

# SAF

STUDENT ACTION WITH FARMWORKERS

## Table of Contents

What You Need to Know About Migrant Education.....	2
Quick Facts on Migrant Students.....	3
No Child Left Behind.....	3
Resources/Recursos.....	4
Into the Fields Internship.....	5
Holiday Gift Ideas.....	5
Upcoming Events/ Announcements.....	6
SAF Supporters.....	6

## Focus on Migrant Education

### First College Day a Huge Success!

by Lyndsey Beutin

Student Action with Farmworkers began its annual series of College Days this year with a great visit to North Carolina Central University (NCCU) on September 17th. Over 40 migrant high school students from Johnston and Franklin counties traveled to Durham to hear about opportunities in higher education. The day included presentations from professors and administrators at NCCU, prize giveaways, and chorus singing! Through different forums, the students learned about the admission process, financial aid, evening and weekend classes, campus life, and scholarship programs. A panel of current NCCU students from different backgrounds and organizations related their college experiences, gave advice, and answered questions for the migrant students. All of the presenters encouraged the students to stay in school in order to accomplish their long-term goals.

Even though threatening weather led to the cancellation of the campus tour, the brewing storm could not dampen the spirits of the participants. Excited chatter filled the lunch area as students ate, looked at their new college goodies, and discussed their personal options for education beyond high school.

Response to the NCCU College Day was overwhelming. Teachers commented that it was one of the best in which they have participated. The university was thrilled to have students with such diverse perspectives and backgrounds seriously consider attending their school, and the students related their interest by asking questions about scholarships, the admission process, and other college opportunities.

*-continued on p. 4*

## El Proyecto Levante

El Proyecto Levante fue iniciado en el 1994 cuando estudiantes voluntarios de SAF reconocieron una falta de buenos modelos en las vidas de los jóvenes migrantes. Cuando hablaban con estos estudiantes, los voluntarios se dieron cuenta que muchos de ellos solo querían salir de la escuela a trabajar cuando tenían la edad. Usando el teatro como gran parte de su programa, los voluntarios animaban a estos jóvenes de terminar la escuela e ir a la universidad.

En el 1997, SAF inició una colaboración con el Programa de Educación para Migrantes (MEP) de Carolina del Norte para desarrollar el liderazgo de los estudiantes migrantes en zonas rurales de N.C. a través de retiros de liderazgo, visitas a las universidades, empoderamiento de jóvenes, y talleres de arte y liderazgo. SAF ha colaborado con MEP para desarrollar los clubes de **Acción, Inspiración y Motivación (AIM)**, de los cuales hay más de 50 en todo el estado.

Las metas del Proyecto Levante:

- Inspirar a los jóvenes migrantes de terminar la escuela
- Proveer maneras para las familias migrantes de participar en la educación de sus niños
- Iniciar dialogo sobre oportunidades de universidades entre jóvenes migrantes y estudiantes de la universidad que son de familias migrantes.

SAF también ha coordinado **Días de Universidad** para más de 2.400 jóvenes migrantes. Vea el artículo arriba para más información sobre estas visitas.

Si Ud. quiere saber más sobre el Proyecto Levante, visítenos en el Internet: [WWW.SAF-UNITE.ORG/PROJECTLEVANTE.HTM](http://WWW.SAF-UNITE.ORG/PROJECTLEVANTE.HTM). (sitio en inglés) O contacte a la Directora del Programa Levante de SAF, Ilda Santiago, a (919) 660-3652. (Se habla español)

## Project Levante

Project Levante was begun in 1994 to fill the void identified by SAF interns who noticed the lack of role models in the lives of migrant students. In talking to students, they found that many had no other goals than to be old enough to quit school and begin work. Using theater as a major component of their program, interns encouraged these youth to finish high school and go to college.

In 1997, SAF's Project Levante began a partnership with the N.C. Migrant Education Program to develop the leadership of migrant youth in rural North Carolina through leadership retreats, tours of colleges and universities, youth empowerment, and art and college preparation workshops. SAF also collaborated with Migrant Education and migrant students to develop **Action Inspiration Motivation (AIM) Clubs**, of which there are now over 50 statewide.

The goals of Project Levante are to:

- Encourage farmworker youth to finish school
- Provide ways for farmworker families to have a greater role in their children's education
- Foster dialogue about college opportunities between farmworker youth and college students from farmworker families

SAF has also coordinated **College Days** for over 2,400 migrant youth. See the article above for more information about our College Day visits.

If you would like to know more about Project Levante, please visit our website at [WWW.SAF-UNITE.ORG/PROJECTLEVANTE.HTM](http://WWW.SAF-UNITE.ORG/PROJECTLEVANTE.HTM) or contact SAF's Migrant Youth Director, Ilda Santiago, at (919) 660-3652.

**SAF** is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization whose mission is to bring students and farmworkers together to learn about each other's lives, share resources and skills, improve conditions for farmworkers, and build diverse coalitions working for social change.

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#### ACTION ALERTS

To receive SAF's weekly Action Alerts about legislation affecting farmworkers, organizing campaigns, campus events, and job opportunities, send an email with the word "subscribe" to <[farmworkers-request@duke.edu](mailto:farmworkers-request@duke.edu)>

**For more information or to submit to the newsletter, contact:**

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**From the Ground Up Editor:**  
*Tony Macias*

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## What You Need to Know about Migrant Education

by **Tony Macias**

According to the US Department of Education, a migrant is anyone "who has moved within 36 months to seek/obtain temporary or seasonal employment in agriculture or to accompany or join a parent, spouse, or guardian to obtain this work." Migrant children attend schools in all 50 U.S. states, and every day across the country they withdraw and enroll from our schools. (See the chart on p. 3 for helpful facts about migrant students.)

The US Migrant Education Program (MEP) was established in November of 1966, when only 1 in 10 migrant students was expected to graduate from high school. Today there is a legacy of its original structure, where local and state advocates for migrant youth have a strong voice in how to serve this unique and mobile population.

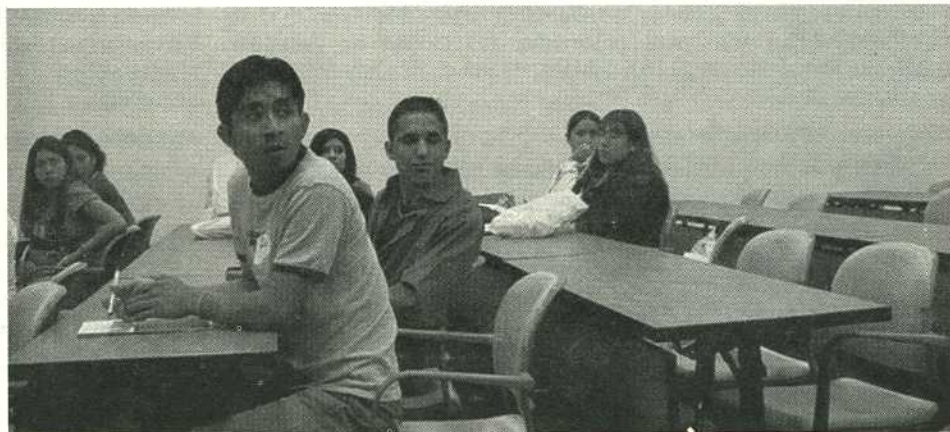
In 1969, long before the days of the internet, Migrant Education created the Migrant Student Records Transfer System (MSRTS) to facilitate the exchange of information among schools that receive migrant students. This innovative use of technology was far ahead of its time, and allowed states to track and share the records of over 800,000 children until 1994 when the project was ended. The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (see article on p. 3) calls for the creation of a new system to track students.

Today, MEP is a program of the U.S. Department of Education, and is responsible for several initiatives including: College Assistance Migrant Program (CAMP), High School Equivalency Program (HEP), Migrant Education National Hotline (1-800-234-8848), Migrant Education Coordination and Support Center, and Migrant Education Even Start (MEES). MEP also administers numerous grants to state and federal agencies that deliver services to migrant students.

For more information on MEP, please visit their website at [www.ed.gov/PROGRAMS/MEP/INDEX.HTML](http://www.ed.gov/PROGRAMS/MEP/INDEX.HTML).

Sources: Migrant Education, [www.ed.gov/programs/mep](http://www.ed.gov/programs/mep) & [Scholars in the Field](#). For more reference information, please refer to the resource list on p. 4

**"The goal of the Migrant Education Program is to ensure that all migrant students reach challenging academic standards and graduate with a high school diploma (or complete a GED) that prepares them for responsible citizenship, further learning, and productive employment."**



Latino students at NC State Summit in 2004. photo by Ilda Santiago

## Migrant Students: Quick Facts

Migrant children are at a great educational disadvantage due to a combination of factors, including poverty, language barriers, poor nutrition and health care, high mobility and absenteeism. However, education is highly valued among farmworker families. Here are some useful facts about this population of students:

- In the U.S. there are 819,000 migrant children.
- 84.9% of migrant students are Hispanic.
- 85% of migrant students are Spanish speakers, but not all are necessarily fluent in this language.
- 60% of migrant students drop out of high school. (1994)
- 17% of young farmworkers are behind one grade level.

- 15% of migrant students are taking English as a Second Language (ESL)/Limited English Proficiency (LEP) classes.
- By the time a migrant child is 12, he or she may be working in the fields between 16-18 hours/week. (*Federal child-labor laws make an exception for agricultural work, allowing children as young as 12 to work in the fields with their parents' permission*)
- The average migrant child may attend 3 different schools in one year. For many children it takes roughly 3 years to advance one grade level.
- Almost half of U.S. migrant farmworkers have less than a 9th grade education.

Sources: *National Agricultural Workers Survey (NAWS)*. 1998; *The Help! Kit. A Resource Guide for Secondary Teachers of Migrant English Language Learners*. 2001

## No Child Left Behind Affects Migrant Students

by Elizabeth King\*

The *No Child Left Behind Act* (NCLB) was passed into law by President George W. Bush on January 8, 2002. A continuation of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, it has been the subject of considerable criticism at the state and national level. Whether or not the act will provide the benefits it proposes, it is easy to see that it has a considerable impact on how public schools are able to reach out to disadvantaged students and to migrant children in particular.

The act, as its name suggests, gives priority to children who are at the most immediate risk of failing to meet academic standards. NCLB is widely interpreted to cover all children studying in the U.S., and even those who move frequently within and beyond our borders. Under *NCLB*, states must make sure migrant children:

- Receive appropriate instructional and support services that address their special needs in a coordinated and efficient manner.
- Are not penalized in any manner by disparities among the states in curriculum, graduation requirements, and state academic content and academic achievement standards.
- Receive full and appropriate opportunities to meet state content and student performance standards all children are expected to meet.
- Benefit from state and local systematic reform<sup>1</sup>.

Of course, there is a difference between written objectives and success on the ground. NCLB reform has placed extraordinary pressure on local and state agencies to address low student performance in schools. Regardless of the root causes of student failure, schools whose students perform poorly must make improvements or they will lose federal funding.

A major criticism leveled at NCLB is that it is an under-funded mandate, since it requires states to design their

own standards and testing systems without appropriating sufficient money for these tasks. Opponents to the act also contend that since parents can now take their children out of low-performing schools, these schools are left worse off than before.

Despite NCLB stating that Limited English

Proficient students should be assessed in their native language for their first three years in public school, it does not provide states and schools with the necessary resources to develop tests in numerous foreign languages<sup>2</sup>. Moreover, migrant students who are English language learners may not advance quickly through these courses due to their high mobility.

One provision of the act gives individual states the responsibility of keeping track of mobile student records, which are essential to migrant students who frequently change school districts. According to one writer, this forced decentralization has led to multiple immunizations, over/under-testing, tracking issues, as well as other problems<sup>3</sup>.

Check out some of the websites listed on p. 4 to learn more about the impacts of this Act on migrant students and their families.

- (1) *Scholars in the Field* p.182
- (2) National Education Association, [www.nea.org](http://www.nea.org)
- (3) *Scholars in the Field* pp. 18-19

\*Elizabeth King is a Duke undergraduate, and is taking *Farmworkers in North Carolina: Poverty* with Dr. Charles Thompson this semester.



Migrant students at NCCU College Day on Sept. 17th  
photo by Ilda Santiago

