

Seven Areas of Concern of the Migrant Education Program

Educational Continuity

Because migrant students often are forced to move during the regular school year, students tend to experience a lack of educational continuity. Migrant students experience differences in curriculum, academic standards, homework policies, and classroom routines. Their course placements reflect inconsistencies. The cumulative impact of educational discontinuity is daunting. In a six year span, students moving more than three times are likely to fall a full academic year behind stable peers. Efforts to overcome this pattern of incoherence are needed to strengthen educational continuity.

Time for Instruction

Mobility also impacts the amount of time students spend in class and their attendance patterns. Such decreases in the time students spend engaged in learning leads to lower levels of achievement. Ways to ameliorate the impact of family mobility and delays in enrollment procedures are essential.

School Engagement

Migrant students are frequently faced with adjustments to new school settings, making new friends, and social acceptance challenges, which are generally grouped as behavioral, emotional and cognitive, based on Fredricks, Blumenfeld, and Paris (2003).

Behavioral engagement focuses on the opportunities for participation, including academic, social, or extracurricular activities. It is considered a crucial factor in positive academic outcomes and preventing school dropout.

Emotional engagement emphasizes appeal. Positive and negative reactions to teachers, classmates, academic materials, and school in general determine whether or not ties are created. Such responses influence identification with the school and a sense of belonging and feeling valued.

Cognitive engagement hinges on investment in learning and may be a response to expectations, relevance, and cultural connections. Without engagement, students may be at risk for school failure. Migrant students need avenues that ensure they are valued and have the opportunities that more stable students have.

English Language Development

English language development (ELD) is critical for academic success. In the school setting, ELD focuses on the literacy skills applicable to content area learning. Since many migrant students have a home language other than English, migrant programs must find avenues to supplement the difficulties faced by migrant students in ELD due to their unique lifestyle, while not supplanting Title III program activities.



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Education Support in the Home

Home environment is often associated with a child's success in school, reflecting exposure to reading materials, a broad vocabulary, and educational games and puzzles. Such resources reflect parent educational background and socio-economic status. While many migrant parents value education for their children, they may not always know how to support their children in a manner consistent with school expectations nor have the means to offer an educationally rich home environment. Efforts to inform families are crucial.

Health

Good health is a basic need that migrant students often do not attain. The compromised dental and nutritional status of migrant children is well documented. They have higher proportions of acute and chronic health problems and there are higher childhood and infant mortality rates than those experienced by their non-migrant peers (Huang, 1993). They are at greater risk than other children due to pesticide poisoning, farm injuries, heat-related illness, and poverty. They are more likely to be uninsured and have difficulties with health care access. Families often need assistance in addressing health problems that interfere with the student's ability to learn.

Access to Services

Newcomer status and home languages other than English often decrease access to educational and educationally-related services to which migrant children and their families are entitled. Since they are not viewed as permanent residents, services become more difficult to obtain.



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