



Introduction and Purpose of Migrant Education

In 1966, Congress included language in the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) to help the children of migrant farm workers and establish the Office of Migrant Education (OME). The North Dakota Migrant Programs provide supplemental instruction and support services to children of migratory workers. The Migrant Education Program (MEP) operates in 50 states and the District of Columbia.

Why Give Special Help To Migrant Children?

Most school programs are set up on a nine-month academic year. However, when migrant children move with their families, their education, as well as their lives, is interrupted. They may come from large families with inadequate living space and low incomes. Poor nutrition, housing and sanitary conditions may cause a high incidence of health problems. They often have limited English skills and/or little experience with success at school. These problems combined with irregular attendance often lead to frustration and low-academic performance, causing many migrant children to drop out of school in their early teens. Because migrant youth have limited knowledge of, and preparation for, other kinds of jobs, they face a high risk of unemployment or become part of the migrant labor force. With help from the Migrant Education Program, migrant children can develop their self-confidence and begin to feel good about themselves. They can begin to enjoy school, attain an education and overcome the many difficulties in their lives.

What Is A Migrant Worker?

Migrant workers seek temporary or seasonal jobs in agriculture, fishing or related work including food processing. They follow the growing seasons across the country and are largely responsible for the cultivation and harvest of fruits, vegetables and many other food products. Many migrant workers have an average annual income below the national poverty level. The migrant population is made up of diverse ethnic groups. Nationally, Hispanics, blacks, whites, Native Americans and Asians complete the overall population. Mexican Americans and Central Americans follow migration patterns all over the country.

Who Is Eligible For the Migrant Education Program?

To qualify for the program, a migrant child must have moved within the past three years across state or school district lines with a migrant parent or guardian to enable the child's parent or guardian to obtain temporary or seasonal employment in an agricultural activity. The child must be three years of age through grade 12 and must not be above 21 years of age.

The North Dakota Migrant Program

The North Dakota Department of Public Instruction receives a grant annually from the Office of Migrant Education (OME), United States Department of Education (USDE) based on the number of identified migrant students that reside in the State of North Dakota. The Migrant Education Program (MEP) identified approximately 500 migrant students during the summer of 2005. A very large percentage of these students migrate from the state of Texas.

The Mission of the North Dakota Migrant Education Program

Because issues of mobility, language and poverty affect the migratory student's opportunities to receive excellence and equity in the classroom, the MEP strives to provide an educational experience which can help children reduce the educational disruptions and other problems that can result from repeated moves. During the regular school year, in areas with concentrations of migrant children, migrant education projects can operate in support of, and in coordination with, the regular school program. During the summer, at the peak of North Dakota's agricultural season, educational programs are set up exclusively for migrant children since regular school programs are not in operation for the most part during that time. In North Dakota, Migrant Education Projects are located in Hillsboro, Manvel, and Grafton.