

**Challenges and Solutions
for Educating Migrant Students**

by Edgar Leon

Working Paper No. 28

July 1996

**Challenges and Solutions
for Educating Migrant Students**
by Edgar Leon

Working Paper No. 28
July 1996

About the Author:

Edgar Leon earned his Ph.D. in College and University Administration at Michigan State University. He is an Education Consultant with the Michigan Department of Education and is a Visiting Scholar at the Julian Samora Research Institute, Michigan State University in East Lansing, Michigan for 1995-96.

SUGGESTED CITATION

Leon, Edgar *Challenges and Solutions for Educating Migrant Students*, JSRI Working Paper #28, The Julian Samora Research Institute, Michigan State University, East Lansing, Michigan, 1996.

RELATED READINGS FROM JSRI

- Cifras-2** Rochín, Refugio I. & Marcelo E. Siles. "Michigan Hispanics: A Socio-Economic Profile." 7 pp. (1994).
- Cifras-8** Heiderson, Mazin A. and Edgar R. Leon. "Patterns and Trends in Michigan Migrant Education." 32 pp. (1996).

The Julian Samora Research Institute is committed to the generation, transmission, and application of knowledge to serve the needs of Latino communities in the Midwest. To this end, it has organized a number of publication initiatives to facilitate the timely dissemination of current research and information relevant to Latinos.

- * *Research Reports*: JSRI's flagship publications for scholars who want a quality publication with more detail than usually allowed in mainstream journals. These are edited and reviewed in-house. Research Reports are selected for their significant contribution to the knowledge base of Hispanic Americans.
- * *Working Papers*: for scholars who want to share their preliminary findings and obtain feedback from others in Latino studies. Some editing provided by JSRI.
- * *Statistical Briefs/CIFRAS*: for the Institute's dissemination of "facts and figures" on Latino issues and conditions. Also designed to address specific questions and highlight important topics.
- * *Occasional Papers*: for the dissemination of speeches and papers of value to the Latino community which are not necessarily based on a research project. Examples include historical accounts of people or events, "oral histories," motivational talks, poetry, speeches, and related presentations.

Challenges and Solutions for Educating Migrant Students

Table of Contents

Preface	1
Introduction	1
About This Paper	2
The Migrant Student	2
Interrupted Schooling	3
Interrupted Schooling - Solutions	3
Limited English Language Proficiency	4
Limited English Language Proficiency - Solutions	4
Lack of Health and Nutrition	5
Lack of Health and Nutrition - Solutions	5
Social Isolation	6
Social Isolation - Solutions	6
Economic Marginality	7
Economic Marginality - Solutions	7
Low Self Esteem	8
Low Self Esteem - Solutions	8
Conclusions	9
References	9

PREFACE

As a state consultant, I have visited Michigan school systems for many years monitoring and providing technical assistance to the 55 plus migrant education programs. Additional information on these programs is available in my recently published report which I co-authored with Dr. Mazin Heiderson (JSRI Cifras Breves, No. 8, 1996).

Throughout these years, I have observed the classrooms, and talked to teachers, administrators, parents, farm workers, and health and social service providers. This experience has provided me with certain data that is of great importance. I speak as a member of a Hispanic group, and from this perspective I may sound hurt and offended by the expressions I use to report what I have seen.

While some may hold my credentials in question, I can only affirm that they should try going to another country and earn a Ph.D. in a language that is not their native tongue. I guess I have been one of the lucky ones that got out of the barrio and made it regardless of the gangs, drugs, violence, and limited economic opportunities. As a consultant, I have made an effort to continue reading and educating myself.

Unless an education consultant reads the latest research, teaches at a school, works on problem solving in their area of expertise, writes research papers, and actively participates as an advocate for children, he or she is prone to vegetate in this field. Simply watching the students fail in the classroom, walking the school hallways, talking with frustrated teachers, parents and administrators, and having lunch and dinner with politicians does not qualify any person for recommending any significant changes in curriculum or educational approaches. Just because a person is of Hispanic heritage, looks Hispanic or speaks Spanish does not mean that he or she has a license to say what is right or wrong for all Hispanic children in their school district or state. I personally do not even attempt to recommend changes until I have studied each situation thoroughly. I do not use my ethnicity as a flag or diploma which makes me capable of providing expert advice. It takes more than being Hispanic or having a Spanish surname. It takes hard work and constant learning to effectively make such changes.

Enough of setting the record straight. The purpose of this paper is to point to challenges and solutions for educating migrant students for the next five years.

INTRODUCTION

Let us start by defining the term “migrant student.” Migrant students are generally defined by the occupation of their parents. In turn, migrant workers are a group of people who work in agriculture, forestry or fishing on a seasonal basis, and through their work contribute billions of dollars to the U.S. economy. By such work, migrants do not get much in return for themselves or for their families. Every year this nation utilizes about 840,000 migrant farm workers, who have 409,000 children traveling with them from one crop to another trying to make a living. Schooling for them is pre-literate, as studies have shown. Children of migrant workers are exposed to dangerous chemicals, social neglect, disrupted schooling, racism and living conditions that make our poor people look like aristocrats.

But just exactly who are these migrant families? The 1993 National Agricultural Worker Survey (NAWS) done by the U.S. Department of Labor revealed that the migrant farm workers in the United States are:

- primarily Hispanic (94 percent);
- born in Mexico (80 percent);
- married with children (52 percent);
- doing farm work in the U.S. without their families (59 percent);
- mostly men (82 percent);
- are today, or were until 1987-88; unauthorized workers (67 percent).

Many times these families are called by different names such as: aliens, illegals, immigrants, trouble-makers and worse. We need to stop using these derogatory labels. We can start by educating our community about the positive side of having migrant families come to our country every year. Our school systems are the vehicle to provide such education to our community.

In addition, one of the best ways to show our gratitude to these hard working families is to contribute to their children’s education, so that they can break the chains of depending on temporary and seasonal work. We can help these families learn that education can give their children a better future. Our community must be very grateful for these people, who are willing to work for very low wages and under very hard conditions so that we can have fruits and vegetables on our tables.

Migrants usually harvest fruits and vegetables that must be picked as soon as they ripen. After migrants finish the work in one area, they seek jobs elsewhere. Few of these workers settle permanently in any community. Most of the migrants in the U.S. are American Indians, Mexican Americans, African Americans, or Puerto Ricans. Of these, Hispanics compose 90 percent of the migrant farm workers in America. Temporary farm workers generally receive low wages and often cannot find work in one place long enough to qualify for such government aid as food stamps, public assistance and disability insurance. Shotland (1989) reports that there is a high risk of injury from farm machinery and equipment, poor sanitation, chronic and acute exposure to toxic pesticides, and harsh and dangerous physical work in agricultural labor. In fact, farm labor is reported as more dangerous than mining.

Many migrant families live in run-down, unsanitary housing. They often lack adequate food or medical care, and many suffer malnutrition or other health problems. Bartlett (1995) reports that undocumented workers are often afraid to apply for benefits, even when they are eligible.

Many migrant workers have difficulty finding other kinds of work because they lack education and good command of the English language. Only about a fifth of the migrant children go beyond sixth grade. Migrant youngsters tend to fall behind in their education because they change schools frequently. Some miss classes because they work to help support their family. Many Michigan schools sponsor summer sessions and other programs to promote the education of migrant children who temporarily live in the area.

ABOUT THIS PAPER

This paper will discuss several solutions to each of the challenges presented. These are not the only solutions, and they will focus only on the immediate need for migrant student services. I will also provide ideas on what can be done by each state to assure that the migrant education program is comprehensive in nature.

It is up to us migrant educators to start meeting these challenges. It is also up to us to provide leadership without fear of retaliation. You have the data, you know where to get more, you can speak

Spanish or English. So, what is the excuse? I will give you my perspective, at the same time understanding that each of us have a different way of accomplishing any given task.

THE MIGRANT STUDENT

These are students that, because of their high mobility during the school year, lose educational continuity and lag behind in their academics. As educators, we must not pity or have low expectations for migrant children or for any Hispanic child. We, as migrant educators, have to work harder and provide them with quality, interesting, and useful supplemental instruction. Supplemental instruction should be understood as being in addition to the regular school day instruction.

Migrant students are, on average, three years behind their peers academically. Some cannot speak, read, or write English. Now, what would happen to you if I suddenly placed you in a classroom in China and said, "You should learn the Chinese language and compete with the Chinese students. I will give you three years to do this." You would say, "I *don't* know the language because I was not taught." Well then, why do we expect the migrant kids to know something we have not taught them? In addition to all of this, school districts provide tutors with dubious credentials in order to give the appearance of providing adequate services for these students. That has only helped create a great employment opportunity for some local, semi-educated Spanish speakers, and as a result we are penalizing our migrant students with cheap instruction! This type of migrant education program does not work, and should no longer be tolerated.

The system is rigged against migrant students. Many administrators do not speak Spanish and lack the means for testing the language proficiency of the tutors or teachers they hire. They may simply rely on what another non-fluent speaker may tell them. You must start ordering college transcripts, and developing tools for measuring a prospective or current teacher's Spanish language proficiency. Just because your Anglo-Saxon teacher took Spanish in high school, does not mean he is able to teach kids in Spanish.

Migrant children that are Hispanic are at least a year behind in their schooling, even before they enter the first grade. According to the National Center for

Education Statistics (1995), Hispanic students, on the average, have lower achievement scores and are less ready for school than their non-Hispanic White or African American counterparts. You may add interrupted schooling as a significant negative factor affecting migrant student achievement. This puts our migrant students between three and four years behind their Anglo-Saxon counterparts.

Nine out of ten of Michigan migrant students are in grade levels K - 8. These students need extra help with social, health and basic support services, while they try to adapt to a culture that conflicts with their own. Something as basic as proper nutrition is essential for setting the stage for learning.

Over the years as a migrant education consultant, I have been able to identify six major challenges to migrant student education.

1. Interrupted Schooling
2. Limited English Language Proficiency
3. Lack of Health and Nutrition
4. Social Isolation
5. Economic Marginality
6. Lack of Self Esteem

In the sections that follow, I will discuss each challenge and potential solutions for it.

INTERRUPTED SCHOOLING

Migrant farm workers move an average of six times per year in order to complete the cycle of farm harvesting. This movement from one state to another, or from one rural area to another within a state, creates a tremendous educational hazard for their children. Migrant children will arrive in a new school, be tested on all subjects, and placed in a room with new students in the middle of the school year. Many migrant students are placed in a lower grade level because the new school's standards and absenteeism policies are different from the school they just came from. Curriculum incompatibility and staff shortages create a compounding negative effect. Migrant students are often placed in a room with a teacher aide, or simply left alone in the school hallway. These conditions often hinder and decrease the accumulation of credits they need to pass from one grade to another. Many students simply decide not to go to school because they want to work and help their parents. They also get positive

reinforcement if they stay home and help take care of their younger siblings.

High school students have very little incentive and self-motivation. Many migrant teenagers would rather drop out and work than study all day long. Going to college is seen as an expensive frivolous activity. Many students are discouraged by their families, because they will not have the resources to provide college tuition. Many times they marry at an early age and continue the migrant cycle. The lack of a uniform interstate curriculum also affects the migrant child's academic progress. Many states do not even recommend science and math classes to migrant students because educators there have very low expectations about the migrant child.

INTERRUPTED SCHOOLING - SOLUTIONS

Since this is a multi-phased problem, it is a complex issue which presents a real challenge for those of you who are creative thinkers and problem solvers. As a first step, plan to base your predictions for need according to what you have seen over the past three years. Look for patterns within the school population. If you know that for the past three years, you have had 40 percent monolingual migrant students in your school population, please have a teacher ready for them before they arrive at your school. Look at your certificates of eligibility and analyze the percent of elementary, middle, and high school students who are migrants. Have a list of all schools where your students come from. You have a very good chance of getting them back in your school next year. In addition, migrant programs must provide instruction in the migrant camps. They must create a charter school or academy that will fit the migrant stream calendar.

Teachers must expose the migrant students to the latest computer technology. Many lessons and books are available via the internet. Teachers must start teaching these skills regardless of their school's economic conditions. You must not wait for the turtles to start moving. If your regular school system is out of sync, provide new outreach programs that can meet the needs of these students. You must not try to fit the students to a school calendar that is dysfunctional to their way of living and learning. Schools must accommodate learning to fit the student's needs.

As for educational materials and books, have them ready for distribution before the students arrive. Set aside some sets of materials so that you do not have to spend time looking for them later when the migrant students inevitably arrive. You may also ask the migrant workers to call your school ahead of time from Texas, Florida and Mexico. You may ask your recruiter to give them a phone number where they can reach you at all times. This alone will help you save valuable time. Keep an academic portfolio on each migrant student, including copies of their academic records on math, English and oral language. This will help you have it ready for distribution to other schools that request this information. Even if they do not request it, you may take the initiative to call the schools and ask them if they need the information. Use the data entry systems available to your school. You must also use the quickest means for transferring student information, such as fax, e-mail, and overnight package couriers.

You are encouraged to be creative and to have a planning session with all local staff and service providers. Write and distribute priorities for the term. Provide a list of list people responsible for the accomplishment of each priority. Make sure you include the address, fax, e-mail, and phone numbers.

LIMITED ENGLISH LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY

The first language of 75 percent of migrant children is not English. Among these, many are foreign-born and have little or no schooling in their native countries. Reading and oral language skills are sometimes very difficult to attain because of the living conditions and limited resources.

Many students are unable to learn English because they do not have the resources to purchase books, or may not have the time and transportation to borrow from the local libraries. More than 50 percent of migrant parents are not able to read to their children because they do not have reading skills. This will also cause a lack of interest in reading on behalf of the child.

School tutors may be a turn off as well. In many schools they just baby-sit and have students work on simple handouts or color pictures. It is less expensive for local programs to hire teacher aides and assistants than to have a certified teacher helping them catch up with their skills.

Pull-out programs that help students once a week in the school hallway for a few hours are also detrimental to the acquisition of English. Students feel ashamed to be seen in the hallways with another person. Other students and teachers may assume that the student is a problem or is in special education.

To compound the problem even more, Bilingual Education is now optional! Bilingual Education has been voted down by the insensitive majority. The majority of people do not have any idea of what it is like to go to another country and learn a new language. This was a totally biased vote. Give me a group of non-minority voters and I will give you a non-bilingual education vote. This new decision will not only create a greater expense to the school, but will also create a vacuum of teachers, materials, and help needed to teach English as a second language. Monolingual students in great need of help will directly suffer the consequences.

What are the consequences? More dropouts and increasing gangs. Who wants to be at a school where people look at you as a burden, as an alien, and where people do not speak your native tongue? Would you be a student in such a school where you do not feel welcome?

We will all have this challenge to deal with in the near future.

LIMITED ENGLISH LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY - SOLUTIONS

Creativity and hard work are the only two immediate solutions that I see for this challenge. We have to start a new school-wide comprehensive program which will focus on the students' needs, not on the local union's needs. Let me tell you a story. Once upon a time there was a group called the Teachers Union, which had control of all the school administrators and local boards of education. They had what they wanted, when and where they wanted. One day they came to school and discovered that all the students were absent. The students had moved to another school where they felt welcome and where they had teachers that really considered them first priority. The new teachers wanted all the students to succeed.

This story will become a reality if we do not start making some radical changes in our school system. There is no dispute that local students are not doing as well as we want them to. We all know that most of our minority students are poor and go to schools that have limited resources. These schools may also have high level of absenteeism which, in fact, will eventually result in high dropout rates.

It has been demonstrated by recent research that black and Hispanic students do not perform as well as white students, in general. What is not discussed is why this pattern is occurring in our schools. You may notice that high income communities correlate to good schools and high scores on the SAT. Such communities also have a mostly white student population.

Now, lets see what happens with Hispanics.

Hispanics are reported as lower achievers than White students, according to the latest SAT reports. The National Center for Education Statistics says, "As early as age nine, differences can be seen in academic performance of Hispanic and White students. Academic proficiency in reading, mathematics, and science, as measured at age nine by the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), is lower for Hispanic children than for white children. Although scores for Hispanic nine year olds have increased in mathematics and science over the past 15-20 years, there has been little change in the gap between the scores of white and Hispanic nine year olds over this time period."

If we add the lack of English language attainment for this group we can conclude that it has a critical compounding effect. Not knowing English will widen the gap even more. Most migrant children come from a Spanish speaking environment. We have plenty of students from Mexico, Puerto Rico, Nicaragua, Guatemala, and other Latin American countries where Spanish is the native tongue. In addition, many of the families do not know how to work with our welfare system. They may not have the language skills to request the benefits which they, by law, qualify for. Many parents do not frequent teacher/parent meetings because they have very limited communication skills or feel that they will not make a difference if they complain. Some even fear that if they complain, the teachers will retaliate by suspending their children. Lack of bilingual support

is a turn-off for most of the students. They will quickly start skipping school and dropping out because they feel that schools do not want them there and that they are outsiders.

We must stop these racist practices and start teaching migrant students how to read and write English. If they only speak Spanish, we must quickly assign a bilingual teacher to use the students native language and help them make the transition. This should not be done by promoting assimilation. It should be done by praising the student for knowing another language, and making him or her feel proud of the fact that they know how to read and write in another language. "We should not promote UNLEARNING SPANISH." Our schools should promote more learning.

LACK OF HEALTH AND NUTRITION

Migrants and their families have much worse physical health than the general population. The infant mortality rate among migrants is 125 percent higher than the general population, and the life expectancy of migrant farm workers is 49 years, in contrast to the nation's average of 75 years (National Migrant Resources Program, 1990).

Commonly reported health problems among the migrant farm workers and their children include: lower height, weight, and other anthropometric attainments; respiratory disease; parasitic conditions; skin infections; chronic diarrhea; vitamin A deficiency; and undiagnosed congenital and developmental problems. In addition, accidental injuries, heat related illness, and chemical poisoning are highly prevalent among the population (American Academy of Pediatrics, 1989; Shotland, 1989; Koch, 1988; National Rural Health Care Association, 1986).

LACK OF HEALTH AND NUTRITION - SOLUTIONS

We should make it a top priority to update all required vaccinations for all migrant children and families that arrive to our schools. We have come a long way with this activity, but we still have plenty to do. Your school is responsible for each of the children that are part of your school community. You must be flexible with the schedules provided for vaccinations. You must also take these basic services to the camp, during and after work hours. Some schools opt for

taking the children in school transportation or using the local migrant recruiters to assist with this responsibility. Parents should know that it is crucial to update their children's vaccinations.

Access becomes a great concern to all of us in migrant education. Many hospitals love to refer all migrant families to local migrant clinics. Migrant families must not be denied basic services. School officials must get involved in making sure that these discriminatory practices come to an end. Most of the excuses used are that there are no doctors available, the schedule for the next appointment may be three weeks from the day of the visit, and that they ran out of vaccines. Let me tell you that these excuses are not, and should not be, acceptable. Migrant education staff must identify these hospitals and health providers. They must report them to the proper authorities so that the next time they apply for federal funding or state funding for special populations, they are denied such monies.

Most hospitals have the option to set payment plans and offer special Medicaid services for poor families. Migrant directors and principals must meet directly with the service providers to supply a list of all the migrant families in the area so that they receive top priority. Remember that these families come for a short period of time and that they do not have time to waste waiting for a doctor. They may also opt for not going to the hospital because they fear that the hospital will report them to immigration officials if they do not have the proper identification. We have a great challenge ahead with this issue. Migrant families are exposed to many chemicals during their work. These contaminated environments may bring future illness to family members and also complications for migrant student learning.

Be sure to have good and complete health records on each family member. This will help you update health records when they return every year. Teachers and staff must be aware of any immediate illness a child may have. Migrant and general school staff must have a plan of action as it relates to migrant health issues. These plans should be coordinated with local health providers.

SOCIAL ISOLATION

The isolation of the migrants from the rest of the community where they are living is hard to imagine until it has been experienced. Camps are located in rural areas near the fields. It is possible to drive through farmland where literally hundreds of thousands of migrants are living and working, and yet be unaware of their existence.

Migrants are socially invisible. Ethnic groups are often kept separate in camps. They rarely interact with each other, thus reinforcing the isolation. Local people try to keep migrants at a distance. In addition to being strangers, migrant children are often culturally different; local children ignore or pick on them (Prewitt Diaz, et. al., 1990). Migrant families try not to use the existing local systems to get help. They will try to get help and support within the migrant camp population before they ask or apply for any health, social, or educational benefits. If they are from another country and do not have proper documentation, they will not ask for any help and will try to live totally isolated from the outside world.

The migrant parent will rarely question the teacher or school system about any situation concerning their child. They will accept as correct and unquestionable the will and demands of the school towards their children. Most parents may feel intimidated by school meetings. They will also be discouraged if the teacher does not speak their native language.

SOCIAL ISOLATION - SOLUTIONS

It is a fact that the institution for socialization and migrant student interaction is the school. A number of factors (e.g. language, transportation, and access) influence migrants' involvement with the school and other community institutions. We must teach all migrant students at an early age that it is important to learn English in order to know the system and work within the system. It will be to their advantage to know two languages. It will also help them interact with the rest of the children.

Schools must make an effort to schedule educational trips to museums, theaters, supermarkets, science fairs, universities, festivals, and other community activities so that they learn how to behave within the different environments and learn

from the visits. All activities must have goals and objectives directed at instruction.

Mainstream students from your school system must know the migrant population and the importance of having these children in our nation.

You, as the migrant educator, are responsible for teaching all administrators and local boards of education that the migrant children are an asset and not a liability. You must set the record straight and provide all this information before they reach your school.

The best place to start is by talking at parent meetings and teacher conferences, and in cafeterias and teachers' lounges.

Another group that is very important for this challenge are bilingual teachers. They are the ones responsible for planning all the activities and materials to be used in order to encourage all groups of children to understand all cultures and respect them for what they are. You must teach that being different is not being bad. Being different is a natural part of life which we must comprehend at an early age if we want to succeed in the future. Be creative with the activities and places you select for educational trips. Always remember that they must have an educational purpose and you are to lead the way.

ECONOMIC MARGINALITY

Income studies (Shotland, 1989) show that in 1986 the average annual income for migrant farm workers was remarkably low – less than \$6,500. Recent studies show that the annual average income of migrant families is \$5,000 (Martin, 1994). Work for the migrant family is usually seasonal and inconsistent. Most workers are not covered by employee benefit programs. In addition to residency problems, language barriers, and lack of contact with community services, most migrant families receive few social, economic, or health benefits. Though very poor, migrant families benefit little from available human services programs. Parents who are barely surviving economically find that their children's school attendance is a hardship. Children could improve the family's income by working in the fields if they did not have to go to school. This is a fact that drives the migrant family, and it is more pressing for children that are in the junior high and high school grade levels.

ECONOMIC MARGINALITY - SOLUTIONS

Migrant and seasonal farm workers continue to face many of the same problems in agriculture that they experienced a decade ago: uncertain demand for jobs, problems in finding housing and accommodations for families with children, uncertain incomes, and related poverty (Rochín, 1994).

Many migrant families come from Texas, Florida, and Mexico to Michigan with a promise of work which sometimes results in a loss of income rather than a gain. Many arrive to find that there is no work at the camp, and that their deposit for housing cannot be refunded to them. Many families give growers up to three months rent in advance even though they may stay only a few weeks. We can help them with this problem by getting involved with the camp owners, and making sure that they know that you care!

Migrant housing is not what we are all used to. Heat, noise, overcrowding, smell, dust, lack of toilets and running water are just a few of the variables that may affect learning. Many migrant children find it very difficult to study and concentrate while their home temperature is close to 100 degrees Fahrenheit. Or maybe the people around the neighborhood are noisy with radios and televisions blasting. Many children have to take care of their younger siblings while their parents work in the fields. Work is the first priority among the majority of the migrant families. That is the basic reason why they move and that should be understood by all of us. These are some of the reasons why you as a teacher or advocate should make an effort to visit the camps regularly.

If you have the migrant families' economic condition in mind, you will not make erroneous assumptions. Clothing, food, and shelter are essential elements for any family to succeed. By creating a program to supply these needs, you may be well advanced in solving some of the major problems that affect migrant student learning.

Farm worker earnings have not improved in terms of purchasing power. In general, farm workers with fewer than 150 days of annual employment at wages of \$6.52 per hour on the average, live in poverty. They may need social services, health services, and welfare to support their families. Your efforts for referral and networking with local service providers are essential for this challenge.

LOW SELF ESTEEM

Because of the instability and continuous change of school environments, the migrant child faces a very disruptive schooling. Friends and teachers have to be left behind just when they are starting to develop confidence and security. Many of these children have to leave their friends and extended family behind so that they can follow their parents. Their living conditions and house commodities have to be very simple and practical. Most of the time even toys and dolls have to be left behind because there is no space in the truck. They also have to deal with being over-age for their school grade.

Many migrant students are older and more physically developed than their peers. For this reason and others, they are constantly teased by the other children. They may also feel out of place because smaller children have mastered the material covered by the teacher, while they struggle with learning English and other subjects at a slower pace. This creates an insecure environment for learning. It also becomes a great challenge for all school staff to tackle at the beginning of the school year and all summer.

Many times the migrant child is placed in a special education class because he or she has not mastered the language, and because the student has problems catching up with all the material to be covered in the school curriculum. More often, children are measured by the speed of completion than the mastery of the subject. They may take longer to master a subject, but it should not be confused with having a mental handicap. They are victims of the environment and their own interrupted schooling. The worst case is when they are labeled speech-impaired because they cannot speak, read, or write English as well as their native counterparts; or because the school does not have enough money to cover the costs for an extra teacher.

Modern education places value on speed. We ask our students to learn things, and to learn them fast. Those that take a little longer because of language barriers are penalized, not because they do not know the material but because they do not comprehend it and need extra time. What makes this situation even worse is that the translators we have for these students may not know enough Spanish or English to provide the students with effective instruction! We need to get off the speed kick and concentrate on teaching our kids the basic material they are supposed to learn.

Learning is supposed to be fun, not punishment. We are supposed to give them interesting and challenging examples. A valuable class cannot be taught out of a book, and the teacher should not be a moderator. The teacher must be the person providing guidance and excitement to students. Teachers should be helping students identify the resources needed for the objectives to be accomplished.

Do you really think that learning of any subject can happen with just half an hour a week? It is not very likely. You need to gather all the school personnel and set the record straight. You, as the advocate, have to give teachers all the information you can gather on each of your migrant students, so that teachers know what they are going to face. This way, they can prepare goals and objectives ahead of time, and teach our migrant students effectively.

LOW SELF ESTEEM - SOLUTIONS

To boost self esteem, our migrant children need continuous praise from all teachers, parents, family, staff, and the entire community. We must praise all the positive accomplishments and provide them with additional steps and educational tools. We have to make sure that they realize that they too can make it. If they try hard and study every day, the results will be positive. We should not turn the migrant children off by lowering our standards or expectations, or by pointing out all their mistakes in front of the entire class. Teachers should identify their students' skills, hobbies, and any other activities that they do well, so that other students focus on these accomplishments. You should help other students and staff accept and understand migrant students.

There are many other techniques to be used in the classroom to increase self esteem. Talk with your school counselor to get other materials or ideas for this particular challenge.

We already know that these students are from economically disadvantaged environments and that being poor brings many characteristics and conditions allowing students to be categorized as "at risk." Before we start placing labels on our migrant students, let's try to identify their strengths and make them feel at home. Let's have an interpreter available at all times that can help bridge the gap between the school principal and the parents. Please understand that migrant children have a hard life on a daily basis because of their high mobility, interrupted schooling, economic conditions, ethnicity, and migrant lifestyle.

CONCLUSIONS

You have been exposed to just a few of the solutions for the challenges presented. My purpose is to provide you with some easy alternatives for immediate action. Migrant Education is here to stay and it must change with the new century. School-wide programs must include migrant education and ways to fulfill migrant students' immediate needs. Priority should be given to these students at all times. They are the ones with the compounding effect of mobility, language, economics, and health service limitations. The challenge is yours and there is no limit to the potential solutions. It is up to us to provide immediate positive action.

REFERENCES

- Aponte, Robert and Marcelo E. Siles. *Michigan Hispanics: A Socioeconomic Profile*, Statistical Brief No.1, Julian Samora Institute, Michigan State University, 112 Paolucci Building, East Lansing, Mich. September 1994.
- Bartlett, Karen J., and Flavio O. Vargas. *Literacy Education for Adult Migrant Farm workers*, ERIC Digest (EDO-LE-91-05), August 1995.
- Huang, Gary. *Health Problems Among Migrant Farm workers' Children in the U.S.*, ERIC Digest (EDO-RC-93-1), January 1993.
- Koch, Janice. *AIDS: A primer for children*, Barret Publications, Roslyn, N.Y., 1988
- Martin, Philip. *Migrant Farm workers and their Children*, ERIC Digest (EDO-RC-94-7), November 1994.
- National Agricultural Worker Survey, U.S. Department of Labor, 1993.
- National Assessment of Educational Programs, 1994 U.S. History: A First Look: Findings from the National Assessment of Educational Programs, Paul L. Williams. et al; Washington DC: Office of Educational Research and Improvement, U.S. Department of Education, 1995.
- National Migrant Resource Program, *Migrant and Seasonal Farm workers Health Objectives for the Year 2000*, Austin, Texas, 1990.
- National Rural Health Care Association, Burlington, Vermont: *Journal of Rural Health*, Vol. 1, No. 1., January 1985.
- Noda, Phyllis, private telephone interview during the time of research and editing, Ypsilanti, Michigan, January 1996.
- Prewitt Diaz, Joseph, Robert T. Trotter, & Vidal A. Rivera, Jr. *The Effects of Migration on Children: An Ethnographic Study*, Centro de Estudios Sobre la Migracion, 119 Cedar Lane, State College, Penn., 1990.
- Rochín, Refugio I., and Marcelo Siles, *Michigan's Farm workers: A Status Report on Employment & Housing*, Statistical Brief No. 2, Julian Samora Institute, Michigan State University, 112 Paolucci Building, East Lansing, Mich., December 1994.
- Shotland, R. Lance and Mark, Melvin M. *Social Science and Social Policy*, Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1995.
- Smith, Thomas M. The Condition of Education 1995, No. 4, "The Educational Progress of Hispanic Students," U.S. Department of Education, Office of Education Research and Improvement, NCES 95-767, Washington, D.C., 1995.
- Wright, Al. *Re-authorized Migrant Education Program: Old Themes and New*, ERIC Digest (EDO-RC-95-1), March 1995.