

The Well Rounded Student, by Emily Wierdsman

Introduction

The migrant community in the United States is on the rise, and nobody can deny it. This may be most obvious in major cities in the United States, but what about the more rural areas of the United States? What about Pennsylvania? The Hispanic community has been steadily growing in Adams County Pennsylvania for the past thirty-five years, and has now created a small community within the walls of the United States. Adams County Pennsylvania is one of the largest producers of the fruit industry, especially in apples. For many years producers and farmers have been bringing the Hispanic community to Adams County to help pick during the picking season, about July to mid November. When this group of people, also known as the migrant community, first began to come to Adams County and began traveling all over the United States in Migration trails, it was mainly single men looking for a way to earn some money to take back to Mexico, or wherever they were from, and then eventually return to their home county themselves. But for some, this never happened.

For some of the migrants, because they needed the financial support of being a migrant, began to take their families around also, not thinking about the effects that it would have on their children or just not being about to do anything else. Many times the children would get caught up in the middle of all the moving around, and may not be receiving the proper education. All over the country, not just in Pennsylvania, children were being overlooked because of their family situations. The children in almost every case, had to travel with their families every time they moved. If children were even in school, they would be abruptly pulled out when it was time for their families to move onto the next place of work. Many children who were from migrant families were not able to go to school because their families needed them in the fields working along with the rest of the family. In the past, the children of migrant parents were primarily the children who were suffering because of their lack of education. If a child was receiving any type of education, many times the focus of the education was not what the child needed.

For the past thirty-five years, the migrant education programs for children have been geared toward helping children to succeed. Teachers and educators have not only tried to help children speak English better, but they have tried to give each child a well rounded type of education. Today's programs, as well as the programs of the past, have been setup to help children assimilate into the Unites States or anywhere more easily. The word assimilate best describes this process because the educators want the students to feel a part of the society and fully understand the way that it functions. The skills that are being taught to the migrant children will teach them basic ways of communicating and socializing with people. With these social skills and a well rounded: education, a child's future is open to more choices and options, and the child will be able to adapt into their surrounding more naturally.

The History of Migrant Education in PA

Migrant education in Pennsylvania has a short history. It is a work in progress and changes from year to year. The person who had the strongest influence on educating migrant students in Pennsylvania was Parker Coble, the director of migrant and ESL programs at Lincoln Intermediate Unit, or the LIU. He began his work with migrants thirty-five years ago as a summer school teacher for migrant children. "I was a home school visitor; I taught school half the day, recruited children in the evening, and also transported kids to and from school in a station wagon at that time," (Coble). When the schooling first began for the migrant students they were still not receiving the full amount that all the other students received; they only had a half day of learning. It is very possible that for many of the children when they finished their half day of school, they finished their day in the fields with their parents. The people who hired Parker Coble thought that he would be best for the job of teaching the migrant students because of his knowledge of farm work and agriculture. Up until this year Parker Coble has strived to overcome barriers that keep migrant children down and to help get programs started in order to help them succeed at life. His contribution to the history of migrant education in Pennsylvania was more than anyone could have ever thought possible and, although he will still be assisting in the educating of migrants, he will be missed after his thirty years of dedication.

Migrant education mainly started in the 1960's when the southern whites and southern blacks came up north for the fruit picking seasons. Their children, at this point in time, hardly saw any type of education at all. When people first began trying to educate the migrant students, child labor laws were not in effect yet and were causing a major problem for the children who were needed to help with the income of the family. "Well, there was a child labor problem when I started. Before there were summer schools, where did the parents have their children? They had nothing to do but take them along to the field, or somebody stayed in the camp maybe a grandmother stayed in the camp with a group of kids, or they took 'em out in the field," (Coble). Without school involvement, families had nowhere else to turn. They had no choice, whether it was economic or just having no one to take care of the children, the majority of the time the children were out in the fields. Since 1978, when one of the first child labor laws was instilled, educators and program directors, like Parker Coble, did not have to worry about the fact that some kids may have to be out in the fields, it just should not be happening today. Unfortunately, this does not happen all of the time, but it was worse before the laws went into effect. Educators somehow had to convince families that their child's education was more important to him or her than the money they would be making in the field.

For the educators this must have been a enormous task, especially because many of the parents did not believe that their child's education was more important than their families income. Some of the parents wanted their children to work in the fields, not just for the economic reasons, but because working in the fields taught them values. For example, Carlos Hernandez told us that he liked the fact that his children worked because it taught them respect for what they did, and a sense of self pride. Carlos did not believe that his children could learn these important values of life in school. He believed that the best education for his children was life itself. (Hernandez)

Another problem that was faced in the past was that "in the 60's and 70's, we were 100% seasonal migrants who came in, harvested the crops, and returned,"(Coble). The disruption in the children's schooling was much more of a problem back when the program was getting started in Pennsylvania because many of the families that did come into Pennsylvania were truly migrant.

Today there are more and more families settling in Adams County. Disrupting a child's education is no longer at the forefront of Pennsylvania's migrant problem; the migrant community grows more and more every year and has created their own community here.

Although, like most things, when one problem has been solved, another one comes up. Today, even for families who are settled in the community and are United States citizens, many are still suffering from racism because they are Hispanic. Kimberly, a Hispanic student at Biglerville High School, still feels outcast from her peers because her family is Mexican. Although Kimberly was born and raised for the majority of her life in the United States, she does not feel as though she is getting her fair chance at what she could have just because of the way she looks. (Bermaho)

When the program first started, teachers did not teach the common subjects of reading, writing, and math, but different types of skills, skills that the students could use in their environment. "When we first started, we called it survival,... You did not hand out a reading book, not-uh, you did not have spelling, you did not have math as subjects. Uh, one of the first things that I did was, I think I told you that day, was to take them to the board, take a liner on the board, try to write their name, I wrote their name and then I would take their hand in my hand and try to get them to trace their name and then get it down on paper. " (McDaniels). Mrs. McDaniels, who was an educator for the migrants in the beginning part of the program, told us that it was not about teaching grammar or spelling, it was about teaching them and letting them experience for themselves self worth. The children that first began the program were raw, so to speak. They had no education, and they simply did not understand what school was like. The program was geared to get the children to understand basic ideas. "... Signs, to recognize signs, such, I said survival, such as poison, fire exit, uh, ladies's room, men's room, things like that, that they could learn to recognize, also railroad crossing signs, street signs, and like that..." (McDaniels). At that point in time, Florence McDaniels believed that there was no use trying to teach these children in a structured setting when they had never experienced one before. The educators were teaching the children the necessities for their life at that point. If the children could not tell what basic street signs or food labels were, then what good would it have been to start trying to teach them proper grammar. "Just to get them to learn to, ah, I did not experience this, but the Bossersmans told me that the, like the very first year that some came, they did not seem to know that, not was not used to having a spoon or fork because, uh, eating tools in their hand, believe it or not," (McDaniels).

Not only did the first teachers try teach the children survival signs, but they also tried to instill social skills: how to act around other children, how to share, and how to communicate verbally and not physically were also very important. Teaching them how to behave with one another came during recess. They would present different games that involved rules and sportsmanship and the children had to abide by them. These were ways that the educators could show the children when their skills would become useful. They did not simply tell them about how to act; they showed them how to interact.

Manners were also taught to the migrant children, when to say thank you and you=re welcome. "Then they had lunch, and there again, uh, tried to get them to do social skills, uh, manners, waiting your turn, yes ma'am, no ma'am, and they were, of what I could remember they were proud once they, you know, knew to do it," (McDaniels). Although the migrant children were not

receiving the same education that the other children received, they were taught what was best for them at that point in time. The migrant students were given a well-rounded education. They were taught some of the standard education, like spelling their names, but they were also taught social skills that would help them in their lives. The educators in the past taught the students what they needed to know, and created a model for future educators.

Teaching Migrant Students Today

Migrant students today, for the most part, have a better chance at succeeding at their education. Now that labor laws are in effect, many children will not be picking fruit at such young ages anymore. Many of the farmers and growers did not want the children in the fields anymore because of the liability and the risks of the children getting hurt. Children are also receiving better programs that will help them get through the tougher times in schools. There is better communication between the schools to let each know the progress of the migrant students, and there are guidance counselors there to help when there is a problem. Centers like the Lincoln

Intermediate Unit create programs to help the migrant students in the area. Many of their programs have become very successful and other types of centers like the LIU have started to adopt them into their organizations.

One program that the LIU has created is Generation Diez. This is an after school program that not only helps migrant students with ESL and their school work, but also with social skills. This program has only been in existence for about a month and a half, but the response from the children seems to be a positive one. The children that are in the program like what they do and enjoy coming to the program two days a week, some would even like to come more if they could. The program now has a total of about twenty-six students in it and is growing every month. As more and more migrants are joining the program, more and more children are able to take an active role in the group. The twenty-six children for now are divided into three different sections. The first group that I met when I did my internship with the program Generation Diez was at the Franklin School in the Gettysburg area. There are nine students in this class and all but one speaks English fluently as well as Spanish. The class has a range of students who excel in their own subjects. One child, Diana, is extremely talented when it comes to drawing and painting. Her class is studying famous artists, and she is able to draw with the same style of many of them. Another boy, Carlos, is such a polite boy that other children follow his lead. He is the first one to say thank you and after he does, everyone else does too. Because of his mannerisms, the other children are drawn to him. I saw the same thing at all of the schools that I went to. The children range from those who excel at school and do not understand much about social skills and vice versa. There is not one child who has everything so pulled together that they would not need the program. The one thing that really drew me to all of the children is that it is they who chose to be there. This is not a mandatory program for the children. They do not have to stay if they do not want to. In fact, the program director has joked around saying let them leave, we have more children who really want to be there if these don't. The children at the program do not take what they are receiving for granted. It shows that the children have never had a lot, but what they do receive, they take to their heart and truly value what is given to them.

It shows that these children will never take anything in their lives for granted, especially not their education.

The program deals with two different aspects of learning. The first is the basic ESL teachings. These tend to be difficult to do because there is such a variety of education levels in the groups. The ESL instructor has a hard job. Not only does he or she have to know where each child is in his or her education, but the ESL instructor also has to keep the children at a challenging level so the children want to continue with their learning. To help with the first problem, finding out where the children are in their education, tests are given to each of the children. These tests were given to the program by Penn State. The University is a major promoter for Generation Diez. Penn State gave the tests to Generation Diez, because Penn State gives a lot of financial support to the program, the director at Generation Diez felt that they had to administer these tests. These tests were unfair to the children and if they did measure the level of the child's intelligence, they had a big margin for inaccuracy. The tests worked like this: in every area, math reading and spelling, the questions or word first started out easy and started to build the child's confidence, but as the first five or six problems were done the test jumped to increasingly harder problems until they were undoable. If the tests measured anything, I felt that they showed how easily you could belittle a child and take away their confidence.

For example, the reading test was the same for every child. The first word was "and" and easier words like it. When the children were reading these words, they were confident and very assured of their answers. Then the words started to increase in difficulty level and as they did, the child's voice went from a strong, loud, assuring voice to a whisper. The children were barely speaking the words that they knew they were pronouncing incorrectly. I believe that the tests did not really help the instructor much at all. When he did start to teach the children, he still did

not know where they all were academically. The instructor now is going through a trial and error test period of his own to try and figure out where all the children are. In the future, I don't think that the tests should be given at all, but if they have to be given, instructors should not rely on them solely. There has to be constant contact with the instructor and the child's normal teacher. They should be helping each other to try to figure out what would help the child the most.

Trying to challenge every student is also part of the instructor's job and is also a tough one. If each child is at a different level, then how is it possible to challenge some without boring some or going too fast for others? Working in pairs can help this situation. The children who are having trouble in certain areas are paired with children who can do the activity fairly well. The two children help each other to complete the activity. The child who has helped gets a lot out of it because they relearn the information in a new way and then teach it. The student who did not understand the information fully, now has a new perspective on it and will hopefully see the way the other student arrived at the answer to the problem. By working in pairs the children learn other ways to solve problems and will keep all of the children challenged.

The next aspect is the social skills lessons. These skills are essential for both the children who have never learned them, and to the ones who may know most of them already but need freshening up. The social skills aspect of the class is very important. This part of the class helps the students see how to work with other children and start to understand how to act in the social

society that we have created. The skills that are taught in the class will help the children succeed in life. By teaching the social skills the children will have an advantage in life, and will be able to make it in the "middle class" society. Teaching the migrant students English and the ways of the American people will only get them so far in life, but they will still not have the skills to succeed. By putting the two together, the English skills and the social skills, the children have a better chance at creating a life for themselves.

The social skills that the students are taught range from skill one, which is listening skill, to skill forty-nine, which is concentrating on a task. Every skill is necessary to have if anyone wants to work socially with other people. Some of the skills are taught solely to deal with just one's self, such as anger control and stress management. Others are used when a child is in a social situation, such as helping others or negotiating. Every skill will help the children get through the tough times in their life and let them grow through the situation and not be held back from them. The forty-nine skills that are taught to the children are as follows:

listening skills, starting a conversation, having a conversation, asking a question, saying thank you, introducing yourself, introducing other people, giving a compliment, asking for help, joining in, giving instructions, following instructions, apologizing, convincing others, knowing your feelings, understanding the feelings of others, dealing with someone else's anger, expressing affection, dealing with fear, rewarding yourself, asking permission, sharing something, helping others, negotiating, using self control, standing up for your rights, responding to teasing, avoiding trouble with others, keeping out of fights, making a complaint, sportsmanship after the game, dealing with being left out, answering a complaint, standing up for a friend, responding to persuasion, responding to failure, dealing with contradictory messages, dealing with accusation, getting ready for a difficult conversation, dealing with group pressure, deciding on something to do, deciding what caused a problem, setting a goal, deciding on your abilities, gathering information, arranging problems by importance, making a decision, and concentrating on a task.

These skills do not have to be taught in the order that they are listed. They can be taught any way the teacher decides. Depending on the class, the instructor can decide which are the more important skills for that particular class to learn. The children in the class need to learn how to interact with each other to fully understand the skills. For example, in one class that I was teaching the children were learning the skill to introduce themselves. Everyone wanted to participate in the activity, but when the instructor chose a girl and a boy to show an example, the task got harder. They did not really want to touch each other or they did not really have anything to say to each other. The exercise got harder when two of the students did not feel very comfortable with each other, or when they did not know each other very well. That is why I believe that these skills are good to learn because they show that the students have to learn how to react in uncomfortable situations.

How Do You Educate Migrant Children?

A migrant child is a very special type of child. Migrant children have to have special exceptions made for them to make up for their circumstances. They are taken out of the normal everyday child's life and made to grow up quicker to help out with the family duties. Sometimes the child is pulled out of school to go and help his parents in the fields because without his help it is possible that they will not be able to make ends meet. Many times when the child has just settled into a new school and has had time to meet new friends and become comfortable with them, it is time for the family to move on, and the connection that was made is broken. These are only a few of the harsh realities that migrant children have to face. Therefore it makes sense that superintendents and teachers should be lenient to the migrant children's needs.

There are many things that teachers can do to make teaching migrant children easier. The first and most crucial is to be able to speak the language of the child. The number one problem is a language barrier between the teacher and pupil. I was teaching a child this term at my internship and there was a definite language barrier. I am not able to speak Spanish very well at all and she spoke no English. I was only teaching her the ABC's in English, but it was still a problem. I felt bad because I could not really compliment her in any way because I did not know how. Also we could only do certain things because I only knew how to say certain things in Spanish. I felt that I was teaching her some things, but if I had kept working with her there would have been a problem. The one thing that I did get out of working with her though was that she did not know what the things in the classroom were. This really confused me because it showed that she was not getting anything by sitting in a classroom listening to English. The first step was putting this girl into a program like Generation Diez so that she could get the attention that she deserved. The step that should have also been taken was to put her in a class with a teacher who spoke Spanish fluently, where she could learn the language.

Bilingual education is a type of education that would be able to help a girl like Jennifer who does not speak any English at all. Jennifer is the type of girl who wants to learn to speak the language. It is seen when she pronounces the alphabet correctly and her eyes light up. Jennifer would not abuse bilingual education as some children would. "Bilingual education is the quickest way for a child to learn English, however, it has been abused. The bilingual system in many school districts has become a crutch rather than a method of getting to a certain place," (Coble). There is a certain type of student who would use bilingual education just to get by in their schooling, but there is also another type of student who would greatly prosper by receiving bilingual education.. Those children who would prosper from bilingual education should have the chance to receive it. Jennifer would be doing worlds better if she had a teacher who could speak Spanish fluently.

Jennifer is just one of many students who fall behind in school because of language barriers. Teachers need to know who requires special attention or time and see that the child is receiving all that she needs to succeed in school. If the teacher cannot provide the correct attention, then it is his or her job to find someone that can. The most important thing to do is to let the child know that people want her to learn and to succeed at school. We want these children to do well at school. As Jose Rodriguez said in George Sanchez's book, *Becoming Mexican American*, "Education means a complete knowledge of yourself, a good knowledge of your fellow men and a thorough knowledge of the world in which you live." "EDUCATION," he concluded, "is our *only weapon!*" (Sanchez 257). As Rodriguez states, education is the way the Hispanic community is going to succeed, thus teaching the children the proper way and getting over the

language barrier is the best possible solution. The Hispanic children must be taught in the schools because we know that they will not get any help from their parents at home if they do not speak English either. Which brings us to the next issue that can cause a distraction in the children's schooling, their home life.

Every child, at one point in time, has some kind of trouble which affects them at home, but for migrant children this problem can be even worse. If a migrant child does not have the support to continue on with his or her schooling, there is a very large risk that is exactly what will happen. Two boys that I taught in the program Generation Diez were having a very hard time at home and it showed in their attitude. All the children had to take tests on their environment at home, in school, and in their neighborhood. The two boys had missed the day that they were supposed to be taking the test, so I gave them the test the next day. I was watching them to make sure that they answered every question and when they got to questions that revolved around their parents and how their parents reacted to the kids' emotions, they answered them poorly. The way that they answered the questions showed that they did not receive much attention at home and that it had an affect on the way they acted in school. The last question that the test asked was whether or not the child would continue on with school, and, if they would, how far would they go? Both of the boys said that they would probably drop out of school before they finished high school.

Many people would think that this is quite normal for any child, but if a child does not have any place that they feel good about themselves, then they are more prone to dropping out of school, and when a child moves around a lot, the process is accelerated. Most people have someone to rely on, but for these two children, and for many migrants, they do not have anything stable. They cannot make friends easily, they don't have a stable home life, and they don't feel comfortable in school yet. The migrant students may feel as if all arrows are pointing in the wrong direction. Kids need a stable home life if they are going to be able to produce well in school. The migrant children may not have a stable life at school or with their friends. That is why it is so

important for migrants= parents to be involved with their kids= lives. The other students whose parents were involved in their kids= lives did have better feelings for school. When a child's life is as unstable as a migrant child's life, then having family stability may be the only thing that helps them succeed at life.

An unstable home life could have monstrous effects on any child, but what happens when a child is pulled out of school up to four times a year? The effect changes from monstrous to completely outrageous. Imagine yourself as a child going through some of the hardest times of your life, trying to be accepted amongst your peers, and the next thing you know is that your family has finished the picking at that particular field and you have to leave the area. The friends that you have just started to make, you have to leave and most likely you will not see them again.

From a teacher's perspective, these children might be seen as a lost hope; they travel around too much, they might not be at the level of the other children in the class, or they might not have a lot of formal schooling at all, but instead of ignoring these children, the teachers need to show these children even more attention. When a migrant student comes into the school system in the middle of the year, the teacher has to be aware of it. Teachers need to know ahead of time when

these children will be entering their class, and try to get their previous record so that they know where they are in their schooling. If the teachers are aware of their migrant students coming into their classrooms, then the students might feel more accepted and more willing to learn and commit to school. If the teachers don't respect the students, then the students will not feel as though school is important and that learning is not important. The more prepared the teachers are, the more willing the migrant students will be to learning and will feel more accepted by society. (Leon).

Assimilation

In Pennsylvania assimilation has been a large part of the migrant children's education. The instructors and the teachers each have taught them not only the language and the ways of the United States, but have taught them how to go beyond what their parent's generation did. In the past, migrant education taught the students the basic concepts that would allow them to go further in life. They taught them how to use utensils, how to interact with other children, and the basic signs for streets and poison, etc. Today the instructors and the teachers are doing the same thing. They teach the children what is best for them to know. Teaching the migrant students social skills and putting them into uncomfortable situations will help them in the classroom and help prepare them for the outside world. The assimilation process does not end when the child has been taught English. That would be like sending a child out into the snow without the proper attire. The child would not be prepared for what is out there and would most likely go back to where he came from. We do not want the migrant children to have to do the kind of work that their parents have to do to make ends meet. If they want to go into the picking business, then it should be the child's choice, not because the child was not equipped to handle the outside world.

When I first started to do the research on the education of migrant students I thought that the process of assimilation had changed over the years. I believed that when the first education programs were in existence, they only taught the children English and math, the basic academic skills that they would need to succeed in school, but what I found out was not that at all. When I conducted the oral history with Florence McDaniel, I realized that she was doing exactly the same thing that the program Generation Diez is doing. The children she was teaching were just at a different level. Most of the children that she was dealing with had no schooling whatsoever. They hardly knew how to spell their own names, let alone know what a proper noun was. Mrs. McDaniel knew that these children would have to start from the basics. She saw that by teaching them things that would help them get a little farther in life, she was doing her job, and assimilating the children into the American society. I thought for a long time that assimilation was just learning the language, but what I have found out is that it is more than that. What these educators are trying to do is to prepare the children that they teach for a way of life. By teaching them how to react to certain situations and how to involve themselves into the American way of life, they are giving the migrant students choices. With the education that they receive, the migrant students will have the choice of staying in the United States, perfectly socialized and assimilated, but they will also have the choice to go back to their heritage if they want to. Educating migrant students is not really that different from educating anyone else. When a person is educated they receive the ability to choose for themselves, and that is exactly what the

migrant education programs have done over the years. They have given the children the proper education to allow them to make choices for themselves and not have to do one certain job just because of their background.

This type of assimilation is not just involved in teaching immigrant and migrant

children. This process works in almost every culture, class, or society. For example, if we equip the lower class with the skills that will allow them to make better choices for themselves and their families, don't you think they would take them? Everybody wants to give their families better than what they had, so if we were able to give them the jobs that would allow them to rise in the class system, so to speak, why would they not take them? If they had the option to rise from a lower class job and society to a lower/middle class job and society, why would they let it pass them by? If we could give them the skills to be a part of that society and grow in that society, then we would find our country with a different type of lower and middle class.

Bibliography

Bermaho, Jesus. Personal Interview. November 16, 1998.

Coble, Parker. Interview done by Keffie Avramovitz and Becca Bruse. September 24, 1998.

Gibson, Margaret and Ogbu, John. *Minority Status and Schooling*. Garland Publishing, Inc., New York. 1991.

Hernandez, Carlos. Interview done by Alicia Reynolds. October 19, 1998.

Leon, Dr. Edgar. *Challenges and Solutions for Educating Migrant Students*. Dr. Leon's web page. May, 1996.

McDaniels, Florence. Interview done by Tom Dillon and Emily Wierdsma. October 21, 1998.

Rasmussen, Linda. "Migrant Students at the secondary Level: Issues and Opportunities for Change." ERIC Digest.

Sanchez, George. *Becoming Mexican American*. Oxford University Press, New York. 1993.

Stewart, David. *Immigration and Education*. Lexington Books, New York. 1993

Weinstein-shr, Gail and Quintero, Elizabeth. *Immigration Learners and their Families*. Center for Applied Linguistics and Delta Systems Co., McHenry, IL. 1995.