**Migrant Summer School: A Positive Experience For Children**

by Francisco Benetti

The United States Department of Education, Chapter I Migrant Education provides funding to all states with migrant students throughout the school year. This includes funding for summer programs in school districts across United States. The Oregon State Migrant Education manages all funding available for all school districts participating in Migrant Education. The United States Department of Education defines a migrant child as “an individual of a migratory agricultural worker or fisherman is a child who has moved with his family from one school district to another during the past year in order that a parent or other member of his/her family might secure employment in agriculture, fishing, or in a related food processing activities.” According to the Oregon State Migrant Education children are eligible for educational services for three years.

What are the potential benefits of having Migrant Summer School in your district?

- The migrant summer school program provides the opportunity for students of different race/ethnic background to strengthen academic skills through an appropriate curriculum and individualized instruction.
- Enhanced cultural background through native literacy, the arts, and extracurricular activities.
- Develops self-confidence through lesson plans and hands-on activities.
- Fosters a positive attitude towards school.
- Develops school readiness skills through preschool classes.

Here are some suggestions to have a successful Migrant Summer Program:

**Funding:** The Oregon State Migrant Education determines each school districts summer school funding based on the number of migrant students registered in the summer program. Based on their funding formula, a migrant child needs to attend at least once for the district to receive the maximum amount of dollars allowed for each individual. At times, the amount of dollars provided by the Oregon State Migrant Education is not enough to cover all expenses in the program. Usually, school districts may need to contribute with a substantial amount of dollars in order to run a full program. In our district, the funding provides for five weeks of a summer program and runs from Monday through Thursday five and a half hours a day.

**Staffing:** It is very difficult to find qualified bilingual teachers to teach the Migrant Summer School. It is important to provide competitive wages and benefits to attract good candidates. It is imperative to hire bilingual staff, especially, Spanish speakers to teach and reach out to the migrant population. In our district, we like to hire our staff by March. It provides the opportunity for those teachers hired to make early plans for their vacations after the program. Also, it gives them the time to explore their assigned curriculum and the opportunity to ask questions to the curriculum specialist in our district. Each classroom is composed of a migrant summer school teacher (Bilingual preferred), a bilingual educational assistant and a high school intern. We prefer to hire bilingual staff, however, it is not always the case.
**Curriculum and Enrichment Program:** It is up to the school district to provide only an academic and/or enrichment program. Based on our migrant school population, we provide a combination of an academic/enrichment program. My school district hired two-curriculum specialist to plan, organize and develop a science-based program. This curriculum called GEMS (Great Explorations in Math and Science) immerses the English Language Learners in vocabulary enrichment and hands-on activities that promote exploration and critical thinking in each child. All GEMS units address current Math and Science standards. If you are interested in more information about the GEMS unit, please contact Juana McDonald at the Newberg School District.

It is our goal to engage the migrant students in events that may not be available during the regular school year, because of limited funding by the state. We try to look for activities that are free to schools and especially related to the summer school curriculum and connected to the overall program objectives. Here are some organizations that provide free events or minimal charges to disadvantage children in the migrant community.

- **Home Depot** - Provides Wood Kid’s clinic to children; also provides aprons and materials to all participants. Contact the Home Depot near your neighborhood.
- **Washington Zoo Zap Team**: It provides with a variety of insect exhibits in your school. Contact Sabrina Burke at Washington Zoo.
- **Swimming Lessons** - Contact your Park & Recreation District for basic swimming classes.
- **Northwest Medical Dental Van** - Offers dental care on-site. There is a minimal charge for this service. Contact the Northwest Medical office for more information.

If you would like to receive more information about the Newberg Migrant Summer Program, contact the summer school coordinator at 503-554-5000