworker houses and ethnic grocery stores, looking for weekend soccer games, and attending church-sponsored social events for local Hispanics or other farmworker ethnic or cultural groups. These activities can help a recruiter find eligible migrant children who might not show up in a local school.[17]

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[15]Pennsylvania Migrant Education Program, *National Identification and Recruitment,* 16.

[16]National Program for Secondary Credit Exchange and Accrual, *Options and Resources for Achieving Credit Accrual for Secondary-Aged Migrant Youth* (Edinburg, TX: Region I Education Service Center, 1994) (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 368 532), 1.

[17]Migrant Student Records System, *Identification and Recruitment Handbook,* 16; and Virginia Migrant Education Program, *Recruiters Manual* (Richmond: Virginia Department of Education, 2001), 3.

Community-based recruiting also has the added benefit of finding families who may be afraid to enter local schools due to their immigration status. These families are eligible for migrant education programs as well as public education. In addition, community-based recruitment can identify families who come to the area only when school is out, such as during the summer or between sessions. Out-of-school youth deserve equal access to program services; therefore, recruitment systems need to deploy recruiters in both school-based and community-based settings.

## Monitoring/Evaluating Success

After spending so much time and effort on a plan, program staff must determine its success. Are all migrant children being identified? Are any new pockets of migrant children being canvassed? How can the plan be improved? Good quality control of a recruitment system has several components: ongoing training, supervision in the field, checking the COEs, and a self-audit system.[18]

**Training recruitment staff.** The amount and quality of training recruiters receive before they are deployed to the field vary greatly from state to state and, sometimes, even within states. Some are simply hired, given a manual and a bunch of blank COEs, and sent out to find families. Others receive extensive training before they ever touch a COE. Thorough initial and ongoing training can prevent audit problems and other difficulties with families who may be misled by an underprepared recruiter. Many states have comprehensive training manuals, and the federal government currently is updating training materials that could be used on a national scale.

**Effective supervision.** Recruiters often are left on their own to cover large areas and may express feelings of isolation. It is important that a supervisor occasionally spend time with recruiters as they go about their daily duties. This gives recruiters a sense they are not out there on their own and gives the supervisor a reality check when examining the COEs and logs turned in by the recruiter. Many programs experience eligibility problems with some families because they have lost regular human contact with

[18]Wright, *Systematic Methodology,* 52; and Johnson and Rivera, *Recruiting Migrant Students,* 83.

their recruiters in the field. The most extensive paperwork and quality-control measures are useless if not backed up by regular field visits by the recruiters' supervisors.[19]

**Record keeping.** Review of the COEs is another important quality-control measure. Typically, the COE must be checked to ensure that the qualifying agricultural activity is within the guidelines set by the federal government and the state. A reviewer must sign off on the COE to approve a family's eligibility for program services. Then, the COE is turned over to a clerk who enters the information into a database system. Clerks should check to make sure all fields have been filled in properly. This process varies depending on the state's total number of children and COEs. In states with a small population of migrant children, the data entry clerk and reviewer might be the same person; in larger states, these responsibilities are shared among many people. Often, the COEs are sent to the state office for final review or approval. In any case, the review of the COE helps ensure that only eligible families receive services and that the program's integrity is maintained.

**Friendly audits and frequent checks.** An important component of any quality-control system is independent reviews, or *friendly audits.* As diligent as states or districts might be in ensuring the integrity of their COEs and the honesty of their recruiters, an occasional review by people who are not a regular part of the system can be beneficial. Depending on a program's funding, independent auditors can be hired to conduct formal reviews. Sometimes, states assign staff not regularly engaged in the recruitment process to review hiring practices, training regimen, paperwork flow, reviewer standards, database entry process, and field-visit schedules. Sampling the COEs for eligibility and other concerns should be a part of the process. Establishing such a process, either formally or informally, can help any program regularly update and improve its quality-control measures.

Once the recruitment system is up and running, it is important to review its effectiveness annually. Have all the plan's elements been followed? Does the training need to be updated? Is the program

[19]Johnson and Rivera, *Recruiting Migrant Students,* 36.

finding and hiring recruiters who speak the same language as the migrant families? Have all efforts been taken to locate out-of-school youth? Do the program's numbers reflect what the U.S. Departments of Labor and Agriculture indicate about migrant farmworkers in the state or region? Has a friendly audit been conducted recently? These are just some of the components that should be included in an evaluation of the program's recruitment efforts. Recruiters can make additional recommendations about the evaluation system and the ID&R process.

## Conclusion

A good recruitment system, like agriculture itself, is changing and dynamic. It needs adequate resources dedicated to its maintenance. Effective hiring, training, support, and monitoring can help ensure that eligible migrant children and families will be found and receive the services they deserve. Addressing these issues in a frequent and objective manner can help determine the steps necessary for improvement and prioritize areas that need immediate assistance.

**Additional Resources can be obtained through the following:**

- ESCORT and the National Migrant Education Hotline: 800-451-8058, or http://www.escort.org/
- Binational Migrant Education Program: 512-245-1365
- U.S. Department of Education, Office of Migrant Education: 202-260-1164, or http://www.ed.gov/offices/OESE/MEP/

# PART III

## SERVICE COORDINATION

CHAPTER 5

# Migrant Service Coordination: Effective Field-Based Practices

BY PRISCILLA CANALES AND JUNE HARRIS

"Tell them," Ms. Mejia, Victor's high school counselor prods. Victor smiles, remaining quiet.

"Go ahead, tell them, Victor," insists Mr. Enrique Montalvo, migrant education program director for Eagle Pass Independent School District (ISD).

Victor smiles again before confidently announcing, "I'm going to college to study law enforcement so that I can be a policeman."[1]

A few months earlier, Victor was on the verge of dropping out of school. Frustrated about lacking the number of credits needed to be a senior, Victor informed his close friend that he planned to drop out. At his friend's insistence, Victor reluctantly attended a student leadership academy organized by the Migrant Education Program (MEP). During the academy, Victor participated in many events—relationship-building activities, leadership development experiences, problem-solving challenges, role model sessions, and reflection seminars. He was attentive, happy, polite, and respectful.

[1]The names of students have been changed to protect their identities.

It was at the final reflection seminar that Victor candidly revealed his prior intentions of dropping out of school. Stating that the academy experiences had made a big difference, Victor proudly announced that he was more determined than ever to complete high school and pursue his dream of becoming a police officer. He thanked Mr. Ortiz, assistant chief of the San Antonio Police Department, for sharing his personal experiences and insights about his years as a teenage migrant farmworker and his own goals of becoming a high-ranking police officer.

This is an example of the real-life impact migrant service coordination can have when representatives from a host of agencies—in this case representatives from Eagle Pass ISD, Uvalde Consolidated ISD, San Antonio ISD, South San Antonio ISD, and Education Service Center, Region 20—come together to create opportunities for migrant students.

Migrant service coordination involves creating and seizing opportunities to address the diverse *academic* and *social-economic* needs of migrant students. It is most effective when a group of committed people come together to efficiently share their cumulative resources in ways that address the unique needs of each migrant student.

This spirit of collaboration is a focal point for migrant education programs in many school districts across the United States. Embracing the Title I, Part C, Migrant Education Program statute related to migrant service coordination, many districts continuously explore possibilities "to ensure that migratory children are provided with appropriate educational services (including supportive services) that address their special needs in a coordinated and efficient manner."[2] In Texas, migrant service coordination is often the mechanism used to implement the six other interrelated focus areas for migrant education: (1) early childhood education, (2) New Generation System,[3] (3) parental involvement, (4) identification and recruitment, (5) gradua-

[2]Education Funding Research Council, "Title I, Part C Migrant Education Program," in *Title I Handbook* (Washington, DC: Education Funding Research Council, 2002), C-325.

[3]The New Generation System is an electronic system for storing and transferring migrant students' information as they migrate from school to school.

tion enhancement, and (6) secondary credit exchange and accrual.[4] The goal of this chapter is to share understanding and insights the authors have gained through long-term involvement and ongoing observations and analysis of effective migrant service coordination practices in Texas and elsewhere.

During more than two decades of direct experience with 21 migrant education programs in south Texas and through interactions with numerous other programs across Texas and the United States, the authors have observed diverse practices associated with migrant service coordination. Despite variations, most effective models—i.e., programs that regularly met or exceeded MEP goals and the needs of migrant students and families—tended to share the following six recurrent practices:

1. recruiting and training formal and informal teams
2. assessing migrant students' and families' needs
3. collaborating with community organizations and service providers
4. training for empowerment of educators, community members, parents, and students
5. organizing for self-advocacy among migrant students and parents
6. navigating via reflective evaluation processes

## Recruiting and Training Outreach Teams

Margaret Mead, renowned anthropologist, once stated, "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has."[5] This belief lies at the heart of migrant service coordination, as its practitioners work together to address the academic and support service needs of the *entire* migrant community, from preschool to postsecondary education.

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[4]Texas Education Agency, "Migrant Education in Texas" (Austin, TX: Texas Education Agency, Division of Migrant Education, n.d.), http://www.tea.state.tx.us/migrant/miged.html/ (accessed January 3, 2002).

[5]Margaret Mead, "Thinking Quotes," http://www.2think.org/quotes.html#mead/ (accessed December 22, 2001).

To meet this intent and purpose, many districts formally and informally recruit outreach teams.[6] Effective teams share common characteristics, including leadership, diversity, competence, and commitment.

**Leadership.** The federal program director or the MEP director usually has principal leadership and facilitative roles in recruiting and retaining caring and committed team members. Most effective leaders embrace collaboration as they facilitate the development and implementation of a clear and compelling vision, measurable goals, doable action plans, and alternative assessments. They expect and model initiative, positive thinking, problem solving, and sensitivity.

**Diversity.** Effective teams tend to reflect the diversity of the community, and this diversity begets productivity. Various experiences, ideas, and viewpoints emerge as teams plan and implement initiatives, leading to effective migrant service delivery. By having migrant constituents on the team, migrant parents feel empowered and valued. When their voices are valued, migrant parents tend to assert ownership in the school system and confidently express their ideas. The words of a parent advisory council member from Eagle Pass ISD captured this invigorated attitude. After hearing that the migrant service coordination team had acted on his recommendation to expose high school migrant students to college life through field trips, a migrant father excitedly shouted, "Asi! Adelante!" ("Yes! That's the way! Move forward!")

Diversity also sends the clear message to all segments of the community that migrant service coordination is a community-wide responsibility worthy of advocacy and support. In numerous cities, business owners and community leaders supported migrant service coordination efforts after learning about the migratory lifestyle and the MEP from a diverse team of committed individuals. For example, upon hearing about the MEP's importance from a three-member team, a local merchant in South San Antonio ISD proudly displayed a poster to support identification and recruitment efforts.

**Competence.** Like diversity, continuous capacity development is a critical attribute of effective migrant service coordination teams.

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[6]Gary Huang, *Health Problems among Migrant Farmworkers' Children in the U.S.* (ERIC Digest) (Charleston, WV: ERIC Clearinghouse on Rural Education and Small Schools, 1993) (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 357 907).

Valuing competence, most districts with effective programs develop the team's knowledge and skills by offering staff development on important topics, such as

- special program services, including bilingual/English as a second language, early childhood education, gifted and talented, career and technology education, and special education
- MEP legislation
- data collection, analysis, and interpretation
- facilitative processes
- basic components of the educational system, including statewide assessments, graduation requirements, promotion requirements, parental rights, and the roles and responsibilities of teachers and other school personnel

Staff development for migrant service coordination teams varies from district to district. Many Texas school districts rely heavily on educational specialists to deliver customized training; other models for staff development include study groups, distance learning, and workshops. Staff development tends to be continuous, hands-on, and interactive.

**Commitment.** In addition to possessing a sound knowledge base, effective teams are driven by a strong commitment to helping migrant students. Committed team members often bring a strong sense of mission to identifying and addressing the unique needs of each member of the migrant community. For example, during a routine home visit in Uvalde Consolidated ISD, a home educator made two startling discoveries: that a newborn in the home suffered from severe birth defects and that the father had abandoned the family. As a member of the district's informal migrant service coordination team, the home educator connected the mother to local social service agencies, which provided financial and medical assistance. In another district, an itinerant teacher visiting a homebound high school student injured in an automobile accident found the injured student sleeping on the couch. She noticed that the family had sparse furniture. After receiving this information, the migrant service coordination team contacted a local charitable organization and secured furniture donations.

In these instances, individuals teamed together to actualize the mission and goals of migrant service coordination and played pivotal roles in meeting the needs of migrant students and families.

## Assessing Needs

Dr. Fitzhugh Dodson has written, "Without goals and plans to reach them, you are like a ship that has set sail with no destination."[7] The destination of migrant service coordination—the fulfillment of the academic and support service needs of migrant students—requires the accurate identification of specific needs. Conducting a comprehensive assessment of all migrant needs, including health needs, is critical.[8]

As stipulated in federal legislation, state education agencies require districts seeking MEP funds to conduct a comprehensive analysis of academic and support service data before submitting their applications. Many migrant service coordination teams rely on the following data sources to conduct a comprehensive needs assessment: (1) official assurances that migrant education funds were being applied in standard ways; (2) the results of national studies on migrant farmworkers, including health, education, housing, and standard of living issues; and (3) national and state statistics on the academic achievement of migrant children, such as graduation rates, college admissions statistics, national and state assessment results, attendance patterns, retention rates, and employability.

In addition to these data sources, effective migrant service coordination teams design alternative needs assessment instruments. Two widely used methods are questionnaires and group interviews. Used to collect information that is not directly observable, these approaches aim to collect information about the particular educational, health, and other social-support service needs of migrant students.

Developing a practical questionnaire is a tedious and time-consuming task. In addition to deliberating over the types, number, and format of questions, most migrant service coordination teams create Spanish versions of their questionnaires and field-test them to solicit feedback on clarity, conciseness, and feasibility. The following

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[7]Fitzhugh Dodson, "Quotes to Inspire You," http://www.cybernation.com/victory/quotations/authors/quotes_dodson_fitzhugh.html/ (accessed July 30, 2002).

[8]Huang, *Health Problems.*

guidelines can prove useful in designing and administering a migrant service coordination questionnaire:

- Keep the questionnaire as short as possible.
- Provide clear-cut instructions.
- Use simple and precise language.
- Develop questions that address the academic status of elementary, middle school, high school, and postsecondary students.
- Pose questions related to social-support service needs, including clothing, counseling, health, and housing.
- Avoid open-ended questions.
- Honor respondents' native language and culture.[9]

Using these guidelines, a small team of educators from Highlands High School, working collaboratively with the federal program director and principal, designed an addendum to San Antonio ISD's identification and recruitment questionnaire. The addendum, a ten-item questionnaire, sought pertinent information about the academic and support services used by migrant students and about the types of additional services they needed. Responses to the questionnaire provided key information for enhancing migrant service coordination efforts at the campus level.

Group interviews can also be used to collect information about the needs of migrant students and their families. The group interview context helps create a comfortable, nonthreatening atmosphere for students to share their needs honestly and elaborate on the needs voiced by others. A series of predeveloped questions is used to elicit pertinent information. The group interview technique was successfully used in numerous school districts with groups of ten to fifteen students. For example, two migrant consultants using the group interview technique with junior and senior students at Uvalde High School were successful in identifying the differing academic and leadership needs of junior and senior students. One consultant asked ten framed questions as the other scribed responses. With this

[9]Meredith D. Gall, Walter R. Borg, and Joyce P. Gall, *Educational Research: An Introduction*, 6th ed. (White Plains, NY: Longman Publishers USA, 1996), 288.

practice, the interviewer could seize opportunities to enrich the quality of responses through probes, paraphrases, and follow-up questions and simultaneously remain focused on the pulse, the energy, the feelings of the group.

In conducting effective group interviews with migrant students and parents, the following suggestions can serve as a guide:

- Engage in small tasks and use conversational language prior to the interview to establish rapport.
- Invite participants to introduce themselves.
- Explain the purpose of the group interview.
- Pose questions using clear, concise, and relevant language.
- Ask questions that contain only a single idea.
- Avoid close-ended questions.
- Use simple paraphrases and probes when appropriate.
- Be sensitive to nonverbal information.
- Honor participants' native language and culture.[10]

Assessing, analyzing, and interpreting the unique needs of migrant students is critical to designing an effective model for migrant service coordination. Migrant service coordination teams that gather relevant data through questionnaires, group interviews, and even impromptu discussions are able to create strategic action plans for service delivery.

## Collaborating with Community Organizations and Service Providers

Partnerships can address problems that lie beyond any single agency's purview. We have observed that in districts with exceptional migrant service coordination, the extended community—churches, businesses, professional organizations, charitable organizations, family services, health clinics, and social service agencies—offers viable resources for meeting students' and families' needs. Also, many national and local organizations and federal programs provide resources and services to migrant students and families, ranging from

[10]Ibid., 294.

the Agrability National Training Program's assistance to migrants with physical and mental disabilities to the Cornell Migrant Program's health care service training and housing assistance project.[11]

Effective migrant service coordination teams develop strong working relationships with key community resource personnel—collaborative partnerships aimed at improving the quality and quantity of support services readily available to migrant students and families. Assertive federal program directors, migrant education directors, and migrant service coordination teams establish communication links with community organization contacts and professional personnel to share information about the MEP and the unique needs of migrant students and families, and to solicit support service assistance.

Collaboration often results in swift action. Many districts compile and use information provided in a community resource directory for migrant students and families. Incorporated into most directories are the names, addresses, telephone numbers, and brief descriptions of community organizations and service providers. Proactive districts ensure that the directory is updated annually. Directories are often published in Spanish. Many districts hold meetings to demonstrate how to use the directory effectively before disseminating it to students and parents.

A scenario involving a family's migratory move illustrates the value of a community resource directory. While making their way from South Texas to Montana, a migrant family's pickup truck broke down in San Antonio, Texas. The father contacted the Migrant Education Service Center, Region XX for assistance. Using a directory that had been compiled collaboratively by several school districts and social service organizations in the San Antonio area, a migrant support

[11]Harriette Pipes McAdoo and Christina Vogel, "It Takes a Whole Village to Raise a Child," *Family Resource Coalition Report*, 12, no. 1 (1993): 14-15. Available online from the National Parent Information Network at http://npin.org/library/2001/n00597/n00597.html/ (accessed November 28, 2001); Atelia I. Melaville and Martin J. Black, *What It Takes: Restructuring Interagency Partnerships to Connect Children and Families with Comprehensive Services* (Washington, DC: Education and Human Services Consortium, 1991); and State University of New York at New Paltz, "Organizations Providing Resources and Services to Migrant Students" (New Paltz, NY: SUNY at New Paltz, Migrant Special Education Training Project, n.d.), http://www.newpaltz.edu/collaborative/mgorg.html/ (accessed September 25, 2003).

specialist was able to secure financial assistance for the family and locate an automotive shop owner who provided a substantial discount to needy families.

## Empowering the School and Civic Community

Migrant service coordination embraces the notions of community involvement, community support, and community advocacy. Recognizing the importance of informing the school and civic community about issues and topics related to migrant students and their families, many entities, such as the Eastern Stream Center on Resources and Training (ESCORT) and the Minnesota Education Resource Center, have designed training programs to educate community members.[12] Similarly, in creating a community-wide system of support, successful migrant service coordination teams often design and deliver interactive training to inform the community about the specific needs of migrant children and to inspire individuals within the community to advocate on behalf of migrant children.

**Professional development for educators.** Believing that educators who understand the migratory lifestyle and the prevailing culture and values of migrant families are in a better position to facilitate migrant students' learning, successful MEP districts design and deliver training to the entire school community.[13] At the school level, migrant service coordination training becomes an integral part of professional development. Program staff seize every opportunity to disseminate pertinent information regarding the mission of migrant education and the specific needs of migrant children enrolled in the district. Opportunities for professional development include scheduled staff development, faculty meetings, campus improvement planning sessions, department meetings, and team meetings. Proactive federal and migrant program directors make sure that the MEP is a component of long-term professional development.

Adult learning methodologies are embedded in professional de-

[12]SUNY at New Paltz, "Organizations Providing Resources"; and Minnesota Migrant Education Resource Center http://www.hamline.edu/graduate/centers/mmerc/index.html/ (accessed June 2, 2002).

[13]Nancy Feyl Chavkin, *Family Lives and Parental Involvement in Migrant Students' Education* (ERIC Digest) (Charleston WV: ERIC Clearinghouse on Rural Education and Small Schools, 1991) (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 335 174).

velopment activities, providing participants with opportunities to (1) discuss the MEP's relevance to the community; (2) connect their experiences to some aspect of migrant education; (3) view key points on video clips, graphic organizers, or other visual materials; (4) hear personal anecdotes and stories; and (5) share insights and personal responsibilities.

The power of a well-planned migrant service coordination training was demonstrated by a districtwide MEP awareness session in Uvalde Consolidated ISD. Dedicated to providing quality services to migrant students, the migrant program director assembled a coordination team to design and deliver hands-on training to all administrators, counselors, teachers, and paraprofessionals at the beginning of the year. In addition to building awareness, the training generated enthusiasm and inspiration for the new school year. Participants' testimonials affirmed the usefulness of districtwide training on the MEP. After the training, several participants informed the presenters that they had no idea about the hardships experienced by migrant students. Moved by the presentation, many participants left with a renewed commitment to provide quality educational and support services to migrant students.

**Developing community awareness.** Recognizing the need to develop community awareness and enlist community commitment for the MEP, federal and migrant directors often created opportunities for migrant service coordination teams to deliver presentations to social service organizations, civic clubs, and parent groups. One good example of community outreach began with a long-range action plan crafted by a multidistrict team that focused on improved identification and recruitment of migrant students. With building community-wide acceptance and support of the migrant program as its goal, the team decided to explore all avenues to educate different segments of the community. Among the most innovative strategies was local media coverage. The migrant coordinator at Education Service Center, Region XX, in collaboration with the migrant service coordinator and the federal program director from South San Antonio ISD, assertively initiated contact with a local TV personality. Their efforts resulted in a 30-minute interview on local television that drew community-wide attention to the hardships faced by migrant families and the special needs of migrant students in south Texas. Many meaningful connections between migrant families and local service providers in the community resulted from the broadcast.

Many organizations have developed products to assist districts in providing quality professional development to the school and civic communities. Education Service Center, Region XX, produced a videotape highlighting the seven areas of focus required of all migrant education programs in Texas. Similarly, Education Service Center, Region I, collaborated with a statewide committee to design a migrant service coordination manual. These are the sorts of efforts needed to keep the school and civic communities focused on the needs of migrant students.[14]

## Organizing Self-Advocacy Teams

Many school districts encourage migrant students to take a proactive role in addressing their own academic and support service needs. As migrant director of Eagle Pass ISD, Enrique Montalvo, once stated, "We want our migrant students and their parents to have the knowledge and skills to address their own needs and to help other migrant students address their unique needs."

Acknowledging that "migrant families have strengths of resiliency, resourcefulness, and responsiveness that educators need to recognize, make use of, and reinforce,"[15] many school districts have added a self-advocacy component to their model of migrant service coordination. The self-advocacy component has focused on building the capacity and confidence of migrant students and families to voice and address their own needs.

Through needs assessment, many districts have discovered that an information gap often separates migrant students and parents from nonmigrant students and parents. Because they possess a firm understanding of the educational system, many nonmigrant students and parents know how to use the system to address their needs. This fact was all too evident at one parent awareness session on literacy. After the session, a nonmigrant parent approached the presenter, a kindergarten teacher, to request informa-

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[14] *Harvest of Hope*, prod. and dir. Education Service Center-Region XX, 13 min., Texas Education Agency/Education Service Center-Region XX, 1999, videocassette; and Texas Migrant Interstate Program, *Migrant Parent's Resource Guide to Understanding the Educational System* (Pharr, TX: Texas Migrant Interstate Program, 1997).

[15] Chavkin, *Family Lives.*

tion regarding her daughter's performance on the Texas Primary Reading Inventory. Later, a migrant service coordinator learned that another migrant parent attending the same session also had deep concerns about her daughter's progress but had asked no questions. Often migrant parents do not advocate on behalf of their children because they lack information or confidence.

In their efforts to close the information gap and to develop the capacity of migrant students and their families for self-advocacy, many school districts collaborate to design empowerment training programs. Although formats differ, most training covers topics related to achieving success in school while simultaneously building the capacity of migrant students and parents to organize as self-advocacy teams. Literacy development, statewide assessments, bilingual education, early childhood education, gifted and talented programs, special education, 504 (the school's obligation to meet the individual educational needs of students with disabilities), registration, and withdrawal are common topics covered with elementary parents. Useful topics for discussion with secondary migrant students and their parents include English as a second language, special education, 504, graduation programs, graduation requirements, state assessments, gifted and talented programs, advanced placement programs, college admissions requirements, financial aid, and many others.

The results of three empowerment-training models illustrate the strength of organizing self-advocacy teams:

**1. Parent trainer-of-trainers model.** To develop parent understanding of the registration and withdrawal processes and their impact on credit accrual, staff from five school districts worked with educational specialists to design a parent trainer-of-trainer session. Migrant program directors and parents serving on Parent Advisory Councils attended the workshop. Through discussion and role-play, the parent participants developed critical knowledge and skills. The enhancement of parents' communication, facilitation, and presentation skills was necessary to build confidence in teaching other migrant parents about the registration and withdrawal processes. Workshop evaluations indicated that parent trainers did indeed feel more confident in their abilities to immediately turn around the training. Formative assessments revealed that the parent trainer-of-trainer session was an effective tool in increasing migrant parents' understanding of the registration and withdrawal process.

**2. Student advocacy model.** A second empowerment-training model, the student advocacy model, involved developing the capacity of migrant secondary students to design and deliver needs-based training to their peers and parents. In preparation for the training, students participated in a leadership academy where they engaged in activities aimed at enhancing their own problem-solving and communication skills, knowledge about the educational system, and understanding of interactive processes for engagement. Having participated in the leadership academy, students from C. C. Winn High School in Eagle Pass ISD used their newly acquired knowledge and skills to collaboratively author a user-friendly manual highlighting the critical components of the educational system. The educational manual became a powerful resource for students and parents.

**3. Basic training model.** In a third model, the basic training model, migrant service coordination team members trained migrant students and parents. A highly successful annual training coordinated by the federal program director of Carrizo Springs Consolidated ISD is an example of the strength of the basic training model. Approximately a hundred migrant parents attend the annual training to learn new information about the school system. The parents have repeatedly indicated that the training develops their knowledge and understanding of the school system in a way that empowers them to informally share new information with other migrant parents in their community.

The self-advocacy component of migrant service coordination focuses on empowerment and on helping migrants become lifelong learners and teachers. By empowering migrant students and parents with knowledge and skills to function as self-advocates, they henceforth become able to open many doors that seemed closed in the past.

## Navigating Via Reflective Evaluation Processes

Striving for continuous improvement, effective districts periodically examine their migrant service coordination practices to identify strengths and weaknesses. Through reflection—a process of stepping back, analyzing, and evaluating the effectiveness of activities inherent in each practice—the federal program director, the migrant director, and the migrant service coordination team are able to ask specific questions aimed at identifying opportunities for growth.

Employing purposeful reflective evaluation processes leads to enhanced staff development opportunities for the school districts in the following example. At a regularly scheduled meeting, a migrant service coordination team consisting of school district personnel and educational specialists reflects on the effectiveness of migrant early childhood staff development sessions held during the course of the school year. For example, discussion stemming from a question about improvement led to the development of a skeletal plan for integrating family literacy into all staff development. The following year, the plan achieved remarkable results as parents, teachers, administrators, and paraprofessionals from Head Start, Even Start, and adult education programs implemented key practices introduced at a multiagency staff development series.

In the effective districts, reflection repeatedly led to program improvements. Most districts relied on questions similar to the ones delineated below to engage teams in purposeful reflection:

- Which activities were successful?
- Does the success of these activities hold implications for other migrant service coordination objectives?
- How can we build on the success of these activities?
- Which activities did not fulfill their expectations?
- How can these activities be modified?
- Are there any additional activities that need to be incorporated as part of the migrant service coordination efforts?
- Were there any surprises?
- What lessons have we learned?
- What insights emerged?
- What have we learned about sustaining migrant service coordination efforts?
- Have any new or emerging targets surfaced as a result of the activities implemented?

Using the reflection process to determine the effectiveness of ongoing activities is integral to continuous improvement in the quality of migrant service coordination.

## Conclusion

The ultimate goal of migrant service coordination is to ensure that the unique academic and support service needs of migrant students residing throughout the United States are met in an efficient and effective manner. The success of migrant students everywhere can be enhanced through migrant service coordination. Advocates for migrant students continuously promote practices to increase the levels of support that school systems and community organizations extend to migrant students.

An analysis of effective migrant service coordination initiatives revealed the integration of six practices: recruitment of a migrant service coordination team, needs assessment, collaboration with community organizations, community empowerment, self-advocacy teams, and reflective practices. Easily adaptable, these practices provide a basic framework for school districts ardently committed to creating an effective model for migrant service coordination.

CHAPTER 6

# *Casa de la Esperanza:* A Case Study of Service Coordination at Work in Colorado

BY MARÍA E. FRÁNQUIZ AND CARLOTA LOYA HERNÁNDEZ

> I was very, very nervous my first day at school. I took all my classes in Spanish, except for my class with my ESL [English as a Second Language] teacher. When I finished the first half of the year, I passed to taking my classes in English. . . . Even though I think English is important and I need to dominate it before I can succeed, many people here in the United States forget their Spanish and know only English. They lose their roots. . . . I think that's wrong because we need to remember who we are and where we come from and be proud of our culture. —Mari Carmen López, *Voices from the Fields*

There continues to be little agreement on the best ways to help migrant students like Mari Carmen learn English, and gain the other knowledge they need to succeed in the United States, without losing their native languages and cultures. Yet, even in the midst of the many differences of opinion, it remains important that migrant educational settings in or outside of schools be caring, respectful places.[1] Re-

[1]Geneva Gay, "Preparing for Culturally Responsive Teaching," *Journal of Teacher Education* 53, no. 2 (March/April 2002): 106-16.

searchers have found that treating students' lives with *respeto* makes teaching more meaningful and easier to understand, increasing the potential for academic achievement.[2]

Quality of life also affects student achievement. Migrant students whose families struggle to make a living or find affordable housing face great challenges in the classroom. In recognition of their special needs, federally funded migrant education and housing assistance programs target these students, who increasingly work alongside their parents in our nation's fields.

## Introduction of Our Collaboration

This chapter begins with a brief history of migrants in Colorado, their struggle to construct a permanent farmworker housing facility, and the personal histories of the authors and their collaboration to provide culturally responsive projects that address migrant students' social and academic needs. Finally, the chapter describes how the talented students at *Casa de la Esperanza* (House of Hope) and the University of Colorado School of Education combined forces to produce culturally responsive after-school education projects.

## Historical Background

In the late 1800s and early 1900s, the cultivation of sugar beets dominated farming in the South Platte Valley of Colorado, and the demand for farmworkers grew to exceed the local labor pool. The Great Western Sugar Company taught farmers the latest techniques, contracted with them to grow a specified number of acres within designated factory districts, and employed agents to recruit field laborers, particularly

[2]Guadalupe Valdés, *Con Respeto—Bridging the Distances Between Culturally Diverse Families and Schools: An Ethnographic Portrait* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996); María Fránquiz, "It's about YOUth!: Chicano High School Students Revisioning Their Academic Identity," in *The Best for Our Children: Critical Perspectives on Literacy for Latino Students,* ed. María de la Luz Reyes and John J. Halcón (New York: Teachers College Press, 2001), 213-28; Geneva Gay, *Culturally Responsive Teaching: Theory, Research, and Practice* (New York: Teachers College Press, 2000); Katherine H. Au and Alice J. Kawakami, "Cultural Congruence in Instruction," in *Preparing Teachers for Cultural Diversity,* ed. Joyce E. King, Etta R. Hollins, and Warren C. Hayman (New York: Teachers College Press, 1997); and Gloria Ladson-Billings, "Toward a Theory of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy," *American Educational Research Journal* 32, no. 3 (fall 1995): 465-91.

German-speaking Russians from Nebraska; Japanese *solos,* or single men; and a large number of Spanish-speaking Americans.

During the 1910s, the violent Mexican revolution drove Mexicans to the rumored prosperity of Colorado's sugar beet industry. Over time, Mexican migrant families provided relatively stable labor, and the Great Western Sugar Company grew to prefer employing them over the other groups.[3]

During most of the twentieth century, migrant families lived in substandard housing provided by the beet farmers. Beginning in the 1990s, the U.S. Department of Labor stepped up enforcement of migrant housing standards, a move that had unintended outcomes. Migrant housing owners were charged $1,000 for each violation of the standards (e.g., unsafe drinking water, torn window screens, non-working toilets). The fines prompted farmers to close or destroy their labor camps, and migrant families were forced to double- and triple-up in private housing.[4] A 1992 editorial in a local Colorado newspaper confirmed the importance of migrants' work in Colorado and highlighted changes affecting their living conditions: "Longmont's agricultural economy historically has been dependent on the migrant worker. And with the demise of several family farms in Boulder County, which previously had housed workers, the needs of migrants became acute."[5] The article emphasized that housing for migrant men, women, and children was a long-standing and now critical problem. The crisis alarmed local citizens and sparked a debate about the need for adequate migrant family housing.

## A Controversial Housing Project

The review of a preliminary development and site plan for a 32-unit apartment complex for migrant families stirred great controversy. However, controversy was not new to Longmont, a town where for decades, public places had displayed racist signs: "No dogs or

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[3]José Aguayo, "Los Betabeleros (The Beetworkers)," in *La Gente: Hispano History and Life in Colorado,* ed. Vincent C. de Baca (Denver: Colorado Historical Society, 1998), 105-20.

[4]Patrick Armijo, "Federal Fines Fuel Migrant Home Dearth," *Longmont Daily Times Call,* 5 January 1991, C1.

[5]"Editorial," *Daily Times Call,* 14 November 1992, 4A.

Mexicans allowed" and "We cater to the white trade only."[6]

Among the arguments against the migrant housing project were "migrant homes would detract from property values, boost the crime rate, and add to traffic problems." Other neighbors worried that the migrants would not fit in and would negatively affect local schools and the community: "Nearly all of its tenants will be transients, who won't care if their rooms or the nearby grounds are kept up." A resident of a mobile home park, in an openly racist letter, wrote "In fact, when more than two are together, they will sexually harass you."[7]

Hearings were held to receive public input on the development of the five-acre site. Housing authority representatives argued that migrants had always contributed to the local economy and required better housing for their families. State and federal funds would pay for the $1.8 million facility, and tenants would pay rent based on a sliding fee scale that approximated a third of the family income. Plans also included a day-care center and an on-site manager employed by the housing authority to address resident and neighbor concerns.

Despite fervent community opposition, the city council unanimously approved the development plans for a resident housing facility for migrant families. The not-in-my-backyard posture of neighbors was organized into an appeal. After two years of negotiations, grant applications, public hearings, and scrutiny by state and federal agencies, a groundbreaking was held for *Casa de la Esperanza* in November 1992.[8]

*Casa* opened with fanfare the following year on September 16, the day that marks the independence of Mexico. Among speakers for the ribbon-cutting gala were a congressman, two county commissioners, the mayor, a councilman, and a Mexican poet who said, "September 16 is a great day for all people who love freedom."[9] The first residents moved into *Casa* before the end of the year.

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[6]Aguayo, "Los Betabeleros"; and Longmont Hispanic Study, *We, Too, Came to Stay: A History of the Longmont Hispanic Community* (Longmont, CO: Longmont Hispanic Study and El Comité, 1988).

[7]Monte Whaley, "Project Stirs Up Fear," *Daily Times Call*, 17 November 1991, 1A, 3A.

[8]David Halbrook, "'House of Hope' to Be Reality: Ground-Breaking Friday for Migrant Housing Complex," *Daily Times Call*, 12 November 1992, 2A.

[9]Gabrielle Johnston, "It Fits, It's Needed, It Belongs," *Daily Times Call*, 17 September 1993, A3.

## A Young and Determined Coordinator of Education Services

In response to public concerns about the impact of migrant residents on the local schools and streets, the Boulder County Housing Authority hired an on-site manager for *Casa de la Esperanza*. They also hired a part-time coordinator of educational services, Carlota Loya Hernández. She ventured from the city of Boulder, where she had attended college and had worked as a paraprofessional in a middle school. Carlota compares the trip from Boulder to Longmont to crossing the borderlands between El Paso and Ciudad Juarez, Mexico; both were so close in miles but so far apart in culture. She embraced the challenges of the job because she, too, had worked the fields along with her farm-laboring parents.

Carlota was born in a *ranchito* in Chihuahua, Mexico, and emigrated to Center, Colorado. She was the eldest of seven children. Her family of nine all worked in the lettuce fields and the potato industry. The end of the summer season was always sad because her coworkers and friends would leave Center and return to their homes in Arizona, New Mexico, or Texas. Nonetheless, she loved school and immersed herself in studies, fully aware she would see her friends again the next summer.

While summers were bountiful with fresh fruits and vegetables, winters in Colorado were lean. In spite of her tenacity, Carlota remembers many winter months of feeling weak and unable to concentrate on schoolwork. These were times when the scarcity of food affected her school performance. She also remembers a Chicano boy harassing her, calling her "wetback," and saying she "smelled." In spite of the taunting, Carlota was determined to stay in school because she knew education was her ticket out of poverty. She graduated with a 3.87 GPA and was chosen Spud Bowl Queen, an honor that provided her with a one-year scholarship at Adams State College, 25 miles from her home in Center. Carlota completed requirements for her BA degree at the University of Northern Colorado in May 2003.

Carlota's childhood experiences in a farm-laboring family give her particular insight into how the children at *Casa de la Esperanza* feel. This background also helps her connect with migrant parents because she understands both their economic frustrations and their dreams for their children. Teachers, neighbors, and university students all realize that Carlota has an insider perspective and knows first-hand about the

distinct challenges migrant students face in adapting to new schools, new teachers, new classmates, and a new language.

With a donation from the Boulder County Board of Commissioners, the first after-school youth program at *Casa de la Esperanza* was implemented in summer 1994. Carlota recalled: "Here we can help the children with their homework, but also in building confidence and exposing them to the world and what it offers. Not many schools offer this because they're not bilingual." Carlotta disagreed with the school district, which claimed it was doing "a good job in trying to meet the needs of every student." Her central concern was that expectations were too low for migrant students. To make up for the limited migrant services in local public schools, the after-school program aimed to develop "confidence in who [migrant students] are and in their nationality, as well as helping them academically."[10]

From the earliest days of the after-school program, Carlota has advertised for volunteers to tutor in reading, science, math, karate, tae kwon do, and *folklorico* dance. Carlota provides direct services to all *Casa* residents, not just students, by coordinating activities; recruiting volunteers; and collaborating with local agencies, youth programs, churches, the Mexican consulate in Denver, and the University of Colorado in Boulder.

In 1995, María Fránquiz became involved in Carlota's vision for better social and academic lives for the migrant students at *Casa*. As a military brat from Puerto Rico, María had experienced much mobility in her youth. Her native language was not seen as a resource by teachers in North Carolina, Texas, California, or Alaska, but she worked hard to overcome the linguistic, cultural, and economic barriers that marked her as different. In college, she had the distinct privilege of working with César Chávez and learned about the benefits of mentoring and coalition building to improve the social conditions of migrant children and their families. María's activist agenda for educators and Carlota's efforts to coordinate programs for migrant youth were an ideal match.

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[10]Jenny McLoughlin, "Program Helps Migrant Labor Children to Cross a Bridge to Understanding," *Daily Times Call*, 12 February 1999, C1-C2.

## Are Short-Term Mentors Valuable in Service Coordination Efforts?

María Fránquiz was new to Colorado when Carlota began working at *Casa de la Esperanza*. As a teacher and researcher, María was interested in learning about living conditions for Latino/Chicano/Mexicano youth and their families in the county where she was employed as a university professor. In the fall of 1995, she was invited to attend meetings of It's About YOUth!, a group of at-risk middle and high school students. She became a member of the group's advisory board and began documenting weekly discussions of the youth and adult group facilitators. She arranged dialogues between the youth and her graduate students on ways to transform negative cultural stereotypes from both outside and inside the Mexican community. Through this work, María became acquainted with *Casa de la Esperanza* and sought to establish a collaborative relationship with Carlota and the migrant children.

As the education coordinator at *Casa* since 1995, Carlota has gone beyond her responsibilities for connecting families to needed health, occupational, recreational, and educational needs. She also strives to be a positive role model for the children at *Casa* and a strong mentor who inspires children to reach their highest educational goals. She does not try to do the work alone; rather, she connects children at *Casa* with as many ongoing mentoring relationships as possible. This is significant because quality mentoring improves the chances of low-income Mexican-origin students enrolling in an institution of higher education. For example, in a study of 50 Latino/Latina individuals who had attained advanced education degrees, Patricia Gándara found that mentors had helped many respondents overcome barriers to educational advancement.[11]

Carlota and María began meeting regularly in spring 1996 to create opportunities for *Casa* children to interact with undergraduate and graduate students from the School of Education at the University of Colorado. These interactions took various forms. University mentors provided one-on-one tutoring and led children in search-and-evaluation activities on the Internet, reading and discussion of children's literature, leadership classes, art projects, trips to the university, and

[11]Patricia Gándara, *Over the Ivy Walls: The Educational Mobility of Low-Income Chicanos* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995).

preparation classes for taking standardized tests such as the ACT. An elementary student stated eloquently why the *Casa* children were more comfortable with the University of Colorado mentors than with their classroom teachers: "I'm afraid to ask the teacher questions because then my classmates will think that I need help and then they can pick on me. . . . So I wait until lunch to ask for help, but then the teacher is always busy. I get a lot of help [at the *Casa* after-school program]."[12]

As part of a seminar on multicultural education, María required doctoral students to participate in a collaborative service-learning project with a diverse array of local community agencies, including *Casa*, Lutheran Refugee Services, Project YES (Youth Envisioning Social Change), It's About YOUth!, the Asian Outreach Project of Boulder County Mental Health Services, and the Family Learning Center. The directors of these agencies visited the university campus during the first two weeks of the semester to make a pitch for volunteers. The doctoral students divided into small groups (preferably two or three students) and selected an agency with which to work. Within the groups, each student picked a separate facet of the agency and coordinated their service work with the agency director. At the end of the semester, the students presented their findings to the class and wrote reports to be included in a community project notebook. Agency directors evaluated the individual and collective contributions of the doctoral students and were invited to attend student presentations on the final day of class.

## Fruits of Collaboration

The following time line indicates the community projects that the doctoral students completed with residents at *Casa*:

In 1996, doctoral students volunteered services to the *Casa* Youth Tobacco Education Project. Funded by the county and city, the project taught bilingual youth about the hazards of tobacco use. Weekly sessions in the community room included creating posters, watching videos, discussing tobacco-related issues, hearing presentations, learning questioning techniques, conducting interviews with peers and adults,

[12]McLoughlin, "Program Helps Migrant Labor Children," C2.

| 1996 | 1997 | 1998 | 1999 |
|---|---|---|---|
| Tobacco Prevention Survey & Production of booklet | Web page for *Casa* & Computer manual for lab | Library & Literacy Project | NABE conference presentation |
| ESL class | | Leadership class | Evaluation of youth programs |
| | | ESL class | |
| | | Outreach grant proposal | Calculator & computer literacy |
| | | | ESL class |

| 2000 | 2001 | 2002 |
|---|---|---|
| College preparation skills | Youth leadership class | Youth Photo Journal Project |
| | Field trip to university | |
| Outreach grant proposal | Mural for community room | |
| English creative writing class | | |

reading literature, writing and translating responses, and writing about the hazards of tobacco for a bilingual booklet on the topic. Carlota assigned the doctoral students the responsibility of implementing the tobacco education project. She liked their self-directedness and felt they had been great role models in the production of the bilingual booklet entitled *El Libro de los Jóvenes del Proyecto de la Comunidad La Casa de la Esperanza: "Diga NO al Tabaco."*

The project has had a lasting impact. Former *Casa* resident Miguel Mosqueda currently attends Metro State College of Denver but finds time to work with the younger generation at *Casa*—helping with homework, supervising the computer lab, and reading to students from the booklet he helped write: "It's a way of paying back the help I got while I was there."[13] Inspired by his own experience as a young

[13]Lauren Gullion, *Boulder County Housing Authority Newsletter* 5 (August 2001): 4.

teenager, Miguel is trying to make mentoring a tradition at *Casa*.

In 1997, the doctoral students created a Web page for *Casa* and wrote a kid-friendly computer manual that was succinct enough for second-language learners of English to understand. The Web page assisted families interested in applying for housing and enabled house residents to voice their stories, often in their native language.

The following year, a larger group of doctoral students (six) set several goals for *Casa*. One subset of students secured funds to buy reference materials in English and Spanish for the families at *Casa* and purchased sets of culturally relevant books for the school-age children, particularly those in the early grades. Another subset of students offered ESL classes. Although these classes were aimed at adults, many school-age children also attended. One student worked closely with Carlota to initiate a leadership class for middle and high school children. This class has been extremely valuable because it provides older students with college preparation skills such as expository and creative writing. For the most part, the leadership class has been sustained continuously since 1998 and no longer depends solely on volunteers from the University of Colorado.

In 1998 and 2000, doctoral students wrote successful outreach grants funded by the University of Colorado's Continuing Education Program. These grants benefitted the residents of *Casa de la Esperanza* directly. For example, the funding enabled the *Casa* youth, some parents, Carlota, her technology assistant, and the doctoral students to present a paper at the annual conference of the National Association of Bilingual Education in Denver in January 1999. The funds also allowed the doctoral students to host *Casa* students for a full day on the University of Colorado campus and purchase bilingual materials and software for the after-school youth program.

In 2001, the doctoral students made a mural for the community center, where classes, fund-raisers, celebrations, and other activities are held. The doctoral students were hesitant at first, as reflected in one student's journal:

> Yesterday was our first day with the Leadership group at *Casa*. It was a little strange—most of the kids only speak to each other in Spanish, and their English skills are mixed. As a non-Spanish speaker, I feel badly for not being able to understand or communicate in the language that these stu-

> dents obviously feel most comfortable with. The kids agreed to do the mural project, but enthusiasm wasn't high. Hopefully, the class will start to feel more ownership once things get rolling.[14]

Another doctoral student wrote,

> "I wasn't sure how much of the mural project is my idea and how much is the kids' actually wanting things—or Carlota? I'm not sure which is the real reason I'm here. . . . Anyway, I wanted to use my background in the arts."[15]

In spite of the uncertainty, university and *Casa* students embarked on a three-month journey that involved measuring, researching ideas, negotiating symbols, planning, sketching, drawing, mixing paints, and learning about one another. Late in the project, another doctoral student wrote the following:

> The other day they were sketching their images of crosses, roses, the Virgin of Guadalupe, thorns, words. . . . I told them to bring music in if they wanted. Their eyes turned to stars, and Olga brought several CDs. So for the next hour we listened to beautiful Mexican folk music and then the occasional Britney Spears tune. It was so interesting. They're in the middle of their own making . . . they're creating their own culture.[16]

Upon completion of the mural, one of the artists living at *Casa* said,

> *Durante el proceso que se tomó para hacer este mural, yo me sentí muy afortunada de hacer algo para esta comunidad que nos ayudaron tanto, nos ayudaron tanto. Entonces regresarle algo a la comunidad o a Casa Esperanza era para mí un honor porque yo nunca pensé que yo podía devolverle algo a ellos.* [During the making of the mural, I felt so fortunate in

[14]Anonymous student, "Community Project Notebook" (Boulder: University of Colorado, 2001).

[15]Ibid.

[16]Ibid.

being able to do something for the community that helped us so much, helped us so much. . . . In other words, to be able to return something to the community, *Casa Esperanza,* was an honor because I thought I would never be able to give something back to them.][17]

All the stakeholders—the mentors, *Casa* students, and authors of this chapter—shared a vision for the mural. Everyone accepted the premise that valuing cultural differences is possible only by acquiring *real knowledge* about a culture, knowledge that challenges one's own ways of seeing the world.[18] Most of the challenges emerged during discussions of what to include in the mural. These social, cultural, and academic exchanges were as beneficial to the doctoral students as to the young residents at *Casa,* demonstrating that mentoring is a two-way street.

## Conclusion

Service coordination and service learning suggest wonderful possibilities for teaching about culture in nontraditional settings while using traditional disciplines such as English, Spanish, or computer literacy and traditional skills such as writing and art. Although mainstream education may not address the needs of migrant students adequately, collaborative projects offer new opportunities for migrant youth to raise difficult issues. For example, one student eloquently stated, "The teachers, they are racist over there [local school], but [at *Casa*], I think we can recover something that we have lost."[19] This student incorporated the "recovering" in the mural, demonstrating an awareness of the fragile and fragmentary state of migrant culture while portraying a vision of a new world. The student later pointed to the

[17]Anonymous *Casa* student, interview by authors, May 2001.

[18]Diane M. Hoffman, "Culture and Self in Multicultural Education: Reflections on Discourse, Text, and Practice," *American Educational Research Journal* 33, no. 3 (fall 1996): 545-69.

[19]Anonymous *Casa* student, interview by authors, May 2001.

[20]Ibid.

mural and added, "I drew this symbol because it represents my life, my new life."[20]

One doctoral student noticed a form of this "new life" in the way *Casa* children greeted one another at the mural unveiling. They had a unique way of swiping and bumping their hands together, which meant "*Raza Unida,*" a Spanish translation for *e pluribus unum:* In many, we are one. Not coincidentally, these were the words chosen as the title for the mural.

Gerardo López has shown that Mexican migrant farmworkers support their children's education by modeling the value of hard work and pointing out that migrant work is not adequately respected or compensated.[21] Migrant children are encouraged to work harder in school so that their life choices are greater than those available to their parents. However, schools often perceive migrant families as uninvolved and uncaring about their children's education. Sometimes these pervasive attitudes erode efforts to improve the life choices of migrant youth. It is imperative to reeducate the education community about migrant students and their families—a transformation accomplished most effectively by *demonstrating* rather than *explaining* the importance of culturally relevant collaborative projects. The doctoral students at the University of Colorado and the migrant families at *Casa de la Esperanza* demonstrated to each other how collaborative effort does have positive impact and, in some cases, lifelong effects. Across years of collaboration, the culturally relevant projects completed at *Casa* were instrumental in reeducating all participants. The new understanding offers great promise or, in the words of one of *Casa's* young muralists, a "new life."

[21]Gerardo López, "The Value of Hard Work: Lessons on Parent Involvement from an (Im)migrant Household," *Harvard Educational Review* 71, no. 3 (fall 2001): 416-37.

# Part IV

## Early Childhood Education

CHAPTER 7

# An Integrated Approach: Even Start Family Literacy Model for Migrant Families

BY PATRICIA A. WARD AND
MARÍA E. FRÁNQUIZ

## Introduction

The complex multidimensional skills that enable an individual to read and write grow over the span of a person's life. Families can play a major role in the development of those skills, particularly through children's interactive language experiences in infancy, the quantity and quality of exposure to language in early childhood, and parents' attitudes toward formal or school-based literacy.[1]

The phenomenon of family literacy as an educational intervention is relatively new, dating to the 1970s, when researchers and practitioners began relating early literacy experiences to children's later

[1]Shirley B. Heath, *Ways with Words: Language, Life, and Work in Communities and Classrooms* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983); Catherine E. Snow, "Families as Social Contexts for Literacy Development," in *The Development of Literacy through Social Interactions: New Directions for Child Development*, ed. Colette Daiute (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1993); Guadalupe Valdés, *Con Respeto—Bridging the Distances Between Culturally Diverse Families and Schools: An Ethnographic Portrait* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996); and Norma González, *I Am My Language: Discourses of Women and Children in the Borderlands* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2001).

reading success. Researchers like Urie Bronfenbrenner identified the family and home environment as the most effective institution in a child's life for supporting enduring education outcomes.[2]

Latino migrant parents typically envision different outcomes for their children than do mainstream middle-class parents. As pointed out by various researchers, the cultural definition of *educación* for Puerto Rican and Mexican families is broader than its English language cognate. *Educación* connotes the development of all the family-related values that shape a child's character, including moral values, respect for self and others, discipline and good manners, and responsibility toward self and the community. Mainstream middle-class families, on the other hand, interpret education in terms of learning to read, reading to learn, acquiring academic literacies, and developing writing and mathematical problem-solving skills. Because of the fundamental differences in definitions, traditional education programs and institutions struggle to honor the integrity and role of the Latino family.[3]

Latino families' respect for and orientation toward others is a primary ingredient for being *bien educado.* The mainstream definition of *well educated* does not encompass interpersonal relationships, but the Even Start Family Literacy Program aims to bridge the gap between *educación* and education, particularly in terms of migrant families' goals for their children's literacy development. As Guadalupe Valdés suggests, family literacy efforts should consider the interplay of social inequalities, educational ideologies, educational structures, and interpersonal interactions. Rejecting these diverse influences predictably limits education outcomes for migrant children.[4]

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[2]Trevor H. Cairney, "Developing Partnerships with Families in Literacy Learning," in *Family Involvement in Literacy: Effective Partnerships in Education,* ed. Sheila Wolfendale and Keith Topping (London: Cassell, 1996); and Urie Bronfenbrenner, "Ecology of the Family as a Context for Human Development: Research Perspectives," *Developmental Psychology* 22, no. 6 (November 1986): 723-42.

[3]Nitza M. Hidalgo, *"I saw Puerto Rico once": A Review of the Literature on Puerto Rican Families and School Achievement in the United States,* report 12 (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University, 1992) (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 355 029); Sonia Nieto, *Affirming Diversity: The Sociopolitical Context of Multicultural Education,* 2d ed. (White Plains, NY: Longman, 1995); and Catherine E. Walsh, *Pedagogy and the Struggle for Voice: Issues of Language, Power, and Schooling for Puerto Ricans* (New York: Bergin & Garvey, 1991).

[4]Valdés, *Con Respeto.*

## Even Start Family Literacy Program

Even Start Family Literacy is a comprehensive approach that focuses on the family unit rather than on individual family members. It addresses language and literacy competence for children and adults through integrated educational activities. The basic premise is that adult basic education and literacy, parenting education, early childhood education, and parent and child "together time" constitute an integrated approach. The components build upon one another to support children's school success and enduring literacy outcomes. Practitioners communicate this integrated approach to migrant families, the majority of whom are of Mexican, Central American, Puerto Rican, or Haitian origin. Even Start takes advantage of migrant families' home resources, networks, and traditions, and recognizes children's *capacidad*, or capabilities.[5]

### Brief History of Even Start

The U.S. Department of Education's Even Start Family Literacy Program is the major provider of family literacy services for migrant families. This comprehensive, intensive, integrated, and collaborative program was first authorized in 1989 as Title 1, Part B, of the Elementary and Secondary School Act (ESEA) of 1965, as amended by the Hawkins-Stafford Elementary and Secondary School Improvement Amendments of 1988. In 1992, states assumed responsibility for administering most grants, but programs specifically for migrant families were supported through special set-aside funds and continued to be administered by the Office of Migrant Education. The Improving America's School Act of 1994 reauthorized Even Start for five years and strengthened provisions targeting services to families most in need. The Literacy Involves Families Together (LIFT) Act, approved in 2000, strengthened Even Start program accountability, expanded the ages at which children can be served, set standards for

[5]Patricia McKee and Nancy Rhett, "The Even Start Family Literacy Program," in *Family Literacy: Connections in Schools and Communities*, ed. Lesley M. Morrow (Newark, DE: International Reading Association, 1995); and Barbara H. Wasik and Suzannah Herrmann, "Family Literacy Programs: Overview," in "Synthesis of Research on Family Literacy Programs," ed. Barbara H. Wasik for the U.S. Department of Education, 2001. A forthcoming publication (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum, 2004) will include the revised chapters from this report.

programs based on scientific research, encouraged coordination with other federal programs, and provided funds for training and technical assistance to local program instructors.

On January 8, 2002, President George W. Bush signed into law the No Child Left Behind Act, which amended the ESEA and consolidated the discretionary Bilingual Education Program and the Emergency Immigrant Education Program into the new Title III State Formula Grant Program. As the latest incarnation of the ESEA, No Child Left Behind is expected to greatly expand the federal role in education. At a time of wide public concern about the state of education, the legislation sets in place requirements that reach into virtually every public school in the United States. For fiscal year 2002, Congress appropriated the largest dollar increase ever in federal education aid, including approximately $7 million for new Even Start awards. This should lead to an expansion of the 17 Even Start migrant projects currently operating in 15 states. Many more states likely will apply for funding to create new home, school, and center-based programs, as well as partnerships to address the needs of highly mobile families.

## Core Components of the Even Start Family Literacy Program

The William F. Goodling Even Start Family Literacy Act (ESEA Title I, Part B, Subpart 3) was designed specifically to address the effects of poverty and improve family literacy through the following services: early childhood education, adult basic education or English language instruction, and parenting education, which includes interactive literacy activities between parents and children. Projects may implement each component or collaborate with other agencies to provide some of the services. The Even Start program has the goals of (1) helping parents improve their English literacy or basic education skills, (2) helping parents become full partners in educating their children, and (3) assisting children in reaching their full potential as learners.

The Even Start Family Literacy Act delineates particular responsibilities for Migrant Education Even Start projects:

- identify, recruit, and ensure services to families most in need
- screen and prepare families for participation
- accommodate participants' work schedules

- design and implement strategies that ensure attendance and support success in achieving families' education goals
- operate year-round services
- provide high-quality intensive instruction
- incorporate preschool reading readiness activities
- promote continuity of family literacy to improve education outcomes
- train project staff in family literacy constructs
- provide adults and children with instruction grounded in scientifically based reading research
- ensure the majority of the academic staff is certified in the appropriate subject area
- conduct regular home-based services
- coordinate with services provided under Title I, Part A; Workplace Investment Act; Individuals with Disabilities Act; Adult Education and Literacy; Head Start; other local literacy councils; etc.
- conduct independent local evaluations

Many of these requirements pose challenges for organizations that serve migrant families, requiring project applicants to plan carefully in developing high-quality programs that provide intensive services no matter where migrant families may travel to live and work. In particular, many project applicants struggle to develop instructional strategies that build family literacy and reading skills in English as well as Spanish.

Service models can range from distance learning and computer-based instruction, to creative arts, to life-management skills. A project grantee can be a state education agency, school district, or faith-based or community-based organization. Often, the most challenging services to sustain systematically are instructional home visits scheduled around parents' work schedules. Home visits provide developmentally appropriate and culturally responsive early childhood education that builds early reading skills.

## Adult Literacy

Adult literacy plays a central role in Even Start and typically includes high-caliber instructional services that advance adult literacy skills through adult basic education (ABE), adult secondary education (ASE), English as a second language (ESL), and preparation for the General Educational Development High School Equivalency Degree (GED). The intent is to strengthen parents' literacy skills, develop parents' understanding of the skills and knowledge needed to assist their children's academic success in U.S. schools, and possibly improve a family's economic standing. The assumption is that conveying the education values of mainstream middle-class America will enhance the confidence of migrant parents to support their children's education. Practitioners must approach program participants with respect rather than a deficit-oriented perspective. The philosophy is that mobile families are capable of moving into a new world without completely giving up the old. This also means families should have a voice in determining which project component they need most.

In a recent study, most adult Even Start participants cited learning English as the primary reason for enrolling in the program. In another study, parents identified the following goals: upgrading reading and math skills, earning a GED or an alternative high school diploma, developing employment interview skills, exploring career options, and improving skills to help children with homework.[6]

Learning new skills, whether basic education or English as a second language, requires a commitment to extensive hours in class and study time out of class. Evidence suggests that 80 to 100 hours of instruction are needed to gain one grade level on tests of adult skills.[7] Due to irregular class attendance and disrupted enrollment patterns, most adults are unable to obtain enough instruction in a year to achieve measurably. Disruptive factors for migrant adults include time constraints related to family, work, and household responsibilities; frequent and often unplanned moves; unreliable transportation; poor health; and inadequate resources for child care.

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[6]Judith Alamprese, "Understanding Adult Literacy in the Context of Family Literacy," in "Synthesis of Research"; and Meta W. Potts and Susan Paull, "A Comprehensive Approach to Family-Focused Services," in *Family Literacy*.

[7]Alamprese, "Understanding Adult Literacy."

One pervasive element in adult literacy that merits serious consideration is the language of instruction. Between 90 and 100 percent of the enrollees in migrant family literacy programs speak languages other than English. Adult education programs need to align program objectives with the goals of adult learners, who may be improving their conversational and functional English skills for various reasons, such as communicating with coworkers, handling health-care issues, or helping their children with homework. Adult learners' goals may also include improving reading comprehension and writing skills in their native language as well as English. To meet this goal, it may be necessary for practitioners to consider team-teaching approaches with monolingual and bilingual instructors. The range of learners' goals can be challenging because most adults in Even Start programs have limited formal education.

## Parenting Education

The parenting education component is designed to help strengthen support of young children's literacy development and early success in U.S. schools through parenting classes, parent support groups, and home-based instruction.[8] Activities share information with parents about language development, emergent literacy strategies, and literacy-rich home environments, and provide hands-on practice sessions to apply information. Native language has been described as "the language of family, of food, of music, of ritual—in short, of identity."[9] Consequently, parenting education in English must not be encoded with negative images, connotations, or direct messages that denigrate the language and literacy practices of the home.

Even Start literacy programs help parents convey to their children the pleasure of reading. Parents learn about mainstream education processes, such as the teaching sequence of emergent reading and writing skills. Parents also learn how mainstream parents share culturally laden experiences with their children, including pretend play, nursery rhymes, storybooks, songs, library visits, trips, and letter activities. This conveys the importance of teaching children culturally

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[8]Doug Powell, "Parenting Education in Family Literacy Programs," in "Synthesis of Research."

[9]González, *I Am My Language*, 50.

relevant oral literacy practices, such as *consejos*, proverbs, and prayers. In other words, enrichment activities found in mainstream homes are no more or less valuable than cultural narratives in Latino households. Research affirms that *consejos* used by migrant parents to instill morals, beliefs, and values often encourage children to do well in school and listen to teachers.[10]

Parents discover the importance of giving their children books to own and making time for reading and storytelling. Parents also learn teaching practices, such as structuring talk to help children display information or expand utterances. These strategies can promote subtractive or additive change to family interactions. Change in child-rearing practices is at the heart of Even Start Parenting Education. However, such change can produce positive or negative results, affirm or disaffirm the cultural values of mobile working-class parents, or create emotional equilibrium or disequilibrium in children's lives. This delicate balance rests in the hands of the practitioner, who can either respect or attack the native culture, language, and literacy practices present in every family.

One practitioner suggests the following to parents:

> Engage the children around you in conversation. For example, "Tell me about the house you drew." Help children expand their vocabularies. One easy way to do this is by talking about things you see during everyday activities. For example, "Look at all the vegetables at the store this morning. Let's see how many we can name."[11]

In this way, parents are helped to understand the mainstream discourse style that migrant children must master to succeed in school. The question is whether family practice of such discourse preferences across years of schooling will alter family relations negatively.

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[10]Concha Delgado-Gaitán, *Literacy for Empowerment: The Role of Parents in Children's Education* (New York: Falmer, 1990); Valdés, *Con Respeto*; and Peter Hannon, "School Is Too Late: Preschool Work with Parents," in *Family Involvement in Literacy*.

[11]*The Achiever*, No Child Left Behind Newsletter, 20 May 2002, http://www.nclb.gov/Newsletter/20020520.html/ (accessed March 24, 2003).

## Early Childhood Education

Even Start provides developmentally appropriate educational activities to improve the language and emergent literacy skills of children from birth through age eight. Effective curricula focus on the strengths and interests of children; recognize children as contributors to their own development; and involve children in active learning that includes manipulation of materials, exploration, and discovery.

The goal of the early childhood component is to prepare migrant children for successful school entry and school achievement in the United States. Research indicates that preschool services can promote language development, emergent literacy, and later school success. Preschool children are better served by approaches that incorporate their native language, which, for most migrants, is Spanish. However, native language instruction has been curtailed in states that have passed laws such as Proposition 227 in California, Proposition 203 in Arizona, and Question 2 in Massachusetts. In light of these restrictive laws, the Even Start early childhood component has taken on added importance for migrant families.[12]

Learning the intricacies of a language requires children to be exposed to that language. As the first teachers, parents talk with children in interactive, conversational ways that convey the uses of language, as well as vocabulary, sentence structure, and grammar. The quality of adult-child verbal exchanges in the home language relates directly to positive school-related outcomes. Parents who elicit daily conversations with their children contribute positively to language outcomes, including earlier talk and more talk.[13]

The emergence of literacy strategies is another important concern of Even Start early childhood education. This developmental approach views literacy as a continuum that proceeds from an infant's first experiences with print to conventional forms of reading and writing.[14] Emergent literacy encompasses all the building blocks of

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[12]Wasik and Herrmann, "Family Literacy Programs"; and Catherine E. Snow, M. Susan Burns, and Peg Griffin, eds., *Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children* (Washington, DC: National Academy Press, 1998) (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 416 465).

[13]Snow, "Families as Social Contexts."

[14]Christopher J. Lonigan and Grover J. Whitehurst, "Getting Ready to Read: Emergent Literacy and Family Literacy," in "Synthesis of Research."

conventional reading, such as corresponding letters and sounds, recognizing word boundaries, using appropriate vocabulary in context, associating print with visual representation, etc. The homes of successful early readers often provide many contexts for using literacy, such as prayer, listening to stories, paraphrasing of stories, and communicating on paper. In literacy-rich homes, parents integrate listening, speaking, reading, and writing into many aspects of family life. They model literate strategies in functional and pleasurable activities and make literacy materials available to their children. These principles guide Even Start practitioners in planning for parent education. To ensure that children have optimal opportunities to develop emergent literacy skills with their parents, Even Start Family Literacy projects provide structured time for parents and children to spend together.

## Parent and Child Together Time

An essential part of the Even Start family literacy model is a regularly scheduled time when parents and children play together under the supervision of a staff member. Parent and Child Together Time offers parents an opportunity to practice skills acquired in the parenting education component: Parents observe their children, listen to and talk with them, and practice proven strategies to support literacy and language development. Informal interactive activities teach parents how to support their children's literacy development in relaxing and fun ways. Staff members study these interactions, which reveal general information regarding parents' knowledge about children, beliefs about parenting, and opinions about the literacy strategies valued by U.S. schools.[15]

Parents' continued support promotes children's reading development even when formal schooling begins. To succeed as partners in the education of their children, parents need to receive specific information about the school's expectations for reading development and how they can support their children. Opportunities for parents and teachers to exchange ideas help parents understand the school's approach to reading and help teachers understand how families use

[15]R. Hancock and S. Gale. *The 1991 PACT Survey.* London: PACT, 1992.

literacy at home and in their community. Parents are more likely to be involved in their children's schooling if they understand their role, feel confident in helping their children succeed, and believe their involvement at home and in school is valued.[16]

The core components of Even Start Family Literacy programs align with a strengths-oriented approach to family literacy. After all, the most important purpose for family literacy programs is to give families greater adaptive control over their lives and their futures. This requires service providers to respect the culture, language, and competencies within families. Programs should develop curricular material related to families' lives, goals, priorities, and beliefs. Program developers also should be sensitive to the ways parents and children share literacy in their daily routines. Storytelling, for example, is an important part of Latino culture and can be used to develop language skills and teach organization of stories.[17]

## Integration of Services: Building Working Partnerships

Even Start programs are required to form partnerships and collaborative agreements with existing education, social service, community, and/or business groups in the delivery of services. The intent is to avoid duplication of services, reduce costs, share expertise, and create a range of services that is greater than the sum of its parts.[18] The challenge to partners and collaborators is to meld their diverse purposes, approaches, and issues into a seamless program that offers quality literacy education to enrolled families. To succeed, staff from partner agencies must become a team, meet regularly, discuss their observations and ideas, and merge them into integrated lessons.

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[16]Ibid.; Joyce L. Epstein, *Effects on Parents of Teacher Practices of Parent Involvement*, report 346 (Baltimore: John Hopkins University, 1983) (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 237 500); and Concha Delgado-Gaitán, "Involving Parents in the Schools: A Process of Empowerment," *American Journal of Education* 100, no. 1 (November 1991): 20-46.

[17]Lesley M. Morrow, ed., *Family Literacy: Connections in Schools and Communities* (Newark, DE: International Reading Association, 1995) (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 383 995); and Alma F. Ada, "The Pajaro Valley Experience: Working with Spanish-Speaking Parents to Develop Children's Reading and Writing Skills in the Home Through the Use of Children's Literature," in *Minority Education: From Shame to Struggle*, ed. Tove Skutnabb-Kangas and Jim Cummins (Philadelphia: Multilingual Matters, 1988).

[18]McKee and Rhett, "Even Start Family Literacy Program."

## Beginning the Process

Building working partnerships among agencies with different histories, expertise, and purposes takes time, trust, and respect. The Interstate Migrant Education Council has proposed a multistep process to establish working relationships:

1. Identify a potential partner.
2. Obtain a sense of compatibility. Are potential partners engaged in compatible kinds of work?
3. Determine mutual interests and potential risks for partners.
4. Validate the partner information and identify partner tasks and costs.
5. Negotiate the terms of the partnership and develop a written agreement.
6. Incorporate partners in the daily processes.
7. Evaluate the partnership. Evaluation should be ongoing and may direct the partners back to a previous step.[19]

Migrant Education Even Start programs are very complex and require partnerships among diverse agencies to integrate a multitude of educational services. As a result, staff must be carefully selected, monitored, and affirmed. Developing a comprehensive plan for continuous staff development and support is of immense importance. The plan should assist staff in working with professionals from different fields to reach culturally responsive goals regarding the course of second-language instruction. Staff must be knowledgeable of and experienced in each program component to communicate the principles and concepts to children and parents.

Technology also can be used among collaborative partners to help migrant families meet their literacy goals. Service providers can encourage families to participate in learning by using the Internet. Some studies point to the effectiveness of software in teaching second-language speech and phonological sensitivity skills to children. A variety of technology projects have been piloted with migrant

[19]Interstate Migrant Education Council, *Technology: Anytime, Anyplace, Any Pace Learning* (Washington, DC: Interstate Migrant Education Council, 2001).

families in Alaska, California, Kentucky, Colorado, Florida, Illinois, Oregon, and other states. The potential benefits of computers include greater communication and employment possibilities, increased access to information that helps children complete homework assignments, and enhanced program coordination and effectiveness.[20]

## Home-Based Delivery Strategies

Migrant family literacy projects employ at least two service delivery strategies: center based and home based. While some evidence points to better outcomes in center-based projects, Even Start projects are required to provide some integrated instructional services in the families' homes. Furthermore, home visit strategies may be the best or only way to serve some families in geographically isolated locations or where emotional, social, or physical fragility is a concern.[21]

Home visits have many positive attributes for both the family and family educator. Home visits enable family educators to gain important insights into the following aspects of family life:

- quality of the relationship among family members
- items in the home that contribute to the development of emergent literacy and that can serve as a base for additional literacy experiences
- physical space available to the family
- organizational and family management skills of the parents
- any physical or emotional distractions inherent in the home environment

Such insights make it possible for the family educator to present practical lessons that parents can carry out within the context of their unique living situation.

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[20]John Strucker, Catherine E. Snow, and Barbara A. Pan, "Family Literacy for ESOL Families: Challenges and Design Principles," in "Synthesis of Research"; and Barbara W. Wise and others, "Interactive Computer Support for Improving Phonological Skills," in *Word Recognition in Beginning Literacy,* ed. Jamie L. Metsala and Linnea C. Ehri (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum, 1998).

[21]Interstate Migrant Education Council, *Proceedings Report: Seminar on Family Literacy for Migrant Families* (Washington, DC: Interstate Migrant Education Council, 2000); and McKee and Rhett, "Even Start Family Literacy Program."

In the home-based model, educators teach families one at a time, individualizing literacy lessons in culturally meaningful ways. This approach motivates migrant parents who may have had negative experiences in prior learning situations. Of equal importance, the home-visit model can help parents understand the link between preschool literacy activities and later reading proficiency. While learning how home life can have a positive impact on their children's literacy development, parents also develop skills to help build partnerships with their children's teachers.[22]

Home visits should be more than an add-on to center-based activities, a drop-off for books or child development information, or a social visit. Effective home visits have (1) clear and realistic objectives, (2) a planned design for delivery of services, (3) well-trained and supervised family educators, and (4) systematic evaluations. Each visit must include a well-developed comprehensive lesson comprising all four core components in fully integrated lesson activities.

The Geneseo Migrant Center developed a particularly powerful series of lessons for its Mobile Migrant and Promesa Even Start projects. Each lesson is based on a children's book and includes early childhood, adult, and parenting education activities. The books selected are appropriate to children's developmental levels, relevant to migrant families, and available in Spanish and English. Lessons correlate to New York state learning standards and early childhood assessment tools. Each lesson includes helpful hints to family educators regarding the skills addressed by the language/literacy theme. Given the importance of parent support and involvement, such lessons provide an effective way to engage families in home visits.[23]

## Migrant Families and Migrant Education Even Start

Among the most salient factors in predicting children's future academic success are the economic, educational, and social character-

[22]Patricia Ward, D. Horton, and M. L. Lougheed, *Migrant Home Literacy Program Manual* (Albany: New York State Migrant Education Program, 1993).

[23]Anne Salerno and Mary A. Fink, *Home/School Partnerships: Migrant Parent Involvement Report* (Geneseo, NY: Parental Resources for Involvement in Migrant Education, 1992) (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 345 915).

istics of the family.[24] Migrant families are among the most economically distressed, educationally challenged, and highly mobile populations in the United States. The frequent moves, low pay, and long work hours associated with the migrant lifestyle are compounded by insufficient health care, inadequate housing, poor nutrition, and interrupted schooling. Any one of these factors could hinder a child's chance for success in traditional education systems and family literacy programs. In spite of these hurdles, migrant parents value education as a path to a better life for themselves and their children.

The challenge to Migrant Education Even Start projects is to design family literacy programs that accommodate the unique attributes of the migrant lifestyle and address the particular literacy needs and learning styles of family members. Andrew Hayes emphasizes the all-inclusive change necessary to address the challenges of migrant families. He suggests that the mobile lifestyle and long work hours of migrant families are likely to preclude long-term or intensive participation in family literacy programs. Therefore, the literacy needs of such families will be served best through strategies that (1) help families achieve specific literacy skills that are additive and can serve as foundation blocks for the attainment of other skills, (2) are considered important by families and can reasonably be achieved within limited time constraints, (3) are important in and of themselves, and when achieved, will enhance the family's situation, and (4) are sustainable, and once developed, are not likely to need redevelopment at a later time.[25]

## Program Development Strategies

Family literacy encompasses several education domains such as early childhood education, adult literacy, and second-language acquisition. The following strategies may be helpful to practitioners:

- read education literature to discover education trends

[24]Andrew E. Hayes, "Breaking the Cycle of Undereducation and Poverty: Comprehensive Family Literacy Programs in Migrant Education" (paper presented at the Interstate Migrant Education Council Seminar on Family Literacy on Migrant Families, Washington, DC, 2000).

[25]Ibid.

- listen to education and government leaders to determine which initiatives and programs are being funded
- create visibility for how family literacy can support those initiatives and strategize ways that family literacy can partner with those programs
- invest time and effort to develop effective, mutually beneficial partnerships
- advertise family literacy to potential partners as a critical support for student learning
- build into the program structures that will accommodate differences among agencies
- integrate services so components and practitioners are not isolated
- plan evaluation, technical assistance, and staff training activities to ensure the quality of family services

## Implications: What Does All This Mean for Migrant Advocates?

The foundational principle of Even Start is that adult basic education and literacy, parenting education, early childhood education, and parent and child together time constitute the central components of an integrated approach. Each component can be optimized through collaborative partnerships among service agencies to guarantee child school success and enduring literacy outcomes. These opportunities can be nurtured through local projects that value family involvement activities while remaining sensitive to migrant families' mobile way of life.

Binational Migrant Even Start projects provide family literacy services for parents and children who follow nontraditional migration patterns of moving between countries rather than within or among states. These families return to Mexico each year for three to four months from home bases as far away as Pennsylvania or as close as Texas. In past years, family literacy services lapsed during the 12 to 16 weeks when families left their local service areas. Stronger ties between states such as Pennsylvania and Texas and the Mexican Department of Education have created a shared approach to family literacy. These partnerships promote the use of similar textbooks,

teacher exchanges, native-language literacy, reading readiness services, adult literacy models, and international credit transfers. Technology such as e-mail, the Internet, and televised instruction for adult education can now connect migrant families wherever they reside. A focus of migrant family literacy services should be to link families who work and live in two countries with a well-established service network. Clearly, multiple coordinated opportunities for education and training provide the best avenues for access and opportunity for migrant children and their families.

# PART V

## SECONDARY EDUCATION ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

CHAPTER 8

# Scholastic Demands on Intrastate and Interstate Migrant Secondary Students

BY JORGE J. SOLÍS

Students encounter myriad educational difficulties and interruptions when they migrate to help their families financially. As an educator and administrator for more than 25 years, I have witnessed the toll these challenges can take on migrant students, especially at the secondary level. This chapter provides an overview of specific challenges facing migrant secondary students.

## Late Entry/Early Withdrawal

The economic situations of many migrant students and their families rule out the option of staying in school throughout an entire school year. Migrants cannot dictate when harvest seasons begin or end, and they risk losing jobs if they do not arrive at a work site on time. This frequently delays migrant students' return to their home schools until after the school year has begun or forces them to leave before the year has ended. Migrant students traveling long distances to find work will miss even more days of instruction. The lost class time discourages many migrant high school students, who drop out at higher rates than other students.

Interruption in the education of migrant students is described as late entry and/or early withdrawal. Many migrant students have

trouble attending school the number of days required by state laws. Migrants who enroll in school late have the added pressure of making up work. In many instances, these students lose credits due to excessive absences, particularly in school districts that do not have attendance policies designed to help migrant students. Those who withdraw between January and April could miss annual standardized testing or the exit-level tests required in some states for graduation. Most importantly, late entry/early withdrawal students lose valuable classroom instruction time.

Late enrollment or the anticipation of early withdrawal also discourages students from taking the more difficult courses required of higher graduation plans (e.g., college prep or advanced placement). As a result, migrant students frequently are excluded from the courses that could best prepare them for a successful postsecondary education. Additionally, irregular enrollment patterns prevent many migrant students from taking pretests for college admissions or scholarships; competing in some sports; or participating in extracurricular events, clubs, and organizations.

Last but not least, some schools tell migrant students who arrive in late November or early December not to enroll because the term is almost over. Likewise, receiving schools sometimes discourage migrants from enrolling late in the school year. These scenarios contribute to students falling behind in their high school credits, increasing their likelihood of dropping out.

## Transfer of Education Records

Whether migrant students enter late or withdraw early, the proper transfer of education records is critical. Some parents and secondary students do not understand the importance of hand-carrying as many education documents as possible, which makes it easier to transition into another school district. The Texas Migrant Student Transfer Packet System, otherwise known as the "Red Bag," provides migrant families with a red canvas bag for their children's school records. The program also trains migrant families on the education system and how to interpret important school documents. Other states have borrowed the concept and now offer their own versions of the Red Bag.

Migrant families sometimes need to leave on short notice and fail to withdraw their children from schools properly. The transfer of

education records is essential for effective placement and/or credit accrual. Some parents do not know they have a right to copies of these records, even special education confidential records. A receiving school may delay enrolling a student until the records have been faxed or, even worse, mailed.

## Schedule Conflicts and Course Credit/Grade Equivalents

Moving between schools, migrant students frequently encounter course dissimilarities and/or unavailable courses, disparities in course credits or grade equivalents, and different class schedules. Some receiving schools may not offer a particular class required by a migrant student's home-base district. Migrant students sometimes must take the course as an elective or wait until they have returned to their home-base school. In the worst-case scenario, they could lose credit for the course.

Some classes are closed to migrant students enrolling late in a semester, even if the student was taking that course where he or she was last enrolled. Often in these cases, states allow only a certain number of students per class and per teacher. Higher level classes may be in such demand that they fill up quickly, discouraging some migrant students from taking these classes and graduating under the most advanced graduation plans.

School districts that run nontraditional class schedules, such as block scheduling, pose yet another obstacle in transferring from one school to another. Migrant high school students tend to fall behind in credits while playing catch up or retaking classes entirely.

Migrant students sometimes have problems receiving credits for courses they have already taken and passed due to differences in a receiving school's grades, class credits, or state-mandated curriculum requirements. A grade of 60 or above, for example, passes in some states but not in others. Some schools average out the two semesters of a course to give a student full credit if he or she has an overall grade of 70; other schools average out the two semesters only if the student has failed the first semester but not the second.

## Evening and Summer School Hindrances

Some migrant high school students attend evening school in receiving states. This places yet another burden on students who work

during the day, often from dawn until 5:00 or 6:00 p.m., and then must attend school from 7:00 to 9:00 or 10:00 p.m. Not only is this tiring, but imagine trying to find time to study or do homework.

Many nonmigrant students enroll in summer school to make up missed credits. However, most migrant students work in the summer or do not have convenient access to summer school programs. Others will enroll in summer school but move again before earning any kind of credit. Some states charge a fee to attend summer school, an expense most migrant families cannot afford.

## Limitations Imposed by Living in Migrant Camps

Living in migrant camps also affects a student's academic success. Some camps have only the bare essentials: bathroom and shower facilities in a separate unit and used by all families, no air conditioning, and several family members sharing one room. The overcrowded, noisy, and poorly lit living quarters make studying difficult. Transportation can be a problem when the camp is far from school; parents sometimes cannot take their children to school, particularly in bad weather.

## Other Concerns and Possible Solutions

Migrant students still run into obstacles despite the many assistance programs available and the benefits of new and emerging technologies. Students taking correspondence courses often need to work by themselves without guidance from a teacher. When and if the correspondence course is completed, a student still needs a professional educator to administer the semester exam. Students occasionally must wait until they enroll again in school to take the exams. Programs that provide laptop computers have helped migrant students complete high school courses from a distance. However, this process requires a working phone line, which some migrant families lack, and only a small percentage of migrant students have access to these programs.

## Conclusions

Migrant students face many difficulties, obstacles, interruptions, and concerns in getting a well-rounded and complete education. Yet, a high school diploma is more important today than ever before.

Some school districts, whose experiences are described in this book, provide programs that help migrant students work through the concerns outlined in this chapter. Hopefully, others will follow in their footsteps and find ways to offer migrant students every opportunity to succeed by removing obstacles or helping students find ways to overcome them.

CHAPTER 9

# Graduation Enhancement and Postsecondary Opportunities for Migrant Students: Issues and Approaches

BY CINTHIA SALINAS AND REYNALDO REYES

In 1973, José Cárdenas and Blandina Cárdenas described the educational challenges for migrant children who move frequently:

> The typical instructional program, with built-in continuity and sequences that assume that the child in the classroom today was there yesterday and will be there tomorrow, is incompatible with this mobility. The program discontinuity problem must be faced with either a mobile curriculum or with a highly individualized instructional program.[1]

Each day, nearly 800,000 migrant students enroll in public schools[2] without the benefit of migrant-compatible schooling policies and practices. Within schools, migrant students can be described as

[1]José Cárdenas and Blandina Cárdenas, "The Theory of Incompatibilities," in *Multicultural Education: A Generation of Advocacy,* ed. José Cárdenas (Needham Heights, MA: Simon & Schuster Custom, 1995), 26.

[2]Allison Henderson and Julie Daft, *State Title I Migrant Participation Information 1998-99,* prepared for Office of the Under Secretary, U.S. Department of Education (Rockville, MD: Westat, 2002), http://mirror.eschina.bnu.edu.cn/Mirror/ed.gov/www.ed.gov/offices/OUS/PES/mig9899rev.pdf (accessed October 31, 2003).

bilingual or monolingual, gifted or with special needs, and successful or failing. The complexity of their lives, their contributions, and the education landscape cannot be understated. These dynamics are most complex at the secondary level, where migrant students encounter numerous challenges that require educators to respond in highly individualized ways.

## What We Know about the Education of Migrant Children

Student populations are growing increasingly diverse in urban, suburban, and rural schools, forcing schools to address the cultural and linguistic needs of their students. Despite reform efforts and decades of various programs, "social and demographic changes would appear to outdistance our ability to develop the technologies, practices, and capacity necessary to cope with classroom circumstances" of today's schools.[3] This is especially true in migrant education. Migrant students and their families are a composite of valuable resources and experiences of cultural and linguistic diversity; yet, the challenging aspects of mobility and low income, characteristic of many migrant families and their children, can overwhelm educators.[4]

The Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, as amended and reauthorized by the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, mandates that states must "ensure that migratory children who move among the States are not penalized in any manner by disparities among the States in curriculum, graduation requirements, and State academic content and student academic achievement standards."[5] This requires secondary schools to pay particularly close attention to credit accrual for graduation, drop-out prevention, and postsecondary education transition as these issues pertain to migrant students.

Administrators and educators often overlook the importance of a systematic and effective approach to credit accrual. One study has

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[3]Alicia Paredes Scribner, "High-Performing Hispanic Schools: An Introduction," in *Lessons from High-Performing Hispanic Schools: Creating Learning Communities,* ed. Pedro Reyes, Jay D. Scribner, and Alicia Paredes Scribner (New York: Teachers College Press, 1999), 1.

[4]Denise McKeon, "Language, Culture, and Schooling," in *Educating Second Language Children: The Whole Child, the Whole Curriculum, the Whole Community,* ed. Fred Genesee (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

[5]*No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, U.S. Code,* vol. 20, sec. 1301 (2002), http://www.ed.gov/legislation/ESEA02/pg8.html/ (accessed January 8, 2003).

shown that "migrant secondary students face significant odds in graduating from high school due to lack of credit accrual. Their mobile lifestyle creates a need for innovative solutions to address what is generally perceived as a fragmentation in their education, making it very difficult to accumulate credit and graduate, if at all."[6] Like so many immigrant and recently arrived students from different countries, cultures, and education backgrounds, migrant students and their families are typically uninformed about the American school culture and credits required for a high school diploma. School administration decisions and attitudes make it more difficult for migrant students to acquire the credits necessary for graduation even after attending class and fulfilling coursework requirements for a large portion of the school year. The most significant problem is that migrant students must disentangle many course and credit requirements as they transfer from school to school.[7]

The most recent of the rare studies of migrant student drop-out rates found that, despite an increase in migrant student graduation, the drop-out rate remained high at about 50 percent in the late 1980s.[8] It is important to note that nearly 86 percent of migrant students are Hispanic and that 40 percent have limited English proficiency. One study found that "while accounting for just 56% of all U.S. immigrants, Latinos account for nearly 96% of all immigrant dropouts."[9] Another study reported that lower academic achievement and high drop-out rates among migrant students can be attributed to frequent movement

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[6]The STAR Center, *GEMS: Graduation Enhancement for Migrant Students* (San Antonio: STAR Center [Support for Academic Renewal], Intercultural Development Research Association, 1997) (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 419 640), i.

[7]Harriet D. Romo and Toni Falbo, *Latino High School Graduation: Defying the Odds* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1996); Cárdenas and Cárdenas, "Theory of Incompatibilities"; and Pedro Reyes, Carol Fletcher, and Monica Molina, "Successful Migrant Students: The Case of Mathematics" (paper presented at the Texas Annual Migrant State Conference, El Paso, 1998).

[8]State University of New York (SUNY) Oneonta Migrant Programs, *Migrant Attrition Project: Executive Summary* (Oneonta, NY: MAP Project, 1987); Vamos, Inc., *National Migrant Student Graduation Rate Formula* (Geneseo, NY: BOCES Geneseo Migrant Center, 1992).

[9]Walter G. Secada and others, *No More Excuses: The Final Report of the Hispanic Dropout Project* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Bilingual Education and Minority Language Affairs, 1998) (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 461 447), 2.

from school to school throughout the academic year, constant adjustments to different social and academic environments, and confusing systems of record keeping and credit transfers. A number of programs have attempted to address the complexities that contribute to migrant students dropping out; however, a lack of cohesiveness among programs from state to state has added to the number of migrant students not finishing high school.[10]

A real impediment to addressing conditions contributing to high drop-out rates is the paucity of research related directly to migrant student education. While many studies have focused on the best practices for linguistically diverse students, little attention has been given to the unique needs of migrant children and their families. An orchestrated research effort needs to target the many facets of migrant education, especially effective secondary education models and approaches that serve migrant children.

This chapter addresses the plight of secondary education students moving across district lines and encountering challenges such as credit accrual and lack of academic resources. The chapter looks at beneficial programs and how secondary educators can help migrant students.

## Course by Course: Working toward Migrant Student Credit Accrual

Though graduation requirements vary from state to state and even district to district, they all amount to a kind of bookkeeping that determines whether or not a student will receive a high school diploma. As migrant students move from school to school, they run the risk of losing course credits in several ways. As a result, high school completion becomes increasingly arduous for them. Several

[10]Anne Salerno and Mary A. Fink, *Dropout Retrieval Report: Thoughts on Dropout Prevention and Retrieval* (Tallahassee: Florida State Department of Education, 1989) (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 318 595); Cheryl L. Sattler and Charles J. Edwards, *Title 1 Handbook* (Washington, DC: Thompson, 2002); J. Lamarr Cox and others, *Descriptive Study of the Chapter 1 Migrant Education Program: Volume I: Study Findings and Conclusions* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Policy and Planning, 1992) (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 355 085); and Yolanda G. Martinez, "Voices from the Field: Interviews with Students from Migrant Farmworker Families," *The Journal of Educational Issues of Language Minority Students* 14 (winter 1994): 333-48.

key issues factor in, including inconsistent state or local course requirements, continuity of curricula, differing scheduling configurations, and efficiency of record transfer systems.[11]

An example of the inconsistencies in course requirements is that New Mexico's minimum requirement for high school graduation is 23 units while Texas requires 22. Additionally, elective requirements for each state differ. For example, New Mexico requires a minimum of 7.5 electives while Texas requires 5.5. Migrant students may move from Texas to a New Mexico high school believing erroneously they have earned all elective requirements. The additional coursework to meet New Mexico's elective requirements could conflict with other required coursework and further delay credit accrual and graduation. Thus, migrant students often encounter deficiencies in their degree plans and are forced to disregard previously completed courses. Some migrant students also are expected to catch up quickly on local credits.

Despite a significant need for a national system, little uniformity exists among or even within states.[12] As migrant students move from school to school, the repeated changes of teachers, textbooks and materials, and curricula (including state/district standards) can affect their ability to complete credits. Migrant students may encounter differing approaches to teaching algebra, or new writing programs in their English courses, or local course requirements.

In an ethnographic study of migrant families, Joseph Prewitt-Díaz and his fellow researchers found that continual moving has a deep impact on the social, psychological, and academic lives of the children. One student commented that moving from school to school is hard "cause you don't know anything, you don't know what they are going to teach, you don't know the people around." He added that his

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[11]Bruce C. Straits, "Residence, Migration, and School Progress." *Sociology of Education* 60, no. 1 (January 1987): 34-43; Janis K. Lunon, *Migrant Student Record Transfer System: What Is It and Who Uses It?* (ERIC Digest) (Las Cruces, NM: ERIC Clearinghouse on Rural Education and Small Schools, 1986) (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 286 700); and Anne Salerno, *Migrant Students Who Leave School Early: Strategies for Retrieval* (ERIC Digest) (Charleston, WV: ERIC Clearinghouse on Rural Education and Small Schools, 1991) (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 335 179).

[12]State of New Mexico Department of Education Web Site, http://sde.state.nm.us/ (accessed January 13, 2003); and Texas Education Agency Web Site, http://www.tea.state.tx.us/ (accessed January 13, 2003).

friends "don't like moving around all the time a lot, and it's hard to make friends and to adjust." The end result, which often magnifies the possibility of losing credits, is a need to adjust abruptly to new friends, school, teachers, texts and materials, and curricula.[13]

Another growing challenge is differing high school scheduling configurations, based upon the pressures of growing state and local course requirements. Florida, for example, requires a minimum of 24 credits for graduation while Texas requires 22. The credit requirements vary within subjects as well (e.g., three credits of science in Florida and two in Texas). To meet graduation requirements, some high schools offer students the traditional scheduling format of six courses to be completed in the academic year while other high schools have implemented a block or accelerated block scheduling schema, through which students can receive eight credits per academic year. Imagine the potential problems when students transfer from a six-course to an eight-course block schedule high school. A student is faced immediately with a mismatch between the courses previously taken and the courses at the new school. Consider a student taking six courses at high school A, including Algebra I as a year-long course. The student transfers in October to high school B that offers Algebra I as a semester-long course (accelerated block). The student instantly is behind other students and will need to receive accelerated instruction. Keep in mind that this student was enrolled in six year-long courses while her peers were enrolled in four courses each semester. In sum, this migrant student would need to receive accelerated instruction in four courses and drop two courses until the spring semester.

Finally, secondary migrant students are confronted with a patchwork of student record transfer systems. No comprehensive national record system for migrant students has existed since the demise of the Migrant Student Records Transfer System (MSRTS) in 1995 (see chapters by Branz-Spall or Pappamihiel). As a result, migrant students have needed to rely primarily on the informal inter- and intrastate cooperation of counselors or registrar officials. Overworked and understaffed

[13]Joseph O. Prewitt-Díaz, Robert T. Trotter, II, and Vidal A. Rivera, Jr., *Effects of Migration on Children: An Ethnographic Study* (Harrisburg: Pennsylvania Department of Education, Division of Migrant Education, 1989) (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 327 346), 90, 91.

school officials are hard pressed to deliver records in a timely fashion. Though some states have formed joint systems to help facilitate the transfer of records (e.g., New Generation System), these impressive efforts are not an all-encompassing approach. Without a network of well-informed, skilled migrant educators, inevitable delays or errors will occur in student credit accrual.

In fictional Scenario 1, educators should address three basic areas to support Angela's education. First, she should be helped to develop a graduation plan that acknowledges her strengths, considers her postsecondary options, and addresses the unique challenges she will encounter as a migrant student. Second, she needs to receive a variety of academic services, including those that help her complete credits and achieve a passing score on the state's standardized tests. For example, correspondence courses, computer programs and services in labs, and distance-learning curricula like Summer Migrants Access Resources Through Technology Program (SMART) are readily available or can be found by checking with regional service centers or state migrant offices. Each of these, however, is aided by the third consideration of academic support. Teachers, counselors, paraprofessionals, and students should contemplate how they collectively can help ensure that Angela will be successful.

**Scenario 1: Credit Transfer Problems**

Angela Gomez is just registering at McAllen High School in McAllen, Texas. This coming school year, Angela's family will return to McAllen in February after living in the Fremont, Ohio, area for three years. Before returning to McAllen, the family plans to migrate to Galveston, Indiana, to pick tomatoes, then to Michigan to pick cherries, and so forth. They will continue into Indiana and Florida before finally returning to McAllen in February. In Ohio, Angela was a junior, but she is not sure how many of her credits will transfer. She was enrolled in General Consumer Math, English III, Biology, World History, a local credit, and a vocational education course. McAllen High School follows a block schedule with eight courses credited per year, while the high school Angela attended in Ohio followed a more traditional approach of six courses per year. She is worried about her classes transferring from Ohio to Texas and about taking the Exit-level TAKS, the standardized test required for graduation in Texas.

Educators are most responsible for helping all students accrue the necessary credits. They should raise their awareness about

credit-accrual issues and dilemmas that migrant students encounter. Educators need to understand the consequences to migrant students when making curricular and course-requirement policy decisions. Above all, educators should be proactive in addressing the needs of migrant students.

## Keeping Migrant Students in School: Valuing Migrant Children and Their Families

In general, many common school policies and practices diminish the cultural capital migrant children and their families bring to school, making it very difficult for migrant high school students to stay in school.[14] Anne Salerno and Mary A. Fink have concluded that approximately 50 percent of migrant students today do not complete high school—an improvement from 20 years ago, when 90 percent were dropping out. This positive trend is in danger of reversing for a number of reasons. First, linguistically and culturally diverse students face institutional barriers. Second, like parents of other linguistically and culturally diverse students, migrant parents are much more likely to be left out of the equation. Finally, high-stakes testing places even greater pressure on migrant students, who often are not present for many of the test preparation and testing opportunities.[15]

**Mobility issues.** While some educators see only the problems created by student mobility, it is important to also recognize the various strengths of migrant students. Migrant students bring cultural diversity and bilingualism to the classroom; continual moving from place to place tends to build in migrants tenacity and a sense of responsibility. At an early age, migrant children come to understand

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[14]Cárdenas and Cárdenas, "Theory of Incompatibilities"; Sonia Nieto, *The Light in Their Eyes: Creating Multicultural Learning Communities* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1999); and María de la Luz Reyes and John J. Halcón, eds., *The Best for Our Children: Critical Perspectives on Literacy for Latino Students* (New York: Teachers College Press, 2001).

[15]Salerno and Fink, *Dropout Retrieval Report*; Enrique T. Trueba, *Raising Silent Voices: Educating the Linguistic Minorities for the 21st Century* (New York: Newbury House, 1989); Maria E. Matute-Bianchi, "Situational Ethnicity and Patterns of School Performance among Immigrant and Non-immigrant Mexican-Descent Students," in *Minority Status and Schooling: A Comparative Study of Immigrant and Involuntary Minorities*, ed. Margaret A. Gibson and John U. Ogbu (New York: Garland, 1991); and María E. Fránquiz, "It's about YOUth!: Chicano High School Students Revisioning their Academic Identity," in *Best for Our Children*.

the dilemmas and perspectives unique to their migrancy. Good practice would dictate that we build upon migrant students' existing knowledge base and help design instruction that fits them better. Instead, it is easier for many educators to continue with existing curricula and pedagogy while belaboring the inconvenience of having migrant students arrive late and leave early during the academic year. Schools should realize the strengths of migrant families and organize resources that will enable migrants to stay in school and achieve academic success.

**Parent involvement.** Compounding these challenges is the exclusion of migrant parents from the schooling of their own children. Again, researchers have documented the failure of schools to include linguistically and culturally diverse parents in the schooling process. Schools often cite language difference and lack of interest on the part of parents, but the reality is that many schools intentionally exclude communities that do not reflect the values and beliefs of White, middle-class America.[16]

An often-overlooked provision of ESEA legislation is the required involvement of parents in the district/campus decision-making process. Schools that do not involve parents of migrant children create additional barriers. Not only do migrant parents retain a rich understanding of their children, they also possess resources that could ensure their children's success.

**High-stakes testing.** Finally, the use of high-stakes standardized testing exacerbates the challenges encountered by migrant students. The current testing mania that consumes public schools increases the chances of a migrant student dropping out. Consider that migrant students are present sporadically or not at all for much of the test preparation and testing that occurs throughout the year. Regardless of their inherent goodness or badness, test preparation and practice help students and their parents better understand test formats and the

[16]Romo and Falbo, *Latino High School Graduation*; Alicia Salinas Sosa, "Involving Hispanic Parents in Improving Educational Opportunities for Their Children," in *Children of La Frontera: Binational Efforts to Serve Mexican Migrant and Immigrant Students*, ed. Judith LeBlanc Flores (Charleston, WV: ERIC Clearinghouse on Rural Education and Small Schools, 1996) (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 393 649); Nancy Feyl Chavkin, "Involving Migrant Families in Their Children's Education: Challenges and Opportunities for Schools," in *Children of La Frontera*; and Nieto, *Light in Their Eyes*.

significance of testing—in many states, high-stakes testing now affects promotion and graduation. The barrage of tests and consequences of testing can easily discourage migrant students and their parents.

Several school strategies could improve situations such as fictional Scenario 2. First, school administrators should ask themselves whether the curriculum engages students like Amanda: Is the material relevant to the lives of our students? How do we incorporate the knowledge of migrant children and their families into our teaching? Second, secondary schools need to make a special effort to involve parents; while involvement at the elementary level is quite common, secondary schools have struggled with approaches. Schools should undertake a self-study, immerse themselves in the parent involvement literature, and make changes that value all communities. Finally, personnel at the state, district, and campus levels should become familiar with the testing practices, policies, and procedures of other states and share this information with students, families, and teachers.

**Scenario 2: Family Involvement and High Stakes Tests**

Amanda Guerrero is in the 10th grade at Taylor High in Seattle, Washington. She lives with her grandparents in a community housing project. The family migrates every summer to Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, and Ohio to detassel corn, pick tomatoes, and pick cucumbers. This past school year, Amanda was in trouble a lot. She was suspended twice and started hanging around with gang members outside of school. Amanda doesn't like school. She thinks of it as a waste of time, regularly skips class, and is indifferent to her failing grades. Her grandmother has gone to the school several times to talk to Amanda's counselor and the assistant principal. On one occasion, she explained to the counselor that when the family is down south, Amanda attends summer school and does quite well. The grandmother boasted that Amanda received a certificate for best attendance last summer and will be eligible to take the Texas standardized high-school-level test (Exit-level TAKS) in any of the above receiving states this summer. Obviously, her grandmother is worried about the test and Amanda's chances of graduating from high school.

Migrant children face the same difficult odds that other marginalized students encounter in completing high school. Schools must adopt policies that embrace the cultural resources and knowledge of entire communities and acknowledge the value of diversity.[17] Educators ought to form

[17]Richard R. Valencia, ed., *Chicano School Failure and Success: Research and Policy Agendas for the 1990s* (London: Falmer, 1991) (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 387 279); and Reyes and Halcón, *Best for Our Children.*

partnerships with parents to help all children succeed. These partnerships are especially important in overcoming the barriers created by the numerous and growing standardized testing demands.

## Pushing Open the Gates: Gaining Access to a Postsecondary Education

It is difficult to provide accurate statistics on migrant students' attendance and graduation rates in postsecondary education because few programs, if any, track students beyond high school graduation. However, logic would imply that migrant students face similar, if not greater, barriers than other linguistically and culturally diverse students when trying to access higher education opportunities. This section analyzes two significant issues confronting migrant students in their postsecondary education efforts. First, as with many other students, math remains the greatest obstacle to college access and success, acting as a gate-keeping tool in the selection of students for college. Second, a body of knowledge, or hidden curriculum, exists for the college bound; however, it is difficult to access, especially for migrant students.[18]

For the most part, access to college preparatory math remains an elusive goal for migrant students. Many schools begin a two-tiered math curriculum as early as sixth grade by creating a single and exclusive pathway toward Algebra I courses in middle school and, ultimately, *the* calculus course in high school. Students in this upper tier are better prepared for college admissions and placement tests as well as for college curricula. Advanced math courses also provide a strong foundation for related high school courses, such as chemistry and physics, that complete the college preparatory curriculum. While districts should help more students gain access to these courses, few have offered such *right of entry* to all students and parents.[19]

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[18]Susan Morse and Patricia Cahape Hammer, *Migrant Students Attending College: Facilitating Their Success* (ERIC Digest) (Charleston, WV: ERIC Clearinghouse on Rural Education and Small Schools, 1998) (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 423 097); and Pedro Reyes and Andrea Rorrer, *Ways To Improve Mathematics Education for Migrant Students: Training Modules* (Austin: Texas Education Agency, 1999).

[19]José Moreno, *The Elusive Quest for Equality: 150 Years of Chicano/Chicana Education,* Harvard Educational Review Reprint Series No. 32 (Cambridge: Harvard Education Publishing Group, 1999).

A discreet ensemble of knowledge assists students wanting to pursue postsecondary education. Prerequisites for higher education include a maze of financial-aid forms, college admissions tests, placement exams, college applications and essays, and other unpublicized details. Clearly, some privileged students have access to this ***hidden curriculum*** while many other students are vaguely aware of it through informal conversations. However, migrant students are not likely to be part of the chosen group, nor are they likely to participate in the informal conversations. Schools need to consider how to institutionalize access to this knowledge for *all* students.

In fictional Scenario 3, Sylvia is right on track but will need plenty of help from her teachers and counselors. First, they must encourage and support her in math and science coursework, a necessity for any future engineering studies. Sylvia's movement from school to school will make continuity of curricula and completion rather difficult. The schools must use comprehensible and supportive language to inform Sylvia and her family about necessary college financial aid, standardized tests, and admissions. For example, high schools participate in college nights but often fail to deliver effective and/or bilingual notices and information. If Sylvia attends a high school with a large enrollment, she could easily fall through the cracks. Above all, schools should recognize their responsibility to students like Sylvia by revealing the many hidden elements of the transition to postsecondary education.

**Scenario 3: A College-Bound Student**

Sylvia Martinez is an eighth-grade honor student at Memorial Junior High School in Nogales, Arizona. Her family has migrated to Sydney, Montana, for as long as Sylvia can remember. Sylvia just finished an Algebra I class for high school credit and is enrolled in a computer program that allows her to take a laptop computer to Montana to work on coursework through NovaNet, an on-line curriculum. This summer, Sylvia will take a yet-undetermined social studies elective. She would like to work ahead in math, but her counselor is opposed because of the district's policy of not allowing accelerated courses during the summer. Sylvia will work on her laptop while attending summer school in Montana as well as Oregon. The family will move to Eagle Pass, Texas, in early August before school starts. Sylvia wants to be the first in her family to attend college and plans to major in engineering.

Because economic demands place greater emphasis on education beyond K-12, it is important for schools to reexamine their policies and practices with regards to future attendance and success in higher

education. State accountability systems throughout the country have begun to scrutinize the enrollment of students in the varying types of high school diploma plans. Particular attention should be given to the numbers and types of students tracked into diploma plans that provide access to higher education. Schools with an emphasis on college-bound plans are not only publicly recognized but also touted as models for others to follow. Beyond the important coursework are the many facets of preparing students for college, including standardized admissions exams and application forms that can sometimes discourage migrant students. Again, schools should be compelled to demystify these processes, ensuring that all students have the opportunity to gain access to and experience success in higher education.

## The Next Step: Addressing the Needs of Secondary Migrant Students

The array of formal and informal practices that affect credit accrual, prevent dropping out, and promote postsecondary transition have vital implications for educators. First, educators need to enact more considerate policies and have greater awareness of migrant issues. Second, migrant drop-out prevention depends heavily on culturally relevant pedagogy, increased parent involvement, and improved approaches for high-stakes standardized testing. Finally, migrant students must have access to advanced math and the hidden curriculum.

Education is primarily a state responsibility, creating little impetus for instituting a national high school diploma; thus, migrant students probably will continue to experience credit accrual difficulties. In response, educators should advocate vigilantly for the reinstatement of an easily accessible and useful national record-keeping system. A long-neglected imperative is the establishment of a national database that includes cross-referenced state/district requirements and that records a student's progress toward a high school diploma. On a local level, policies need to be more flexible in recognizing the previous work migrant students have accomplished toward a high school diploma. Likewise, school staff must be provided with greater awareness and support as they work through the maze of credit requirements.

While a great deal of research has targeted drop-out prevention

for women, ethnic minorities, and English language learners, such efforts have not necessarily considered the complex social and academic needs of migrant students. The high mobility of migrant students should be given special consideration when designing, restructuring, or implementing drop-out prevention programs and policies. Educators should foster culturally relevant learning environments in which migrant students can comfortably incorporate their knowledge and skills.

Effective communication between the school and parents also is critical in enhancing the education experience of migrant secondary students. Schools must inform migrant parents about students' educational progress, options at the secondary level, and possibilities for postsecondary education. Finally, researchers should examine how high-stakes testing policies negatively affect the education and graduation opportunities of migrant students. Migrant students should be adequately prepared to tackle the exit-level standardized tests required for graduation in many states.

Migrant students should have equal access to higher education. The hidden curriculum and, in particular, the key math courses, must become target areas of advocacy for educators. Without opportunities and support within the college-bound curriculum, migrant students will remain excluded and disenfranchised. Migrants must have access to the rich curriculum that adequately prepares them for postsecondary education. Simply having entry into a track labeled "college preparatory" is not adequate. A diploma in hand is meaningless if students have not been equipped with the necessary tools, skills, and knowledge to have access to and succeed in higher education. Secondary educators must ensure that migrants, along with all other students, learn the content material that will ensure achievement at the postsecondary level. Like all students, migrant children and their families deserve an egalitarian and democratic education system.

# PART VI

## PARENTS—THE CORNERSTONE OF MIGRANT EDUCATION

CHAPTER 10

# Bringing the Mountain to Mohammed: Parent Involvement in Migrant-Impacted Schools

BY GERARDO R. LÓPEZ

Prior to 1966, state and local governments, including local school boards, were reluctant to assist migrant workers and their families, who were seen as temporary farmhands, in the area for only a short time.[1] The Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965—the cornerstone of President Lyndon Johnson's War on Poverty—finally made migrant students an identifiable subject in the educational discourse. The thousands of children who traversed the continent with their caretakers in search of agricultural work prior to 1965 were, for all intents and purposes, invisible and considered unworthy of local, state, and federal assistance. Although the amount and types of services offered to migrant students have improved substantially since 1965, most migrant-impacted schools and districts still do not address adequately the multiple needs of migrant students and their families. In other words, schools have yet to solve the

[1]Deborah S. Dyson, *Utilizing Available Resources at the Local Level: Fact Sheet* (ERIC Digest) (Las Cruces, NM: ERIC Clearinghouse on Rural Education and Small Schools, 1983) (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 286 702); and Philip Martin, *Migrant Farmworkers and Their Children* (ERIC Digest) (Charleston, WV: ERIC Clearinghouse on Rural Education and Small Schools, 1994) (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 376 997).

complex educational problems associated with mobility.[2]

As in the past, migrant students still face economic, cultural, and social discrimination, both within and outside the school environment. High poverty rates, numerous health- and work-related factors, increased rates of social and physical isolation, and a host of other factors (e.g., limited English proficiency, high turnover rates) place enhanced demands on schools to address the needs of this population.[3] Migrants have one of the highest drop-out rates of any student group in the country. Research suggests the vast majority of migrant children are at risk of dropping out due to poverty; the primacy of family survival, which often forces migrant children to work at an early age; and perpetual relocation from one school district to another.[4]

All in all, migrant children are at greater risk than other youth in the United States.[5] Many migrant families today still do not have taken-for-granted "necessities" such as running water, refrigerators, appli-

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[2]Mary Henning-Stout, ")Qué podemos hacer?: Roles for School Psychologists with Mexican and Latino Migrant Children and Families," *School Psychology Review* 25, no. 2 (1996): 152-64; William H. Metzler and Frederic Sargent, "Problems of Children, Youth, and Education Among Mid-Continent Migrants," *The Southwestern Social Science Quarterly* 43 (June 1962) (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 012 632); Joseph O. Prewitt-Díaz, "The Factors That Affect the Educational Performance of Migrant Children," *Education* 111, no. 4 (1991): 483-86; Prewitt-Díaz, Robert T. Trotter, II, and Vidal A. Rivera, Jr, "The Effects of Migration on Children: An Ethnographic Study," *Education Digest* 55, no. 8 (April 1990): 26-29; Harriett D. Romo and Toni Falbo, *Latino High School Graduation: Defying the Odds* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1996); David B. Schuler, "Effects of Family Mobility on Student Achievement," *ERS Spectrum* 8, no. 4 (fall 1990): 17-24; and Bruce C. Straits, "Residence, Migration, and School Progress," *Sociology of Education* 60, no. 1 (January 1987): 34-43.

[3]Judith LeBlanc Flores and Patricia Cahape Hammer, "Introduction," in *Children of La Frontera: Binational Efforts to Serve Mexican Migrant and Immigrant Students,* ed. Judith LeBlanc Flores (Charleston, WV: ERIC Clearinghouse on Rural Education and Small Schools, 1996) (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 393 633); Al Wright, *Reauthorized Migrant Education Program: Old Themes and New* (ERIC Digest) (Charleston, WV: ERIC Clearinghouse on Rural Education and Small Schools, 1995) (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 380 267); Roberto S. Guerra, "Work Experience and Career Education Programs for Migrant Children," *Sourcebook of Equal Educational Opportunity* 39 (1979): 437-50; and Prewitt-Díaz, "Factors That Affect the Educational Performance."

[4]José A. Cárdenas, *Education and the Children of Migrant Farmworkers: An Overview* (Cambridge: Harvard University, Center for Law and Education, 1976)

ances, and basic sanitation facilities.[6] They do not willingly choose to live without such necessities; rather, the substandard living conditions are an all-too-common outgrowth of the piece-rate pay system that dominates migratory work.[7] In addition, these conditions often expose migrant children and their families to toxic pesticides, resulting in higher rates of tuberculosis, pneumonia, asthma, emphysema, and bronchitis.[8] In fact, one study shows the average life expectancy of a migrant worker is 49 years.[9]

Common sense suggests these hardships would have a negative impact on the educational progress of migrant children. To be certain, research demonstrates overwhelmingly that migrant students consistently must adjust to harsh living and working conditions while simultaneously learning, with each move, to navigate new curricula, teachers, friendships, testing practices, credit accrual systems, and state regulations.[10] Given the nature of social and cultural reproduction, the educational prospects for migratory

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(ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 134 367); David Hinojosa and Louie Miller, "Grade Level Attainment among Migrant Farm Workers in South Texas," *Journal of Educational Research* 77, no. 6 (July-August 1984): 346-50; and Ann Cranston-Gingras and Donna J. Anderson, "Reducing the Migrant Student Dropout Rate: The Role of School Counselors," *School Counselor* 38, no. 2 (November 1990): 95-104.

[5]Gary Huang, *Health Problems among Migrant Farmworkers' Children in the U.S.* (ERIC Digest) (Charleston, WV: ERIC Clearinghouse on Rural Education and Small Schools, 1993) (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 357 907).

[6]Nancy Feyl Chavkin, *Family Lives and Parental Involvement in Migrant Students' Education* (ERIC Digest) (Charleston, WV: ERIC Clearinghouse on Rural Education and Small Schools, 1991) (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 335 174); and Isabel Valle, *Fields of Toil: A Migrant Family's Journey* (Pullman: Washington State University Press, 1994).

[7]Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, *Migrant Farmworkers in the United States: Implementation of the Helsinki Accords: Briefings of the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe* (Washington, DC: Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, 1993) (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 365 486).

[8]Huang, *Health Problems*.

[9]Gerdean G. Tan, Margaret P. Ray, and Rodney Cate, "Migrant Farm Child Abuse and Neglect within an Ecosystem Framework," *Family Relations* 40, no. 1 (January 1991): 84-90.

[10]Jan Hamilton, "The Gifted Migrant Child: An Introduction," *Roeper Review* 6, no. 3 (February 1984): 146-49; Prewitt-Díaz, Trotter, and Rivera, "Effects of Migration on Children"; and Straits, "Residence."

children do not look very promising.[11] In fact, data demonstrate migrants are less educated than the general workforce, having an average education of less than eight years.[12]

The most reliable and recent national studies of migrant school completion rates (more than a decade old) report that only about half received a high school diploma.[13] In light of this sobering statistic, it would be easy to conclude that the destiny of many migrant youth is to become permanent members of the migrant stream. However, there are success stories in the literature that show the strong mediating role educational institutions can play in the lives of migrant children.[14]

Rather than accepting (and perhaps expecting) low academic performance from Latino students and other students of color, educational institutions need to foster, promote, and demand accountable systems that ensure a proper education for *all* children. This requires adopting policies and practices that call for educational excellence, particularly for the most marginalized and disadvantaged youth.[15]

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[11]Louis Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses," in *Education—Structure and Society: Selected Readings,* comp. B. R. Cosin (New York: Penguin, 1971); Jean Anyon, "Social Class and the Hidden Curriculum of Work," *Journal of Education* 162, no. 1 (winter 1980): 67-92; Michael W. Apple, "Reproduction and Contradiction in Education: An Introduction," in *Cultural and Economic Reproduction in Education: Essays on Class, Ideology, and the States,* ed. Michael W. Apple (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1982); Stanley Aronowitz and Henry A. Giroux, *Education Still Under Siege,* 2d ed. (Westport, CT: Bergin & Garvey, 1993); Pierre Bourdieu and Jean-Claude Passeron, *Reproduction in Education, Society and Culture* (Beverly Hills, CA: Sage, 1977); and Samuel Bowles and Herbert Gintis, *Schooling in Capitalist America* (New York: Basic, 1976).

[12]Steve Harrington, "Children of the Road," *Instructor* 97, no. 4 (November-December 1987): 36-39.

[13]State University of New York (SUNY) Oneonta Migrant Programs. *Migrant Attrition Project: Executive Summary.* (Oneonta, NY: MAP Project, 1987); and Vamos, Inc. *National Migrant Student Graduation Rate Formula.* Prepared for Secondary Credit Exchange and Accrual. (Geneseo, NY: BOCES Geneseo Migrant Center)

[14]Flores, *Children of La Frontera*; and Pedro Reyes, Jay D. Scribner, and Lonnie Wagstaff, eds., *A Vision for Tomorrow: Successful Migrant Education Practices, Migrant Education Policy and Practice Research Project, Second Year Report* (Austin: Texas Education Agency, Department of Migrant Education, 1998); Eugene E. García, "Foreword," in *Children of La Frontera*; Flores and Hammer, "Introduction"; and Guerra, "Work Experience."

[15]David Hayes-Bautista, Werner O. Schink, and Jorge Chapa, *The Burden of Support: Young Latinos in an Aging Society* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University

## The Promise of Parent Involvement in Improving Minority Student Achievement

In recent years, parent involvement increasingly has been recognized by educators as a positive force in addressing minority student underachievement.[16] Research consistently shows a high correlation between parent involvement and the academic performance of children.[17] Parent involvement is so popular among educators and policymakers that one researcher has referred to it as the "vanguard of educational reform."[18]

Because of its participatory nature, parent involvement is seen not

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Press, 1988); James Joseph Scheurich, "Highly Successful and Loving, Public Elementary Schools Populated Mainly by Low-SES Children of Color: Core Beliefs and Cultural Characteristics," *Urban Education* 33, no. 4 (November 1998): 451-91; Gary Orfield, "The Growth and Concentration of Hispanic Enrollment and the Future of American Education" (paper presented at the Annual Conference of the National Council of La Raza, Albuquerque, 13 July 1988) (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 319 819); Romo and Falbo, *Latino High School Graduation*; and Pedro Reyes, Jay D. Scribner, and Alicia Paredes Scribner, eds., *Creating Learning Communities: Lessons from High Performing Hispanic Schools,* Critical Issues in Educational Leadership Series (New York: Teachers College Press, 1999).

[16]Nancy Feyl Chavkin, ed., *Families and Schools in a Pluralistic Society* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993); and Oliver C. Moles, "Collaboration between Schools and Disadvantaged Parents: Obstacles and Openings," in *Families and Schools*.

[17]Rhoda Becher, *Parents and Schools* (ERIC Digest) (Urbana, IL: ERIC Clearinghouse on Elementary and Early Childhood Education, 1986) (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 269 137); Jacqueline S. Eccles and Rena D. Harold, "Family Involvement in Children's and Adolescents' Schooling," in *Family School Links: How Do They Affect Educational Outcomes?* eds. Alan Booth and Judith F. Dunn (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum, 1996); Joyce L. Epstein, "Parents' Reactions to Teacher Practices of Parent Involvement," *Elementary School Journal* 86, no. 3 (January 1986): 277-94; Anne T. Henderson, *The Evidence Continues to Grow: Parent Involvement Improves Student Achievement* (Columbia, MD: National Committee for Citizens in Education, 1987) (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 315 199); Nicholas Hobbs, *Strengthening Families* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1984); Kathleen V. Hoover-Dempsey, Otto C. Bassler, and Rebecca Burow, "Parents' Reported Involvement in Students' Homework: Strategies and Practices," *Elementary School Journal* 95, no. 5 (May 1995): 435-50; David Peterson, *Parent Involvement in the Educational Process* (ERIC Digest) (Eugene, OR: ERIC Clearinghouse on Educational Management, 1989) (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 312 776); and Carmen Simich-Dudgeon, *Parent Involvement and the Education of Limited-English-Proficient Students* (ERIC Digest) (Washington, DC: ERIC Clearinghouse on Languages and Linguistics, 1986) (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 279 205).

[18]Michelle Fine, "[Ap]parent Involvement: Reflections on Parents, Power, and Urban Public Schools," *Teachers College Record* 94, no. 4 (summer 1993): 682.

only as an effective vehicle for school accountability but also as a powerful tool to promote the academic success of students.[19] For example, research consistently finds that parent participation enhances student self-esteem, improves parent-child relationships, and helps parents develop positive attitudes toward schools.[20] Research also suggests that educators benefit as a result of increased parent involvement: teachers gain confidence in their efficacy to teach children,[21] administrators strengthen community relations as they interact with parents on a more frequent basis,[22] and schools become more collaborative and less hierarchical in nature.[23]

Most importantly, parent involvement has a positive effect on student learning. Children whose parents are involved in their education have better grades, improved test scores, long-term academic success, more positive academic attitudes,[24] higher reading achievement,[25] improved grades through homework assignments,[26] and other indicators of a sound educational foundation.[27] In short, there is general consensus concerning the efficacy of parent involvement as a

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[19]Becher, *Parents and Schools*; Eccles and Harold, "Family Involvement"; Henderson, *Evidence Continues to Grow*; Anne T. Henderson, Carl L. Marburger, and Theodora Ooms, *Beyond the Bake Sale: An Educator's Guide to Working with Parents* (Columbia, MD: National Committee for Citizens in Education, 1986) (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 270 508).

[20]Patricia Clark Brown, *Involving Parents in the Education of Their Children* (ERIC Digest) (Urbana, IL: ERIC Clearinghouse on Elementary and Early Childhood Education, 1989) (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 308 988).

[21]Kathleen V. Hoover-Dempsey, Otto C. Bassler, and Jane S. Brissie, "Parent Involvement: Contributions of Teacher Efficacy, School Socioeconomic Status, and Other School Characteristics," *American Educational Research Journal* 24, no. 3 (fall 1987): 417-35.

[22]Henderson, Marburger, and Ooms, *Beyond the Bake Sale.*

[23]Mick Coleman, "Planning for the Changing Nature of Family Life in Schools for Young Children," *Young Children* 46, no. 4 (May 1991): 15-21; James P. Comer, "Parent Participation in the Schools," *Phi Delta Kappan* 67, no. 6 (February 1986): 442-46; Mary E. Henry, *Parent-School Collaboration: Feminist Organizational Structures and School Leadership* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996); and Nel Noddings, *The Challenge to Care in Schools: An Alternative Approach to Education* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1992).

[24]Peterson, *Parent Involvement.*

[25]Simich-Dudgeon, *Parent Involvement.*

[26]Hoover-Dempsey, Bassler, and Burow, "Parents' Reported Involvement"

[27]Brown, *Involving Parents*; Hobbs, *Strengthening Families.*

transformational tool of school reform and school accountability.[28]

Parent involvement gives historically marginalized communities a voice in school decision-making efforts and a role as collaborators in their children's education.[29] It also is a vehicle for turning schools into true learning organizations that focus on student success for all children, irrespective of cultural backgrounds or migratory status.[30]

However, despite improved efforts to include minority parents in school matters, studies have shown that marginalized parents still are not involved at the same rate as their White nonmigrating counterparts. This problem troubles scholars in the field, who recognize the connection between parent involvement and student achievement.[31]

## Moving Beyond Good Intentions: The Need to Identify Best Practices

How can schools involve marginalized parents on a daily basis? Both researchers and practitioners have provided recommendations and guidance to answer that question. Mary Henry, for example, suggests schools look to feminist theory, which moves away from bureaucratic and disconnected understandings of organizational leadership toward a more egalitarian, collaborative, and caring ethos. Henry criticizes the traditional male domination of organizational and leadership roles and contends schools should develop a partnership approach, where respect, shared decision making, and a celebration of diversity are daily parts of school. Henry believes schools must move toward a more democratic vision, with the values and teachings of feminism serving as a vehicle for school reform. Other scholars have provided compelling arguments for egalitarian and caring practices.[32]

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[28]Becher, *Parents and Schools*; Eccles and Harold, "Family Involvement"; and Henderson, *Evidence Continues to Grow.*

[29]Henry, *Parent-School Collaboration.*

[30]Moles, "Collaboration between Schools."

[31]Chavkin, *Families and Schools*; and Moles, "Collaboration between Schools."

[32]Henry, *Parent-School Collaboration.* See also Catherine Marshall, "School Administrators' Values: A Focus on Atypicals," *Educational Administration Quarterly* 28, no. 3 (August 1992): 368-86; Nel Noddings, *Caring: A Feminine Approach to Ethics and Moral Education* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984); Noddings, "The Gender Issue," *Educational Leadership* 49, no. 4 (December 1991): 65-70; and Noddings, *Challenge to Care.*

However, much of the advice educators have had to rely on in working with *migrant* parents is based primarily on anecdotal evidence and accounts of schools that have developed creative approaches. Little systematic research has been done to specifically address best practices for involving this particular population of parents.[33] In part because of this lack of research-based knowledge, many parent involvement efforts have limited success. Schools often fail to acknowledge the multiple factors that migrant families face on a daily basis. In short, there is a great need for research that identifies and documents successful approaches to increasing migrant parent involvement in their children's educations.[34] Researchers could begin to develop this knowledge by studying schools that have a proven track record of success.

One such effort was initiated more than three years ago by a cadre of researchers from The University of Texas at Austin with the assistance of the Migrant Office at the Texas Education Agency. This group has launched one of the first comprehensive research projects to focus specifically on best practices for migrants.[35] Early findings of this research indicate that effective migrant parent involvement initiatives are not defined as a set of practices or activities for parents to do (e.g., PTA/PTO, bake sales, parent-teacher conferences). Instead the focus is on ways schools can help migrant parents cope with the problems they face on a daily basis.[36]

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[33]Gerardo R. López, Jay D. Scribner, and L. Walling, "Creating and Maintaining Effective Parental Involvement Programs for Migrant Populations: A Critical Analysis of Parent Involvement Research" (paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, San Diego, April 1998).

[34]Joseph Prewitt-Díaz, Robert T. Trotter, II, and Vidal A. Rivera, Jr., *Effects of Migration on Children: An Ethnographic Study* (Harrisburg: Pennsylvania Department of Education, Division of Migrant Education, 1989) (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 327 346).

[35]Although this research project was not the first to identify best parent involvement practices for migrant populations, it was one of the first to research and document such practices in a systematic and comprehensive manner. To be certain, a wealth of important practitioner-based research has been conducted in the migrant parent involvement arena for more than 35 years. Such work should not be minimized or presumed to be less significant than this research project.

[36]Reyes, Scribner, and Wagstaff, *Vision for Tomorrow.* The findings reported herein are based on Gerardo R. López, Jay D. Scribner, and Kanya Mahitivanichcha, "Redefining Parental Involvement: Lessons From High-Performing Migrant-Impacted Schools," *American Educational Research Journal* 38, no. 2 (summer

These findings reconceptualize how we have traditionally viewed parent involvement. Instead of requiring parents to come to schools to get involved, the schools in this study perceived themselves as active and proactive agents in reaching out to migrant parents. In other words, the effective schools and districts in this study showed a high degree of "home involvement" and worked very hard to reach out to migrant parents on a daily basis.

The high degree of outreach employed by these schools and districts was a necessary response to the situations faced by the migrant families they served. Many families had little or no food to eat; some lived in their cars or tiny travel trailers; others had no electricity, natural gas, heat, running water, or sewage/septic systems. Their primary concern was basic survival from one day to the next. When parents are living under such harsh conditions, it becomes very difficult for them to think about school involvement in traditional ways. The parent involvement coordinators, migrant personnel, teachers, school staff, and other administrators in these schools and districts fully recognized the necessity of meeting the needs of migrant families as a first step. The researchers found that home visits played a major role in making school personnel aware of the various needs of migrant families. In fact, many schools and districts in the study had an official policy that a teacher or school administrator would visit the home of every student at least once a year.

Migrant families highly valued this type of personal, one-on-one interaction. In the study, school personnel felt they had to get to know families on a more personal, rather than professional, level in order to understand the lived reality of the families with whom they worked. They dedicated a tremendous amount of time to meeting personally with every migrant family, time that was never counted or recognized in any official document.

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2001): 253-88. We identified "*exceptional*" as school districts with at least an 80 percent migrant graduation rate, an 80 percent migrant promotion rate, a 94 percent migrant student attendance rate, and a 70 percent passing rate on all areas (e.g., math, reading, and writing) of the state standardized test during the 1995-1996 academic year. The study of four school districts included a total of 17 interviews (12 group interviews, 5 individual interviews) with district-level administrators, school-level administrators, parent involvement coordinators, migrant personnel, school paraprofessionals, and parents themselves. All interviews were recorded, transcribed, and analyzed according to traditional qualitative guidelines.

The researchers concluded that this level of personal commitment was what made the difference in the studied schools and districts. The schools placed a high priority on helping families and serving parents, as opposed to having the parents serve the schools. Accommodating the needs of migrant families, first and foremost in a respectful and nonjudgmental way, made the families more likely to view schools as true partners in the education process.

Another finding of this research related to the types of parent education programs the schools offered. Traditionally, parent education is viewed as a means to train parents to better intervene in the schooling process. In these schools, however, parent education was seen as a vehicle to broaden parents' cultural capital, enhancing their ability to improve their lives and to gain access to employment options other than migratory work. In essence, parent education was seen as an end in itself and not necessarily as a means toward some other end. This commitment to meet the needs of migrant parents—above any other factor—is what made these schools and districts unique.

In short, the researchers found in these effective schools that the concept of parent involvement was entirely different from traditional approaches. The schools in this study viewed parent involvement as a proactive endeavor. School personnel made an extra effort to visit homes and take the school to the migrant families. The schools also redefined parent education as an end in itself rather than as a system to teach parents about appropriate parenting styles or suitable involvement forms. Underlying this approach was a genuine interest in the well-being of migrant families.

## Conclusion

This research points to the fact that migrant parents cannot be involved in traditional ways until their basic needs have been met. As long as parents are worried about their day-to-day survival there is little hope of getting them involved in typical school-based parent activities. The schools in this study were effective because they fully understood that meeting the basic needs of migrant families was first and foremost.

This research also suggests that schools move away from the assumption that involvement consists only of specific activities such as

PTA, school-governance councils, or parent-teacher conferences. This study and others show that minority populations tend not to be involved in these traditional ways. However, if we begin with the premise that involvement results from actions taken by the school, then the question becomes not "How can parents be involved?" but rather "What can *we, as educators, do* to get parents involved?"

The schools in this research project were successful because they asked an entirely different set of questions regarding parent involvement. School personnel took affirmative, proactive steps to address the basic fundamental needs of migrant parents. As a parent involvement coordinator in La Joya, Texas, suggested:

> You have to understand where migrants are coming from: the poverty, not having electricity, no running water, always moving around from place to place—all that stuff. It really makes life difficult for them, you know? . . . So most of the time, migrant parents have to prioritize. . . . [They have] to figure out how they're gonna live, or even where they're gonna live, or how they're gonna put food on the table. You know, basic stuff like that. So if they can't come to the school, then we have to take it upon ourselves to go to them. It's like that saying goes: "If Mohammed doesn't come to the mountain, then the mountain has to go to Mohammed." I really think that's what we're about in this district. Everyday we try to live by that [philosophy]. And I think that's what makes us different than the other school districts out there. Because we really do believe that, and we really do care about these families 110 percent. We really care about these families and we'll go the extra mile, if we have to, in order to do our job. Because our main concern is those parents and those families. We need to make sure they don't fall through the cracks.

Effective parent involvement programs can take root in a school environment that is receptive, welcoming, and nonjudgmental of marginalized parents.[37] Schools can foster such an environment by

[37]Nancy Feyl Chavkin and David L. Williams, "Working Parents and Schools: Implications for Practice," *Education* 111, no. 2 (1990): 242-48; Henry, *Parent-School Collaboration.*

engaging in home involvement and by removing logistical barriers that often inhibit many disadvantaged parents from attending school functions.[38] For example, barriers can be overcome by providing parents with transportation, child-care services, bilingual interpreters, and campus security. However, not all barriers are logistical—some barriers are social. School professionals must develop a vision for change, including an organizational approach that is less hierarchical and more collaborative, with active encouragement for minority parents' participation.[39] In other words, a successful recipe for involvement engenders two-way communication and a democratic partnership approach, including ongoing cooperation, collaboration, trust, learning, and professional development for everyone.[40]

This expanded definition of involvement has obvious implications for both policy and practice—especially for schools impacted by migrant students. It is time for us to "bring the mountain to Mohammed" and begin the process of making a real difference in the educational lives of migrant families.

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[38]Henderson, Marburger, and Ooms, *Beyond the Bake Sale.*

[39]Concha Delgado-Gaitán, "Involving Parents in the Schools: A Process of Empowerment," *American Journal of Education* 100, no. 1 (November 1991): 20-46; Margaret Finders and Cynthia Lewis, "Why Some Parents Don't Come to School," *Educational Leadership* 51, no. 8 (May 1994): 50-54.

[40]Finders and Lewis, "Why Some Parents"; David L. Williams, Jr., and Nancy Feyl Chavkin, "Essential Elements of Strong Parent Involvement Programs," *Educational Leadership* 47, no. 2 (October 1989): 18-20; and Susan McAllister Swap, *Developing Home-School Partnerships: From Concepts to Practice* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1993).

CHAPTER 11

# Against All Odds: Lessons from Parents of Migrant High-Achievers

BY ROBERTO E. TREVIÑO

What if you met a low-income, migrant, non-English-speaking, undocumented family in which the parents had little or no formal education? What would you say the odds would be that one of their children would become an aerospace engineer for NASA? What would be the odds that one of their children would get a scholarship to Rice University or Harvard? What if this family had 18 children, and all 18 graduated from high school and went to college? What if you found *five* families like that? Would you want to find out what these parents did? That's what this chapter is about—a case study involving five very remarkable migrant families. Against all odds, they reared 41 highly successful children, among them doctors, nurses, lawyers, aerospace engineers, teachers, scientists, and business entrepreneurs. Best of all, you will learn what they did to help their children, and how they did it.

The first section describes what some authors (certainly not this one) might consider a *problem*. According to a number of scholars, migrant students are supposed to drop out of school and continue in the "culture of migrancy"—the *problem* is these five migrant families

refute those studies.[1] The chapter continues with an explanation of how the study was conducted, including profiles of the initial sample of students. The second section describes how and why these parents involved themselves in their children's schooling. Finally, the chapter concludes with some ideas on what educators can do to involve migrant parents more effectively in the educational process.

## The *Problem* of Migrant High Achievers

Nationally, legislation and programs designed specifically to improve migrant student achievement have still not solved the problems associated with mobility, a major frustration for policymakers and migrant advocates.[2] In Texas, where this study was conducted, one in five migrant students is overage for grade; and of those migrants who persist through their senior year, nearly one in four will not graduate. During the 1997-98 school year, nearly six in ten migrant students in grades 10-12 did not pass all three sections (reading, writing, and mathematics) of the statewide exit-level examination, the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS).[3]

Nonetheless, each year the Texas Migrant Interstate Program (TMIP) recognizes exemplary migrant student graduates, such as valedictorians, salutatorians, student council presidents, and all-state athletes. Annually, these students have received academic scholarships and appointments to such institutions as Harvard, Rice, Stanford, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, West Point, and the Air Force Academy. In the TMIP awards ceremonies, students have attributed

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[1]The "culture of migrancy" was coined by Joseph O. Prewitt-Díaz, Robert T. Trotter, II, and Vidal A. Rivera, Jr., *Effects of Migration on Children: An Ethnographic Study* (Harrisburg: Pennsylvania Department of Education, Division of Migrant Education, 1989) (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 327 346). The concept will be discussed in the conclusions of this chapter.

[2]Ibid.; Harriett D. Romo, "The Newest 'Outsiders': Educating Mexican Migrant and Immigrant Youth," in *Children of La Frontera: Binational Efforts to Serve Mexican Migrant and Immigrant Students,* ed. Judith LeBlanc Flores (Charleston, WV: ERIC Clearinghouse on Rural Education and Small Schools, 1996) (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 393 635), 61-91; David B. Schuler, "Effects of Family Mobility on Student Achievement," *ERS Spectrum* 8, no. 4 (fall 1990): 17-24; and Andrew Trotter, "Harvest of Dreams," *American School Board Journal* 179, no. 8 (August 1992): 14-19.

[3]Texas Education Agency, *1998-99 State Performance Report: Title I, Part C, Elementary and Secondary Education Act, State Agency Program for Migrant Children* (Austin: Texas Education Agency, 1999).

their success to a variety of factors, including a strong work ethic and mental toughness developed by persevering through many kinds of hardships, a first-hand experience of what life can be like without an education, and, most important, the support and influence of their families, particularly their parents.[4]

## Migrant Parents

Researchers have approached their investigations of migrant student success mostly from two perspectives: (1) the effect of the schools and their support systems and (2) the effect of the socio-cultural factors surrounding the migrant lifestyle.[5] Research addressing the involvement behaviors of migrant parents with their children has

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[4]Texas Migrant Interstate Program, *Exemplary Migrant Students of Texas* (Pharr, TX: Texas Migrant Interstate Program, 1998).

[5]Studies from the first perspective include Ann Cranston-Gingras and Donna J. Anderson, "Reducing the Migrant Student Dropout Rate: The Role of School Counselors," *School Counselor* 38, no. 2 (November 1990): 95-104; Mary Henning-Stout, "¿Qué podemos hacer?: Roles for School Psychologists with Mexican and Latino Migrant Children and Families," *School Psychology Review* 25, no. 2 (1996): 152-64; David Hinojosa and Louie Miller, "Grade Level Attainment among Migrant Farm Workers in South Texas." *Journal of Educational Research* 77, no. 6 (July-August 1984): 346-50; Prewitt-Díaz, "The Factors That Affect the Educational Performance of Migrant Children," *Education* 111, no. 4 (1991): 483-86; Pedro Reyes, Jay D. Scribner and Alicia Paredes Scribner, eds., *Creating Learning Communities: Lessons from High Performing Hispanic Schools*. Critical Issues in Educational Leadership Series (New York: Teachers College Press, 1999); Romo, "Newest 'Outsiders'"; and Anne Salerno, *Migrant Students Who Leave School Early: Strategies for Retrieval* (ERIC Digest) (Charleston, WV: ERIC Clearinghouse on Rural Education and Small Schools, 1991) (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 335 179).

Studies from the second perspective include José A. Cárdenas, *Education and the Children of Migrant Farmworkers: An Overview* (Cambridge: Center for Law and Education, Harvard University, 1976) (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 134 367); E. Garza, Jr., "Life Histories of Academically Successful Migrant Students" (Ph.D. diss., The University of Texas, 1998); Guy J. Manaster, J. C. Chan, and R. Safady, "Mexican-American Migrant Students' Academic Success: Sociological and Psychological Acculturation," *Adolescence* 27, no. 105 (spring 1992): 123-36; Prewitt-Díaz, Trotter, and Rivera, *Effects of Migration on Children*; Linda Rasmussen, *Migrant Students at the Secondary Level: Issues and Opportunities for Change* (ERIC Digest) (Las Cruces, NM: ERIC Clearinghouse on Rural Education and Small Schools, 1988) (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 296 814); Schuler, "Effects of Family Mobility"; and Al Wright, *Reauthorized Migrant Education Program: Old Themes and New* (ERIC Digest) (Charleston, WV: ERIC Clearinghouse on Rural Education and Small Schools, 1995 (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 380 267).

been quite limited.[6] Many policy decisions made in the design and implementation of parent involvement programs for migrant families are based mainly on the parent involvement literature for either traditional student populations or nonmigrant Mexican American populations. Considering that migrant students often attend many schools in many different communities, it would seem logical to study these highly mobile children from the standpoint of the one constant in their lives—their *families.*

Could it be that migrant parents, being a nontraditional population, might involve themselves in their children's education in nontraditional ways? Moreover, based on the assumption that parent involvement has a positive influence on student achievement, would it not make sense to examine how the parents of high-achieving migrant students involve themselves in their children's education? Thus, the principal research question of this study was: *Why and how do parents of high-achieving migrant students get involved in their children's education?*

## Methodology

The subjects of the study were five Texas-home-based Mexican-origin migrant parents—mothers and/or fathers—from five very different geographic regions of Texas: (1) Pharr, in the Rio Grande Valley; (2) Hereford, in the Texas Panhandle; (3) Baytown, 30 miles outside Houston; (4) Loraine, a small town of 731 people in west Texas; and (5) San Antonio, a city of 1.1 million with a Hispanic population of more than a half million. These locations were selected to determine whether the parents involved themselves differently in schools and communities where the Mexican-origin population was

[6]Stephanie L. Bressler, "Voices of Latina Migrant Mothers in Rural Pennsylvania," in *Children of La Frontera* (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 393 647), 311-24; Nancy Feyl Chavkin, *Family Lives and Parental Involvement in Migrant Students' Education* (ERIC Digest) (Charleston, WV: ERIC Clearinghouse on Rural Education and Small Schools, 1991) (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 335 174); Chavkin, "Involving Migrant Families in Their Children's Education: Challenges and Opportunities for Schools," in *Children of La Frontera* (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 393 648, 325-39; Mary Lou de Leon Siantz, "Maternal Acceptance/Rejection of Mexican Migrant Mothers," *Psychology of Women Quarterly* 14, no. 2 (June 1990): 245-54; and Siantz and M. Shelton Smith, "Parental Factors Correlated with Developmental Outcome in the Migrant Head Start Child," *Early Childhood Research Quarterly* 9, no. 3-4 (1994): 481-503.

the majority as opposed to those places where they were the distinct minority.

Although all students in the initial sample were male, their role was merely to identify their parents. During the interviews, the parents described their involvement behaviors relative to ***all*** their children—male and female. The findings described later do not make distinctions as to gender, but clearly this is an area for further research, relative to both parent involvement and student achievement.

Three types of data were used: (1) semistructured individual interviews employing a protocol of open-ended questions and probes, (2) field observations, and (3) field notes. Data were gathered in the fall of 1999 from more than 100 hours of personal audiotaped interviews, telephone interviews, and home visits. Participants could express themselves in either English or Spanish, and all customs of *respeto, cortesía*, and *hospitalidad* that are common to Mexican-origin families were observed. At the families' request, all interviews were conducted in Spanish.

## Student Profiles[7]

**Abel Juárez.** Abel has one older brother and two younger sisters. Both his parents are natives of the Mexican state of Tamaulipas and immigrated to the United States illegally. They settled in Baytown, a coastal city of approximately 70,000, located 30 miles east of downtown Houston. Baytown is served by Goose Creek Independent School District, which has an enrollment of approximately 18,000 students, of whom 37 percent are Hispanic, 17 percent are Black, and 45 percent are White. Abel graduated from high school in three years and then graduated from Rice University in Houston in three years, majoring in mechanical engineering.[8]

**Carlos Ojeda** Carlos graduated as salutatorian of his class of nearly 500 seniors, finishing with a 99.5 GPA in the Advanced Honors Program. He has five older sisters and one younger sister. His father,

[7]The names of all students and family members have been changed to protect their privacy.

[8]U.S. Bureau of the Census, *The Hispanic Population in the United States: March 1990,* Current Population Reports Series P-20, no. 449 (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1991); and Texas Education Agency, *District Snapshot Report: 1997-98* (Austin: Texas Education Agency, 1998).

a native of Nuevo León, and his mother, from San Luis Potosí, immigrated to the United States illegally and settled in Hidalgo County in the Rio Grande Valley. Hidalgo County has a population of more than 380,000, of which more than 315,000 are of Mexican origin. Carlos's school district has an enrollment of more than 20,000 students, of whom 98 percent are Hispanic. Carlos currently majors in engineering at the University of Texas-Pan American in Edinburg.[9]

**Antonio Ortega.** Antonio graduated as valedictorian of his class, finishing with a 108.9 GPA in the Advanced Honors Program. He has one older brother and a younger sister. His mother, the only single parent in the sample, is a native of Chihuahua and immigrated to the United States illegally in the mid-1970s. After migrating to Kansas, Carlos's family settled in Hereford in the Texas Panhandle. Hereford Independent School District has an enrollment of approximately 4,400 students, of whom 73 percent are Hispanic and 25 percent are White. Antonio, a National Merit Scholar, currently attends Harvard University, majoring in engineering.[10]

**Martín Cantú.** Martín graduated fourth in his class of more than 300 seniors, with a GPA of 100.2. He is the second youngest of 11 children, having six brothers and four sisters. His parents, both natives of Zacatecas, immigrated to the United States illegally and settled in San Antonio. The San Antonio Independent School District is one of the largest in Texas, with an enrollment of more than 61,000 students, of whom 84 percent are Hispanic. The enrollment at Martín's high school is more than 88 percent Hispanic, with 85 percent of the students listed as economically disadvantaged. Elected three times to *Who's Who Among American High School Students*, Martín majors in mechanical engineering at Texas A&M University in College Station.[11]

**Ricardo Castillo.** Ricardo graduated as president of his senior class and was an all-district athlete. He is the youngest of 18 children, all of whom have graduated from high school and attended college. Twelve have university degrees and four have community-college degrees. His parents, both first-generation *tejanos*, picked cotton with

[9]Texas Education Agency, *District Snapshot Report: 1997-98.*

[10]Ibid.

[11]U.S. Bureau of the Census, *The Hispanic Population*; and Ibid.

their families throughout southern and western Texas, finally settling in the small town of Loraine in Mitchell County. Sixty-seven percent of the residents in Mitchell County are White, and 28 percent are of Mexican origin. The school district is the smallest of the sample, having an enrollment of 199, of whom 59 percent are Hispanic and 35 percent are White. More than 75 percent of the students in Loraine Independent School District are listed as economically disadvantaged. Ricardo recently became the 13th college graduate in the family, graduating from Angelo State University in San Angelo, Texas.[12]

## Findings

The findings were generated by an initial list of 18 open-ended questions aimed at permitting the parents to provide as much information as possible. The data from the audiotapes were then transcribed, translated, and analyzed for common themes that emerged among the five families. To minimize researcher bias, each family was given the opportunity to review the findings and conclusions for accuracy and correctness, and changes were made accordingly. Not surprisingly, when asked *why* they involved themselves in certain activities, the parents explained it had to do with their personal and family belief systems.

### What These Migrant Parents Believe

**It all starts with a vision.** In each case, at least one parent, with strong support from the other, envisioned superior achievement for their children. The parents had remarkably high academic expectations as well as performance standards. They expected *all* their children to choose a profession and be successful at it.

**Parents are the first teachers.** The parents considered themselves partners with teachers in their children's education. They saw themselves as their children's first teachers and recognized a responsibility to provide as much academic support as possible when the children were out of school.

**Graduating from high school and college is not negotiable.** The families expected *all* their children—girls and boys—to graduate,

[12]Texas Education Agency, *District Snapshot Report: 1997-98.*

preferably with honors. Getting a college degree was not part of the original vision, but the parents expanded their expectations when educators informed them that their children had the achievement profiles to succeed in college. As the older children began college, the goals for the younger children changed from just graduating from high school to graduating from college and obtaining a professional degree.

**Keep the main thing the main thing.** In word and action, the parents in this study made it clear that education was *the* top priority for the whole family. Farm work or any other type of work was secondary for the children and did not interfere with school. In one instance, parents gave each of their 18 children $300 in seed money to take to college—a considerable commitment given their limited resources. Another father won encyclopedias for his children by selling the books door to door. He succeeded at the sales job despite working a full day at a slaughterhouse and not speaking English.

These families did not expect their children to waste time in school but to focus on the lessons and be academically engaged. Except for music, the parents considered school organizations, sports, and other extracurricular activities secondary to academic achievement. Such activities were allowed as long as the children maintained high grades. The parents' motto was "no 'A,' no play."

The parents budgeted their limited money to provide adequate food, medical attention, clothing, books, reference materials, computers, and school supplies for their children. With little or no money for luxuries, the children had fewer distractions such as video games, cars, and music entertainment systems. The children's lives revolved around school, chores, homework, church, and family fellowship.

**No one's going to give you anything on a silver platter.** In their own words, the parents were self-sufficient, proactive *luchistas* (strivers) and expected their children to be the same. They did not expect anything to be given to them on a *platón de plata* (silver platter). On the contrary, these families were very sensitive to the stereotypes attached to illegal immigrants, such as sponging off the government. They took pride in not soliciting help from health and social services. Moreover, with encouragement from their parents, the children developed a mind-set that they were just as bright as their mainstream classmates and could outwork and outthink their way to success in this country.

**Respeto.** Similar to the findings of Guadalupe Valdés, the study found that the families expected their children to respect themselves, teachers, and other students.[13] The children understood that teachers and school administrators were to be considered *segundos padres* (second parents). The parents expected their children to be respectful and cooperative but also competitive high achievers.

**Be proud of who you are.** The parents took pride in all their children's accomplishments and pointed out the assets that had helped them achieve so well: individual gifts, older siblings who were there to help, the superiority of being bilingual and bicultural, and the mental and physical toughness developed from persevering through various family hardships and struggles.

**Religious faith.**[14] Adhering to strong religious beliefs, three of the five families professed to be devout, practicing Christians and followed a strict moral code. These three families gave much credit to their faith in God for helping them overcome numerous hardships.

**You don't need to spank your children.** The parents did not consider corporal punishment an effective form of discipline. They expected their children to be self-disciplined and very conscious that all behavior, good or bad, reflects on the entire family. The families used extra chores, work details, and revocation of school privileges as forms of discipline.

## What These Migrant Parents Did

**Made sure the oldest children were high achievers.** The parents spent more time working with the oldest children for two reasons: (1) older children were more academically challenged because of limited English proficiency, and (2) given the parents' limited educational levels, it was easier to help the older children in the lower grades.

**Involved themselves in school activities with an academic focus.** The parents never missed one-to-one parent-teacher or parent-counselor conferences regarding their children's academic progress. If

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[13]Guadalupe Valdés, *Con Respeto—Bridging the Distances Between Culturally Diverse Families and Schools: An Ethnographic Portrait* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

[14]Note: This topic was not solicited by the researcher.

the teacher did not speak Spanish, they asked the school for an interpreter or, more commonly, asked an older child to translate. None of the parents participated in Migrant Parent Advisory Councils or Site-Based Decision-Making Committees; however, they did occasionally attend PTA or large campus meetings. They rarely attended campus-wide meetings, most of which were conducted in English only, making it impossible to understand what was being discussed. On the other hand, they attended much more regularly when schools conducted the meetings bilingually or provided translators during meetings.

**Attended all ceremonies in which their children were being recognized.** They attended no matter how small the recognition and no matter how difficult it was for them to attend. Even when the recognition meetings were conducted totally in English, the parents realized their presence was extremely important and meaningful to their children.

**Ensured that at least one parent attended to the children after school.** Even if it meant sacrificing much-needed income, they took jobs that allowed the flexibility to be home for their children after school. The single mother, for example, chose to work as a house maid, despite better job opportunities, because the house maid job allowed her to finish work in time to be home when her children got out of school. In other families, the fathers worked two or three jobs to allow the mothers to address school matters that might arise during the day and to be there when the children got home from school.

**Monitored free-time activity very closely.** They allowed little or no time for TV, video games, or "hanging out" with friends. Often, the lack of financial resources did not allow the children these luxuries. The parents saw this as an advantage rather than a deficit because it allowed the children to stay focused on studying. Indeed, they took great care to ensure their children's friends were also academically focused and encouraged them to form self-help study groups, especially in high school. Homework, chores, family time, and academic engagement activities were top priorities after school.

**Designated one parent to assume primary responsibility for school performance.** In three of the families, mothers were responsible for school-related issues and academic performance; in the other two, fathers were responsible. In all cases, the primary parent was the

one with the highest educational level, with the second parent acting as an alternate and usually equally informed. This study suggests that educational level—not gender—is what matters to parents in deciding who assumes the responsibility for their children's school performance.

**Encouraged higher level thinking skills.** The parents conversed with their children as intellectual equals yet maintained the aspect of *respeto.* They discussed complex, sometimes sensitive, family problems and decisions using advanced language forms in Spanish. The parents devoted much time to reading, storytelling, and physical play, especially during preschool years, and made extensive use of oral language, vocabulary, fantasy, and critical-thinking skills during bedtime stories in Spanish.

**Provided whatever academic help they were able to give.** Despite their educational levels, the parents tried their best to help with spelling, reading, science, and math, mostly in Spanish. In the process, they learned English from their children.

**Provided the most effective learning materials they could afford.** These included library books, children's Bible books, encyclopedias, dictionaries, and, in two cases, personal computers. The parents used their limited resources to buy their children the necessary educational resources, shopping at garage sales, flea markets, and thrift stores. They also visited local municipal libraries almost weekly, making sure the children had plenty of reading materials at home.

**Advocated firmly for their children at school.** Willing to endure possible embarrassment because of their limited English skills, modest dress, or unfamiliarity with school protocol, the parents were not intimidated by school staff and other authorities. They gave all due respect to teachers and administrators and accepted nothing less in return. They nipped small problems in the bud, making sure their children received the same fair treatment as other students, especially regarding academic opportunities.

**Minimized school interruptions.** At all grades, but especially at the secondary level, the parents made remarkable personal sacrifices to ensure their children did not miss school. One family flew a son down from Indiana so he could be home on the first day of school. Another father interrupted his work in the fields in Washington state to drive his

Mexican-born, high school-age daughters to San Luis Potosí and Monterrey so they would not miss school. He dropped off his daughters and immediately returned to Washington to finish the harvest.

**Permitted children to participate in musical activities.** The parents favored musical activities such as band, orchestra, and *mariachi* above sports, clubs, and student government. Hard contact sports were least favored because of potential injuries and their possible financial impact on the family. To keep their children focused, participation in musical or any other activities always depended on academic performance.

**Deliberately developed the older children as mentors and tutors.** The parents realized that the older siblings comprised the academic learning capital of the family and delegated certain *in loco parentis* responsibilities to them. As the older children became academically successful, they helped the younger children with homework and advised them on courses to take in high school, college admissions, and financial aid.

**Made extensive use of learning resources in the community.** The families visited their local libraries regularly and often, especially during the summer months. Each child checked out books to read at home. Library fines were no deterrent. The parents chauffeured children to school functions, study-group meetings, and school laboratories to complete projects, even late in the evenings and on weekends. As long as it had to do with school, the parents responded quickly, willingly, and with a positive attitude.

**Valued counselors and teachers as critical resources.** The Rice and Harvard students would not have received scholarships without considerable help from their counselors. Educators also were responsible for expanding the parents' vision to include getting a college degree. Unfortunately, some school counselors did not inform the parents about residency and citizenship requirements for college admission and financial aid. As a result, some of the older children—despite equally high achievement—did not have the same college opportunities as their younger siblings.

## Conclusions

As mentioned, most of the literature on migrant students would suggest that the term *high-achieving migrant student* is an oxymoron. The fact is that, compared to other student populations, little has been

written about migrant students, particularly the role of parents in their education. Unfortunately, what *has* been written has been based on disadvantaged, deficit, or at-risk theories of academic failure; that is, much ado has been made about the negative effects of Mexican-origin culture, the lack of adoption of *American* values, and the supposed lack of high aspirations.[15]

One study, for example, concluded that Mexican-born migrant students with Mexican-born parents tend to be low performers; attend smaller high schools in smaller towns; and come from families that are larger, poorer, more rural, and more "foreign."[16] Even Joseph Prewitt-Díaz and his colleagues, whose study is certainly the most frequently cited and perhaps the most comprehensive ethnographic study on the effects of migration on children, conclude by proposing the existence of "the culture of migrancy." The theory suggests migrant parents feel that the cycle of migration is too hard to break and that their children are likely to end up being migrants too.[17] In contrast, the present study demonstrates clearly that the "culture of migrancy" is not an absolute and can be changed, and supports the notion that parents of high-achieving migrant students involve themselves in their children's education in ways that sometimes differ from school expectations. It further suggests how educators can partner with migrant parents more effectively to enhance the academic achievement of migrant students.

## What Educators Can Do

View the children's migrant/immigrant experience as a positive attribute, not a deficit. In fact, the struggles and hardships of migrants give children strengths such as perseverance, focus, motivation, discipline, attention to detail, teamwork, resiliency, initiative, priority-setting skills, resourcefulness, and bilingual/bicultural abilities.

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[15]George O. Coalson, *The Development of the Migratory Farm Labor System in Texas: 1900-1954* (San Francisco: R&E Research Associates, 1977); Celia S. Heller, *Mexican American Youth: Forgotten Youth at the Crossroads* (New York: Random House, 1966); William Madsen, *Mexican-Americans of South Texas* (New York: Holt, Rhinehart, & Winston, 1966); and Audrey James Schwartz, "A Comparative Study of Values and Achievement: Mexican-American and Anglo Youth," *Sociology of Education* 44, no. 4 (fall 1971): 438-62.

[16]Manaster, Chan, and Safady, "Mexican-American Migrant Students' Academic Success."

[17]Prewitt-Díaz, Trotter, and Rivera, *Effects of Migration on Children,* 117.

**Help migrant parents get involved in activities that meet their needs, not the school's.** If parents are interested primarily in the academic achievement of their children, one-to-one parent-teacher or parent-counselor meetings may be more important than joining the Migrant PAC or the PTA. Ask them to attend activities involving their children, especially awards recognitions. Sensitize school staff to understand that education is a very high priority for migrant parents; however, as a nontraditional parent subgroup, they may not readily participate in more traditional parent involvement activities like PTA or helping teachers in the classroom.

**Encourage parents to establish a tradition of academic excellence.** Urge parents to expend maximum attention and energy as early as possible to enable the oldest children to be high achievers. This will pay huge dividends when the older siblings mentor and tutor the younger ones.

**Help parents resolve their children's U.S. citizenship as soon as possible.** Parents should know that universities in the United States require incoming students to be U.S. citizens or permanent residents by at least their senior year in high school. Educators must explain to parents that, in most states, migrant students cannot receive scholarships and other types of federal financial aid unless they are legal residents, regardless of academic achievement. Because the legalization process is extremely complex and slow moving on both sides of the border, parents should know this information as early as grades 5-6. This can be accomplished without asking parents directly about their personal citizenship status. Moreover, school-community liaison staff can put parents in contact with agencies and individuals who can help negotiate the legal residency process.

**Empower migrant parents to be advocates for their children.** Help parents develop the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that will help them communicate with teachers, counselors, and school administrators in *any* school, in any state, whether in Mexico or the United States. Migrant parents need to know what questions to ask, whom to ask, and who the power brokers and gatekeepers are. Train them on the various school programs available to meet the needs of their children as well as state graduation and promotion requirements. Migrant parents need to know their rights under the law, including the

protocol—how to get things done legally and effectively, with due respect and consideration among all concerned.

**Reach out to migrant families during evening hours and on weekends.** For equity reasons, schools located in economically depressed areas should offer extended-day and weekend programs that allow students to access print and multimedia libraries, science laboratories, and computer banks. Evenings and weekends can also be used for PTA meetings, one-to-one parent-teacher or parent-counselor conferences, legal residency counseling, English-as-a-second-language (ESL) classes, and training for parents on home-teaching skills.

# PART VII

## EDUCATION, TECHNOLOGY, AND MIGRANT CHILDREN

CHAPTER 12

# Making Connections: Building Family Literacy through Technology

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After-school programs have received public support for various reasons in recent years. The federal government and law enforcement agencies view after-school programs as safe havens for latchkey kids. In the report *Safe and Smart: Making After-School Hours Work for Kids*, U.S. Attorney General Janet Reno and Secretary of Education Richard W. Riley stated that juvenile crime and injury could be significantly reduced if the estimated five million latchkey children were placed in after-school programs. As a result, federal government funding earmarked for after-school programs increased by several hundred million dollars toward the end of the Clinton administration.[2] Many local communities also have embraced

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[2]Julie Pederson and others, *Safe and Smart: Making the After-School Hours Work for Kids* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Partnership for Family Involvement in Education, June 1998), http://www.ed.gov/pubs/SafeandSmart/ (accessed October 5, 2002).

after-school programs as opportunities to provide students with homework help and other educationally enriching extracurricular activities.[3]

While it makes sense to supply students with additional learning resources in after-school programs, it is less certain how these programs should be designed and enacted. In fact, a heated debate exists in the field of family literacy about how to offer accessible school-based literacy practices to students and their families who are not part of mainstream society due to their home language and ethnicity. Indeed, Lisa Delpit and, more recently, Cynthia Ballenger have highlighted the challenges educators face in honoring and building on minority students' and parents' home-based literacy practices while, at the same time, introducing school-based literacy practices. Many after-school *family literacy* programs are designed to help close the gap between desirable school-based literacy practices and home-based literacy practices. Olga Vasquez, Lucinda Pease-Alvarez, and Sheila Shannon describe these types of programs as operating under a *difference perspective*. The difference perspective holds that schools try to replace minority language and cultural backgrounds with White, middle-class, mainstream language and culture. The language and cultural backgrounds of minority students and their parents are seen as interfering with the system. But what would a program look like if language and culture were viewed as resources? What if these resources became a foundation for a generation of new understandings in a highly technology-embedded world?[4]

This chapter summarizes key pedagogical design and discursive

[3]Richard Durán, "Cultural Projection in a Community-Based Technology Learning Setting for Immigrant Parents and Children: The Parents, Children, and Computer Project" (paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, New Orleans, April 2000).

[4]Lisa Delpit, "The Silenced Dialogue: Power and Pedagogy in Educating Other People's Children," *Harvard Educational Review* 58, no. 3 (1988): 280, http://unix.temple.edu/~sparkss/delpitsilenced.htm/ (accessed October 5, 2002); Cynthia Ballenger, *Teaching Other People's Children: Literacy and Learning in a Bilingual Classroom* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1999), 6; Elsa Auerbach, "Deconstructing The Discourse of Strengths in Family Literacy," *Journal of Reading Behavior* 27, no. 4 (December 1995): 643-44; and Olga A. Vasquez, Lucinda Pease-Alvarez, and Sheila M. Shannon, *Pushing Boundaries: Language and Culture in a Mexicano Community* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 7.

features of a family literacy program, the 1998-1999 Migrant Educational Technology (MET) program, that made use of technology tools.

## The MET Program

The MET program is an annual after-school program that introduces Latino migrant families to basic computing and educational software applications. Its goals are to provide the families with resources to support students' schoolwork more effectively, increase participants' understandings about basic computing and educational applications, and improve students' school achievement. MET is part of a larger migrant education program at the Detroit Bilingual Education Office, which provides extra support to migrant students at high risk of poor academic achievement due to migratory patterns and low economic and social stability. The Detroit Bilingual Education Office created the MET program specifically to address the persistent disparity in technology access between Latino households and majority-group Americans.[5]

The MET program is aligned with several districtwide goals: (1) to engage parents for the purposes of mobilizing resources, promoting positive attitudes and behavior, strengthening the enabling role of families, and ensuring student learning; and (2) to integrate technology throughout the curriculum, infusing it in the delivery of services.[6]

The 1998-1999 MET program was organized into a preliminary qualifying phase, a work-sessions phase, and a home-based computer use phase. In the first phase, migrant students had to meet academic, attendance, and citizenship requirements to borrow a computer to take home. The students also had to sustain progress in all classes, have exceptional attendance, be punctual, collaborate with others, and have a positive, productive attitude with their peers and teachers in all school activities. Students meeting the preliminary requirements could take their families to work sessions on basic computing and

[5]National Telecommunications and Information Administration, *Falling Through the Net II: New Data on the Digital Divide* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Commerce, National Telecommunications and Information Administration, 1998) (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 421 968), http://www.ntia.doc.gov/ntiahome/net2/falling.html/ (accessed October 5, 2002), 2.

[6]Otis Stanley, *Transitional Connections: Developing a School Improvement Plan* (Detroit: Detroit Public Schools, 1998-2000), 25.

educational applications. The software programs included KidWorks Deluxe, MayaQuest, and a MECC program on fractions.

Fifty participating families qualified to attend work sessions in the fall of 1998. Infrastructure problems plagued the school district and considerably delayed the start; nonetheless, 22 families attended work or make-up sessions for up to 60 hours and thus qualified to take home a computer and a printer. The program continues to provide the 22 families with technical support for home use of the technology tools.

## Pedagogical Design Features

The two pedagogical models used in the 1998-1999 MET program were project-based learning and participatory pedagogy. These models positioned participants as co-constructors of the curriculum.[7]

Project-based learning works well in combination with a participatory model because of five features that help structure knowledge around students' interests: (1) a *driving question* meaningful and broad enough for students to pursue subquestions as part of an (2) *extended inquiry* aided by (3) *collaboration*, (4) *cognitive learning tools*, and (5) *artifacts*. Artifacts allow learners to demonstrate their current understanding and receive feedback from the teacher and other learners. One artifact every family created was a Web page, which showed their understanding of word processing software and hypertext markup language (HTML) as well as their goals and sense of self.

A central feature of participatory curriculum is to work away from a *transmission* model of education toward multilateral directions of knowledge construction. A curriculum guide developed by Elsa Auerbach offers excellent advice for making students' economic, political, and social interests part of the classroom content.[8]

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[7]Ronald W. Marx and others, "Enacting Project-Based Science: Experiences of Four Middle Grade Teachers," *Elementary School Journal* 94, no. 5 (1994): 522; and Auerbach, "Toward a Social-Contextual Approach to Family Literacy," *Harvard Educational Review* 59, no. 2 (1989): 165-81.

[8]Auerbach, *Making Meaning, Making Change: Participatory Curriculum Development for Adult ESL Literacy*, Language in Education: Theory & Practice 78 (Washington, DC: Adjunct ERIC Clearinghouse on Literacy Education for Limited-English-Proficient Adults, 1992) (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 356 688).

It is useful to draw on the interests of families, especially migrants, in planning and doing instructional programs. In her book *Con Respeto,* Guadalupe Valdés writes that family literacy programs may meet short-term goals of family-school involvement efforts but have a detrimental effect on long-term family goals. Designers of family instructional programs know little about the effects of changing the routines and activities for entire families. For instance, family instructional programs can have a negative impact on how, when, and for what reasons mothers talk to their children. Mexican advice, known as *consejos,* might well give way to children telling stories and playing literacy games. The child's mother usually tells *consejos* to her children in private, person to person, and in loving trust. *Consejos* are not written or codified, as they depend on an intimate relationship between mother and child. Echoing Valdés's concerns, Timothy Shanahan and Flora Rodriguez-Brown state, "Family literacy programs raise . . . ethical problems because of their attempt to change parent values with regard to their children's education, and parent-child relations such as the use and sharing of literacy among parents and children." Participatory family programs have the potential to address these concerns because of a central design feature that directly involves students and their parents in the construction of the program's goal, values, content, and methods.[9]

Given that design features alone cannot guarantee a truly participatory orientation among students and their families, what else should be considered? Educators must pay attention to both the pedagogical design and discursive features of the program. The latter can be understood by examining patterns in the discourse of the program's participants.

## MET Participants

I had the opportunity to be the facilitator of the 1998-1999 MET program. I used features from both the aforementioned pedagogical models to position all participants, including myself, as co-construc-

[9]Guadalupe Valdés, *Con Respeto—Bridging the Distances Between Culturally Diverse Families and Schools: An Ethnographic Portrait* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 202; and Timothy Shanahan and Flora V. Rodriguez-Brown, "Towards an Ethics of Family Literacy" (paper presented at the International Family Literacy Forum, Tucson, 1994).

tors of knowledge. I considered my experiences as an educator, a Chicano/Chicana Studies undergraduate, and a Mexican immigrant. At the time of the MET program, I was credentialed in California and Michigan with bilingual endorsements and completing a second year as a doctoral student in education technology. I also had three and a half years of teaching experience and two and a half years of professional development experience. As a teacher, I had worked closely with Latino parents, who were instrumental in various roles—as classroom volunteers and family science workshop participants. I designed the MET program based on my first-hand knowledge of how parents could contribute to a learning environment. I shared language, gender, and immigrant struggles with the MET families. I am a first-generation Mexican immigrant from a poor working-class background. My mother did not finish the third grade, and I was the first female in my family to go to a four-year college. In designing the program, I wanted to create a space where the families and I could address our shared sociohistorical backgrounds. These common foundations are important considerations in designing migrant family literacy programs.

All 22 families were of Mexican heritage and spoke Spanish at home. They lived in the southwest section of Detroit called Mexican Town. Mexican-owned businesses in this community include bakeries, music and gift shops, and restaurants, all of which cater to the local Latino population as well as tourists. Of the 22 families, the 14 that participated regularly in the work sessions consented to take part in the study.

The discourse analysis conducted on all the participants was based on a data set that included 44 hours of audiotape and videotape, field notes on 18 work sessions, copies of parents' printed work, conversations with 14 parents, and copies of the facilitator's handouts. The text excerpts in this chapter appear in English *and* Spanish when relevant; otherwise, only the English version is provided.

## Discursive Features of the MET Program

Drawing upon methods of critical discourse analysis, the MET research study found several key discursive program features that reflected and shaped a collective, participatory orientation on the part of the participants. These included the framing and reframing of the

*driving questions*, acknowledgment of the group's shared experiences, and the facilitator's use of inclusive language.[10]

## Driving Question (DQ)

At the beginning of any migrant literacy program, it is important to determine any concerns the parents have about their children's schoolwork. At MET, one mother said she wanted to find a tutor who could help her child read better. Another mother expressed concern that her son had been retained a year because the teacher felt he was not reading at grade level. A third mother asked which language should be used at home to support her child's schoolwork.

These concerns raised a big question: "How can we improve how our students read and write?" In the terminology of project-based learning pedagogy, this is a driving question that organizes subquestions and that supports extended sustained inquiry about a day-to-day concern of the learners. The participants began a *cycle of activities* that allowed time to learn new technologies while addressing concerns about their children's academic progress. The participants were given practice time to learn a new software tool, then were brought together as a group to discuss works they had created with the tool.

The new tool was introduced in a teacher-directed mini-lesson in a whole-group format. The participants used the software to explore various writing genres, such as fictional and nonfictional short stories. By developing and sharing various written pieces, the participants appropriated different ways of supporting their children's reading and writing proficiencies. The cycle of activities left room for several discussions about Spanish-English language use and about bilingual and mainstream teachers in the local community. The flexibility in the design of the MET program also created a space in which participants could challenge the selection of software applications. In fact, with regard to the software MayaQuest, several parents made it clear they preferred their children to learn about Aztecs rather than Mayans because of the wide influence of Aztecs on Mexican society and culture. The parents' sentiments about the software selection was invaluable in making the technology tools as culturally and linguistically responsive as possible.

[10]Norman Fairclough, *Discourse and Social Change* (Cambridge, England: Polity, 1992), 225.

During the cycle of activities, the parents pointed out that I had improved my Spanish reading and writing. Mrs. Gonzalez, for example, made some edits to an evaluation sheet I had drafted. The evaluation sheet had been designed to get feedback from participants at the end of each work session. The excerpt below contains the exchange about Mrs. Gonzalez's edits.

**How to improve the facilitator's Spanish literacy.** The session began with a directed lesson, in which the whole group reviewed how to save a document on a diskette and on the desktop. Afterward, participants worked in small groups on school projects the students had brought. Midway into the small-group work, Mrs. Gonzalez arrived at the session, and the following exchange took place:

Mrs. Gonzalez: Hice unos cambios. [I made some changes (handing Rosario a document).]

Rosario: Oh, esto se necesita poner a máquina. [Oh, this needs to be typed (smiling).]

Mrs. Gonzalez: Sí. Yo nada más lo traje. Yo dije que tú lo vieras y después que los cambios se le hicieran. [Yes. I just brought it. I said that you (informal) should see it and then later the changes could be made.]

Rosario: Sí. Le gustaría hacer los cambios? [Yes. Would you like to change it?]

Mrs. Gonzalez: Sí. [Yes.]

Rosario: OK. Vamos al centro Andrades porque aquí ya no hay más computadoras. [OK. Let's go to the Andrades' Center (main office) because there are no more computers available here (in the MET computer lab).]

Mrs. Gonzalez: OK. [OK.]

The tone of the exchange was friendly. I was pleasantly surprised that Mrs. Gonzalez had taken the initiative to change an *official* document. She suggested altering the wording to align with language used in Mexico City—a language similar to standard Castillian Spanish and familiar to most of the participants. For example, she changed my translation of "workshop" from *taller* to *sección*, "fair" from *más ó menos* to *favorable*, and "poor" from *mal* to *fatal*. The new revised evaluation sheet was used henceforth.

Other parents and students also helped me remember or articulate words in Spanish. All my formal education in the United States had been in English, save for a couple Spanish courses, so it was no surprise I needed to improve my Spanish literacy. Migrant parents often provide this type of language expertise to staff, educators, and administrators. Likewise, the parents and their children improved their reading and writing abilities in Spanish and English.

**How to improve the mothers' and children's literacy.** One day, the participants composed and typed statements about their families that were to be posted on the MET Web site. In their statement, Mrs. Huerta and her son Jose wanted to thank Mr. Buenavista, the director of the Detroit Bilingual Education Office, who had initiated the MET program. Both mother and son were unsure how to spell the director's name. Jose asked me how to spell "Buenavista."

Jose: Buenavista goes with the little "v?"

Rosario: First with the big "b" then with the little "v" like in "Victor."

Jose: See, mom, I told you.

Mrs. Huerta: With the big one?

In addition to assisting the students with reading and writing, the program helped parents and students improve their Spanish and English literacies. I suggested changing the group's driving question to "How can we improve how *we* read and write?" Mrs. Villa, one of the most active parents in the program, had been taking ESL classes for adults. She had made conscious efforts to learn English in the MET program by writing notes during teacher-directed lessons and asking for specific translations. She responded to the suggestion of the new driving question by stating, "Yes, truly. You (the facilitator) are learning Spanish, and we are learning English."

These developments in the design of the learning activities demonstrate the participatory orientation of MET. The parents' subquestions fed the first driving question of the program, the cycle of activities, and the content. This move created a space in which to negotiate technology-enabled learning activities and the parents' ways of knowing, language, and interests.

The next development was to change the original driving question to "How can we improve how *we* read and write?" We, the

parents and myself, placed ourselves as learners like the students. The program was not operating in a linear, unidirectional fashion. I was not apprenticing the families into the world of educational computing solely for the benefit of the students' literacy development and improvement. All parties were using the technology tools and the learning cycle to develop various aspects of *our* literacies. This participatory, inclusive orientation positioned parents as co-constructors of the sessions' agendas, how the agendas were taken up, and the methods used to carry out the agendas.

Mrs. Gonzales brought up the need to help me develop Spanish literacy. Mrs. Huerta and her son took the opportunity to develop their Spanish literacy. Lastly, Mrs. Villa contributed the notion that the parents were developing their English literacy.

Developing all the MET participants' literacies (including my own) became part of the program's larger agenda via the new driving question. The entire group was invested in developing its literacies, a testament to the participatory orientation of the program. Moreover, the parents' initial concerns about their children's reading and writing drove not only the initial development of the cycle of the activities but the content and purpose for the cycle. As such, the program addressed the parents' ways of knowing, "funds of knowledge," interests, and languages.[11]

These developments, moreover, speak to the program's collective orientation—a sense of affiliation among the participants and myself along shared goals, values, and struggles. We all tried to become bilingual, which formed a bond among participants.

## Group's Shared Experiences: A Latino Esprit de Corps

One session began with a discussion of MayaQuest, leading to a rich conversation about other topics, including the effectiveness of local bilingual and mainstream teachers. A second-year high school student generated a list of recommended teachers in response to a father's request. Some families came in a bit late, and the participants were asked to introduce themselves:

[11]Luis C. Moll and others, "Funds of Knowledge for Teaching: Using a Qualitative Approach to Connect Homes and Classrooms," *Theory into Practice* 31, no. 2 (spring 1992): 132-41.

Mrs. Gonzalez: I am Consuelo Gonzalez. I have four children. I am here in the program. Sometimes I come. Sometimes I don't because, unfortunately, I work. Well, fortunately, I work (mild laughter). Until 5:30 or 7:00. So, sometimes I can't come. But, well, I am here today (applause).

Rosario: I want to add that Mrs. Gonzalez works at BEING (a community center). At the center . . . well, what if you (addressing Mrs. Gonzalez) share with us something about the center?

Mrs. Gonzalez: Well, BEING is a program that was started about 30 years ago to help Latino people. There is training for new better-paying jobs. We are nonprofit. We are not about earning money. The city gives us money in order to offer our services. Well, that is all (applause, as she began to sit down). And I work with just numbers (standing up again). Another thing that I want to tell you. There I took training for computerized accounting. And I asked my teachers why I was the only Latina. The majority are of color. Well, it is not that I am discriminatory or anything. But, it seems strange to me that we are in a Latino community. BEING is in this community. Why are there only two or three Latinos? They told me that it is because Latinos are not well-trained.

Mrs. Vallejo: "Eh" (a Spanish marker for affiliation or agreement).

Mrs. Gonzalez: I think that, no, there are a lot of people that want to. Well, for x number of reasons, the Latino people could not continue with their studies. But there are people like yourselves, ourselves, that are here—we want to continue studying. Well, we were invited to improve upon ourselves, to graduate from high school (addressing the students) or, if not, from the university. Or us like mothers. Me, like a mother. We think sometimes that it is too difficult. But I, too, took the training. And I thought it was much too hard. And I was scared. At that time, I did not know much English. I still don't know much English. But, I can tell you with much pride that I came out with the best . . . ahumm . . .

Rosario: Degree?

Mr. Inez: Average?

Mrs. Gonzalez: Average.

Rosario: Oh.

Mrs. Gonzalez: And this, for me, was a big source of pride, to demonstrate to the teachers that we can. No? Because, on many occasions, they say that we only graduate from the first year of elementary school. It is not true. There are lots of times that people do (advance further in their studies). But we can continue to prepare ourselves. So, there is that training program. And, to me, it seems like a good thing because people with few resources (money) can take the training. Even if they don't have something to move with, they (the center's officials) pay for the training.

Mrs. Vallejos: Then why don't Latinos go to that program?

Mrs. Gonzalez: That is what I have told my children—that the Latino community does not go to that program. But it can. I will bring you (the MET participants) some bulletins so you can see when they (training sessions) start. They also have classes for doctor's assistant. They also have training in the morning and in the evening.

Mrs. Vallejos: That is very good.

Mrs. Gonzalez: And right now, they (programs like the MET program and the BEING center) are like a lift for us (MET participants) so that we can begin to train ourselves. Right now, jobs are requiring that people speak at least two languages. Take me, for example, I like my job. It is a five-minute drive from my home. But I sent out my résumé and now a company wants to hire me for exporting and importing with Mexico, with Latin America. So, it is very nice, isn't it? To show them that we can and that we, too, are intelligent. And there is BEING. There you can go.

Mr. Villa: Thank you.

The collective orientation was, in part, a function of the shared goal to develop everyone's literacies in two languages—Spanish and English. We shared awareness about the associated struggles in learning both languages but particularly English, our nonnative tongue. These struggles have shaped the experiences of the majority of the Latino community in Detroit. Mrs. Gonzalez's tone speaks to how the

design and discourse of the MET program reflected and shaped a collective orientation on the part of the participants.

Mrs. Gonzalez referred to "us" several times in her statements. "Us" is herself and the rest of us in the MET program. This group positioning signaled solidarity along cultural and linguistic lines. Her reference to the official staff of the BEING center and the MET program as "they" illustrated she had not yet fully accepted her position as co-constructor of the MET program, nor of the BEING center where she worked. Her need for "training" showed she had accepted the mainstream approach that knowledge and skills are acquired in a transmission mode rather than in a constructivist, participatory, and collectivist mode. However, her rephrasing, "we can train ourselves," demonstrated an awareness that she and the other members of the program had the skills necessary to take on new knowledge and mold it into skills useful in mainstream society. Specifically, Mrs. Gonzalez acknowledged that the "two language" advantage the MET participants had, coupled with additional training, could increase employment opportunities on both sides of the United States-Mexico border.

Still, Mrs. Gonzalez's phrase "demonstrate to them that we can" explicitly stated the collective orientation of the MET participants. She spoke about the group's shared struggles as Latinos/Latinas in a society that often has labeled migrant and immigrant Spanish-speaking urban dwellers as disintegrated and socially and ethically decayed. These collective perspectives played a crucial role in how the group focused on and developed its literacies and technology skills as well as its sense of power as a Latino group in the local urban community.[12]

## Facilitator's Discourse

I drew on several oral resources to decrease the formal distinction between myself as a *maestra,* or teacher, and the parents as learners. First, I allowed parents to call me by my first name. We never discussed the use of formal and informal referents, but it was clear from the beginning that parents should address me informally. This informality helped set the program's participatory orientation.

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[12]James Crawford, "Bilingual Education: Language Learning and Politics: A Special Report," *Education Week* (1 April 1987): 19-50 (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 284 421).

Second, I consciously used singular and plural forms to address parents when their self-esteem was at stake. On one occasion, I asked a parent about a missing document. Instead of using a singular "you," which would have placed direct responsibility on the parent, I asked, "de casualidad lo horraron ahí en el desktop?" ("By chance, did you (plural) save the work on the desktop?"). My use of plural subject forms was an attempt to maintain parents as co-constructors of learning. I tried to position them not as individual learners making mistakes but as members of a group collectively responsible for a task.

Third, I drew upon tag questions as a linguistic resource. To ensure participation by parents and students in decision making about the content and methods of the program, I often added a tag question to my suggestions. For example, in a discussion where a parent had challenged my choice in a software program, I added, "Are the rest of you in agreement?" This tag question opened the discussion for the participants to dissent or pose alternative options. The following excerpt about providing the families with extra computer time includes an example of a tag question:

> Rosario: That is the thing. We have little time left. We could go Saturday after the class. Are you in? What do you say?

Tag questions are intended to invite ongoing changes, as did the word "draft" on my handouts. I used conditional prefaces in the same way. In a discussion about the MayaQuest program, I asked, "We could look at some other software programs, like about pyramids or about the oceans?" I prefaced this question with the unstated conditional phrase "if you would like."

Fourth, I regularly used low subjective modality, which Norman Fairclough describes as the degree of affinity given to a statement.[15] Hedging, for example, can be an effective use of low subjective modality.[13]

One day, I addressed a mother who was sitting alone during a directed lesson on a new technology tool: "You (formal) know what I am thinking, Madame? That maybe your son would like to see this." I suggested the whole family would be more successful at using the

[13]Fairclough, *Discourse and Social Change,* 142.

tool at home if the mother and son worked together in the work session. Low subjective modality is evident in the words "I am thinking" and "maybe." Had I said, "It would be best if your son joined you," my assertiveness could have intimidated the woman. The words "I am thinking" and "maybe" were more inviting.

## Conclusion

Several lessons emerged from the pedagogical design and discursive features of MET. When enacting participatory programs for migrant families, pay particular attention to the program's social organization and tone of the discourse. Participatory programs call for equity in terms of voice, that is, providing space for all participants' ways of knowing and associated funds of knowledge, language, and interests. It is important to monitor the use of formal referents, tag questions, conditional prefaces, and low and high subjective modality. Together, these efforts shape participation that can support growth in literacy and technology skills.

Fairclough cautions that participatory discourse must be equitable. Business management, in some instances, has employed similar participatory models to make assembly line workers feel like they have a voice. In the end, management, not the workers, still sets the agenda, initiates action, and carries out the action. Colin Lankshear warns that progressive pedagogies can be a dangerous rhetoric because they carry the illusion of equity for all while privileging dominant, mainstream voices. Technology tools also carry the illusion of equity for all when, in reality, many reflect dominant, mainstream voices, interests, and values.[14]

[14]Ibid., 228; and Colin Lankshear, with James Paul Gee, Michael Knobel, and Chris Searle, *Changing Literacies* (Buckingham, England: Open University Press 1997), 187.

CHAPTER 13

# Project SMART: Using Technology to Provide Educational Continuity for Migrant Children

BY PATRICIA MEYERTHOLEN, SYLVIA CASTRO, AND CINTHIA SALINAS

Public Law 89-750, which authorized Title I, Part C, Education of Migratory Children, was passed by Congress on November 23, 1966, as an amendment to Public Law 89-10. This law was initiated in recognition that the basic Title I program did not meet the unique academic and support service needs of migratory children brought about by their mobility. Historically, migrant children:

- had a high incidence of mobility
- were viewed by school districts as nonresident and, as such, not the district's responsibility
- received short spans of instruction
- had no continuity of instruction from district to district and from state to state
- suffered academically because resources did not follow the students as they moved[1]

[1]Alexander Goniprow, Gary Hargett, and Nicholas Fitzgerald, *The Same High Standards for Migrant Students: Holding Title I Schools Accountable, Volume III: Coordinating the Education of Migrant Students: Lessons Learned from the Field* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Office of the Under Secretary, 2002) (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 467 999).

Under the newly developed Migrant Education Program (MEP), states were charged with the responsibility of designing and supporting programs that helped migrant students overcome the challenges of mobility, barriers of culture and language, social isolation, and other difficulties associated with a migratory lifestyle in order to succeed in school and to successfully transition to postsecondary education or employment. Positively impacting the educational achievement of migrant children has posed unique challenges to educators since the program's inception. Under the reauthorization of the Title 1, Part C law, the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, states must ensure that migrant children

- receive appropriate instructional and support services that address their special needs in a coordinated and efficient manner
- are not penalized in any manner by disparities among the states in curriculum, graduation requirements, and state academic content and student academic achievement standards
- receive full and appropriate opportunities to meet state content and student performance standards all children are expected to meet
- benefit from state and local systemic reform[2]

Vicente Serrano identified the lack of instructional continuity as one of the chief detriments to academic success among the children of migrant workers in the United States.[3] Movement across district lines results in changing curricula and materials, instructional approaches, and learning contexts. For elementary students it often disrupts important relationships between student and teacher and could have dire consequences for children in bilingual or special education programs.

Alexander Goniprow and colleagues described the most common conditions leading to the discontinuity of education for migrant children: lost instructional time due to early withdrawal while families

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[2]*No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. U.S. Code.* Vol. 20, sec. 1301 (2002). http://www.ed.gov/legislation/ESEA02/pg8.html/ (accessed January 8, 2003).

[3]Vicente Z. Serrano, *Mobility and Continuity: New Ways of Lowering Dropout Rates for Migrant Students through Credit Accrual and Exchange* (Denver: Education Commission of the States, 1983) (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 261 851).

relocated or due to late re-entry; lack of information to place students properly; loss of course credits due to lack of information about courses taken elsewhere or inappropriate placements; missed opportunities to prepare for and take the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS) test; inconsistent high school course offerings; conflicts between need to work and to attend school; dissimilar language assistance programs for LEP migrant students; dissimilar grade placement policies; and different graduation requirements between schools and states.[4]

The MEP as a state-administered, federally funded program has a wide degree of flexibility in designing programs that address educational discontinuity. To fill in the gaps in a migrant student's education, states may offer programs at grade levels ranging from prekindergarten to high school, in time slots ranging from weekend tutorial sessions to summer night programs, and in settings ranging from traditional classrooms to migrant labor camps. Many times MEP staff implement nontraditional educational approaches with the hope that students will make significant academic gains in short periods of time.

This search for effective ways to maintain more educational continuity and improve migrant students' learning experiences has led migrant educators to investigate computer and distance learning technologies. Project SMART (Summer Migrants Access Resources through Technology), a national distance learning program for migrant students, offers tremendous potential in addressing this educational dilemma by coordinating efforts among its partner states. Students can move from school to school and still receive the same curriculum delivered by the same instructor.[5]

Carolyn Adger voiced the need for fundamental change in the ways schools function to promote student success.[6] Her premise was that by modifying curriculum and instruction and involving all stake-

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[4]Goniprow, Hargett, and Fitzgerald, *The Same High Standards.*

[5]Texas Education Agency, *Project Smart Operational Guide* (Austin, TX: Texas Education Agency, 2002).

[6]Carolyn Temple Adger, *Language Minority Students in School Reform: The Role of Collaboration* (ERIC Digest) (Washington, DC: ERIC Clearinghouse on Languages and Linguistics, 1996) (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 400 681).

holders, the notion of *school* can be reconceptualized to formulate a more collaborative structure. Project SMART promotes a new conceptualization of migrant education by making the entire nation a school for participating migrant students.

## How Project SMART Began

In the late 1980s to early 1990s, visionary migrant education leaders began to explore new possibilities for technology projects. Various state-level migrant directors met to discuss the concept of shared accountability for Texas-based migrant students moving to other states. Frank Contreras, director of the Texas Education Agency's (TEA) Division of Migrant Education, and Angela Branz-Spall, director of the Montana Office of Public Instruction's Title I Migrant Program, agreed to a summer program for Texas migrant secondary students traveling to Montana. They formed a collaborative interstate relationship with the following premises: (1) a desire and commitment to improve migrant education through the resourceful use of technology; (2) a willingness to share expertise, staff, and funding to implement the program; (3) the boldness to be innovative and flexible in program design; (4) the strong belief that migrant students deserve opportunities for academic success; and (5) a proactive leadership approach in moving the project toward implementation.

Contreras and Branz-Spall enlisted the aid of several migrant educators, which evolved into the National Migrant Distance Learning Committee. These individuals were long-standing friends who held influential positions and roles within migrant education programs.[7]

[7]Roy Jackson, Hilda Escobar, Marty Pena, Sheila Nicholls, and Art Sepulveda from several Texas Education Service Centers; Tadeo Reyna and Sylvia Castro of the Central Stream Program Development/Coordination Center; Ana Acevedo of the Houston Independent School District; Ramon Billescas of the Pharr San Juan Alamo Independent School District; Norma Davis of the Mission Consolidated Independent School District; Mari Gonzalez of the La Joya Independent School District; Elena Mycue of the McAllen Independent School District; Peggy Wimberley of the University of Texas at Austin Migrant Student Graduation Enhancement Program; and Tomas Yánez, director of the Texas Migrant Interstate Program. Other participants included Kathy Bibus, Susan Durón, Bob Lynch, and Pat Meyertholen of the Indiana Migrant Education Program; Brenda Pessin of the Illinois State Board of Education; Manuel Recio of the Pennsylvania Migrant Education Program; and Paula Stoup.

The technology project in the summer of 1992 was the first migrant distance-learning effort using satellite-delivered instruction. The pilot, "From the Lone Star to the Big Sky," included approximately 150 migrant students and their parents. The organizers selected content, hired teachers, and delivered lessons by satellite from the Texas Region XX Education Service Center (Region XX ESC) in San Antonio. The summer pilot was a success, and preparations were made to continue, improve, and expand the project through follow-up meetings.[8] Periodic meetings were scheduled to coincide with major migrant conferences and in San Antonio so distance-learning teachers from the Region XX ESC could report to the committee.

The National Distance Learning (NDL) Committee formalized general guidelines for content selection: challenging curriculum following TEA requirements; learner-centered and research-based instruction; culturally and linguistically relevant content; integration of math, science, and language arts; thematic units; hands-on activities; support materials and extension activities; English-as-a-second language (ESL) strategies; and reinforcement activities for the home. The Region XX ESC Distance Learning Division (TI-IN Network) entered into partnerships and formal arrangements to provide the telecasts. This included hiring and training television teachers, developing curriculum, and delivering instruction via satellite. The Central Stream Program Development/Coordination Center (PDC) supported the effort with staff development, coordination, and funding for several components of the project. The Texas Migrant Interstate Program (TMIP) contributed interstate efforts such as student tracking, credit exchange, and out-of-state testing.

The collaboration, staff development, and training were diverse and complex. Cross-training was important and necessary. For example, the Region XX ESC TI-IN Network distance-learning teachers and personnel were trained to "catch the vision" of educational opportunities for migrant students, while school personnel were required to learn about satellite technology and distance-learning terminology.

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[8]Frank Contreras, *Texas/Montana Summer Distance Learning Pilot Project: "From the Lone Star to the Big Sky"* (1992) (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 361 126).

Finally, the Region XX ESC TI-IN Network distance-learning instructors prepared student curriculum, or SMART packets, which TMIP distributed to participating school districts. An effort was made to minimize costs to districts. The TEA's Division of Migrant Education covered the expenses for television instructors, satellite airtime, materials development, and production. School districts paid for materials duplication, personnel, and project operating costs, through summer amendments funded by TEA. Funding requests and program selection were prioritized based upon the length of the summer program, number of students to be served, cost per student, and uniqueness of the program in meeting the special needs of migrant students.

In just one short year, by the summer of 1993, the program had grown to 18,000 students. The TEA reported that more than 3,200 high school students had earned a half credit toward graduation by taking Mathematics of Money during the televised course. The numbers increased yearly as programming for more grade levels became available and as more Texas schools and more receiving states (states receiving students home-based in Texas) joined the Project SMART consortium. The growth of the project continued even though Project SMART was not mandatory in Texas; it was just one more resource for districts that wanted to expand their summer programs. Some districts continued their traditional migrant summer programs; others incorporated Project SMART; and still others made Project SMART the centerpiece of their summer programs. By 2002, Project SMART served almost 50,000 migrant students in 11 states.[9]

## How Project SMART Works

Every year, the TEA's Division of Migrant Education contracts with the StarNet Consortium-Region XX ESC in San Antonio, Texas, to provide the SMART telecasts, the television teachers, the curriculum, and the satellite broadcast time. Costs for television instructors, satellite airtime, materials development, and production expenses are provided by the TEA's Division of Migrant Education while participat-

[9]States participating in Project SMART include Illinois, Maryland, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, New York, Ohio, Texas, and Wisconsin.

ing Texas school districts and receiving state partners pay for materials duplication, personnel, and project operating costs.

The NDL Committee, composed of partner state representatives, develops themes, evaluates the preceding year's SMART offerings, fosters interest among receiving states, and explores new technologies that might be incorporated through the SMART program. In accordance with best practices for English language learners, the NDL Committee provides continuous, explicit attention to how students' language skills, cultural backgrounds, and experiences shape the way Project SMART defines its unique distance-learning model for migrant students.[10]

The NDL Committee actively addresses the vastly differing needs of the many states. The flexibility of the instructional delivery models for Project SMART allows Texas districts and partner states to incorporate SMART to meet their own needs and resources. For example, in Texas, Weslaco Independent School District (ISD) customizes Project SMART to fit its own goals and objectives by infusing gifted-and-talented strategies into SMART thematic units at the elementary levels. McAllen ISD (Texas) employs college students to mentor migrant students during the SMART summer migrant education project. LaJoya ISD (Texas) incorporates an e-mail component into the SMART design to communicate with migrant students in other receiving states taking SMART courses. Through the Indiana MEP, Project SMART is offered in a trailer at a migrant labor camp. In Montana, a "techmobile" travels to all the summer migrant education projects, providing technical support for Project SMART's hands-on activities. The Minnesota Migrant Resource Center developed SMART traveling thematic unit kits for use in its summer migrant education projects.

Blending television technology and innovative instructional design, Project SMART provides distance-learning education to two groups of students. First, migrant students who remain in Texas during the summer are taught in their homes, at school sites, or in community centers via televised classes with additional instructional support from locally employed teachers. Second, Texas students living temporarily out of state and attending established summer

[10]Adger, *Language Minority Students in School Reform.*

educational programs for migrant students can also participate. Students migrating out of state receive the same curriculum from the same television teachers as students remaining in Texas, providing educational continuity for Texas home-based migrant students. Migrant personnel in the states that receive Texas migrant students coordinate with Texas migrant personnel and television instructors to facilitate credit accrual for secondary migrant students.[11]

At each level of instruction, Project SMART is based on the philosophy that learner-oriented activities should be relevant to the students' experiences, and that lessons should be framed in meaningful contexts. Extensive drill and practice are given low priorities, and conceptual teaching for understanding is the guiding factor for instructional development. The themes, lessons, and activities selected for the five grade-level strands reflect functional principles, including an abundance of opportunities for natural, meaningful communication. Cooperative learning and interactive group activities that can be used either at home or school are incorporated into the lessons. Materials and resources easily available to students are used as centers of suggested follow-up activities.[12]

Project SMART offers five grade levels of programming. An early childhood level (PK-K) emphasizes oral language within developmental contexts (social, cognitive, cultural, and physical) and higher order thinking skills. The lower elementary level (grades 1-2) and the upper elementary level (grades 3-5) are directly related to the reading, writing, and math skills on Texas's standardized test, the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS), with special emphasis on integrating higher order thinking skills into math and science thematic units. The middle school level (grades 6-8) provides math and science skills related to TAKS with lessons built around migrant students' daily experiences. Traditionally, the high school level (grades 9-12) offers one new credit course per summer. School districts have the opportunity to continue to use videotapes of the secondary courses for credit and/or enrichment.[13]

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[11]Texas Education Agency, *Project Smart Operational Guide*, 2002.

[12]Ibid.

[13]Ibid.

Many times Project SMART is infused into existing summer offerings. The summer program at the local site may consist of three to five days of instruction per week, and it may be a half-day or full-day program. In receiving states, summer migrant projects range in length from three to eight weeks, depending on the crop cycle. Students often begin Project SMART in Texas and continue with the programming in another state. Project SMART live broadcasts run from the second week in June through the end of July. Summer migrant education programs tune in to Project SMART as soon as their summer programs begin. Areas in Texas that do not have access to telecasts by cable receive the instruction via satellite, as is the case for the receiving states participating in Project SMART. For those summer migrant projects without satellite or cable capabilities, videotapes of the telecasts are available.

An integral component of instruction involves SMART Partners, employed by summer migrant programs. For students remaining in Texas, the SMART Partner often is a teacher or paraprofessional who interacts with students in their homes. In out-of-state programs, SMART Partners facilitate in summer school programs, which are mostly center based. SMART Partners monitor progress, assess student achievement, implement additional instruction, and share ideas with the television teacher via a toll-free telephone number. SMART Partners are critical team members who provide the face-to-face interactions necessary to build self-esteem, as well as the follow-up activities to the televised instruction.[14]

Television teachers call on participating schools in an organized manner and use the interactions to monitor performance and to maintain instructional momentum. To minimize delays and down time, SMART Partners review proper telephone etiquette with their students before using the toll-free telephone number during on-air class time. Students participating in classes from their homes or community centers or via videotape are not able to call in during classes. These students, along with those participating in the live interactive sessions, may talk to the television teacher before or after the on-air class during established office hours.[15]

[14]Ibid

[15]Ibid.

## Other Technology Projects and Programs

Project SMART has piloted other technologies as part of its offerings, such as streaming audio and video, reception via computer stations that receive SMART through T-Star (the TEA's satellite programming), and Internet tutoring options. Through the NDL Committee, Project SMART works collaboratively with other technology projects that serve migrant students.

The Office of Migrant Education (OME) piloted five five-year technology projects for migrant students in 1997. Project Estrella, one of the OME technology grants awarded to the Illinois Migrant Council (IMC), serves fifty high school students each year who travel with laptop computers and access online coursework. IMC coordinates with the NDL Committee and offers SMART secondary coursework as one of the credit options to its secondary students.[16] In the summer of 2003, the SMART secondary offering was a creative writing course developed for CD-ROM by the National PASS (Portable Assisted Study Sequence) Center. In addition, a balanced literacy approach will be incorporated into the SMART thematic instructional model in the lower and upper elementary grades. Balanced literacy offers students and teachers a more sustained approach to reading in order to proactively address the challenging NCLB reading standards that migrant children, as well as the general student population, are expected to meet. Staff development to provide teachers and SMART Partners training on balanced literacy will be offered via satellite television, which will provide continuing education credits to those who successfully complete the staff development training program.

As technologies improve, becoming less expensive and more readily available to the large numbers of migrant students who participate in SMART in a wide variety of ways, the NDL Committee pilots them as optional means of service delivery. However, there are still great obstacles impeding migrant student access to the various technologies being applied to migrant education. For example, in many receiving states the only telephone in migrant labor camps is the public pay phone. Computer labs in school buildings are usually

[16]Jeri Kinser, Patricia Meyertholen, and Brenda Pessin, "From the Fields to the Laptop," *Learning and Leading with Technology* 28, no. 5 (February 2001).

closed during the summer months when summer migrant programs are operating in the receiving states. Summer migrant education projects often operate out of libraries, migrant labor camps, community centers, and migrant families' residences—all sites where there is limited access to technology. When incorporating various forms of technology into the SMART programming, the migrant lifestyle is always kept in mind.

Project SMART is successful because it embraces the lifestyle of the migrant student and seeks to make it a positive experience, rather than a negative one. And Project SMART continues to flourish because it offers a curriculum that is adaptable, universal, flexible, and transportable—all qualities that address the need for continuity in the educational process of migrant students. Finally, Project SMART offers migrant educators a distance-learning technology that is affordable, available, and flexible enough to allow for a variety of implementation needs to meet the demands of migrant education programs throughout the nation.

# PART VIII

## CULTURALLY AND LINGUISTICALLY APPROPRIATE PRACTICES

CHAPTER 14

# Alternative Secondary Mathematics Programs for Migrant Students: Cultural and Linguistic Considerations

BY SYLVIA CELEDÓN-PATTICHIS

The manual *Principles and Standards for School Mathematics* includes equity as one of its principles: "Excellence in mathematics education requires equity—*high expectations* and *strong support* for all students."[1] Migrant students need strong support from educators while traveling from state to state or within a state. These students worry about fitting in culturally and linguistically, performing in content areas such as mathematics, and meeting their families' needs.[2]

One of the goals of the U.S. Department of Education Migrant Education Program (MEP) is "to ensure that migrant children have access to services to assist in overcoming cultural and language barriers, health-related problems, and other challenges that place

[1]National Council of Teachers of Mathematics, *Principles and Standards for School Mathematics* (Reston, VA: National Council of Teachers of Mathematics, 2000), 11.

[2]Yolanda G. Martinez and Ann Cranston-Gingras, "Migrant Farm Worker Students and the Educational Process: Barriers to High School Completion," *High School Journal* 80 (1996): 28-37. Emphasis added.

children at risk for completing their education."[3] Similarly, the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM) recognizes the importance of mathematics teaching and learning for culturally and linguistically diverse students. In a position statement on mathematics for language-minority students and English-as-a-second-language (ESL) learners, NCTM proposed the following:

- All students, regardless of their language or cultural background, must study a core curriculum in mathematics based on the NCTM Standards.
- Educators must identify and remove language-based barriers by providing first- and second-language support while learning mathematics.
- Counselors and teachers must support and encourage students to enroll in higher-level mathematics and continue their higher education in technical fields.
- The importance of mathematics and the nature of the mathematics program must be communicated both to students and parents.
- The mathematics curriculum, teaching, and assessment must include connections to the cultural heritage of students and build on prior knowledge and experiences.[4]

Schools must prepare migrant students for higher education, which includes offering alternative mathematics curricula that enable them to complete their high school diplomas.

The first part of this chapter analyzes secondary mathematics curricula available to migrant students nationwide through distance-learning programs, including the University of Texas Migrant Student Program, Project Summer Migrants Access Resources through Technology (SMART), and Encouraging Students through Technology to Reach Expectations in Learning Life Skills and Achievement

[3]U.S. Department of Education, Office of Migrant Education, *Migrant Education Program* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, 13 November 1998), http://www.ed.gov/offices/OESE/MEP/ (accessed October 2, 2002), 2.

[4]National Council of Teachers of Mathematics, *Mathematics for Second-Language Learners* (Reston, VA: National Council of Teachers of Mathematics, July 1998), http://www.nctm.org/about/position_statements/position_statement_06.htm/ (accessed October 2, 2002).



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(ESTRELLA). Also described is the Portable Assisted Study Sequence (PASS) Program, provided by the BOCES Geneseo Migrant Center, which is not a distance-learning program but does offer a consistent curriculum for migrant students. These programs focus particularly on the secondary level, where higher level mathematics, a requirement for acceptance to most four-year universities, often has been inaccessible to migrant students (see Table 1). The second part of the chapter examines the challenges of integrating the cultural and linguistic experiences of migrant students into

**Table 1: Distance-Education Programs in Mathematics**

| Name of Program and Course Offerings | Contact Information |
|---|---|
| 1. **University of Texas Migrant Student Program**<br>Algebra 1A* & 1B, Algebra Across the Wire, Geometry A & B | Peggy Wimberley<br>Phone: 800-444-1905 or 512-471-0581<br>Fax: 512-232-5533<br>E-mail: peggywimberley@mail.utexas.edu<br>http://www.utexas.edu/cee/dec/migrant/courses.html |
| 2. **Project SMART**<br>TAAS Math Preparation (noncredit), Algebra 1A*, Geometry A & B | Patricia Meyertholen<br>Phone: 512-463-9067<br>Fax: 512-463-9759<br>http://www.jump.net/~newman/tea/toc97.html |
| 3. **Project ESTRELLA**<br>Course offerings through NOVA Net and use of laptops | Brenda Pessin, Project Director<br>Phone: 312-663-1522, ext. 233<br>E-mail: brenda_pessin@msn.com<br>http://www.estrella.org |
| 4. **Portable Assisted Study Sequence (PASS)**<br>General Math A & B, Consumer Math, Consumer Economics, Basic Algebra/ Calculator, Algebra A & B | Robert Lynch, Director<br>Phone: 800-245-5681<br>Fax: 716-658-7969<br>E-mail: pass@migrant.net<br>http://www.migrant.net/pass/ |

*A = First Semester
B = Second Semester

learning mathematics. The final section summarizes how schools can better address the needs of migrants studying mathematics.

## Alternative Approaches to Mathematics Curricula

Distance education can provide migrants with continuity in secondary mathematics education. Most of the programs described in this chapter initially were implemented for migrant students only but now have become schoolwide programs that help any student who needs to make up missed work.[5]

### The University of Texas Migrant Student Program

Since 1987, The University of Texas at Austin has provided a program that offers 22 of the core courses required for high school graduation in Texas, delivered in a distance-education format designed specifically to meet the needs of migrant students. More than 75 percent of the students in the program complete their courses. The program is based on research that identifies best teaching strategies for migrant students. For example, characteristics of effective distance-learning courses include the following:

- short study units and vocabulary reviews to ensure comprehension of content and to improve language and vocabulary skills
- commentary that explains and demonstrates subject matter in clear, concise language
- appropriate, effective visual presentations that reinforce course elements
- various objective activities that give students ample opportunities to apply and practice new knowledge and skills
- writing exercises that invite students to relate subject matter to their own lives[6]

[5]Martinez and Cranston-Gingras, "Migrant Farm Worker Students"; and *Improving America's Schools Act of 1994*, Public Law 103-382, §§ 1301-09 (1994).

[6]Judy Ashcroft Copeland and Thomas M. Hatfield, "Migrant Student Program," *Discovery* 15, no. 4 (2000): 31, http://www.utexas.edu/admin/opa/discovery/disc2000v15n4/disc_migrant.html/ (accessed October 2, 2002).

The program delivers courses in nontraditional ways to accommodate migrant students' needs. For example, students can earn credit through correspondence or by exam. It also employs on-site grading, audio-conferencing, CD-ROMs, and the Internet. These delivery formats provide students the option of doing coursework at home, at school through extended-day programs offered before and after school, or in summer school programs. This flexibility is important to migrant students as they move from place to place. Furthermore, a network enables Texas and out-of-state migrant educators to interact personally with students enrolled in distance-education courses.

One of the courses offered through the program is Algebra Across the Wire, which allows students around Texas and in other states to earn missed credits via live audio-conferencing. The technology is similar to a telephone conference call, as one instructor can communicate with students throughout Texas and in 50 schools outside the state.

The first semester of algebra was first taught during the summer of 1992 to a group of high school migrant students at Texas A&M at Kingsville, Texas. The student population consisted of 13 students from South Texas—8 males and 5 females aged 15 to 18. Most of the students had taken algebra two or more times, and their scores on the Stanford Diagnostic Mathematics Test indicated low achievement in problem solving, mathematical concepts, and computation. In spite of this previous lack of success, the final grade average for the first Algebra Across the Wire class was 88 percent, with all students passing the course.[7]

Although the instructor taught via audio-conferencing, an on-site instructor was available an hour before the course began to answer students' questions. In addition, students who wanted additional review or who experienced difficulty with the course had access to an instructional videotape.

Algebra Across the Wire was offered to 36 migrant students in Greeley, Colorado, and in Laredo, McAllen, and El Paso, Texas, during

[7]Kathy J. Schmidt, Michael J. Sullivan, and Darcy Walsh Hardy, "Teaching Migrant Students Algebra by Audioconference," *The American Journal of Distance Education* 8, no. 3 (1994): 51-63.



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the summer of 1993; 33 students passed the course, 2 dropped, and 1 failed. The unsuccessful student was an English language learner who was unable to work effectively with a translator during class time. The overall final grade average for the four sections of the course was 92 percent.[8]

Given this high success rate, the number of students enrolled in Algebra Across the Wire almost doubled, and the number of sites increased to five in the summer of 1994. Two sites offered a second semester of algebra in addition to the first. The overall final grade average was 90 percent for the 58 students who completed the course.

## Project SMART

Project SMART, a collaborative distance-learning program between the Division of Migrant Education of the Texas Education Agency and its receiving states, aims to increase educational opportunities for migrant students. Combining technology and innovative instructional design, Project SMART includes several delivery models—live interactive televised instruction, live noninteractive televised instruction, delayed televised instruction, and videotaped lessons. Mathematics courses that have been videotaped in the past include Mathematics of Money, Pre-Algebra A and B, Informal Geometry A, and Algebra A and B.

Project SMART addresses the needs of two groups of students. First, migrant students who remain in Texas during the summer can receive instruction in their homes, at school sites, or in community centers via televised classes. A locally employed teacher or paraprofessional visits students' homes to offer assistance. Second, students who live temporarily outside Texas can participate if they are enrolled in an established summer education program for migrant students. Again, televised classes are the main conduit of instruction. In out-of-state programs, SMART partners are responsible for monitoring student progress, assessing student achievement, implementing additional instruction during nonbroadcast times, and sharing ideas with the television teacher via a toll-free telephone number. SMART part-

[8]Ibid.



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ners play a critical role by interacting with the students face to face and providing follow-up activities to the televised instruction.[9]

## ESTRELLA

Funded by the Office of Migrant Education (OME), ESTRELLA provides migrant students in Texas with opportunities to earn credits toward graduation, prepare for exit-level standards-based achievement testing, and/or enhance their academic skills. Participation in the program is not automatic; students must meet certain criteria. First, to participate in ESTRELLA, migrant students must show a pattern of moving from Texas to Illinois, Minnesota, Montana, or New York. Priority enrollment is extended to motivated juniors and seniors who have strong parental support; freshmen and sophomores are given second priority. Other selection criteria include having a phone, needing credits, having study skills and computer literacy, and being a self-advocate. Migrant students are identified from six targeted Texas school districts: Eagle Pass, La Joya, Mercedes, Pharr-San Juan-Alamo, San Felipe-Del Rio, and Weslaco.

Key components of ESTRELLA include collaboration, distance learning, cyber mentors, and visual learning. At the center of the program is the collaborative effort between the receiving states and the home-base state of Texas. The ESTRELLA Working Web Home Page is a place for learning, where instructors and students can share ideas and information. Furthermore, teachers, family, and friends communicate with one another via e-mail.[10]

ESTRELLA's distance learning is provided through NOVA Net. The interactive curriculum includes graphically rich multimedia lessons, with self-paced courses that adapt to student needs. Students take their courses with the same teacher. This continuity allows them to complete the coursework from their homes or anywhere they travel. Most important, migrant students do not have to worry about differences in curricula from state to state. Cyber mentors are an important facet of the program. In addition to assisting with coursework, cyber

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[9]Meta Associates, *Project SMART Linking Classrooms Through Distance Learning in Montana* (N.p.: [Meta Associates], n.d), http://www.metaassociates.com/MT_Smart_right.html/ (accessed October 2, 2002).

[10]ESTRELLA Web Site, http://www.estrella.org/ (accessed October 2, 2002).

mentors are positive role models who help migrant students make the transition from high school to postsecondary education and who inform them of career options.

### Portable Assisted Study Sequence (PASS)—BOCES Geneseo Migrant Center

Recognized nationally and used by 29 states, PASS originated in 1978 as part of California's Secondary Migrant Dropout Prevention Program. PASS offers mobile secondary students an alternative means to earn full or partial credits toward graduation. In addition, Mini-PASS serves middle-school students and offers similar educational opportunities. Both programs are designed to meet the needs of migrant, alternative, and nontraditional students. Data from 1991 to 1996 indicate that PASS serves an average of 11,870 students and graduates an average of 2,186 students per year.

Each semester course consists of five units with unit tests. PASS provides students with all materials needed, such as rulers, graph paper, textbooks, and reference materials. What makes PASS alternative is its flexibility to allow students to work semi-independently with the assistance of a mentor, who meets with the students on a regular basis. The students can complete a course at their own pace and, with the assistance of more than one mentor, begin a course in one city and complete it in another. The curriculum does not change, so students can finish the work on two units in one location and another three units at a different place. When students pass the five unit tests, they earn a half credit toward graduation.

PASS offers a variety of courses in language arts, science, mathematics, and other subjects. The mathematics courses include General Math A & B, Consumer Math, Consumer Economics, Basic Algebra/Calculator, and Algebra A & B. The 2000-2001 National PASS Report data indicate that mathematics and science are the subjects least enrolled. Although the course offerings may help students meet minimum mathematics requirements for a high school diploma, educators should be careful not to limit students' options to regular graduation tracks, versus college preparatory tracks. All migrant students should be encouraged to take courses beyond algebra and geometry, which increase their chances to enroll in a four-year university and eventually find a job involving higher level mathematics.

The course completion rate was 31.1 percent in 1991-1992 (12,283 courses enrolled, 3,823 courses completed), 44.7 percent in 1992-1993 (13,541 courses enrolled, 6,063 courses completed), and 68.7 percent in 1995-1996 (11,742 courses enrolled, 8,068 courses completed). Although PASS had low success rates in the early 1990s, the course completion rate increased substantially in the mid-1990s. Students' essays portray success stories from PASS and indicate that the program has made a significant difference in helping students finish high school.[11]

## Cultural and Linguistic Influences in Mathematics Learning

All of these programs create alternative approaches that address the needs of migrant students. A challenge still remains to make the curriculum relevant to students' linguistic and cultural experiences. Making connections between migrant students' experiences and mathematics is left up to the instructors and on-site educators. Despite the success rates of these programs, it is important to consider the challenges migrant students encounter as they try to study various subjects while learning a second language.

### Learning a Second Language

Migrant ESL students face the dual tasks of learning new linguistic structures and academic content. The process of learning a new linguistic system and academic content does not occur automatically. In fact, to attain the same academic performance as native English speakers, English language learners may take five to seven years or more to develop proficiency in a second language. Jim Cummins (1992) distinguishes between two levels of language proficiency—basic interpersonal communication skills (BICS) (i.e., social language) and cognitive/academic language proficiency (CALP), the type of language required to understand mathematics content. If students have not developed the language used for academic tasks in their first

[11]National PASS Center Web Site, http://www.migrant.net/pass/ (accessed October 2, 2002); National PASS Center, *Portable Assisted Study Sequence: 1995-1996 National Report* (Mt. Morris, NY: Geneseo Migrant Center, 1997); and *PASS: 2000-2001 National Report* (Mt. Morris, NY: Geneseo Migrant Center, 2002), http://www.migrant.net/pass/pdf/2002.pdf/ (accessed August 1, 2003).

language, they may experience difficulty with CALP in their second language.[12]

This potential dilemma has two implications. First, if migrant students have CALP for mathematics in their first language, mathematical concepts (e.g., addition, subtraction, division, multiplication) will transfer to their second language, with changes in the lexical items (vocabulary) attached to these concepts. Second, if migrant students do not have CALP in their first language, they will have considerable difficulty developing CALP in their second language. Teachers and migrant students may need to use the first language more frequently when referring to mathematical terms in problem solving.[13]

Mathematics word problems will be significantly complex for two reasons. First, processing linguistic structures from one language to another takes time; some words may not make sense to the reader. Second, mathematics word problems are not always straightforward in comparison to problems that involve simple calculations. As a result, ESL students easily can misinterpret text or be confused by word problems with more than one solution.[14]

Migrant students need mathematical activities that address language in natural as well as mathematical contexts. Initial reading of word problems should focus on understanding so students learn to differentiate between natural language and mathematical language.

In a recent study, I conducted think-aloud protocols with nine ESL students of Mexican descent in a self-contained 6th to 8th-grade classroom. They struggled to construct meaning from word problems when the mathematical language was mixed with natural everyday

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[12]Virginia P. Collier, "Acquiring a Second Language for School," *Directions in Language & Education* 1, no. 4 (fall 1995), http://www.ncela.gwu.edu/ncbepubs/directions/04.htm/ (accessed October 2, 2002); and Jim Cummins, "Language Proficiency, Bilingualism, and Academic Achievement," in *The Multicultural Classroom: Readings for Content-Area Teachers,* ed. Patricia A. Richard-Amato and Marguerite A. Snow (White Plains, NY: Longman, 1992), 16-38.

[13]Cummins, "Language Proficiency."

[14]David Pimm, *Speaking Mathematically: Communication in Mathematics Classrooms* (New York: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1987); and Pilar Ron, "Spanish-English Language Issues in the Mathematics Classroom," in *Changing the Faces of Mathematics Series, Perspectives on Latinos,* ed. Luis Ortiz-Franco, Norma G. Hernandez, and Yolanda De La Cruz (Reston, VA: National Council of Teachers of Mathematics, 1999), 23-33.

language. For example, only one of the nine students could solve the following problem:

> *A number 300 can holds 13 7/8 ounces. A number 2 can holds 28 ounces. How many more ounces does a number 2 can hold than a number 300 can?*[15]

Most of the students wanted to solve the problem using 300 and 2, which are only labels for the cans. Furthermore, the students interpreted *can* as an auxiliary verb not as a noun needed to solve the problem. Words with multiple functions (e.g., the word *can* as a noun and as an auxiliary verb) may confuse migrant students who are beginning to learn English. In addition, students performed poorly on this problem regardless of whether English or Spanish was used, a finding that indicates confusion also stemmed from the use of mathematical language in nonmathematical contexts.[16]

Mathematics educators are often unaware of the role of language acquisition in the teaching and learning of mathematics for migrant students. It is critical that mathematics educators consult bilingual educators when designing distance-education courses, especially those offered through audio conference, where context-embedded instruction may be compromised by the lack of visual cues that support verbal language for English language learners. A resource teacher needs to be present where these courses are offered to provide migrant ESL students with instant feedback, cues, and clues.[17]

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[15]Robert E. Eicholz and others, *Addison-Wesley Mathematics: Grade 6* (Menlo Park, CA: Addison-Wesley, 1991).

[16]Sylvia Celedón-Pattichis, "Constructing Meaning: Think-Aloud Protocols of ELLs on English and Spanish Word Problems," *Educators for Urban Minorities* 2, no. 2 (2003): 74-90.

[17]Jim Cummins, "Wanted: A Theoretical Framework for Relating Language Proficiency to Academic Achievement among Bilingual Students," in *Language Proficiency and Academic Achievement,* ed. Charlene Rivera (Clevedon, England: Multilingual Matters, 1984); for studies on the role of language in algebra, see Jose P. Mestre, "The Role of Language Comprehension in Mathematics and Problem Solving," in *Linguistic and Cultural Influences on Learning Mathematics,* ed. Rodney R. Cocking and Jose P. Mestre (Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum, 1988), 201-20.



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## Cultural Influences on Mathematics Learning

School mathematics experiences for students in the United States often have been treated separately from the students' lives outside school. Students' voices rarely are included in the common mathematics-driven curriculum. Although the NCTM's standards movement has had a major impact in the professional, political, and public realms, students' learning experiences are still detached largely from their personal experiences.[18]

Migrant students have "funds of knowledge" within their families, but mathematics educators may be unaware of them because of sociocultural and socioeconomic differences.[19] Migrant students should have opportunities to write their own word problems and share their personal experiences through journal writing and other interactive/experiential methods. Educators should try to determine which linguistic structures are best understood (or not understood) in word problems. I gave the nine ESL students the following word problem:

> *Admission to Hall's planetarium costs $4.50 for adults and $2.75 for students. Mr. Emery took his class of 27 students to a show. How much did Mr. Emery and his class spend for tickets?*[20]

None of the nine knew what "Hall's planetarium" meant. These findings are consistent with a study by Walter Secada, who found that elementary Hispanic bilingual students encountered difficulties with word problems when their personal experiences did not match the linguistic expressions presented in the word problems. Thus, it is critical to include migrant students' experiences in every aspect of the curriculum.[21]

Mathematics educators can make connections by combining mi-

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[18]National Council of Teachers of Mathematics, *Principles and Standards*.

[19]Luis C. Moll, "Literacy Research in Community and Classrooms: A Sociocultural Approach," in *Theoretical Models and Processes of Reading*, 4th ed., eds. Robert B. Ruddell, Martha R. Ruddell, and Harry Singer (Newark, DE: International Reading Association, 1994), 469-82.

[20]Eicholz and others, *Addison-Wesley Mathematics*.

[21]Celedón-Pattichis, "Constructing Meaning"; and Walter G. Secada, "Degree of Bilingualism and Arithmetic Problem Solving in Hispanic First Graders," *Elementary School Journal* 92, no. 2 (November 1991): 213-31.



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grant students' experiences outside the classroom with mathematical concepts, such as distance = rate x time. Migrant students, particularly those in middle or high school, often take the initiative to plan activities with their parents. One activity could involve planning an actual trip, justifying the best route of travel from one city to another, and determining how long the trip would take based on a specific speed limit and distance. Another activity could include creating a budget for the trip and later comparing the original calculations with the actual money spent. The concepts covered in these activities could range from using decimals, fractions, and percentages to performing statistical analyses on the two budget plans. The activities involve problem solving using experiences outside the classroom.[22]

## Conclusion and Discussion

This chapter has reviewed alternative secondary programs that provide flexibility in helping migrant students complete credits in their mathematics education. Specifically, The University of Texas Migrant Student Program, Project SMART, ESTRELLA, and the Portable Assisted Study Sequence deliver secondary courses in mathematics throughout the country. Each of these programs emphasizes linguistic and cultural influences in teaching mathematics. Research is needed to explore the experiences of migrant ESL students enrolled in mathematics distance-education courses. Educators should ensure that migrant ESL students are not excluded from these programs. Instead, migrant students should be provided the necessary support, such as the help of bilingual educators knowledgeable about mathematics, to succeed in distance-education and/or other alternative curricula.

Think-aloud protocols can benefit mathematics educators who teach migrant ESL students enrolled in distance-education programs. Students should be encouraged to express their thoughts about the vocabulary used in different word problems to find out what words help or hinder their understandings. This approach also monitors ESL

[22]For a specific activity integrating the experiences of migrant students into elementary mathematics, see Frederick L. Silverman and others, "On the Road with Cholo, Vato, and Pano," *Teaching Children Mathematics* 17, no. 6 (February 2001): 330-33.



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students' conceptual and procedural knowledge. In some instances, there may be a mismatch between what students conceptualize and what they say or do. It is not uncommon to hear ESL students say they will add, when, in reality, they want to multiply. The problem could be that ESL students do not know the correct vocabulary for different mathematical operations in English (e.g., addition, subtraction, division, and multiplication) while understanding the concepts represented by the symbols (e.g., +, —, ÷, and x).

Finally, teachers need to draw on students' linguistic and cultural experiences to make mathematical connections between everyday use of English and language specific to mathematics. Mathematics educators need to seek help from bilingual/ESL specialists when preparing distance-education courses. Combining the knowledge of mathematics and bilingual/ESL educators can help migrant students make better connections between their lives and the classroom.



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CHAPTER 15

# Effective Instruction: Integrating Language and Literacy

BY ILIANA ALANÍS

During the past two decades, increases in the number of culturally and linguistically diverse children have had a major impact on our nation's classrooms. According to the 2000 U.S. Census, 9.8 million school-age children live in homes where languages other than English are spoken, representing 18.4 percent of the total student population. Of these children, 69.8 percent speak Spanish or Spanish Creole.[1]

These are highly significant statistics, especially in light of a recent analysis by the National Center for Education Statistics, which revealed that the academic performance of minority students continues to be considerably below majority norms. In all academic areas,

[1]Data on persons aged 5-17 drawn from a data table based on the Census 2000 Summary File 3. U.S. Census Bureau, "PCT10. Age by Language Spoken at Home for the Population 5 years and Over," American FactFinder, http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/DTTable?ds_name=D&geo_id=D&mt_name=DEC_2000_SF3_U_PCT010&_lang=en/ (accessed November 7, 2003).



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achievement gaps between Whites and minorities, whether U.S. or foreign born, appear early and persist throughout school.[2]

Reading, critical to student achievement in all subjects, continues to show the greatest achievement gap. In a technological society, the demands for higher literacy increase constantly, creating ever more negative consequences for those who lack reading and writing skills. This academic gap contributes to the widening economic disparities in our society. According to the National Research Council, failure to learn to read adequately is much more likely among poor children, non-White children, and English language learners (ELLs).[3]

The literacy gap occurs, in part, because ELLs must learn academic subjects simultaneously while learning to speak English. Among this population of linguistically and culturally diverse students are Mexican migrant children who follow their parents' agricultural work. In 1998-99, more than 780,000 migrant children and youth lived in the United States; about 30 percent attended school in California, with another 25 percent in Texas and Florida combined. In 1999-2000, the Texas Migrant Education Program (MEP) identified approximately 125,988 migrant students in Texas. Economic difficulties forced a very large percentage of these students to migrate outside Texas to 48 receiving states. In addition, a significant percentage moved within the state to some 550 school districts. Because these children enrolled temporarily in various schools, their education was not always a successful endeavor. For example, in the 1999-2000 academic year, migrant students averaged 73.2 on the reading section of the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills compared to the state average of 87.4.[4]

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[2]Phillip Kaufman and others, *Dropout Rates in the United States: 1999* (Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics, 2000) (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 452 308); and Grace Kao and Marta Tienda, "Optimism and Achievement: The Educational Performance of Immigrant Youth," *Social Science Quarterly* 76, no. 1 (March 1995): 1-19.

[3]Urie Bronfenbrenner and others, *The State of Americans: This Generation and the Next* (Old Tappan, NJ: Free Press, 1996); Keith E. Stanovich, "Matthew Effects in Reading: Some Consequences of Individual Differences in the Acquisition of Literacy," *Reading Research Quarterly* 21, no. 4 (fall 1986): 360-407; and Catherine E. Snow, Susan M. Burns, and Peg Griffin, eds., *Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children*, Committee on the Prevention of Reading Difficulties in Young Children, Commission on Behavioral and Social Sciences and Education, National Research Council (Washington, DC: National Academy Press, 1998), http://www.nap.edu/html/prdyc/ (accessed November 25, 2003).





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Continuity of instruction for migrant children is a major challenge facing the entire education community.

Despite the negative effects of poverty and the migrant lifestyle, schools could offer these children an opportunity to realize their full academic potential. Migrant students, however, are inadequately served for a variety of reasons, including the diversity and complexity of their needs; a shortage of trained teachers; and a lack of cohesive, comprehensive program planning.

Recent research indicates that bilingually schooled students outperform comparable monolingually schooled students in academic achievement in all subjects after four to seven years of dual-language schooling. Although instruction in a child's native language continues to be the most effective means to educate ELLs, many migrant students find themselves in mainstream classrooms with teachers who are ill-prepared to meet their needs. Indeed, few teachers are adequately trained to work effectively with the linguistically and culturally diverse migrant student populations that have become increasingly common across the country. Given that these students spend a large proportion of their time in mainstream classrooms, it is not enough to educate only English-as-a-second-language (ESL) and bilingual teachers to work with these students; all teachers must be prepared to meet the needs of this distinctive group.[5]

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[4]Allison Henderson and Julie Daft, *State Title I Migrant Participation Information, 1998-99* (Rockville, MD: Westat, 2002) (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 468 509); Texas Education Agency, *Migrant Program Summary* (Austin, TX: Texas Education Agency, 2000); and Amy Siler and others, *Meeting the Needs of Migrant Students in School Wide Programs: Technical Report of the Congressionally Mandated Study of Migrant Student Participation in Schoolwide Programs* (Rockville, MD: Westat, 1999) (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 427 930).

[5]Catherine Minicucci and Laurie Olsen, eds., *Educating Students from Immigrant Families: Meeting the Challenge in Secondary Schools* (Santa Cruz, CA: National Center for Research on Cultural Diversity and Second Language Learning, 1993) (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 360 826); Wayne Thomas and Virginia Collier, *Reform of Education Policies for English Learners: Research Evidence from U.S. Schools* (Santa Cruz, CA: Center for Research on Education, Diversity, and Excellence, 2002); J. David Ramirez, "Executive Summary of the Final Report: Longitudinal Study of Structure of English Immersion Strategy, Early-Exit and Late-Exit Transitional Bilingual Education Programs for Language-Minority Children," *Bilingual Research Journal* 16, no. 1-2 (winter-spring 1992): 1-62; Thomas and Collier, *School Effectiveness for Language Minority Students*, NCBE Resource Collection Series 9 (Washington, DC: National Clearinghouse for Bilingual Education, 1997), http://www.ncela.gwu.edu/ncbepubs/resource/effectiveness/ (accessed October 3, 2003); and Snow, Burns, and Griffin, *Preventing Reading Difficulties.*

Migrant students need the support of family and community and access to high-quality preschool and primary instruction to be sure of academic success. Curricula designed for migrant children should meet the same challenging academic content and student performance standards expected of all children. We must first educate ourselves about who migrant children are and what they need to succeed. This chapter addresses the academic, emotional, and social needs of migrant students in elementary English classrooms. It describes learning environments that encourage academic success, crucial teacher behaviors, and effective instructional approaches that facilitate language and literacy development for culturally and linguistically diverse migrant students.

## The Connection between Language and Literacy

Reading is essential to success in our society. The ability to read provides social, academic, and economic benefits. As children learn to read, they learn how spoken and written language relate to each other. Children's concepts about literacy are influenced from the earliest years by observing and interacting with readers and writers. Literacy is no longer regarded as simply a cognitive skill to be learned. Rather, it is a complex interactive and interpretative process in which development is determined by the social and cultural context.[6]

Literacy is broader and more specific than reading. Literate behaviors such as writing and other creative or analytical acts invoke very particular bits of knowledge and skill in specific subject matter domains. Language experiences are central to effective literacy instruction. Children learn about themselves, one another, and the world around them from spoken language. Young children gain functional knowledge of the parts, products, and uses of the writing system by analyzing the external sound structure of spoken words. John Downing suggests language is not an object of awareness in itself for a child but is "seemingly like a glass, through which the child

[6]Elizabeth Sulzby and William Teale, "Emergent Literacy," in Vol. 2, *Handbook of Reading Research,* ed. Rebecca Barr and others (New York: Longman, 1991), 727-57; Jerome Bruner, *Studies in Cognitive Growth: A Collaboration at the Center for Cognitive Studies* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1966); and Lev S. Vygotsky, *Mind in Society: The Development of Higher Psychological Processes,* ed. Michael Cole and others (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1978).



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looks at the surrounding world . . . not suspecting that it has its own existence and its own aspects of construction." To become a mature reader and writer, a child must become increasingly aware of language and how it is constructed. For this awareness to grow, the reading program and instructional materials selected must relate to one another and be carefully organized into sequences.[7]

## Classroom Environment

Students' attitudes about school and sense of self are shaped largely by what happens in classrooms and school as a whole. Ideally, instructional gains are best accomplished in an enrichment program that utilizes the child's native language. Mainstream teachers, however, can provide a natural learning environment with lots of rich language, both oral and written. Classrooms should be inviting, attractive places where students feel comfortable and welcome. Teachers can foster a sense of safety and trust by sharing some of their own experiences. Environments rich with everyday printed language resources, such as signs, schedules, calendars, books, magazines, and newspapers, help children realize that print serves many purposes and that printed language is all around them. In addition, students should have ample opportunities for long periods of reading, writing, and carrying on task- or topic-oriented conversations.[8]

A classroom library with an abundance of books and magazines in both English and students' native languages will stimulate a love of reading. Classroom libraries should offer a diverse array of bilingual and Spanish reading materials, varying from easy to read to more challenging and complex. One idea is to have children create classroom books, which can center on learning themes or events experienced by the whole class, such as field trips or guest speakers.

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[7]Richard C. Anderson and P. David Pearson, "A Schema-thematic View of Basic Processes in Reading Comprehension," in *Handbook of Reading Research*, ed. P. David Pearson and others (New York: Longman, 1984), 225-91; and John Downing, *Reading and Reasoning* (New York: Springer-Verlag, 1979), 27.

[8]Anne E. Cunningham and Keith E. Stanovich, "Tracking the Unique Effects of Print Exposure in Children: Associations with Vocabulary, General Knowledge, and Spelling," *Journal of Educational Psychology* 83, no. 2 (1991): 264-74; and Linda J. Dorn, Cathy French, and Tammy Jones, *Apprenticeship in Literacy: Transitions Across Reading and Writing* (York, ME: Stenhouse, 1998).



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Likewise, children need access to many books they can take home and read with family members. Wordless books are avenues for parents and children to develop vocabulary in any language. Listening to and talking about books on a regular basis demonstrates to children the benefits and pleasures of reading. Student work displayed in the native or second language encourages writing, develops self-esteem, and promotes a community of learners engaged in supportive interactions. In short, classrooms and schools can minimize the cultural alienation felt by many Mexican American migrant students by providing a learning environment that encourages and motivates students to be successful.

## Teacher Behaviors

Migrant students enter school with a variety of personal and social characteristics. Teachers need to be aware that various factors may affect students' lives and their behavior and achievement in school. Effective teachers know how to capture the potential of the positive factors and diminish the impact of the negative factors that affect student performance. When teachers have confidence in their students' abilities, the students are more likely to believe in themselves and be able to achieve. This theory is the basis for the Teacher Expectation and Student Achievement (TESA) behavioral change model for instruction, which can be used at all grade levels and in all subject areas. Teachers often make inferences about students' behavior and/or abilities based on preconceived notions or observations; such teacher inferences often are not equitable and can have potentially damaging effects on students. Results of classroom research indicate that improved teacher expectations reduce student discipline problems and improve academic performance, gender and diversity awareness, attendance, and classroom climate.[9]

An important aspect often omitted from discussions about teacher behavior is the need to prepare teachers for intensive work with families and communities. Heather Weiss writes that teachers are the critical link in making family involvement a reality and that they need

[9]See the Los Angeles County Office of Education Web site for program overview, http://www.lacoe.edu/orgs/165/index.cfm?ModuleId=17/ (accessed October 3, 2003).



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to be taught and encouraged to take on this challenging task. To help educators establish open communication with parents, bilingual assistants can be a valuable link between schools and migrant families and can help students and parents become more actively involved in school. Teachers should also consider that migrant parents have different needs, interests, schedules, and situations. What works for one group of parents may not work for another. As educators, it is important that our relationships with students and parents be characterized by tolerance, acceptance, and mutual respect. This often calls for a re-examination of the assumptions that have traditionally defined teachers' expectations for parent involvement. (See Chapter 11 for a description of various ways migrant parents supported the achievements of their children.)[10]

## Activating Prior Knowledge

From research on brain theory, we have learned the importance of connecting individual sources of knowledge to a larger network of information. The activation of prior knowledge—bridging students' bilingual-bicultural knowledge with new knowledge across the curriculum—allows students to make important discoveries. During literacy activities, teachers use language to communicate specific knowledge, skills, and strategies to children. Teachers can monitor their own language by asking themselves two simple and important questions: (1) Is your language meaningful to the child? (2) Is your language relevant to the task at hand? These questions challenge teachers to identify what each child brings to the task and define what is important for accomplishing the task. If a child is expected to apply information without having the necessary background experience, the activity will be empty and meaningless. Teachers, therefore, must have a clear understanding of what children already know before guiding them toward higher levels of development. Teachers should tap into students' experiences and the richness of their cultures and languages. A good starting point would be to ask students to write or

[10]Heather Weiss, "Preparing Teachers for Family Involvement" (paper presented at the National Conference of the Family Involvement Partnership for Learning, New York, 12-13 April 1996) (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 396 823); and J. Howard Johnston, "Home-School Partnerships: Shall We Dance?" *Schools in the Middle* 4 no. 2 (November 1994): 5-8.



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tell about their experiences, which can then be incorporated into subjects such as social studies and language arts.[11]

Research demonstrates a strong and positive correlation between literacy in a student's native language and learning English. Although the surface aspects of different languages are clearly distinct, an underlying cognitive proficiency is common across languages and makes possible the transfer of literacy-related skills from one language to another. Valuing native languages and building upon existing knowledge help migrant children develop cognitively and academically. The importance of valuing existing skills and knowledge, regardless of a student's native language, cannot be underestimated.[12]

Children must be given opportunities to practice the strands of language arts in connected and purposeful ways. Real-world problem-solving lessons tend to hold students' interest while developing their language, literacy, and critical-thinking skills. Teachers can develop thematic units and writing assignments based on the knowledge and experiences of students' families, thereby enabling parents to be involved in their children's homework. Additional techniques for teaching literacy and language include the use of visuals, gestures, songs, chants, poems, culturally relevant literature, and games that involve talking, listening, and following directions.[13]

Effective integration of prior knowledge requires teachers to have accurate materials that represent the diversity of the Mexican American experience. In essence, the teacher's role is to mediate learning through language and appropriate literacy opportunities that enable children to reach their highest potential.

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[11]Dorn, French, and Jones, *Apprenticeship in Literacy*.

[12]Virginia P. Collier,"Age and Rate Acquisition of Second Language for Academic Purposes," *TESOL Quarterly* 21, no. 4 (December 1987): 617-41; Thomas and Collier, *School Effectiveness for Language Minority Students*; and Jim Cummins, *Empowering Minority Students* (Sacramento: California Association for Bilingual Education, 1989).

[13]Luis C. Moll and others, "Funds of Knowledge for Teaching: Using a Qualitative Approach to Connect Homes and Classrooms," *Theory into Practice* 31, no. 2 (spring 1992): 132-41.



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### Incorporation of ESL Standards

During literacy activities, teachers use language to communicate knowledge, skills, and strategies to children. All teachers, not just bilingual or ESL teachers, should have some working knowledge of ESL methods and second-language acquisition and should become familiar with ESL standards. According to the national ESL standards, ELLs must use English for social purposes. They need to talk with peers and teachers and use English for their own enjoyment. Students should be encouraged to read magazines or picture books and then participate in literature circles. The second ESL goal advocates the use of English to achieve academically in all content areas. The ESL standards define the type of academic language proficiency that ELLs need. The final goal emphasizes that ELLs need to be taught explicitly the social and cultural norms associated with using English, such as when to use formal or informal language, what gestures are appropriate, and when humor is acceptable.[14]

## Effective Instructional Approaches

Literacy instruction must meet students' developmental needs: linguistic, academic, cognitive, emotional, social, and physical.

### Vocabulary Development

Words are the tools we use to access our knowledge, express ideas, and learn about new concepts. Students' word knowledge is linked strongly to academic success. Word knowledge is crucial to reading comprehension and determines how well students will be able to comprehend the texts they read in upper elementary grades, middle and high school, and college. Words are the very foundation of learning.

An effective way to expose children to more formal vocabulary is reading aloud from storybooks accompanied with discussion. Both younger and older children appear to benefit from read-aloud activities. Story reading introduces children to new words, new sentences, and new ideas. In addition, they hear the kinds of vocabulary,

[14]Deborah Short, "The ESL Standards: Bridging the Academic Gap for English Language Learners," *NABE News* 24, no. 5 (2001): 8-10.



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sentences, and text structures they will be expected to read and understand in their academic books. Reading aloud to children every day and talking about books and stories can expand oral language development and help students connect oral to written language. Quality audio books can introduce students to an array of language styles while they are learning about topics of interest. Storytelling is another way to increase the quality of students' oral language experiences.

Storytelling exposes students to richer language than they would hear in normal conversation. Pretend play likewise involves rich language use. Preschool children's conversations and teachers' use of a more sophisticated vocabulary also have been found to affect students' language and literacy development. The chosen strategy should be fun for students because the more they enjoy words, the more they will want to know about them.[15]

## Writing

Studies by Marie Clay indicate that the development of writing and reading skills is rooted in oral language. Proficiency in a second language develops best when allowed to emerge naturally through functional and authentic language. Children must become expert users of the building blocks of written language. Written language places greater demands on children's vocabulary knowledge than does everyday spoken language. Consequently, students need to develop a feel for how written language is different from everyday conversation. It is valuable to draw their attention to the distinctive characteristics of written language, even when reading aloud, and to help them learn to read like a writer and write with an audience in

[15]James F. Baumann and E. J. Kameenui, "Research on Vocabulary Instruction: Ode to Voltaire," in *Handbook of Research on Teaching the English Language Arts,* ed. James Flood, Diane Lapp, and J. R. Squire (New York: Macmillan, 1991), 604-32; Richard C. Anderson and Peter Freebody, "Reading Comprehension and the Assessment and Acquisition of Word Knowledge," in *Advances in Reading/ Language Research,* ed. Barbara Hutson (Greenwich, CT: JAI, 1983), 231-56; Steven A. Stahl, M. G. Richek, and R. Vendevier, "Learning Word Meanings Through Listening: A Sixth-Grade Replication," in *Learning Factors/Teacher Factors: Issues in Literacy Research (40th yearbook of the National Reading Conference),* ed. Jerry Zutell and Sandra McCormick (Chicago: National Reading Conference, 1991), 185-92; and Michael F. Graves, Connie Juel, and Bonnie B. Graves, *Teaching Reading in the 21st Century* (Boston: Allyn & Bacon, 1998).

mind. Donald Graves' case studies of writing show the energizing effect of oral interaction surrounding literacy events. Graves has demonstrated that children who write instead of going through a basal reader can learn to read while they learn to write. Strategies include dialogue journals and interactive writing, where teachers use language prompts and adjust levels of support to enable children to accomplish writing tasks they would be unable to complete alone.[16]

Teachers should encourage children to write their own stories. As children write true and invented stories, they develop language fluency. Activities should encourage children to write with words they have learned in class and keep records of interesting and related words. Teachers should offer children opportunities to write for real-life reasons, including letters inviting parents and other community members to visit their classrooms or "thank you" letters to individuals and organizations. Writing can also be a collaborative effort between and among students.

## Cooperative Learning

Grouping practices can affect students' perceptions of themselves and their worth. Most experts agree that grouping based on diagnostic information related to specific subjects can be beneficial. Membership in these groups should change as the children progress or as they experience difficulty. However, teachers should use ability grouping cautiously because research indicates the technique helps high-ability students academically but negatively affects low-ability students. The harmful effects of ability grouping for low-ability students are pronounced, including low expectations for their achievement and behavior, less instruction time resulting in less learning, less opportunity to experience higher level topics, and lowered self-esteem, all of which have a stigmatizing effect. These findings are particularly disturbing considering that migrant children from low socioeconomic backgrounds tend to score below average on the types of assessments often used to assign students to ability groups. If the ability grouping

[16]Marie M. Clay, *Becoming Literate: The Construction of Inner Control* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1991); and Donald H. Graves, *Writing: Teachers and Children at Work* (Exeter, NH: Heinemann, 1983).

system is very rigid, not providing for frequent reassessment of students and regrouping, migrant students are likely to be tracked into an inferior educational experience.

In contrast, positive results can accrue for all students placed in mixed-ability cooperative learning groups. Studies by David Johnson and Roger Johnson as well as Spencer Kagan indicate that cooperative learning has a dramatic positive impact on language and literacy acquisition. Cooperative learning supports comprehensible input, increased verbal interaction, contextualized language, reduced anxiety, and active involvement of the learner. The small-group setting allows a far higher proportion of comprehensible input and output because speakers can easily adjust their speech to an appropriate level for the listeners and check for understanding. Listeners can ask questions, make contributions to the discussion, and acquire differing points of view. Cooperative learning provides a supportive, motivating context for speech to emerge. Students in cooperative groups are motivated to speak and feel greater support for a variety of reasons: (1) they need to communicate to accomplish the cooperative learning projects, (2) cooperative learning structures demand speech, (3) peers are more supportive than in a traditional classroom, (4) students are taught to praise and encourage one another, and (5) students develop interdependence. Many students are comfortable talking to one another individually or in small groups but are not ready for the formal discussions of a whole-class setting. In addition, students in cooperative learning groups communicate about real events and objects. For example, students can generate a list of questions for research, respond to first drafts of writing, discuss the meanings of stories, decide how to prepare a group report, and plan a readers' theater. Such communication is functional as students refer to what is happening in the moment. As students converse, they provide immediate feedback. Feedback and correction in the process of communication lead to easy acquisition of vocabulary and language forms. Finally, cooperative-grouping tasks allow for consistently engaging students in challenging and higher level thinking. Nonetheless, teachers should monitor group interactions to ensure that all students contribute equally. Students with high academic ability should not be treated more favorably than low-ability students in the group.[17]



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## Conclusion

Research indicates that children who do not become successful readers by the end of third grade will have difficulty catching up with their peers in later years. For migrant students to become successful learners, teachers must be knowledgeable about the literacy process and provide constructive reading and writing experiences. Teachers also must become familiar with the cognitive, social, and cultural dimensions of learning because all students, particularly ELLs, learn more effortlessly when they can relate to the context of the material. In addition, teachers must erase their preconceived myths about students from lower socioeconomic households and/or homes in which English is not the primary language.

The future of migrant education requires a fundamental shift in thinking. Migrant students' languages, experiences, and histories have been excluded systematically from classroom curricula and activities. Schools must provide more opportunities for migrant students to engage in developmentally and culturally appropriate learning inside as well as outside the classroom.[18]

The collaboration between teachers and parents, the integration of students' home language and culture, and the accepting classroom climate are all key factors contributing to the achievement of migrant students. Parent involvement and support are significant for a child's initial adjustment and continued performance. Learning environments

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[17]David W. Johnson and Roger T. Johnson, "Social Skills for Successful Group Work," *Educational Leadership* 47, no. 4 (December-January 1990): 29-33; Johnson and Johnson, *Learning Together and Alone: Cooperative, Competitive, and Individualistic Learning,* 4th ed. (Needham Heights, MA: Allyn & Bacon, 1994); Spencer Kagan, *We Can Talk: Cooperative Learning in the Elementary ESL Classroom* (ERIC Digest) (Washington, DC: ERIC Clearinghouse on Languages and Linguistics, 1995) (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 382 035); and Kagan, "Cooperative Learning and Sociocultural Factors in Schooling," in *Beyond Language: Social and Cultural Factors in Schooling Language Minority Students,* comp. Bilingual Education Office, California State Department of Education (Los Angeles: Evaluation, Dissemination, and Assessment Center, California State University, 1986) (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 304 241).

[18]Eugene E. García, *Hispanic Education in the United States: Raíces y alas* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2001).

that offer children opportunities to read, listen, and speak for real-life purposes are important and meaningful to every child.[19]

Addressing the educational needs of migrant students requires teachers to examine their assumptions about literacy and their beliefs about students whose backgrounds may be different from their own. The more educators learn about the development and uses of literacy and the diverse sociocultural experiences of migrant students, the better prepared they will be to create appropriate environments for learning through literacy.

[19]Nancy Feyl Chavkin, *Family Lives and Parental Involvement in Migrant Students' Education* (ERIC Digest) (Charleston, WV: ERIC Clearinghouse on Rural Education and Small Schools, 1991) (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 335 174).



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# PART IX

## WORKING TOWARD THE FUTURE OF MIGRANT EDUCATION

CHAPTER 16

# The Challenge of Change: A Gringo Remembers Tough Choices

BY SCOTT A. L. BECK

Although this personal narrative is specific to one individual in one state, it could have taken place almost anywhere in our country. Migrant education has produced positive changes in the educational and living conditions of migrant children and their families. Nonetheless, these advances should not mask the terrible inequities and intolerable conditions that continue to exist across the United States, supported by the economics of corporate agriculture and cheap food and the politics of special interests and neglect.[1]

## Another Horror Story

During the 2001 fiscal year, Hispanics constituted nearly one-third of all workplace deaths in Georgia, a staggering statistic given that Hispanics make up only 5.3 percent of the state's population. Since

[1]Thank you to an anonymous reviewer for suggesting and outlining this prologue. To assert the universality of this story and protect the privacy of the innocent, a few quotes from regional newspapers have been edited slightly. In addition, all names, except mine, are pseudonyms.

1994, at least three children have been maimed in Georgia packing houses while waiting for their parents to finish work.[2]

One of these incidents occurred on Monday, May 17, 1996, when two-year-old Javier Gutierrez lost his left hand to a conveyor belt in an onion packing shed. I was working as a migrant education outreach specialist at the time, making my usual rounds of the isolated labor camps that house thousands of Latino migrant farmworkers during the spring onion harvest. I knew my destination that day was one of the most difficult camps in the area—dirty, overcrowded, and a temporary home to Mixtec migrants from rural Mexico whose children frequently were not enrolled in school.

The route to the camp was circuitous, but I had driven those roads many times before. I drove along a quiet state highway and turned off the pavement down a dirt road, passing between two large, flat fields of sweet onions. After about a mile, I turned right onto another dirt road, alongside a stand of pine trees. This road twisted and turned until it gave rise to a third dirt road, smaller and more poorly maintained than the previous two. The third road dipped down through a small stream, turned a corner, and placed me in front of a ramshackle two-story farmhouse adjacent to three mobile homes and a tent, all well out of sight of the main roads.

I found half a dozen preschool children running about the camp only marginally supervised. Even for this camp, this was an unusual and disturbing situation. Although there was a Migrant Head Start program in this county, like most, its funding, capacity, and limited schedule could not match the demand for child care during the height of the $50 million harvest of the onions that "won't make you shed a tear."

One little girl, approximately three years old, cried continually for her mother. An adult who knew me explained in Spanish, "Something has happened. They won't let the children in the shed anymore." He added that the children's parents were in a neighboring field. Wondering what could have happened to ban the workers' children from the packing shed, I drove to the field to search for a crew leader and

[2]"Hispanic Workers Account for Nearly a Third of Georgia Workplace Deaths," *Associated Press State & Local Wire,* 17 December 2001; "Life in Rural South Tough for Hispanics," *Augusta Chronicle,* 9 January 2001, C10; and "Mixing Kids and Machines," *Savannah Morning News,* 16 December 1997, 10A.

further information. There, along with the other workers, I found two school-age children, 11 and 12, harvesting green beans alongside their parents. The parents claimed just to be passing through on their way from Florida to Colorado. They said they had stopped to visit relatives and did not want to enroll their children in school here. Normally, I would be able to obtain the parents' cooperation by gently reminding their crew leader or farmer of the legal necessity to keep children out of the fields. However, with no such authority in sight, I kept looking for someone who could explain what had happened.

I found part of the answer five miles away at the local elementary school, where the children from the camp should have been enrolled. The farmer's wife worked there as a teacher, and the school staff informed me she had left suddenly that day because of an accident at the farm. The next day's newspaper explained the details:

> Javier's parents brought the child to the shed Sunday but kept the toddler in a box, away from the machinery. On Monday, the boy was sitting by his mother when he stuck his hand into a small hole on the machine. . . . The child's hand was cut off about an inch above the wrist.[3]

Javier was evacuated by helicopter to the state medical college, where a failed attempt was made to reattach his hand.

## Of Yankee Gringos and Sweet, Sweet Onions

How was I to respond to this tangle of illegalities and conflicts of interest? That was not clear. This was not my home community, but I had learned that there was a local code of silence about such things.

I am a Yankee Gringo, raised among the dairy farms of rural upstate New York. My previous work as a public schoolteacher and as a migrant health outreach worker had allowed me to find work in this region's migrant education office. As a migrant education outreach specialist, I was responsible for a sparsely populated 36-county region that received a growing number of Mexican and Mexican American migrants each year. I spent my days driving the back roads, locating labor camps, and introducing newly arrived migrants to the few

[3]"Toddler's Hand Severed in Onion Grader," *Savannah Morning News,* 28 May 1996, 1A.

bilingual social services in the area. My goals were to meet their immediate needs and make sure their children were in school.

The landscape of this region of Georgia is largely "nothing but marshes and piney woods," to quote John Berendt, except for occasional fields of cotton, tobacco, and sweet onions. As the popularity of these onions has grown, their production has doubled, redoubled, and redoubled again during the past two decades. A *Wall Street Journal* article observed, "Thanks to the onion, farmers here sport Rolexes and drive new Mercedes-Benz sedans."[4]

Years ago, sweet onions were a small seasonal crop and could be harvested by local laborers and schoolchildren. During the 1980s, the expansion of the onion crop outstripped the local farm labor supply. Tentatively at first, and then with enthusiasm, local onion farmers hired crew leaders to bring in Latino migrants. The farmers found that the largely Mexican-heritage migrants would work long, hard hours for low pay. Remarking on the Mexican American migrants, one of the most successful farmers stated, "You could close down the onion industry without them."[5]

## Constraints and Hierarchies

I had many things to consider with regard to what I had seen on May 17, 1996. Migrant outreach workers learn to expect, although not accept, routine violations of myriad child labor and school attendance laws, workplace safety rules, and housing regulations. Well-intentioned rules and laws are useless unless vigorously enforced, and, across much of our nation, such enforcement has been scarce for more than a generation. Since the Reagan administration of the 1980s, an anti-regulation climate has weakened the ability of federal agencies to enforce labor laws affecting migrants, especially in rural regions.

Nonetheless, the front-page publicity of two-year-old Javier's injury raised the likelihood of regulatory action. I even hoped that such attention might improve conditions throughout the region since nearby farmers might upgrade working and living conditions out of

[4]John Berendt, *Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil: A Savannah Story* (New York: Random House, 1994), 29; "No Need to Cry, but Vidalia Onions Cause Bushels of Grief," *Wall Street Journal*, 28 October 1998, A8.

[5]"A Place to Pick," *Macon Telegraph*, 6 August 1995, 9A.

fear of similar scrutiny. Interviewed by a newspaper the day after the accident, a U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) Wage and Hour investigator promised to examine working conditions at the farm, especially potential child labor violations: "We wouldn't want to do nothing and find out tomorrow a 14- or 15-year-old got hurt in the same place."[6] What I had observed seemed highly relevant. Clearly, I had a responsibility to share what I had seen with the investigator.

It was not so simple though. Upon being hired two years earlier, I had been told by my boss's boss that my role was *not* to be an advocate on behalf of migrant families and children. Rather, my role was to facilitate the needs of the local schools, administrators, and teachers. I did not know it at the time, but this role was not in keeping with the National Association of State Directors of Migrant Education's vision that migrant educators should "mobilize students, staff, and parents around a vision of a school in which all students can achieve."[7] Trying to change the basic functioning of schools was not part of my job description; instead, I was hired to minimize the impact of newly arrived migrants on the routines of local schools.

These constraints were an outgrowth of the hierarchy that oversaw the funding of my regional migrant education office. Like all migrant education offices, its funding originates at the federal level and passes through the state department of education. This means that migrant education is always beholden to national and state politics and educational policies.

In addition, our area's migrant education office is administered by a regional educational service agency (RESA), which is controlled by local school superintendents. Thus, in a very tangible way, this region's migrant education office is controlled by local school boards whose traditional membership has included farmers and their families.

This is neither a new nor an isolated phenomenon. In his landmark 1927 study, *The Social Composition of Boards of Education*, George Counts documented that school boards are formed "from the

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[6]"Doctors Optimistic about Boy's Reattached Hand," *Savannah Morning News*, 29 May 1996, 1A.

[7]National Association of State Directors of Migrant Education, comp., *Rethinking Migrant Education: A Response to the National Education Goals: A Report of the Migrant Education Goals Task Force* (Baton Rouge: National Association of State Directors of Migrant Education, 1992) (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 352 219), 26.

more favored economic and social classes."[8] In rural areas this meant that there would commonly be "three farmers serving on a typical six-member county board."[9]

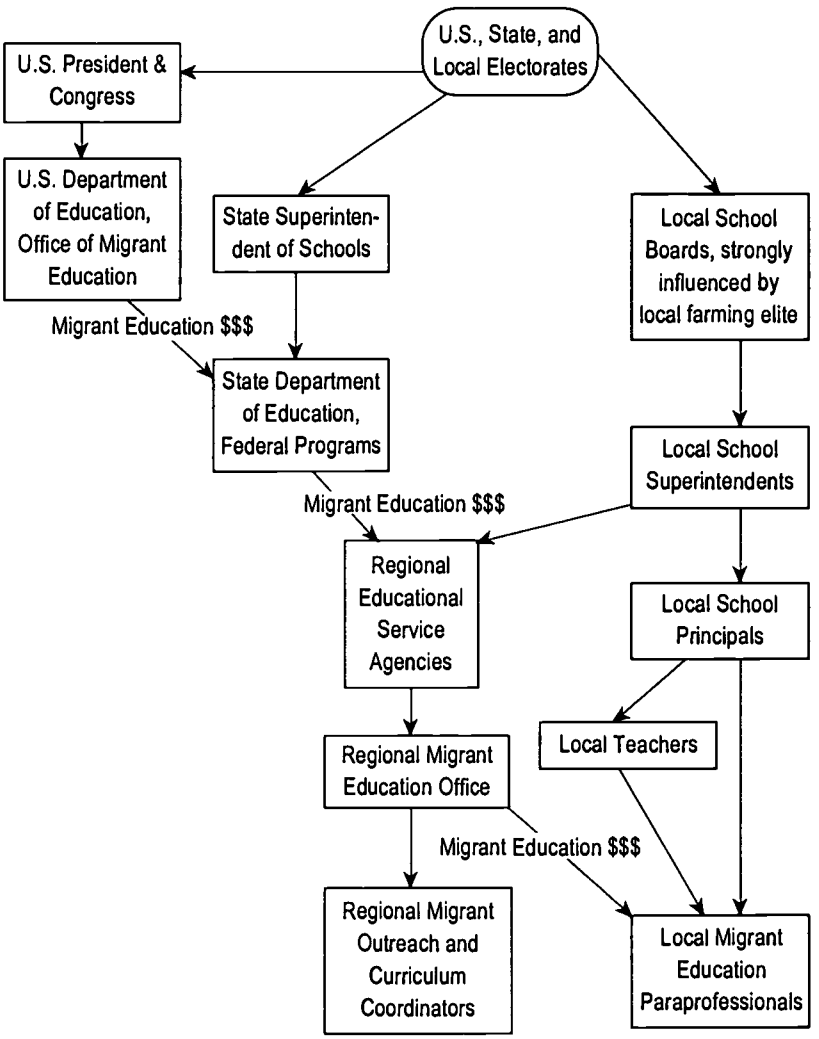


**Figure 1. The National, State, and Local Hierarchy of Migrant Education**

[8]George S. Counts, *The Social Composition of Boards of Education: A Study in the Social Control of Public Education* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1927), 82, as cited in Herbert M. Kliebard, *The Struggle for the American Curriculum: 1893-1958* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 159.

[9]Kliebard, *Struggle for the American Curriculum*, 159.

This pattern has not changed. In 1999, in a county a few miles to the east of the accident site, three of the six school board members were either farmers themselves or from prominent farming families. In another neighboring rural county, conflicts of interest among the board of education and school administrators caught the attention of a regional newspaper a year before the accident:

> Education in this county is a relative concern. Literally. The superintendent is married to the curriculum director. Their nephew is the school system's attorney. Three of the five members of the county board of education have spouses or children employed in county schools. In short, the school system in this county of 16,000 is a tangle of family trees.[10]

These school boards have demonstrated their indifference toward non-English-speaking students. Despite the presence of a substantial and growing English language learner (ELL) population, the school boards in this region have resisted instituting ELL educational services. Such services were begun in the school district where Javier lost his hand only after a U.S. Department of Education Office of Civil Rights investigation in 1999 found violations of *Lau v. Nichols*, the Supreme Court decision that defined the nature of equal education for language-minority students. Working within this context, my paycheck and continued access to migrant children in the schools depended upon my willingness to avoid stepping on the toes of the farming families, school boards, and administrators of the region.

## Silencing Migrants and Their Advocates

Migrant families had no counterbalancing power representing their interests in this hierarchy. Locally, Mexican Americans have yet to find a political voice. Despite making up as much as 10 to 20 percent of the local school population year-round, they are still perceived by many as a largely transient population. Their political weakness is compounded by the large numbers who lack the right to vote or who choose not to vote. There is only one Mexican American political activist in the area. Operating on a shoestring budget out of

[10]"All in the Family in Appling," *Savannah Morning News,* 11 May 1995, 1.

an old storefront, she has limited capacity to address the needs of thousands of migrants.[11]

Regionally, the mandated migrant education parent advisory council (PAC) meetings offer appealing rhetoric about the importance of parent involvement but provide little political empowerment. Using Bauch's typology of parent involvement, attendees at PACs are frequently reminded of the role of parents as "teachers of their own children," "school volunteers," and "adult learners," but the more political and powerful roles of parents as "decision makers" and "teacher colleagues" are overlooked.[12] The PACs never have become forums for pursuing real changes in migrant education, let alone in the schools or workplaces. PAC meetings and agendas are organized by migrant education staff. In the end, each PAC meeting is a hoop to be jumped through—required by federal funding but largely irrelevant to migrant education's daily operations.

At the state level, the situation has been even more problematic. In 1994, a new state superintendent of schools was elected. Edmund Hamann described this superintendent's administration as providing "limited, reluctant, and sometimes hostile response[s]" to the rapidly growing needs of immigrant, language-minority, and Latino students in the state.[13] Starting from the top and working down, the superintendent and her staff systematically purged the state department of education staff of persons supportive of multiculturalism and replaced them with staff amenable to her agenda. For example, the new federal program director stated that this "administration does not support multicultural education and it does not celebrate diversity."[14]

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[11]Sidney Verba, Kay Lehman Schlozman, and Henry E. Brady, *Voice and Equality: Civic Voluntarism in American Politics* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995); and Debra Sabia, "Challenges of Solidarity and Lessons for Community Empowerment: The Struggle of Migrant Farm Workers in Rural South Georgia," in *SECOLAS Annals*, ed. Nancy Shumaker (Carrollton, GA: Thomasson, 1999).

[12]Jerold P. Bauch, "Categories of Parental Involvement," *School Community Journal* 4(1): 53-60 (1994).

[13]Edmund T. Hamann, "The Georgia Project: A Binational Attempt to Reinvent a School District in Response to Latino Newcomers" (Ph.D. diss., University of Pennsylvania, 1999), 145.

[14]Hamann, "The Future is Now: Latino Education in Georgia", (paper presented at the American Anthropology Association Annual Meeting, Washington, DC, 22 November 1997) (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 445 854), 13. For

The new Title I director, who oversaw migrant education and ESOL, (English for speakers of other languages) proposed a series of problematic approaches:

- requiring ESOL teachers to report any suspected illegal alien students to the Immigration and Naturalization Service
- advocating the U.S. military's high-cost intensive instruction model to teach ELLs fluent English in just six months
- advocating a commercial "failure-free reading program" to teach reading to ELLs in just six weeks of 20-minute sessions
- rejecting bilingual education
- hiring an English-only advocate as state ESOL coordinator
- implementing an English-only pretest/posttest regime in migrant summer school programs across the state, taking four or more days of instructional time away from a 20- to 25-day session

Former migrants worked at the lowest levels of the migrant education hierarchy, but many were in their first nonagricultural jobs and very vulnerable to being fired for making waves. Most had very little experience negotiating the politics of rural U.S. communities. Thus, their positions usually were reduced to the vital but limited roles of caring individuals and cultural brokers.[15]

That left only a handful of migrant staff like myself, well-intentioned professionals with the cultural capital to meet the system on its own terms.

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a much more detailed discussion of recent ELL educational policy and politics in Georgia, see Scott A. L. Beck and Martha Allexsaht-Snider, "Recent Language Minority Education Policy in Georgia: Appropriation, Assimilation, and Americanization," in *Education in the New Latino Diaspora: Policy and the Politics of Identity,* ed. Stanton Wortham, Enrique Murillo Jr., and Hamann (Westport, CT: Ablex, 2001).

[15]Beck and Allexsaht-Snider, "Recent Language";. See also: Margaret Gibson and Livier F. Bejínez, "Dropout Prevention: How Migrant Education Supports Mexican Youth," *Journal of Latinos and Education,* (forthcoming); Hamann, "Creating Bicultural Identities: The Role of School-based Bilingual Paraprofessionals in Contemporary Immigrant Accommodation" (M.A. thesis, University of Kansas, 1995); and Melford S. Weiss, "Marginality, Cultural Brokerage, and School Aides: A Success Story in Education," *Anthropology & Education Quarterly 25*(3): 336-46 (1994).

## Making a Choice

It seemed I had only a few options regarding what I had seen that day:

- I could say nothing, which would preserve my job and my working relationships with the schools and farmers. But, would I be able to sleep at night?
- I could speak privately to the farmer about his child labor practices, as I had done before with others. But, this approach would neglect the opportunity to prompt potentially wider change through regulatory action.
- I could speak out publicly as an advocate for the rights of children and be certain that my opportunity to work in and with the schools would be curtailed.[16]
- As some critical ethnographers suggest, I could pursue discrete involvement with the families at the camp and thereby encourage them to speak out for themselves. However, this approach is particularly difficult and time-consuming in small rural communities where comings and goings are well-observed and with people who lack the linguistic and political skills to act within the local system.[17]
- Finally, I could address the problem via regulatory enforcement agencies as a supposedly anonymous whistle-blower. But, this would turn the problem over to a bureaucracy that might not fulfill its purpose.

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[16]In retrospect, I wish that I had had the chutzpah to adopt the activist role modeled by Gloria Anzaldúa in her poem "El sonavabitche," in *Borderlands / La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (San Francisco: Spinsters/Aunt Lute, 1987):

You want me telling every single one

Of your neighbors what you've been doing

All these years? The mayor too?

Maybe make a call to Washington? . . .

I'd seen it over and over.

Work them, then turn them in before paying them.

But, I did not have such bravery.

[17]Christine Sleeter, "Activist or Ethnographer? Researchers, Teachers, and Voice in Ethnographies that Critique," and Loida Velázquez, "Personal Reflections on the Process: The Role of the Researcher and Transformative Research," in *Inside Stories: Qualitative Research Reflections,* ed. Kathleen B. deMarrais (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum, 1998), 49-66.

I naively tried to convince my employers I must speak. After explaining what I had seen to my boss, I was cautioned to talk to the RESA director before doing anything. The RESA director advised me not to do or say anything publicly; but, I was encouraged to be honest if approached by an investigator. This would allow the RESA deniability in case a school board member complained that I had been making trouble.

This presented a dilemma. How could I, without stepping forward publicly, make sure an investigator would contact me? I discreetly placed a call to a legal services farmworker advocate and told him I had relevant information about the accident investigation. Within a few days, I was contacted by a U.S. DOL investigator and gave a formal statement of what I had seen.

I then found out about the inadequacy of the enforcement and legal systems. The array of rules and regulations, so onerous from the farmer's perspective, had gaps as big as a two-year-old's outstretched left hand. Because Javier had been too young to help sort onions, the DOL would not pursue the issue of this specific child being in the packing shed, making it unlikely any fine would be assessed relating to the accident. Instead, the DOL would look for other child labor violations in the fields. The DOL's only Spanish-speaking investigator in the region was responsible for tens of thousands of migrant farmworkers spread across hundreds of miles. She could not possibly investigate the large number of complaints she received on a regular basis. Thus, despite the horrible and very public nature of Javier's accident, it did not become her priority case. It was nearly four months before I received any follow-up contact from the investigator. In the end, despite a recommendation by the investigator for penalties of $6,800, the DOL levied no fines against the farmer. Moreover, despite four DOL investigations since 1994 showing repeated violations and infractions by the same farm, no civil fines have ever been assessed.[18]

A few years later, I saw Javier again at a different migrant camp in the same county. He and his parents still moved with each season, forced by grinding poverty to seek work wherever they could find it.

[18]This information was obtained by the author through a Freedom of Information request to the U.S. Department of Labor, Employment Standards Division, Wage and Hour Division, Atlanta, 16 December 2002.

Meanwhile, the farm that took his hand was still in operation, and the camp where I had seen children in the fields was still overcrowded and substandard. Little had changed in the economy of local onion production or even in Javier's life–except that he would grow up with a stump where a hand was supposed to be.

## Epilogue

In late 1997, I shifted from migrant outreach to migrant education curriculum work. Migrant education curriculum coordinators were the staff members most likely to run afoul of the state superintendent's agenda because much of our time was spent planning migrant summer school curricula and providing ELL training and materials to teachers.

All the migrant education curriculum coordinators resisted the state department of education agenda. The success of the existing whole-language curriculum, doubts regarding the testing of ELLs in English, and concerns about decontextualized back-to-basics remedial instruction were all presented as counterarguments to the new migrant curriculum. Nonetheless, we were forced by the state department of education staff to implement their new program.

Our resistance brought greater scrutiny. The resulting tension reached a climax during the summer of 1999, when one of my colleagues contacted the U.S. Department of Education Office of Civil Rights regarding an ELL student whose school district was not providing any ESOL classes, nor any other ELL services, in disregard of *Lau v. Nichols*. In response, the state Title I director defunded our positions, effectively firing all seven migrant education curriculum coordinators, including myself. The state department of education later acknowledged the impropriety of this action by settling, out of court, a lawsuit filed by one of my colleagues.

In the end, the curriculum positions were refunded. Nonetheless, a number of long-time migrant education employees, including myself, left their jobs in the wake of this attack on the regional offices. Moreover, the attempted defunding reinforced a programwide reluctance to report illegal educational practices in the schools and problematic situations on the farms. The department of education's failed attempt at defunding migrant education curriculum coordinators did succeed in silencing many strong advocates for migrant children.

My decision to leave migrant education was not entirely my own. Nonetheless, I could have fought to keep my position. I chose not to do so. My supervisors cautioned me that fighting the defunding publicly could make it difficult for local school systems to look upon me favorably in the future. I had already learned from experiences such as Javier's accident that my work in migrant education was limited to administering metaphoric Band-Aids to cover gaping wounds in the system. Thus, I decided to go quietly.

Since then, I have spent the past four years working toward a doctorate in education to help me write and speak honestly and intelligently about all I have seen. This chapter is a part of that process. My writing cannot give Javier his hand back, but it might give pause to those who want to oppress migrants or silence the voices of migrant educators. Advocating for the poorest of the poor is never a popular job, nor is it an easy one. I regret to say I may not always have made the best choices. Perhaps this reflection will help other migrant educators examine their consciences and their options when facing troubling choices, which can occur any time they step into a field, camp, or classroom.

CHAPTER 17

# Breaking Through in Migrant Education[1]

BY BLANDINA CÁRDENAS

More than thirty years ago, in the "Theory of Incompatibilities," José Cárdenas and I described the persistent failure of schools to educate migrant students. Today, the children who harvest the food we eat still experience a harsh life, and schools continue to ignore the importance of migrant children's experiences.

José and I grew up in stable middle-class homes in segregated southern Texas. Our neighborhoods and schools would lose more than half their populations in early spring as families boarded the big trucks that took them to pick cherries, apricots, *lechuga* (lettuce), and *betabel* (sugar beets). We listened as our friends came home with stories of travel and adventure in exotic places like Wisconsin, Michigan, and Idaho, and we believed. They returned to our classrooms from late September to early November and seemed stronger, more savvy, quicker to problem-solve, and weary and wise in ways

[1]In 2002, Francisco Jiménez received the Tomás Rivera Children's Book Award from Southwest Texas University for his autobiographical works *The Circuit* and *Breaking Through*. I use the *breaking through* metaphor with profound respect and appreciation for the insight and inspiration gained from his moving stories of individual and family strength in the face of grinding poverty, discrimination, and impermanence.

we recognized but did not understand. A few struggled to catch up with lost instruction and quickly became competitive; many more barely got by or tuned out altogether. On a deep, partly unconscious level, we believed our migrant friends had assets and were every bit as capable of excelling in academics as we were.

## Why the Theory of Incompatibilities?

In developing the Theory of Incompatibilities, we relied on the largely quantitative social science research methods supported by the education research funding of the late 1960s and early 1970s. We looked at systems and characteristics. What escaped our analysis was a sufficient appreciation for the harshness of migrant life and the moral and cognitive strength it elicits—a strength schools either do not recognize or are unable to tap.

Since the passage of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, federal funding for migrant education has flowed from the Title I Migrant Education Program, Head Start Indian and migrant allocations, the College Assistance Migrant Program, and other initiatives. Years of experimentation and advances in technology finally have resulted in an education record transfer system, although incompatibilities in requirements among states remain a barrier. Success stories among former migrant students are numerous and include individuals who have served in Congress, state legislatures, law, medicine, the military, and positions of leadership in higher education and public schools.

But the glass is still at least half empty when it comes to migrant education. Too many success stories occur in spite of the education system, not because of it. Schools have not made sufficient strides in adapting processes and instruction to the needs and assets of children whose life chances are shaped by the harshness of fieldwork. Exposure to agricultural chemicals still menaces families in the field. The effects of irregular immigration and migrant labor are either ignored or attacked. An education system structured historically to serve an agriculture-based economy now is unable to restructure its beliefs and processes to serve the children of workers whose backbreaking labor puts food on our tables. Schools must find ways to connect with the creative and productive potential that migrant children demonstrate simply by surviving.

The Theory of Incompatibilities posited that five interdependent characteristics have an impact on migrant education: poverty, culture, language, mobility, and societal perceptions. Schools must consider each characteristic in adapting education services and programs to the needs and the strengths of Mexican American migrant children. Education processes—from governance, to curriculum, to pupil services, to evaluation—should be made compatible with the characteristics of the population rather than requiring the population to adapt to the school. The effects of these conditions likely have become more acute in a population battered by economic, immigration, familial, and cultural forces more demanding than those of a third of a century ago. Implementation of the Theory of Incompatibilities today requires particular attention to the binational nature of mobility, psychological pressures of immigration and irregular status, cultural and structural changes in families, health needs attendant to working in toxic environments, and exacerbated effects of living in extreme poverty in a high-cost economy.

## Curriculum of Identification, Affirmation, and Validation

Francisco Jiménez describes a moment of deep learning and insightful teaching that says everything the Theory of Incompatibilities intended to communicate. As a high school sophomore, Jiménez struggled with English language, grammar, composition, and comprehension. Charged to write an autobiographical composition, he did not want his teacher Miss Bell to know he had entered the country illegally. Instead, he wrote about the time his baby brother had nearly died in a migrant labor tent city. His paper was returned with a sea of red marks and a note to see Miss Bell after class.

> "Is what you wrote a true story?" Miss Bell asked.
>
> "Yes," I answered, feeling anxious.
>
> "I thought so," she said smiling. "It's a very moving story. Did your brother die?"
>
> "Oh no!" I exclaimed. "He almost did, but God saved him."
>
> "Now, let's look at your paper."
>
> "Your writing shows promise. If you're able to overcome the difficulties like the one you describe in your paper and you continue working as hard as you have, you're going to

> succeed." She gave me back the paper and added, "Here take it home, make corrections, and turn it in to me tomorrow after class."

When he submitted the revised paper, Miss Bell handed him a book and asked, "Have you read *The Grapes of Wrath?*"

"No," I said, wondering what the word wrath meant.

Grabbing every moment to read the book and continuously looking up unfamiliar words, Jiménez absorbed the Joads even into his dreams:

> I kept struggling with the reading, but I could not put it down. I finally understood what Miss Bell meant when she told me to read for enjoyment. I could relate to what I was reading. The Joad family was poor and traveled from place to place in an old jalopy, looking for work. They picked grapes and cotton and lived in labor camps similar to the ones we lived in like Tent City in Santa Maria. Ma Joad was like Mama and Pa Joad was a lot like Papa. Even though they were not Mexican and spoke only English, they had many of the same experiences as my family. I felt for them. I got angry with the growers who mistreated them and was glad when Tom Joad protested and fought for their rights. He reminded me of my friend Don Gabriel, the *bracero* who stood up to Diaz, the labor contractor, who tried to force Don Gabriel to pull a plow like an ox.[2]

Applying the intuition many good teachers possess, Miss Bell created compatibility between the curriculum and her student. She offered a curriculum of identification, affirmation, and validation. Moreover, she focused on Jiménez's assets rather than his deficits and gave him a lifeline to her high expectations and standards. While issues of culture and language were not in her imagination, she responded to the characteristics of poverty and mobility. Most important, she responded to the characteristic of societal perceptions. She

[2]Francisco Jiménez, *Breaking Through* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2001), 98-102.

let Jiménez know he belonged in her demanding class and recognized he was transforming the adversity in his life into something valuable.

My own Mexican American migrant students taught me about the curriculum of identification, affirmation, and validation, and that changing the curriculum is not enough. I entered the dusty, hot barrack that was the site of my first teaching assignment in mid-April 1967. My third graders were migrants (because the other third-grade teacher did not like migrants), African Americans (because the other third-grade teacher did not like African Americans), and the Padilla boys (because the other third-grade teacher had taught their fathers and did not want to teach any more Padillas). Almost all the African American students were migrants and spoke Spanish. The previous teacher had left me a class as chaotic as any scene Hollywood might devise.

Mostly male, my students' ages spanned 10 years, with the gifted Padilla boys slightly underage for their grade. I had never had an education course and never heard the terms *bilingual education* or *multicultural education.* The principal handed me the overhead projector, purchased recently with Title I funds, and told me not to worry because the class would soon thin out as the migrants left. Unable to control the students, I resorted to bribery. I brought a cake to class and promised the students a party if they behaved. Everyone but the Padilla boys saved the cake to take home to their mothers. The next day, I took two cakes, one for the students to eat in class and one to be divided up for their mothers. As my students left, I called one of them *mijo,* the endearing version of *mi hijo,* or my son. Laughing and teasing, the students asked me if the boy really was my son. When I explained they all were my sons, of sorts, they all wanted me to call them *mijo.* I agreed.

Every day, I baked two cakes. Slowly, my classroom became a joyous place. Absences were nonexistent. One of my favorite stories was Benito Juárez, Mexico's only Indigenous president. While working in the fields and protecting his sheep from wolves, he learned lessons that served him well in defeating the French and saving Mexico's democracy. I went to the storeroom and found some old third-grade readers that described Juárez's life. With too few books, I grouped my students and had them read along as I read to them. My students were spellbound. After a raucous discussion of their own

experiences—including some of dubious veracity involving fields, mountains, sheep, and wolves—I assigned each student to read the book to their parents and report on what more they had learned about Benito Juárez. Every day for the next week, the students came back with their families' stories about Juárez. I did not know it then, but I had created the optimal environment for oral English language development, a pressing need among most of my students.

When the first student started talking about leaving to go to "the works," I felt I had to do something to keep him in school. I urged his family to keep him in school until after the exam. It worked. For the next few weeks, I spent my afternoons traipsing through the barrio and talking with every migrant head of household. Unaware of how a delayed departure could affect a family's income, I made a convincing case for the importance of education. Perhaps it was that I was 22 years old, that my Spanish was formal and respectful, or that my cakes had preceded me, but all but one student remained through the end of the term.

From these third-grade students and their families, I gained the essential understandings that have shaped my work in education and my advocacy for children. The cake scenario provided insight into the powerful role culture plays in motivating all learners. I realized that the most important role for these Mexican American students was to be a family member and that these close family ties could be a motivational and teaching tool. I have used the curriculum of identification, affirmation, and validation in all my teaching regardless of the students' education levels or cultural, ethnic, or racial backgrounds.

A growing number of former migrants are writing about their experiences, providing a deeper understanding of migrant children's complex lives and the impact of immigration, impermanency, language isolation, and hard labor on education.[3] These voices reflect the complexity of challenges, needs, and strengths of migrant families. Going forward, the actual stories of migrants must be at the center of

[3]Tomás Rivera reflects the experiences of long-term, U.S.-citizen, South Texas families who leave a stable community yearly to labor in agricultural fields. See Julián Olivares, ed., *Tomás Rivera: The Complete Works* (Houston: Arte Publico, 1991). Other autobiographical accounts include Jiménez, *Breaking Through*, and Josie Mendez-Negrete, *Las Hijas de Juan: Daughters Betrayed* (San Jose, CA: Chusma House, 2002).

advocacy and efforts to improve the education and life chances of migrant children and their families.

In a riveting first-person description of her childhood, Josie Mendez-Negrete describes the ache of leaving her close-knit, love-filled village in Mexico and her introduction to life in the land of opportunity:

> Not wanting to be *arrimados* ("spongers"), we stayed only long enough to make the money we needed to get to the next place. Mague and I were drafted into the fields. We lost our appetite for apples or any of the fruits we picked. Hated the scent of ripe fruit that clung to our clothes and turned our stomach. Felt as if we had been drenched in cheap perfume all day long.
>
> We didn't have drinking water, and we had to hold our bladder or go behind the bushes in view of the other workers. Never had breaks, forced to keep up an adult pace. Tin buckets we carried cut into our fingers and blistered them until we grew calluses on our palms.[4]

For Mendez-Negrete, immigration and impermanence meant isolation from her native community and her constantly changing world in the United States. The Theory of Incompatibilities focused attention on the need to bridge these experiences.

## Building a Model of Advocacy

José Cárdenas and I often have been asked to single out the most important characteristic identified in the Theory of Incompatibilities. Bilingual educators expect us to cite language; migrant educators focus on mobility; compensatory education specialists point to poverty. We have declined to answer, rejecting the tendency of reformers to look for a silver bullet to produce quick results. In private, however, we have always agreed the prerequisite for a breakthrough is embedded in the characteristic we call *societal perceptions.*

The concept of societal perceptions emerged from consistent data indicating migrant parents are concerned about schools' attitudes

[4]Mendez-Negrete, *Las Hijas de Juan.*

toward them and their children. In 1969, parents reported feeling unwelcome in schools, being subjected to inferior teachers or classrooms after returning to their home schools, and multiple other slights. As we probed deeper, particularly with multigenerational migrant families, it became clear the parents' feelings had as much to do with their own experiences of rejection, discrimination, and failure in school as it did with their children's experiences. Societal perceptions explain how schools and families view each other and how this interactive relationship affects the success of migrant children. It is equally important to respond to schools' negative or dysfunctional perceptions of migrant students and their families as it is to address the negative or dysfunctional perceptions migrant students and their families have of schools.

The concept of societal perceptions initially proved difficult to manage. Defensive school personnel grasped that migrant parents might have negative attitudes toward education. Migrant education advocates focused on societal perceptions to affirm the existence of schools' discriminatory attitudes. Our position was that all the factors interrelate and that affirmative steps must be taken with regard to individual students, parents, and school personnel to develop positive perceptions and expectations.

In today's terms, we would say the paradigm on migrant families and their schooling must shift to achieve a significant breakthrough in education outcomes. Indeed, the Theory of Incompatibilities represented a weak paradigm shift, calling on educators to look not at deficits but at the disconnect between a school's expectations and what the students bring to school. We referred to needs and, more weakly, to strengths. The future paradigm for migrant education must be needs-responsive but also must focus aggressively on the assets of migrant children, families, and communities.

John Kretzmann and John McKnight have developed an assets-based community-development model that focuses on building community in urban settings; however, many of the strategies could work in migrant communities and school districts with new migrant or immigrant populations and limited resources. Kretzmann and McKnight call for mapping assets, building relationships, releasing individual and organizational capacities in communities, and capturing local institutional resources. Migrant communities, whether temporary or

permanent, have numerous assets to help schools better serve children. Migrant workers survive by using informal communication networks, kinship groups, and groups based on location of origin. People influence one another based upon a sophisticated assessment of the knowledge, skills, and wisdom relative to each challenge they confront. These assets, if recognized by schools, can serve as resources to benefit children.[5]

Luis Moll and James B. Greenberg demonstrate that an advanced classroom pedagogy requires a full understanding of how students' households express their own pedagogies. Social relations and means of production connect households to one another and help transmit "funds of knowledge" among participants. These transactions are extended zones of proximal development that can inform the mediation of instruction and transform classrooms into more advanced contexts for teaching and learning. A recent model engages parents to examine the funds of knowledge in their own household interactions with strategies that mediate their children's learning. This model goes beyond understanding that migrants *have* assets; the new paradigm understands that migrants *are* assets.[6]

In the spring of 1998, Jaime Chahin and I traveled to the central gulf coast of Florida to study tutoring programs.[7] Expecting that Title I children in that part of the country would be largely African American and White, we were surprised to see that most of the people in one small town were young Mexican men. By the end of the day, we were anxious to explore the area and figure out why all these Mexican men were there. We looked in the Catholic Church but found no one. Before long, we found a thriving Mexican food restaurant and

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[5]John P. Kretzmann and John L. McKnight, *Building Communities from the Inside Out: A Path Toward Finding and Mobilizing a Community's Assets* (Chicago: Acta, 1993).

[6]Luis C. Moll and James B. Greenberg, "Creating Zones of Possibilities: Combining Social Context for Instruction," in *Vygotsky and Education: Instructional Implications and Applications of Sociohistorical Psychology,* ed. Luis C. Moll (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990); and Belinda B. Flores, Mari Riojas-Cortez, and Ellen Clark, "Los Ninos Aprenden en Casa," in *Young Child* (forthcoming).

[7]Dr. Jaime Chahin subsequently developed the "Las Colonias" project to inform the public and policymakers about the needs and assets of the 500,000 mostly migrant families who live in unincorporated neighborhoods along the Mexico-U.S. border.

a waitress in her late teens with an engaging personality and intelligence to spare.

She explained how her family made their way from the Mexican state of Oaxaca to the Florida gulf coast: "We walked," she said, in flawless English. "You walked?" we exclaimed. She enrolled in school at age six and recently graduated third in her class. She wanted desperately to attend college, but her immigration status denied her access to financial aid. During the discussion, we kept coming back to the remarkable story of how she *walked* with her father and sister from Oaxaca to the Florida gulf coast: "We walked up to Sonora and crossed through the desert and then walked across through Oklahoma and Arkansas."

We were awestruck by her story and assertion that many of the migrant workers in the town had taken the same trek. Invisible to the American consciousness, the stories of migrants are as courageous as the trail rides of pioneer settlers through desert and mountain, as hope-filled and dangerous as travel along the Underground Railroad. As with these earlier risk takers, the character and competence of migrants will sustain the United States for years to come.

In spite of the hardships, families engaged in migratory agricultural labor are not and need not become part of the permanent underclass. These families exemplify the values of family, work, and faith that society seeks. Whether recent immigrants, longer-term residents, legal or illegal, they *work!* They maintain intact, if imperfect, families. They keep at it, believing in this country. Cognitive competence always emerges from human beings teaching their children to negotiate family, work, and faith. Migrant children's experiences create formidable assets; we must build upon these assets to help them break through and succeed in school.

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