



Education and Humanistic Issues Faced by Migrant Education Programs During Times of Pandemic and Natural Disasters

During a time of crisis, migrant education programs are asked to respond and provide support sometimes beyond what they say they will do in their service delivery plan. Migrant Education Program administrators at the state, regional, local and even at the national level are asked to develop a response plan on how, as a program, they will continue to provide services to the migrant families that they serve. As an educational institution, we are more caught up with responding with educational help or support that we sometimes forget about the other side of the picture which is how do we deal with the problem from a humanistic approach that affects the wellbeing of migrant families.

Given what is occurring in our nation right now, we will look at issues that the migrant education program is facing from an educational and humanistic view and what are the challenges these issues pose. Even though we are experiencing a health pandemic right now, these issues could also occur if we have a natural disaster like flooding, tornados, hurricanes, earthquakes, fires, and lava flows that can cause heavy damage to a local area or even to a state.

In IMEC's strategic plan there is a priority focus area called Relevance. One of the goal statements under this focus area talks about "providing current, practical, relevant, and useful services for all members to support their efforts to strengthen the support provided for migratory children and their families". Issues shared in this paper are from articles and websites that have been shared with the IMEC membership through publications such as Education Week, Rural Migration Blog, Child Trends, web-links from the Consortium Incentive Grantees (CIG), the Federal School Safety Clearinghouse, the U.S. Department of Education, and from the IMEC membership.

Currently states are implementing a "Stay at Home" policy with only those who need to access essential services allowed to leave their residence. Educationally, this has caused schools to close and in some states the school year has already been interrupted for the remainder of the current academic year. However, learning has not stopped and migrant administrators and staff have had to come up with state, regional, and local plans on how they will continue to provide educational support during this "Stay at Home" policy. Here are educational issues the migrant program is currently facing or will face as this pandemic continues its path. Although schools are mentioned in this paper as educational agencies that receive migrant funds, in some states, migrant funds are also sub allocated to a regional office, a local educational agency or local operating agency (LEA/LOA) to meet the needs of the migrant student population that they serve. They too are faced with the same or similar issues that will be mentioned here.

With schools closing due to the "Stay at Home" policy, teachers are asked to continue their classroom instruction through "Distance Learning" to make up for lost instructional time. Here are some challenges with this.

- **Getting Teachers Online** – Distance learning only works if teachers are familiar with knowing how to access the Internet and then learn how to use programs such as “Google Classroom” or other online platforms that students can access the teacher’s lesson(s).
- **Students Having Access to Computers** – It is one thing to have a teacher provide lessons online but not all students have access to a computer or a laptop. Schools are not always willing to lend them out or even have them leave the school campus for security reasons. However, during a time of crisis they may have to change some of their policies if they want students to access distance learning.
- **Internet Access** – Even if a student has a computer or laptop, they need connectivity to the Internet in order to access the distance learning. Not all families have access to this or they live in a remote area where connectivity to the Internet service cannot be obtained.
- **Picking Up Packets** – For those students who have no access to a computer/laptop or to an internet connectivity, schools have been trying to provide lessons via hard copies which the families have to come to the school to pick it up in packets. Classes students are taking arrange packets and once they complete the packets, the families return the packets to the school and pick up a new packet. Teachers arrange a time with the school to pick up the completed packets and some email the lessons to the school office that then copy and run off the packets for the students.
- **Tutorial Help** – Parents are being asked to help their child if the child does not understand the lesson or is stuck on a particular assignment. Who can the child turn to if the parent themselves do not know how to do the problem? Teachers are not always willing to give out their private numbers to their students to call them. The school’s office staff cannot provide the needed tutorial help so the child is stuck in trying to complete the assignment. This is where the migrant education program can offer support to their migrant students either, through the phone; through technology; or in some cases if allowed by current state law, in person by practicing social distancing.
- **Equitable Services for All Students** – In all of the support that is given to the regular education students, schools also have to be mindful when they are doing distance learning or passing out packets that they also address the needs of those students with special needs as well as those who are EL Learners.
- **Free Online Programs** – Teachers and parents are also looking at free online programs that can supplement the child’s learning in the core subject areas or assist them in areas that the student might need additional help. These programs are usually accessible from a computer, tablet, or cell phone but all require some kind of connection to the Internet. (See the section on Resources at the end of this paper for some online programs and learning).

Another issue that schools are faced beyond the academic includes, health and nutritional concerns for the students. This involves the following areas:

- **Meal Program** – For some families, the free meal program that the schools offer during the regular school year helps to supplement the family’s budget with the child receiving both a breakfast and lunch meal while the school is in session. With schools closing due

to the pandemic or natural disaster this option goes away unless the state or district decides to offer meal programs through the schools or other community agencies to make up for the loss of meals for students. Some have policies where the family can pick up a free breakfast and a free lunch at set times as long as the child is present with an adult and the child is a K-12 student. A problem for some is that migrant parents are working during the day and cannot accompany their child to pick up the meal. Some are also fearful of going outside of their home for safety reasons and thus this leads to migrant students going hungry. Migrant programs can be a resource here to help families explore options for obtaining food and necessities.

- **School-based Health Clinics/Centers** - Some community-based health clinics/centers are housed on school campuses. With the shutdown of the schools, families do not have access to these services and will need to be guided elsewhere in the community to address their health needs. An issue, are medical supplies to stock the clinics/centers. Some providers may move these supplies to other needed areas such as hospitals and emergency care units and thus close down some of these community-based health clinics/centers.

With the closing of schools, this puts a strain on the office staff and migrant administrators at all levels based on the uncertainty of when the school will be allowed to re-open. General areas that could be affected are fiscal, personnel, and waivers from current regulations. If this pandemic or natural disaster occurs during the second semester of the school year, then summer school plans could be affected or needs to be adjusted. Some of these general areas that could be affected by the school closure are:

- **Fiscal Carryover and End of the Year Expenses** – If a school, regional office, or LEA/LOA is in a shutdown mode and it is second semester, this could affect the spending of funds if it is not monitored closely. A waiver can be asked of the Tydings Amendment, which allows states to carry federal monies over for another year before it expires. Federal monies have a life span of 27 months after it has been released and usually it is a “first in, first out” system when monies are being spent. Schools have until September 30th to encumber the monies and have the purchase order paid by December for federal funds that are expiring on October 1st. Also, with federal funds there are guidelines on what you can spend federal monies on and what you cannot. Some schools and programs are looking to spend monies on cleaning supplies, computers and, essential necessities for families that are served in their MEP. Those require special permissions from the federal government in order for it to be an allowable cost. Many states have already received a Federal waiver on funds that will be expiring and thus have been given an additional year to spend them. Spending of state funds would vary from state to state but most of their fiscal year ends on June 30th to use the funds from that school year.
- **Fiscal Resources Impacted** – With the schools, regional offices, LEA/LOA shutting down in the current year, the impact of these closures will not be felt till possibly the subsequent school year as the economy dips into a recession. To make up for this short fall it could mean higher pensions with more people being unemployed or laid off from

their jobs. States are talking about implementing a pay cut percentage across the board for all state employees to make up for the funds being spent for unemployment. Federally, this will have an impact as well as the economy tries to recover and replenish what has been lost in payouts to keep the current economy afloat.

- **Unemployment of Casual Hires** – With schools, regional offices, LEA/LOA shutting down, those who are paid as casual hires or even as substitute teachers are not able to draw an income without direct contact with students. In a migrant education program, this would affect tutors and maybe even recruiters who are paid as part-time casual hires.
- **Mental Health of Staff and Students** – When one mentions mental health here, we are including one's emotional, psychological, and social wellbeing. The longer a student stays out of school and a learning environment that supports them, the more services are needed to support this student. For some students, school becomes their safe haven to go to so that when they come to campus, they can put their troubles or emotions away and start to focus on themselves. With the stress of the pandemic or natural disaster, there is no telling how this would affect the child socially and emotionally. Counseling helps to get through this and is something that a school may need to look into.

In the same light, schools need to monitor the mental health of their staff. Some may have lost their jobs in the school or are unable to make ends meet as a family due to cut backs. This can cause an emotional strain on the staff member. Having to answer questions or trying to support, within their powers, those who are less fortunate than them can cause an emotional breakdown of a staff member as well as it can become a daily stress occurrence. Support from the school should also extend to counseling for staff members identified needs.

No matter what the situation may be, monitoring of the students and the staff at all levels needs to be closely watched and evaluated. They could have lost a family member, a friend, a teacher, and/or a colleague to this epidemic or natural disaster and resources need to be provided immediately and on-going as necessary.

Other areas that could be affected if schools are closed down for a while are summer programs, receiving or making up credits, statewide testing, and graduation. Migrant students could be affected by the shutdown of these programs.

- **Summer School/ Summer Leadership Program/ Leadership Institutes** – As the pandemic or natural disaster extends to the summer months, this has an impact on summer programs if schools and universities are still shut down. Facilities and staff will not be available to provide services to migrant children and might have to resort to online learning like what is happening during the regular school year. Some states have already planned for virtual programs.
- **Credit Recovery/Credit Accrual/Dual Credits** – Like summer school, students in these programs may have to use online programs to make up or advance in credits if schools and universities are closed. Like the issues that were mentioned for Distance Learning, such as lack of equipment and connectivity, these factors will come into play for students

seeking these types of credits. For some, not being able to access credit recovery classes may result in not having enough credits to graduate with their class.

- **Statewide Testing and Federal Reporting of Data** – State’s who do statewide testing during the 3rd and 4th quarter of a school year have been impacted by schools being shut down during this time period. The U.S. Department of Education has provided waivers for states regarding the testing requirements under ESSA and which will have an impact on the data being reported for migrant students under EDEN and CSPR for the 2019/20 school years. Federal reporting of data for EDEN and CSPR could be impacted by the shutdown of schools especially if some of the data is used to determine funding. The federal government should allow for waivers to use the previous year’s data in making these determinations until the data stabilizes in subsequent years.
- **Child Count Data** – Schools and programs are affected at the federal and state level when child count data is used to determining not only funding as mentioned above but also, personnel staffing. For migrant education, one can only think of the impact that it could have on the child count with recruiters not being able to qualify eligible students due to the pandemic or natural disaster in their region or local. Funding and staffing formulas may need to be adjusted due to these changes.
- **Graduation** – If social distancing is still in place at the time of graduation, then ceremonies to honor the current year graduates becomes an issue schools will be faced with. Along with this would be the determination of promoting students to the next grade level based on quarter/semester grades completed.

Another Priority Focus Area in IMEC’s Strategic Plan is “Advocacy”. Under this focus area it states that “IMEC provides effective and positive leadership to impact public policy and the optimization of resources at the national, state, and local levels.” Resources at these three levels sometimes only focuses on the educational aspect of things since the migrant program is funded under Title I, Part C of ESSA. However, there are others issues besides education that impacts the migrant family as a whole which sometimes are lost if one does not advocate for the migrant families. For this paper we make reference to these as Humanistic Issues that impact the migrant family as a whole.

- **Impact on Farms** – With a pandemic or natural disaster, farms that deal with agriculture, dairy, meat processing, etc. are impacted by this. With migrant families working and, in some cases, living on these farms the impact becomes much greater. Here are some events and issues that can impact farms.
 - **Closing of restaurants, hotels, schools, and theme parks** – With the closure of some of these businesses or all of them, the impact on the farms becomes greater due to they no longer purchasing the products to feed their clients. As a result, farms now have a surplus of products with nowhere to sell them and thus lose out on any profits.
 - **Selling to grocery stores** – Farmers are having a hard time selling their products to the grocery stores (especially those bigger chain ones) whose contracts are with farmers who grow crops or do dairy/fisheries specifically for these clients retail business. Some of the contracts are outside of the U.S.

- **Perishable products** – These types of products do not last long so pushing them out to the consumers as soon as they are picked helps to cut down on spoilage. Consequently, places like the food banks have to put together pre-packed boxes of perishable products to move their inventory if they get too many perishable products which farmers cannot sell.
- **Agriculture Department’s Commodity Credit Corp** – Farms continue to look for help from Congress in the form of emergency aid, tax breaks, small business loans, and other financial assistance to stabilize the farm economy.
- **Housing issues** – If farmers are providing housing for their employees, then some of the issues they are faced with are: Where are they going to house them? How do they restructure the living and working conditions due to health concerns? If social distancing is mandated in the state, how does this affect the living arrangements that the employer provides?
- **Employment of Workers** – The epidemic and/or natural disaster has an impact on the employment of workers including those migrant workers who they employ. Here are some issues that farmers and businesses are facing during these times.
 - **Essential Workers** – With the necessity to keep people fed, the farm worker is being classified as an essential worker and thus allowed to continue working in the fields or processing plants. Both farmers and processing plants along with fisheries and dairy’s will need to address the health issues due to a pandemic and be knowledgeable of CDC Guidelines.
 - **Less H-2A Workers** – The availability of H-2A workers to hire may become less due to travel restrictions coming into the U.S. and across state lines. Some of this is due to the closure of the U.S. Consulates in their native country who would have processed Visa’s if they were open.
 - **Workers from Other Professions** – As businesses close down in some cities, workers in those industries such as construction, restaurant, and retail are moving from the city to rural areas to work in agriculture to pick the crops so that they have some income to feed their families. They also become part of the essential workforce.
 - **Salary dilemma** - As mentioned above on the impact on farms that an epidemic or natural disaster can have, farm owners are faced with a decision on how to keep their employees working. With the possible loss of income due to not being able to sell their crops, farm owners have to make a decision to either dump their crops/products or hire less workers to do the job. If they hire fewer workers, they face the dilemma of cutting back on their wages or having the worker work longer hours to make up for the loss of employees. Are the workers in this case eligible for overtime pay? This is an issue here that should be monitored.
 - **Students working** – Due to the schools closing down, some states are experiencing high school students wanting to work on the farms because of the free time that they have. Some students are working and not participating fully in their distance learning classes. They may be more interested in trying to make money to supplement their family’s income.

- **Impact on Migrant Families** – The issues that farms, food processors, fishery and dairy businesses face impact the migrant families in many ways. Some are overlapped with what is going on educationally with their children. Here are some issues that migrant families are being faced with during an epidemic or natural disaster.
 - **Unemployment** – With farms and businesses closing down or downsizing and who employ migrant families, they (migrant families) now have no source of income to pay for their basic needs. Due to language barriers, some do not know how to apply for government assistance and this can become an even greater barrier if they are undocumented workers.
 - **Health Care** – Without employment, migrant workers may have a hard time accessing health care for family members. Like applying for unemployment, guidance is needed here in helping them find some kind of health care assistance until they can be employed again. Health issues can spread if the workers in the family are deemed essential workers and they are in contact with other people. If the families live in complexes or compounds, is social distancing practiced or are they even made aware of this? Do the migrant workers have access and are they educated on the use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)?
 - **Child Care** – With schools closing down and students told to stay at home, families have to make a decision on who should be watching their child and who can go to work. If schools are passing out nutritional meals and an adult is needed to accompany the child to get the meals, this becomes a challenge if the adult is working and cannot get away to take their child. Children cannot be left home alone especially during a Stay at Home order if the state is enforcing this and the adult is deemed an essential worker. Children cannot be brought to the work place environment for obvious safety reasons and work place laws.
 - **Stimulus Funds** – With the government passing out stimulus checks to assist families with their financial burden, some migrant families may not be eligible for this assistance. Workers without the proper paperwork would not be able to get any assistance even if they followed the law and paid their taxes. Families who are eligible with children under a certain age and are claimed as a dependent are eligible for additional funds as well. However, under the current rules a child who has one parent who does not have the proper paperwork is not eligible for any cash assistance for the family.
 - **Accessing Assistance** – During a time of crisis, the migrant education program can play a role in assisting migrant families in connecting to various resources that other non-migrant families can access. Even though recruiters and migrant staff workers are limited in their ability to stay within the means of “social distancing”, there are other ways they can connect with the families. Phone calls, letters and fliers are some of the ways to stay connected with the families. If schools are having a hard time connecting with their migrant families to pass out lessons or get information to them about distance learning, the recruiter or the migrant education program may have more current contact information than the school. Finally, migrant programs and their recruiters can also reach out to farms

and agribusinesses to let them know how they both can work together to support the migrant families. This can include getting information out about the program available through the state's Department of Agriculture or the state's Department of Human Services.

- **Mental Health** – As mentioned for students, mental health for a family includes the emotional, psychological, and social wellbeing of all family members. The more the family is affected by the occurrence of these events, the greater the support is needed. Not knowing if and when their next meal may come from or trying to meet all of the family's needs might cause a breakdown in one's social and emotional health. Those families who have lost loved ones due to the pandemic or natural disaster may be seeking help as well. Migrant workers are deemed essential workers and many are torn between sacrificing their own health and providing the necessary essentials that their family needs (i.e. food, clothing, shelter, etc.) by going to work. This is magnified in work place environments where high numbers of people are getting sick due to the working conditions. The fear is that these people are going to work out of necessity and risk bringing any illness they may come into contact with home to their family members.

People who work with these families or knows of a family who is going through these difficult times need to be aware of these triggers and guide them to places where they can receive the help and medical attention that they will all need.

The issues mentioned in this paper both from the educational and humanistic perspective has an impact on the migrant families as a whole. Some do not know whom to turn to for guidance thus, the migrant program becomes their only voice or source of information to guide them through these difficult times. While there are many more issues that migrant families can face, the migrant education program should become a vehicle of support, which can lend a helping hand.

The Interstate Migrant Education Council (IMEC) can assist at both the local, state, and national levels during these crises by advocating for the highest quality education and other needed support for the nation's migratory children and youth. IMEC can continue to provide relevant information and resources to their families as they become readily available.

Note: This paper was prepared by Solomon Kaulukukui is an independent consultant, a former IMEC member and a former Migrant State Director of Migrant Education.

Resources: Online Programs and Learning

Name	Description	Website
ABC YA	Free- Practice math and reading skills all while playing fun games.	www.abcya.com
Big Universe	Free to K-8 migrant students till Dec. 2020. 16,000 titles for students to access with Lexile. Students can choose topics they like and it matches titles to their Lexile. Retell and short comprehension with every story.	Passwords and direction from Migrant programs.
EdReady.org	Free for high school students. Identify goal like passing SAT, College math, etc. and after an assessment, will develop and teach skills missed.	EdReady.org
EverFI	Free for K-12 has good tutorial that includes video lessons and activities to check for understanding. STEM classes at all levels.	https://everfi.com/
Fun Brain	Free- Play games while practicing math and reading skills.	www.funbrain.com
Highlights Kids	Free-Read, play games, and conduct cool science experiments.	www.highlightskids.com
Into the Book	Free- Go "into the book" to play games that practice reading strategies!	www.reading.ccb.org
Math Nation	Free till Aug. 2020. Initially launched in Florida in 2013, Math Nation is currently serving more than 1,000,000 students and 20,000 teachers. Online curricula are available for 6th-8th Grade Math, Algebra 1, Geometry, and Algebra 2 courses as well as PSAT and SAT preparation materials. Digital resources feature over 5,000 engaging instructional videos for every topic with on-screen "Study Experts" (virtual co-teachers), digital practice tools, teacher resources, and more! Algebra 1 in English and Spanish.	access@MathNation.com
Nat Geo for Kids	Free- Learn all about geography and fascinating animals!	www.kids.nationalgeographic.com
PBS Kids	Free-Hang out with your favorite characters all while learning!	www.pbs.org
Reading A-Z	Free till the end of the school year. Differentiated student reading with more than 2,000 books at 29 levels of reading difficulty.	www.learninga-z.com/leveled/Reading
Scholastic	Free- Scholastic has launched a "Learn at Home" website that has daily courses for students from Pre-K to grades 6 and higher.	https://www.scholastic.com/teachers/teaching-tools/articles/resources/scholastic-learn-at-home--free-resources-for-school-closures.html#

School/District purchased paid programs	Many schools and districts have already purchased online programs to help with reading and math. In many cases students can access the programs at home or public library with their password.	Titles include: Moby Max, Math and Science Gizmos, Reflex Math Fact Fluency, Start Math, Successmaker, Raz-kids, etc.
Star Fall	Free- Practice your phonic skills with these read along stories.	www.star.org
Storyline Online	Free- Have some of your favorite stories read to you by movie stars.	www.storylineonline.net
Stride Academy	Free to K-8 migrant students till Dec. 2020. Language Arts, Reading, Math and Science tied to the Common Core standards. English and Spanish.	Passwords and direction from Migrant programs.
Suessville	Free- Read, play games, and hang out with Dr. Seuss and his friends.	www.suessville.com
Switcheroo Zoo	Free- Watch, listen and play games to learn all about amazing animals!	www.switcheroozoo.com

MEP Consortium Incentive Grants (CIG)

Name	Description	Website
GOSOSY	Graduation and Outcomes for Success for OSY. Provides resources to build capacity in states with a growing secondary-aged migrant out-of-school youth population.	www.osymigrant.org
IRRC	Identification & Recruitment Rapid Response. Provides resources to improving the proper and timely identification of all migrant children.	www.idr-consortium.net
MLN	Meeting Literacy Needs. The Migrant Literacy NET provides teachers with supplemental resources and students with online instruction to develop individual literacy skills.	www.migrantliteracynet.com
PI	Preschool Initiative. Provides resources in helping to improve the school readiness of migrant preschool children and to strengthen parent engagement in early learning.	www.preschoolinitiative.org

Note: Resource list provided by Jonathan Fernow, Oregon's State Migrant Education Director. Besides this list there are numerous other programs and resources that are available. The MEP staff should consult with their state, regional, and local offices for further assistance.