**Interstate Migrant Education Council’s National Symposiums**



**2015 – 2019**

**The Purpose of This Report:** Since 2015, the Interstate Migrant Education Council (IMEC) has sponsored three national symposiums that have focused in on various topics and issues that are facing the migrant education programs across our country. The Symposiums provided a forum for state and local education agency personnel, legislators, state school board members, university collaborators, and other Migrant Education Program (MEP) stakeholders to discuss new research, promising practices, and engaging information to benefit the MEP and the students and families that are served.

The purpose of this paper is to look at the conclusions and recommendations from each of the three national symposiums and find commonalities and exclusive issues that arose from the discussions and presentations at each symposium. Also, each symposium had some follow up and next steps that the IMEC membership can use as they move forward in their mission to “advocate for the highest quality education and other needed support for the nation’s migratory children and youth.”

**About the Interstate Migrant Education Council:** The Interstate Migrant Education Council (IMEC) was established in 1983 whose mission is to advocate for the highest quality education and other needed support for the nation’s migratory children and youth. IMEC’s members are state-level decision makers who examine MEP policy issues to ensure that the federal governance of the migrant program provides maximum flexibility to states to serve students and to recommend that specific programs be enhanced to improve migrant students’ academic achievement.

Currently, there are 24 member states: Alaska, Arizona, Arkansas, California, Colorado, Hawaii, Idaho, Illinois, Indiana, Kansas, Maine, Massachusetts, Nebraska, Nevada, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, North Dakota, Ohio, Oregon, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Utah, and Washington.

**National Symposium Themes:** Each of the symposiums was held during the month of October in Clearwater, Florida. Starting in 2015, the IMEC council decided to host a symposium every two years. In 2015, the theme of the symposium was “Changing Demographics and Mobility: New Opportunities in Migrant Education”. The focal point being the overarching areas that were influencing challenges to the MEP. These areas being the presentations of the latest data on migrant student demographics, mobility, and poverty.

The 2017 symposium’s theme was “The ABC’s of Education: Moving Forward Under ESSA to Engage the Agriculture, Business, and Education Communities”. The focus of this symposium was to address the influence of Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) on the Migrant Education Program (MEP) and explore meaningful ways to interact collaboratively to maximize our efforts including working with the national experts on worker/farmworker supply and demand.

The 3rd symposium was held in 2019. The theme for this symposium was “Moving Forward by Working Together”. The previous two symposiums looked at the migrant education program and the impacts that have occurred in the program in the past and during current times. This symposium looked at how all levels (local, state, federal) can work together in a coordinated effort to advance support services for migrant students and their families moving forward.

**Format of the Symposium:** Each symposium met over a two-day period and consisted of several core presentations around the focus area of the symposium for that year. After certain core presentations, participants were placed in work groups to address questions related to that presentation. A table monitor for each table recorded the discussion and the notes were compiled into a document as part of a Proceedings Report for each symposium. The outcomes from these work groups helped to form the Conclusions and Recommendations that came out from each symposium.

**Conclusions from the Three Symposiums:** The conclusions from all three symposiums focused in on 6 topic areas. For this report the 6 areas are: 1) Changes in migration patterns; 2) Shift and decrease in mobility; 3) Student demographics; 4) Changes to the Title I – Part C, under ESSA; 5) Impact of technology; and 6) MEP Program and the resources moving forward. Each area for this report will detail what conclusions/trends came from the symposiums and the recommendations that followed. At the end a synopsis of the next steps will be presented.

**Topic 1 - Changes in Migration Patterns:** This topic was based on the conclusions and recommendations from the “Shift in Migration Patterns” (2015 Symposium) and the “Immigration/Migration Changes” (2017 Symposium).

* The conclusions were:
	+ Major changes in immigration and migration patterns have occurred and are projected to continue across the U.S.
	+ Major shifts in immigration and migration patterns have occurred and are projected to continue across the U.S. More immigrant families who are eligible for the MEP are coming from countries other than Mexico and Central America, with an influx from African countries and Burma.
* Recommendations:
	+ Strengthen partnerships with NAWS and MPI which will lead to better information for states about the immigrants and refugees arriving, help provide a basic overview of their culture and language, as well as the jobs they typically do in their home country, and strategies to involve them in schools and communities.
	+ Services to students representing more languages and cultures demands more staff development around language and culture of the groups served, and a greater knowledge of school and community resources. Training for intentional recruitment of new populations should be undertaken.
	+ MEP staff at all levels need to share meaningful conversations with school/school district staff about who migratory students are (and are not), how they can qualify for the MEP, and ways to work collaboratively and efficiently to meet their needs. Some of the strategies mentioned by Symposium attendees include MOUs to solidify collaboration and data sharing, collaborative partnerships at the Federal level shared with states, utilizing funds from other Federal programs (e.g., Rural Schools, Homeless, 21st Century Community Centers), coordinating with immigrant support and refugee resettlement agencies, using culturally-competent instructional methods, and working together with parents and community leaders to understand how cultural characteristics may affect learning.

**Topic 2 - Shift and Decrease in Mobility:** This topic involved the conclusions and recommendations from the “Shift in Mobility” (2015 Symposium) and “Decrease Mobility” (2017 Symposium).

* The conclusions were:
	+ Based on the present eligibility criteria, mobility is decreasing although migrant work is available. Migrant families are not as mobile as in previous times which will result in greater instances of the children continuing to live an agricultural lifestyle in poverty, but not qualifying for the MEP.
	+ Changes in migration patterns have resulted from natural disasters and weather-related phenomenon, as well as the current political climate and crop/processing plant mechanization. These factors and increased automation of agribusinesses and farms leads to less migration.
* Recommendations:
	+ The policy regarding the length of time migrant children are eligible to receive MEP services needs to be revisited to ensure the program is serving the intended population. Students are changing schools within school districts or moving within large school districts and living in migrant camps, but do not qualify for the MEP. Education and mentoring for staff are needed on teaching strategies unique to students from target cultures, understanding language acquisition, migrancy/mobility, classroom dynamics and the challenges and benefits that different cultural groups bring (e.g., social practices, religious practices, culture shock). Partnerships with universities will help prepare instructional and administrative staff with multicultural competencies.
	+ Many children who formerly were eligible for the MEP continue to live an agricultural lifestyle in poverty but do not qualify for the MEP. Some of the strategies mentioned by Symposium attendees include expanding advocacy networks and collaborating with community, state, and government organizations on behalf of these former migrant students, offer more intense and/or more frequent MEP services to those students who are eligible, explore migrant patterns through Department of Agriculture data mapping to prepare for changes, communicate between sending and receiving states about student arrivals/departures, utilize MSIX, regularly update the migrant student profile in the CNA, and combine project and non-project funded services to reduce staff.

**Topic 3 - Student Demographics:** This topic is based on the conclusions and recommendations from “Shift in Student Demographics” (2015 Symposium) and “Increase in Pre-K and OSY” and “Increase in H-2A Workers” (2017 Symposium).

* The conclusions were:
	+ Pre-K migrant student numbers are increasing while there are fewer OSY and school-aged children.
	+ Numbers of pre-K migrant children and OSY are increasing due to the new eligibility requirements under ESSA.
	+ There has been an increase in migratory youth, who typically are male and traveling without their family, and are in the U.S. on a temporary work visa (H-2A).
* Recommendations:
	+ There is a need for providing “wrap-around” services to benefit pre-K migrant children and their families as a means to increase school readiness. In consideration with OME’s non-regulatory guidance, states should revisit how Priority for Services (PFS) is defined to accommodate pre-K children. Demographic trends should be explored in depth as states conduct their MEP comprehensive needs assessments and service delivery planning. Further, funding needs to be reconfigured in states (and at the Federal level) to accommodate the changes in migration patterns.
	+ Avenues for networking and strategy sharing should be explored to build infrastructures to support pre-K and OSY through targeted ID&R, preschool services, services to OSY, and materials and training for MEP staff on these populations. Some of the strategies mentioned by Symposium attendees include professional development and cross-training, setting up state board of education goals for every child to be successful and for subgroups to improve their achievement, conduct in-home MEP services working with parents and children together, connect with health clinics to provide services to migratory students, train recruiters to look for new populations, and conduct shared recruiting along state borders.
	+ Provide mentoring and classes to prepare this migrant population to set learning objectives, survive and thrive in the communities in which they reside, and graduate from H.S. and explore postsecondary, career, and workplace options. Some of the strategies mentioned by Symposium attendees include providing avenues to support migrant families and students emotionally; offering recruiter training that focuses on hard-to-reach H-2A workers; and providing supportive services and referrals to agencies in the community to assist with housing, transportation, counseling, and other basic needs.

**Topic 4 - Changes to the Title I – Part C, Under ESSA:** This topic is based upon the conclusions and recommendations from “Changes in Title I – C Funding” (2017 Symposium) and “What Have We Learned from ESSA So Far?” (2019 Symposium).

* The conclusions were:
	+ Under ESSA, shifts are occurring in the Title I-C allocation to states. Many are seeing a decrease, some an increase.
	+ The GPRA indicators are linked to student achievement, yet the migrant program is supplemental in nature. Are there other ways to evaluate the effectiveness of the MEP program other than using state content assessments? Parent involvement has always been a part of the MEP program. How can programs get more parents involved in their child’s education?
	+ Migrant students and their families truly have some unique needs. However, there is little research on what educators can do to meet these needs. Besides academic needs, issues such as equitable services and mental and emotional health are now surfacing as needs for the migrant families.
	+ The terms “migrant”, “immigrant”, and “migratory” is causing confusion among practitioners who are not part of a migrant education program. Eligible families do not want to be associated with either one of the groups for fear of any possible retribution that has occurred to others in the past. ICE raids are also having an effect on families. The trust issue becomes a major hurdle to overcome for the migrant program as they try and work with the families they are trying to serve.
* Recommendations:
	+ Some of the strategies mentioned by Symposium attendees to address the changes in Title I-C funding include ensuring that MEP service delivery is aligned with state priorities; establishing a statewide MEP advisory group that includes local superintendents to inform them about MEP requirements and obtain their support; examining the mission and strategic plan of each MEP service collaborator to determine who best can provide the service, thus avoiding duplication; increasing summer (Category 2) programming, after school services, and credit recovery; considering if some of the work that is contracted out can be done in-house, relying on the services available through CIGs to provide ID&R and quality control more efficiently, providing reading and OSY lessons using electronic means, and developing strategies for identifying and serving pre-K and OSY populations.
	+ A think tank group should be formed to talk about the issues mentioned in this report and how the Title I, Part C program can continue to move forward under ESSA and the changing times that are happening across our nation. The group would be composed of a cross section of participants similar to the makeup of the IMEC organization. Also included in the discussion are members from OME and policy makers at the national level. Recommendations would come from this group to be shared with OME and with policy makers as ESSA goes into its next reauthorization period.
	+ Allow states more flexibility in the use of their migrant funds to address the unique needs of the migrant population.
	+ Encourage collaboration at all levels and among all federal programs who provide services to the migrant population. Pool resources to meet the unique needs of these families.
	+ Continue to educate those outside of the migrant education program on how the program defines a “migrant” worker and/or family.
	+ Build trust with the families and how the program can benefit them and not have a negative label placed on them by their participation in the program.
	+ As much as possible, use the word “migratory” in talking about the families that are served by this program.

**Topic 5 - Impact of Technology:** The conclusions and recommendations for this topic came from the 2015 Symposium - “Shift in Work Technologies” and the 2019 Symposium - “Shortage of Labor Workers vs. Mechanization”.

* The conclusions were:
* More automation of farms and agribusiness leads to fewer farm workers being needed and ultimately, less migration.
* Several occurrences have caused a decrease in the work population. Unemployment rates are low with more Americans working as well as over the past decade, unauthorized immigration caused for a decrease in the work population. However, this is not the only reasons for a shortage of workers according to Dr. Stup’s presentation. Fewer young Mexicans are looking for work which is tied to the nation’s decline in the fertility rate. More are staying in Mexico, including women, to work. Guatemala’s data is still growing but not as pronounced as Mexico.
* Due to a shortage in labor workers, farms still need to have their crops picked. Farms are looking at alternative ways to grow their crops which makes it easier to pick with machines. This is a high capital investment to replant trees to create crops to be picked by robots but the labor shortages will escalate the investment in technology. Thus, heavy manual and repetitive labor will be largely replaced by automation.
* Climate change is affecting states in a very negative way. The change in the weather patterns is affecting the ability for migrant workers to find and keep work. Recent tariffs and trade wars have affected farms too as well this summer.
* Recommendations:
	+ Having fewer migrant families allows MEP services to be delivered more comprehensively – in greater depth. Likewise, changing patterns of employment call for revisiting MEP eligibility requirements to allow for additional migrant work categories. Collaboration with OME on non-regulatory guidance is needed surrounding eligibility criteria to accommodate changes in the migrant population and to address any changes needed and provide structures to support state and local MEP’s. The use of data to “tell our stories” which highlight changes, successes, and how challenges were overcome will help schools and communities prepare for these shifts and manage transitions to better serve the needs of migrant families.
	+ Mexico may no longer be the main country where agriculture workers are coming from. Farms may have to look at growth areas such as Africa, Asia, and Central and South America as a population to be tapped.
	+ Take a look at the 2017 Agricultural Census to see a significant reduction in workforce for agriculture and the farms that are affected not only nationally, but at the state and local level.
	+ Employers need to recruit from all walks of life (rural-urban, native-immigrant) to find careers that combine biology, technology, and information. Could also be a part of the school’s STEM program. Ensure that migrant children receive the same opportunities in these STEM programs as their non-migrant peers receive.
	+ Although climate change is out of our control, policy makers should look at ways to support farms (especially small ones) who are affected by not only the change in the climate but by the tariffs and trade wars that prevents them from raising and selling their products.

**Topic 6 - MEP Program and the Resources Moving Forward:** The conclusions and recommendations for this topic comes from the 2015 Symposium - “Shift in Needed Resources” and “Shift in Collaborations”, and the 2019 Symposium - “The MEP Program Moving Forward”.

* The conclusions were:
	+ National networking and sharing of strategies in areas such as ID&R, translated materials, and credit accrual is needed to build infrastructures to serve the changing face of the MEP.
	+ Although all states are using MSIX and submitting data into this system, the MSIX system is not being used to its fullest capacity. States are struggling to find personnel and time to maintain their data collection to feed into MSIX.
	+ Changing demographics and an increase in the immigrant and refugee populations require expanded partnerships and collaborations with community and government service organizations.
	+ States would like to see the student’s eligibility for services by the MEP program moved from 3 years to 6 years. As a supplemental program, it is hard to measure student achievement if students are settling out early than later. Resources and interventions to meet the needs of the students and their families takes time to make a difference. Mobility of families will always be an issue if families do not settle out.
	+ Creative ways need to be looked at in utilizing the migrant funds and the resources in order to meet the needs of the migrant families. Collaboration with other agencies that also provided support were some of the suggestions. Equitable services and issues like mental and emotional health are new challenges that the migrant programs are facing.
	+ How ID&R was done in the past has now changed due to the changes in the agricultural field. Farms are having to use more H-2A and OSY workers to make up for the shortage in the work force.
	+ State and local levels are having to relook at how they are doing ID&R so that they can be more effective and how they can do it differently.
	+ More time and money are being spent to focus in on the ID&R efforts by hiring more staff to find the families. The MEP program is a supplemental program whose resources may be limited in meeting the needs of the migrant children and their families.
* Recommendations:
	+ Proactive outreach to community agencies/organizations that serve migrant and refugee populations is needed to boost infrastructure and systems development. Partnerships also are needed to leverage resources and expand advocacy networks that include interstate and intrastate collaboration as well as collaboration with community, state, and government organizations. As a means to this end, it is recommended that national data on agriculture and agribusiness trends serve as a source for conducting broad conversations involving migrant parents, school and SEA staff, program administrators, and other decision-makers.
	+ Engagement among these groups in collaboration with refugee settlements and service agencies/organizations will result in more organized and meaningful services to the migrant students we serve.
	+ New opportunities exist for the MEP to extend outreach to community agencies and organizations that serve migrant, immigrant, and refugee populations. In addition, state and local MEPs should foster collaboration with institutions of higher education and community agencies to increase awareness of diversity and support culturally-competent instruction (e.g., strategies for teaching Els, uses of innovative technologies). Strategies are needed to promote collaborations to support migrant student advocacy systems that build relationships with parents representing all languages and cultures to achieve better understandings and ensure the delivery of appropriate services.
	+ More training is needed on how to optimize the use of MSIX at both the local and state level. Maybe training should be done based on the size of states as smaller states needs will be different from that of a larger or middle size state.
	+ Continue the discussion with policy makers and OME on increasing the eligibility status in the program from 3 years to 6 years.
	+ Professional development should continue to be built in at both the national, state, and local levels to share with practitioners on how to address the unique needs of the migrant students and their families. Networking time at all levels between states as well as between districts on how to best maximize the use of migrant funds with programs of similar needs and structure.
	+ Find ways to leverage your agricultural data that will help to support your ID&R efforts.
	+ Look at the impact that the H-2A program is having at the state and local level. Focus on OSY workers who may be eligible for the migrant education program in addition to the K-12 students.
	+ Collaborate with other national, state, and local agencies who also work with the migrant population that your program serves to provide additional resources to the families.

**Synopsis of the Follow Ups and Next Steps:** In all three symposiums there was one common follow up and next steps that was mentioned by all. ***That a committee or work group of IMEC members or their designees should be convened to consider policy implications for SEAs, LEAs and avenues to work with OME to jointly address action items.* *Shared timelines, responsibilities, and deliverables should be developed.***  This is a big task for IMEC to take on by themselves and other professional partners may need to be included on this committee or work group. Prioritizing and including certain deliverables as part of IMEC’s strategic plan may be a way of moving forward on this. IMEC membership needs to ask themselves, “What is within our control that we can do something about?” and “What is not in our control but others can?”

Other follow ups and next steps that were mentioned at each symposium is listed below with the symposium year in parenthesis at the end of each statement.

* In light of the recent passage of Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) that assures commitment to equal opportunity for all students, the recommendation contained in this Proceedings document should be disseminated to OME as it develops non-regulatory guidance and regulatory language to support the new law. (**2015)**
* As a follow-up to the symposium, the feasibility of an IMEC invitational roundtable to focus on key questions and next steps should be explored. The roundtable could be limited to one or two representatives per IMEC state and researchers/presenters selected for their knowledge and expertise in the design and development of policies, practices, and services to migratory children and youth. Use a question/recommendation format similar to that of the symposium to arrive at call-to-action outcomes. **(2015)**
* Refugee populations offer MEPs new opportunities to collaborate with other organizations such as refugee resettlement centers to share the work load and services, learn about the language and culture of new populations of migrant workers, and share effective and promising practices in the education of migrant children and youth. State MEPs should take the lead on identifying these support groups and disseminating it to local MEPs as part of regularly scheduled professional development. **(2015)**
* The ability of the MEP to show data to Congress on the farm worker population along with migrant student performance data will build a case for continued funding. It is imperative that the MEP community works together to present recent demographic data; data on the effectiveness of the program through migrant student achievement, graduation, and other outcomes; and studies showing effective and promising practices. **(2015)**
* The IMEC membership will need to look at recommendations that came out of this symposium and see how it fits to IMEC’s Strategic Plan which has four primary focus areas: Relevance; Sustainability; Advocacy; and Organizational Effectiveness. Through their strategic plan, IMEC can continue to play a leadership role in advocating and gathering information to aid policy makers as requested. **(2019)**

**Final Thoughts:** If one is to make a judgment on the success of the three IMEC’s Symposiums it can be safe to say that many participants stated that prior to attending the symposium their desired outcome was to learn new things that can help them with their job and their migrant program. They also said that they were looking forward to the time to network/collaborate with their peers and colleagues. The symposium met almost all of the participants’ desired outcomes through the presentations and interactions among national, state and local education agency personnel; legislators; state school board members; university collaborators; and other Migrant Education Program (MEP) stakeholders.

Participation in the symposium from the first one to the most recent one increased each year. From 89 participants from 35 states including the District of Columbia (DC) to the most recent figures of 116 participants coming from 38 states including the DC. The maximum capacity of the symposium should be kept at around 150 participants so that this event does not get too big to manage and loose it’s intimacy of being able to network with colleagues, peers, and professionals who work with the migrant population that we all serve.

The IMEC Symposiums continue to address issues that are current and relevant to issues practitioners face across the country. Forty-one (41) states including DC have participated in at least one IMEC sponsored symposium with 28 states who have participants come to all three symposiums. What should be noted is that 7 of these states who participated in all three symposiums are non IMEC state members. Having the MEP “Consortium Incentive Grant (CIG)” participants meet at the same location prior to the symposium has help to attract participants to also participate in the symposium afterwards. An off shoot of all of this is that a few states have become IMEC members because of their participation at one of the symposiums and the inter/intra state collaboration that they were able to experience. As of October, 2019, the current IMEC membership consist of 23 states and will continue to grow as new states have expressed an interest in joining this organization.

At their January, 2020, council meeting the IMEC Board of Directors and the membership as a whole decided that as much as possible, IMEC should continue to host a symposium every two years. The topic being an issue that is relevant to the current events that is pertinent to what migrant programs are facing across the nation. This is what makes the IMEC Symposium unique and it should not lose the focus of IMEC’s mission which is to, **“Advocate for the highest quality education and other needed support for the nation’s migratory children and youth”.**

*Note: This report was prepared by Solomon Kaulukukui who is an independent consultant and a former IMEC member who was also a former Migrant State Director.*

**ACRONYMS USED IN THIS REPORT**

CIG Consortium Incentive Grant

CAN Comprehensive Needs Assessment

DC District of Columbia (Washington, DC)

ESEA Elementary and Secondary Education Act

EL English Learner

ESSA Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015

H-2A A Federal program allowing U.S. employers to bring foreign nationals to the U.S. to fill temporary agricultural jobs

GPRA Government and Performance Results Act

H.S. High School

ICE Immigration and Customs Enforcement

ID&R Identification and Recruitment

IMEC Interstate Migrant Education Council

LEA Local Education Agency

MEP Migrant Education Program

MOU Memorandum of Understanding

MPI Migration Policy Institute

MSIX Migrant Student Information Exchange

NAWS National Agricultural Worker Survey

OME Office of Migrant Education

OSY Out-of-School Youth

Pre-K Pre-Kindergarten

PFS Priority for Services

SEA State Education Agency

STEM/STEAM Science, Technology, Engineering, Art and Mathematics