



Washington Office of Superintendent of
PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

REPORT TO THE LEGISLATURE

Children of Seasonal Farmworkers Study 2025

Authorizing Legislation: ESSB 5950

Dixie Grunenfelder

**Assistant Superintendent
Student Engagement and Special Programs**

Prepared by:

- **Sylvia Reyna**, Director
sylvia.reyna@k12.wa.us | 360-742-4654
- **Ceair St. Onge**, Program Specialist
ceair.st.onge@k12.wa.us | 360-701-8806

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Executive Summary.....	4
Introduction.....	5
Purpose.....	5
Methodology.....	9
Literature and Data Review	9
Engaging With Representatives From State Agencies and Advocacy Groups	10
Engaging with Seasonal Farmworkers	10
Limitations and Considerations.....	11
Study findings.....	12
Three Interconnected Levels.....	12
Key Findings.....	13
Recommendations	17
Proposed Definition of "Student of a Seasonal Farmworker"	17
Conclusion & Next Steps.....	20
Study Barriers	20
Acknowledgments.....	21
References.....	22
Appendix A:.....	24
Key Findings.....	24
The following section breaks down the study findings based on the data collection method.....	24
Appendix B:.....	31
Interview Protocol.....	31
Introductions & Organizational Background	32
Factors that Impact Children of Seasonal Farmworkers Compared to Migratory Students.....	32
Recommendations on Programs and Program Access	34
Closing	34
Appendix C:.....	36
Focus Group Protocol.....	36

Appendix D:	39
Survey (Alchemer).....	39
Appendix D:	46
Annotated Bibliography	46
Legal Notice.....	50

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Washington Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) contracted Koné Consulting to examine factors affecting educational opportunities for children of seasonal farmworkers, focusing on school access, academic performance, and postsecondary opportunities as mandated by ESSB 5950. The study focused on the needs of children of non-migratory seasonal farmworkers who may lack access to these same resources that migratory agricultural workers receive through the federally funded Title I Part C Migrant Education Program (MEP). This study collected quantitative and qualitative data from stakeholders and community representatives to understand the unique educational needs of seasonal farmworker families. The study examined school accessibility, including access to certification and postsecondary education programs, academic performance indicators, state assessment results, graduation rates, and disciplinary actions. This report presents experiences of formerly migratory students whose families still conduct agricultural work, but lost MEP eligibility after settling permanently in local communities, along with recommendations to enhance educational outcomes for children of seasonal farmworkers.

This study revealed that providing a state-funded mirror program serving all students of seasonal farmworkers, regardless of migratory status, would greatly support and benefit the families in the state who provide essential work in the agriculture industry. Taking action to serve these students will improve the academic achievements of children of seasonal farmworkers, broaden equitable access to education, and expand educational pathways. This legislative report serves as a summary of the longer feasibility study, pulling out the major findings and recommendations from that study.

INTRODUCTION

Purpose

The Washington Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) contracted Koné Consulting to examine the factors affecting opportunities for children of seasonal farmworkers, conducted in partnership with the Washington Department of Agriculture and Department of Labor & Industries. ESSB 5950 called for an examination of the following areas: school and program access, school readiness, attendance, grade promotion and retention, performance on state assessments, academic growth, graduation rates, discipline rates, teacher qualifications and years of experience, and access to post-secondary education and career opportunities in formerly rural or agricultural communities. Due to limitations in identifying seasonal farmworker children within these data sets, the study focused on school access, academic performance, and post-secondary opportunities. Children of migratory agricultural workers and fishers qualify for supplemental academic and support services through the federally-funded Title I Part C Migrant Education Program.¹ However, there is a concern that children of non-migratory seasonal farmworkers lack access to these same resources, despite having similar experiences to migratory students.

Background Context Regarding Farmworker Demographics and Agriculture

Washington's agricultural industry represents a significant economic sector. In 2023, Washington's agricultural production was nearly \$14.0 billion² and made up approximately 3% of the state's gross domestic product.³ The state's agriculture leads the nation in the production of apples, cherries, pears, blueberries, onions, and hops.⁴ Agricultural production is not evenly distributed across the state: Yakima, Chelan, and Grant Counties are some of the largest producers and employ a large share of the farmworkers that are needed to plant, grow, harvest, and pack crops.⁵

¹ Migratory child means a child or youth who made a qualifying move in the preceding 36 months as a migratory agricultural worker or a migratory fisher; or with, or to join, a parent or spouse who is a migratory agricultural worker or migratory fisher.

²United States Department of Agriculture. (2024, October). Press Release: Value of Washington's 2023 agricultural production totaled a record high of Nearly \$14.0 billion. Washington, DC: National Agricultural Statistics Service. https://www.nass.usda.gov/Statistics_by_State/Washington/Publications/Current_News_Release/2024/VOP_WA.pdf

³ Washington | Economic Impact of Agriculture. (2022). Uada.edu. <https://economic-impact-of-ag.uada.edu/washington/>

⁴ ibid

⁵ Briar, C., & Miller, M. (2023). The needs of farmworkers in Washington State: Preliminary report. (Document Number 23-12-4101) Olympia: Washington State Institute for Public Policy.

A report by the Washington State Institute for Public Policy stated that in 2024, there were 113,174 farmworkers, which was about 3% of the state's total employment.⁶ The same report points out that nearly all farmwork is labor-intensive and highly seasonal, which means farmworkers often move from one location to another depending on the crops. Because agricultural production is unevenly distributed across the state, many farmworkers move from one location to another as crop production demands. However, historical trends around farmworker migration for crops are changing. The National Agricultural Workers Survey administered in 2021–2022⁷ illustrates how this work is inherently physically demanding, seasonal, and encompasses a wide range of tasks, including crop production, livestock care, and food packing. Unlike many other states, Washington provides important protection for these workers through laws governing collective bargaining, overtime pay, and minimum wage requirements. As previously mentioned, the distribution of farmworkers across the state is uneven due to various geographic factors, with Yakima having more than three times as many farmworkers as any other county. Grant and Chelan also have over 10,000 farmworkers, while other counties like Ferry and Wahkiakum have very few.⁸

Labor economists suggest a Washington trend where domestic farmworkers are aging out, and younger people lack interest in farmwork. The effect is a decline in migratory labor. Other factors contributing to a decline in migrant labor may be due to families choosing to settle in one area rather than moving seasonally. According to the U.S. Agriculture Census data, over a five-year period from 2017 to 2022, overall farm labor in Washington declined by 23% as migrant labor dropped by 37%. Comparatively, the overall national farm labor dropped 9% and migrant labor decreased 14% during this period. In addition, the number of farmworkers in Washington employed through the H-2A guest worker program nearly doubled, according to data from the Employment Security Department.⁹

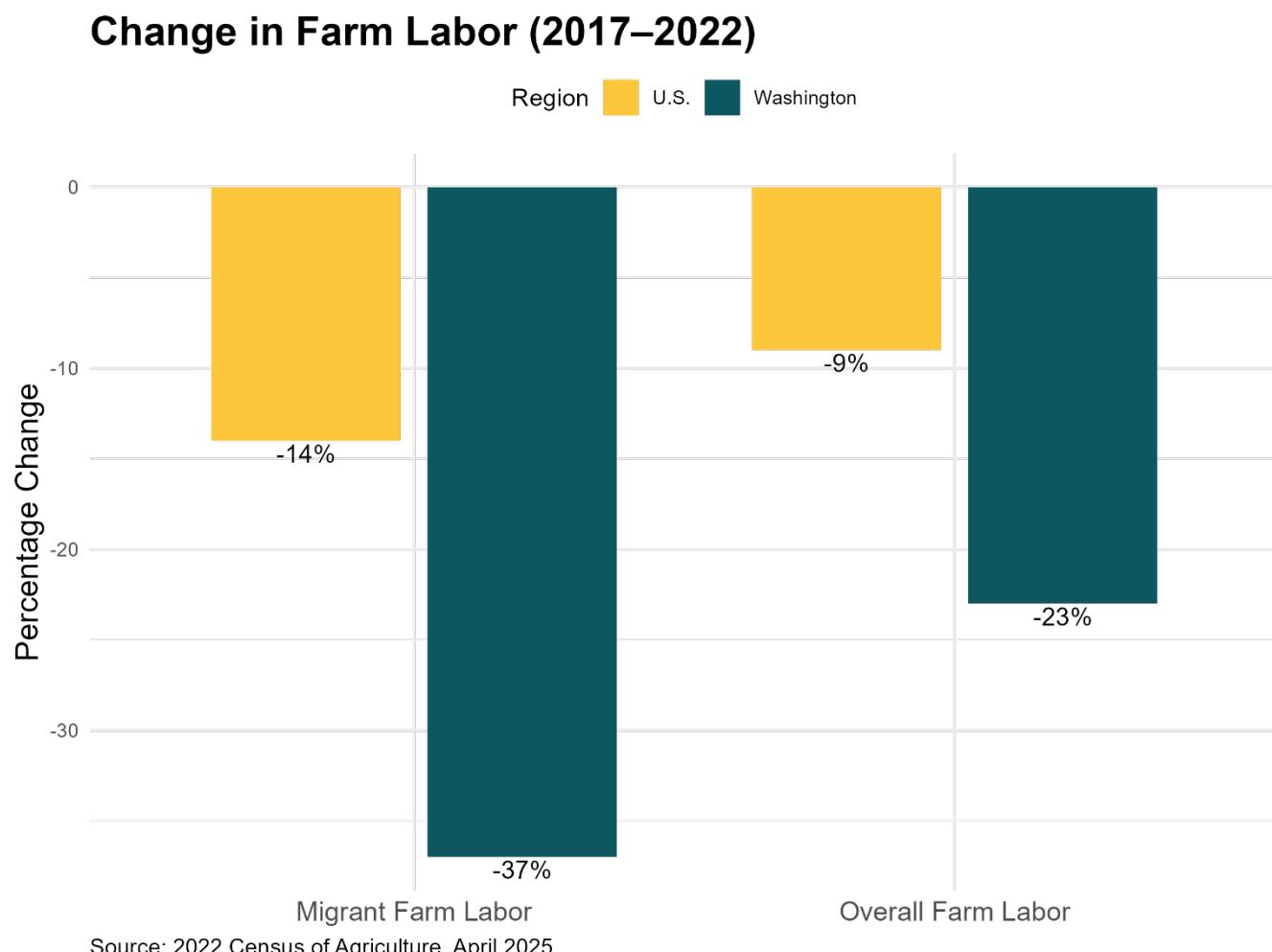
⁶ ibid

⁷ National Agricultural Workers Survey (no date) DOL.

⁸ Briar, C., & Miller, M. (2023). The needs of farmworkers in Washington State: Preliminary report. (Document Number 23-12-4101) Olympia: Washington State Institute for Public Policy.

⁹ Employment Security Department. (2024). 2024 Agricultural seasonal workforce services <https://esd.wa.gov/media/pdf/2750/2024-asws-reportpdf/download?inline>

Figure 1: Changes in farm labor, 2017 to 2022



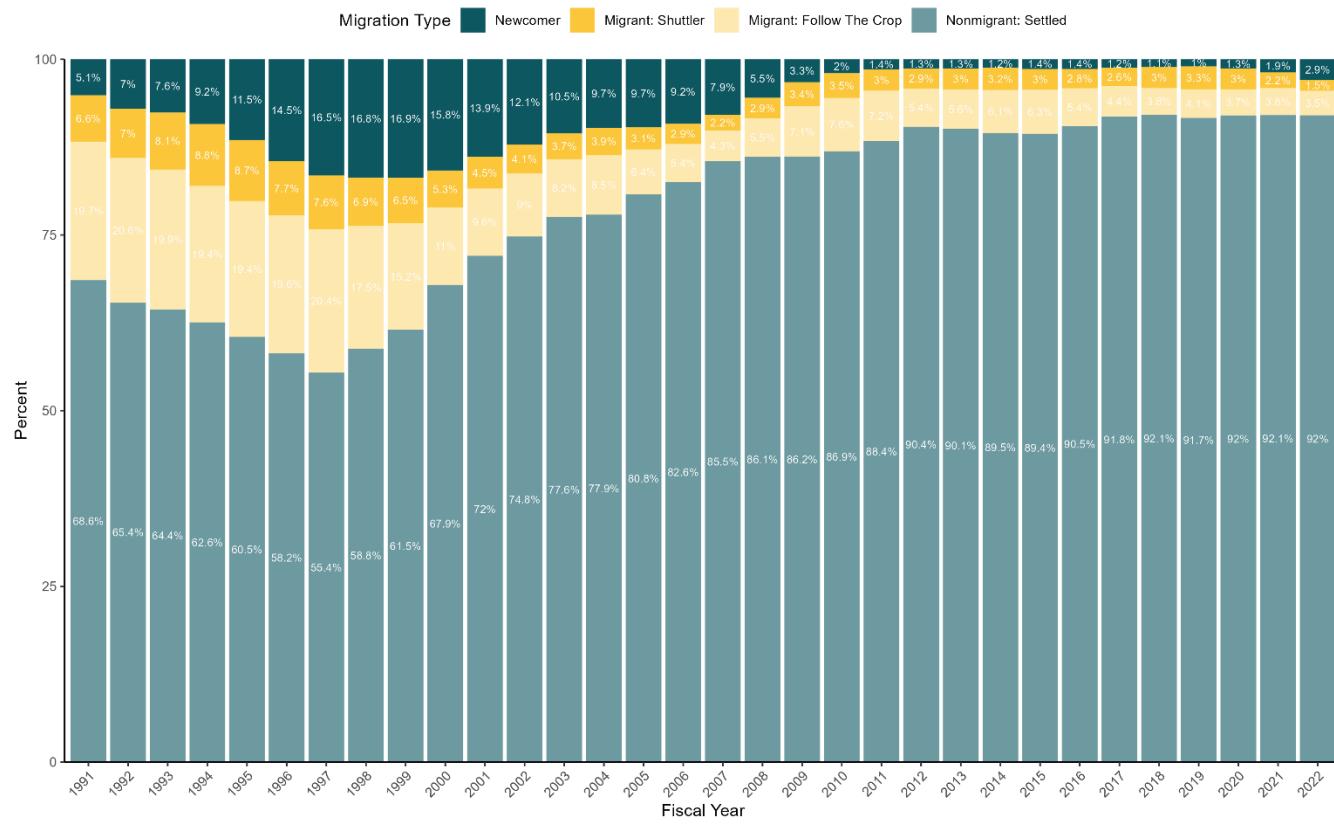
Farmworker Migration Patterns at the National Level

Across the nation, a greater percentage of seasonal hired crop farmworkers are now working within 75 miles of their home. Based on 2025 data from the Economic Research Service, most hired crop farmworkers (83%) are “settled”, which is defined as working within 75 miles of their home.¹⁰ This is a significant increase from the late 1990s, when only 41% of hired crop farmworkers were settled. In the 2022 data, about 9% are considered “shuttlers”, which is defined as a hired crop farmworker who works at a single farm location more than 75 miles from home. “Follow-the-crop migrants” constituted 4% of all hired crop farmworkers in 2022.

¹⁰ U.S. Department of Agriculture. (2025, September 12). Farm labor. Washington, DC; Economic Research Service. <https://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/farm-economy/farm-labor>

Figure 2: Hired Crop Farmworker Migration Patterns, 1991–2022

Farmworker Migration Patterns (3-Year Moving Average)



Source: U.S. Department of Labor, National Agricultural Worker Survey (April 2022)

(*Migration Patterns of Hired Crop Farmworkers, Fiscal 1991–2022 | Economic Research Service, n.d.*)

National trends demonstrate a decrease in mobility and an increase in settled farmworkers. This suggests there is likely a substantial number of children of non-migratory seasonal farmworkers in Washington, as compared to the 30,000 identified migratory children, although no specific method currently exists to count non-migratory children of agricultural workers.

Key Characteristics of Children of Seasonal Farmworkers

Children of seasonal farmworkers represent one of the most educationally vulnerable populations in the United States, facing a complex intersection of challenges that significantly impact their academic trajectories and life opportunities. Children whose parents work in agricultural labor are predominantly from families where approximately 67% originate from Mexico and 50% are undocumented.¹¹ Many are bilingual or English language learners, with 81% classified as English learners by third grade, and they may be either U.S.-born or foreign-born themselves.¹²

¹¹ Delgado & Becker Herbst, 2018

¹² Delgado & Becker Herbst, 2018

Historically, families have frequently moved to follow agricultural work seasons and crop harvests across different regions. In some cases, parents travel alone for seasonal work while children remain in their home community under the care of extended family members or older siblings. This migration pattern creates profound educational disruptions, as children experience frequent school changes that disrupt their academic continuity. Mobility often results in family separations during migration periods, adding emotional and social stress to an already challenging educational landscape.

Academically, children of seasonal and migrant farmworkers experience lower performance outcomes compared to their peers, with 91% not meeting state performance standards and 66% scoring below standards in mathematics, reading, and writing. These students experience higher dropout rates compared to their non-farmworker peers and are significantly less likely to graduate from high school or pursue a college education. Socioeconomic factors compound the educational challenges, as their families have the highest poverty rate of any occupational group, with 61% living in poverty. Parents often have limited formal education themselves, and children may begin working in agricultural fields by age 12, contributing 16–18 hours per week to family income.¹³

Beyond academic and economic challenges, these children face elevated rates of physical and mental health issues, including higher rates of depression and anxiety. They experience trauma and acculturative stress while often serving additional family roles such as interpreters, further complicating their educational experience. This population is defined not just by their parents' occupation, but by a complex intersection of socioeconomic, educational, linguistic, racial bias, and mobility-related factors that create unique challenges for their academic success and overall well-being.

METHODOLOGY

Literature and Data Review

The project team conducted a comprehensive review of existing data sources to establish a foundational understanding of the seasonal farmworker population in Washington and their children's educational experiences. This review included legislative reports, academic research studies, white papers, and other state-level data sources that provided context on the demographics, working conditions, and educational challenges facing seasonal farmworker families. The literature review informed the development of data collection instruments and helped identify key themes and gaps in existing knowledge that guided the primary research components of this study.

¹³ Schmitt, A.M., Horner, S.L., & Lavery, M.R. (2020). The Impact of Summer Programs on the English Language Scores of Migrant Children

Engaging With Representatives from State Agencies and Advocacy Groups

Interviews

A total of 19 interviews were conducted with a variety of participants, including parents, recruiters, educators, and educational service district and school district staff, as well as stakeholders possessing professional expertise and/or lived experience related to seasonal farmworkers, their children, and their children's education in Washington. The project team developed an interview protocol in collaboration with OSPI staff based on insights gathered through the review of existing data sources. The team utilized a semi-structured interview approach, preparing core questions while maintaining flexibility to explore topics that emerged naturally during conversations. A copy of the interview protocol is available in Appendix B.

Advisory Group

Koné convened monthly meetings with a stakeholder advisory group that included representatives from Employment Security, Labor and Industries, the Department of Children, Youth and Families (DCYF), OSPI's Migrant Education Program, and community-based organizations. During these meetings, the project team provided status updates and gathered feedback on the study components.

Survey

The project team conducted a survey of employees who provide services to seasonal farmworkers and/or their children. The survey opened on May 2, 2025, and closed on May 30, 2025, spanning four weeks of data collection. A total of 109 survey responses were collected. Of these, 35 were removed from the dataset due to the survey being incomplete, with 50% or more of the questions being left unanswered. After these removals, the final dataset consisted of 74 complete responses that formed the basis for the analysis. The survey was designed and distributed in an online format through the software program Alchemer. Verbal and paper versions of the survey were not made available. A copy of the survey questions can be found in Appendix D.

Engaging with Seasonal Farmworkers

Focus Groups

The project team convened five focus groups with seasonal farmworker families across the state, with each focus group including 10 households. Three in-person focus groups were held in the following locations: Quincy, Mount Vernon, and Burlington. Two additional focus groups were conducted virtually in Pasco and Bridgeport. The team collaborated closely with local school districts and community-based

organizations to recruit participants for the focus groups, ensuring family safety and enabling the team to host sessions in comfortable, familiar settings. The focus group protocol was semi-structured to facilitate free-flowing, open discussions that would elicit authentic data and uncover underlying themes. All focus groups were conducted in Spanish, audio recorded, transcribed, and translated to English for thematic analysis. A copy of the focus group protocol is available in Appendix C.

The analysis associated with each data collection method is extensive and described in detail. A comprehensive account of the procedures, analytic approach, and key findings for each method is provided in Appendix A at the end of this paper.

Limitations and Considerations

Bias

Possible sources of bias in this study include the collection of sample data that may not accurately represent the entire group (sampling bias), the tendency for people to report inaccurate answers to self-report questions (response bias), and the systematic tendency of study participants to remember and report information differently based on their outcome status or exposure (recall bias). The study design mitigated these possible sources of bias by triangulating data from interviews with the data from the survey and focus groups to identify the strongest themes.

Limitations

This study was designed as a sample-size study rather than a full-scale, statewide assessment. As such, while the findings offer valuable insights into the needs of children from seasonal farmworker families, they may not fully represent the experiences of all districts across Washington. In particular, additional work may be needed to accurately estimate the percentage of seasonal farmworker students enrolled in each district to inform potential funding models. Furthermore, data collection efforts were primarily concentrated in Northwest and Eastern Washington, which may limit the geographic generalizability of the findings.

Current Political Landscape

The current national political environment related to immigration enforcement and the recent experiences and needs of seasonal farmworker families who are immigrants or refugees from other countries impacted this study. As federal immigration policies have become increasingly restrictive, it has created a climate of uncertainty and fear within the communities of seasonal farmworkers. Policy shifts, heightened enforcement measures, and anti-immigrant rhetoric have created heightened stress for families. That fear impacted the willingness of some families to participate in the in-person focus

groups for this study, so accommodations were made for virtual participation. The study revealed that the current environment has also impacted the willingness of seasonal farmworker families to access and apply for educational services for their children.

STUDY FINDINGS

Three Interconnected Levels

Study findings from interviews, surveys, and focus groups reveal critical gaps in supporting seasonal farmworker students across three interconnected levels: system level, operational challenges, and student level.

System level, the changing nature of farmwork shows families increasingly settling in communities rather than migrating, yet the only funding resource for seasonal farmworkers is focused on the migratory seasonal farmworker, which does not reflect the shift in migration patterns.

Operational challenges center on insufficient academic support services, including tutoring and classroom assistance, coupled with a critical need for additional classroom support staff to help students succeed. Equally important is the need for cultural competency training among educators to develop a deeper understanding of seasonal farmworker family lifestyles and how these circumstances impact classroom engagement. Additionally, there is a need to strengthen communication channels with parents and improve advocacy efforts for students. This includes raising awareness about available services and building trusting relationships between farmworker families and graduation specialists, school administration, and student advocates to create a more supportive educational environment.

Student level, children of seasonal farmworkers need comprehensive support to overcome educational barriers. Essential needs include dual language programming for bilingual learners, expanded career exploration programs, tutoring services, and transportation access for enrichment activities. Students also need improved mental health support and healthcare access, particularly as farmworker communities face increased targeting and stress. Additional needs include financial aid guidance, enhanced technology support, and addressing housing instability that affects educational continuity.

These findings highlight the need for a comprehensive approach that recognizes the evolving nature of seasonal farmwork, expands program eligibility, and addresses the interconnected academic, social, and economic challenges facing these students and their families.

Key Findings

Supporting Children of Seasonal Farmworkers: Recommended Program Improvements and Funding Priorities

Survey respondents identified several critical areas for improvement and strategic funding allocation to better support children of seasonal farmworkers and improve their academic outcomes.

Academic Support and Extended Learning

Academic support emerged as the most pressing need across all survey responses. Over twelve respondents called for improvements to access academic support, including after-school tutoring, homework assistance, summer school opportunities, and credit recovery programs. Respondents emphasized the need for targeted tutoring programs and academic coaches specifically designed to address learning gaps among seasonal farmworker children.

Bilingual and language support was consistently highlighted as essential, with organizations requesting bilingual staff and enhanced English Language Development programs. Several respondents noted the need for language-specific programming for Spanish and Mixteco-speaking students, recognizing the linguistic diversity within farmworker communities.

Extended learning opportunities represented a significant focus area, as traditional school schedules often do not align with farmworker family needs. After-school programs were often mentioned as essential for providing safe environments while parents work long hours, combined with continued academic support. Multiple organizations wanted to expand summer school programs to offer academic enrichment and credit recovery opportunities, recognizing that extended day and year programs are necessary to accommodate the unique scheduling challenges faced by farmworker families.

Staffing and Cultural Competency

Staffing and personnel needs were consistently emphasized across many of the open-ended responses. Organizations mentioned the need to hire added personnel, including advocates, recruiters, case managers, and support specialists. Current staff are overwhelmed, and reduced caseloads through more team members would significantly improve service delivery.

As one respondent noted: *"In my school, I am the only person who provides support for all farmworker students and families, but it's very difficult to do it on my own. With extra funds not only would I love to get an extra hand to help, but it would also increase the quality of support provided."*

Cultural competency training for teachers and staff emerged as another priority area, with eight respondents emphasizing the need for educators who understand farmworker family lifestyles and can provide multicultural instruction. Many specifically requested culturally competent staff members, student advocates, and bilingual professionals who could better serve the community. Respondents also emphasized improving communication with families and the need for culturally aware individuals to work directly with families.

Survey participants highlighted that seasonal farmworker families are often misunderstood by education staff, who may stereotype families when students miss school due to parents' work schedules. As one respondent observed: *"Education staff seem to stereotype families, I've heard comments, 'they don't care about their students' education.'*

Family Engagement and Wraparound Services

Family engagement and support services reflect staff understanding that supporting families is crucial for student success. Respondents recommended providing wraparound services that connect families to essential resources, including healthcare, housing stability, mental health support, and transportation. Parent education appeared as a priority, with organizations seeking to offer family workshops, parent training, and navigation support to help families better understand and engage with the education system.

Mental health and healthcare services were identified as critical needs, with respondents suggesting that preventive healthcare and behavioral health services be offered in or near schools to overcome transportation barriers. Several respondents emphasized the need for mental health services, including counseling and emotional support for students dealing with the stresses of mobility and economic instability.

Extended day programming and childcare emerged as necessary support, with respondents noting the need for programs that accommodate non-traditional hours aligned with agricultural work schedules. There was a strong emphasis on developing culturally relevant programming and family engagement events that honor the community's cultural background.

Post-Secondary Preparation and Career Development

Post-secondary and career preparation was identified as a critical area for investment, with organizations prioritizing the preparation of students for life after high school. College and career readiness programs, including high school credit transfer guidance for students from other countries and career pathway partnerships, were listed as priorities. College access programs—including campus visits, post-secondary education support, and college preparation services—were also often mentioned.

Career exploration opportunities such as field trips, internships, and job training were seen as valuable for exposing students to various career paths. Leadership development and future planning support were also identified as essential components.

Transportation and Technology Access

Transportation and technology access were recognized as critical barriers that additional funding could help address. Multiple respondents mentioned the need to provide transportation services for school attendance, appointments, and educational activities. As one respondent noted, "seasonal farmworkers students are usually not allowed to stay for after-school activities or tutoring, because of no transportation." Technology access was another priority, with organizations seeking to ensure that students have reliable internet and devices for home learning, particularly during peak periods of seasonal work for families. Additionally, technology access enables students to complete and submit college applications online, access financial aid resources and scholarship opportunities, and participate in virtual tutoring and other academic support programs.

Critical Service Gaps

Multiple respondents emphasized a critical service gap affecting children of non-migrant seasonal farmworkers who face identical educational challenges to migratory students but remain ineligible for specialized program support. As one respondent explained: *"Just because they belong to a settled community does not mean they have the tools or resources they need to succeed. These students face similar challenges – poverty, language barriers, and limited access to academic and social support."*

Another respondent noted: *"The way of life of farmworker families is so different that no matter if they migrate or not, they need the support because students take on so many adult responsibilities at such a young age due to parents working all the time during busy seasons."*

This population experiences the same disadvantages as migratory children but lacks access to extra academic support, causing them to fall behind academically. Title I Part C limitations were specifically mentioned, particularly addressing gaps when families' program eligibility expires.

Systemic Issues

Several systemic issues were highlighted through survey responses. One respondent noted consideration for a state-funded model that includes fewer reporting requirements would allow more direct service time, while federal funding has many reporting requirements that take time away from direct student services. They also noted budget constraints have led to program cuts, with one respondent observing: *"Due to budget reasons, some of our after-school programs have been cut, and I have seen a difference in my students academically."* Respondents also highlighted that families are

experiencing heightened stress due to federal government policies, making traditional academic metrics seem secondary to immediate family concerns.

Innovative Solutions and Comprehensive Service Models

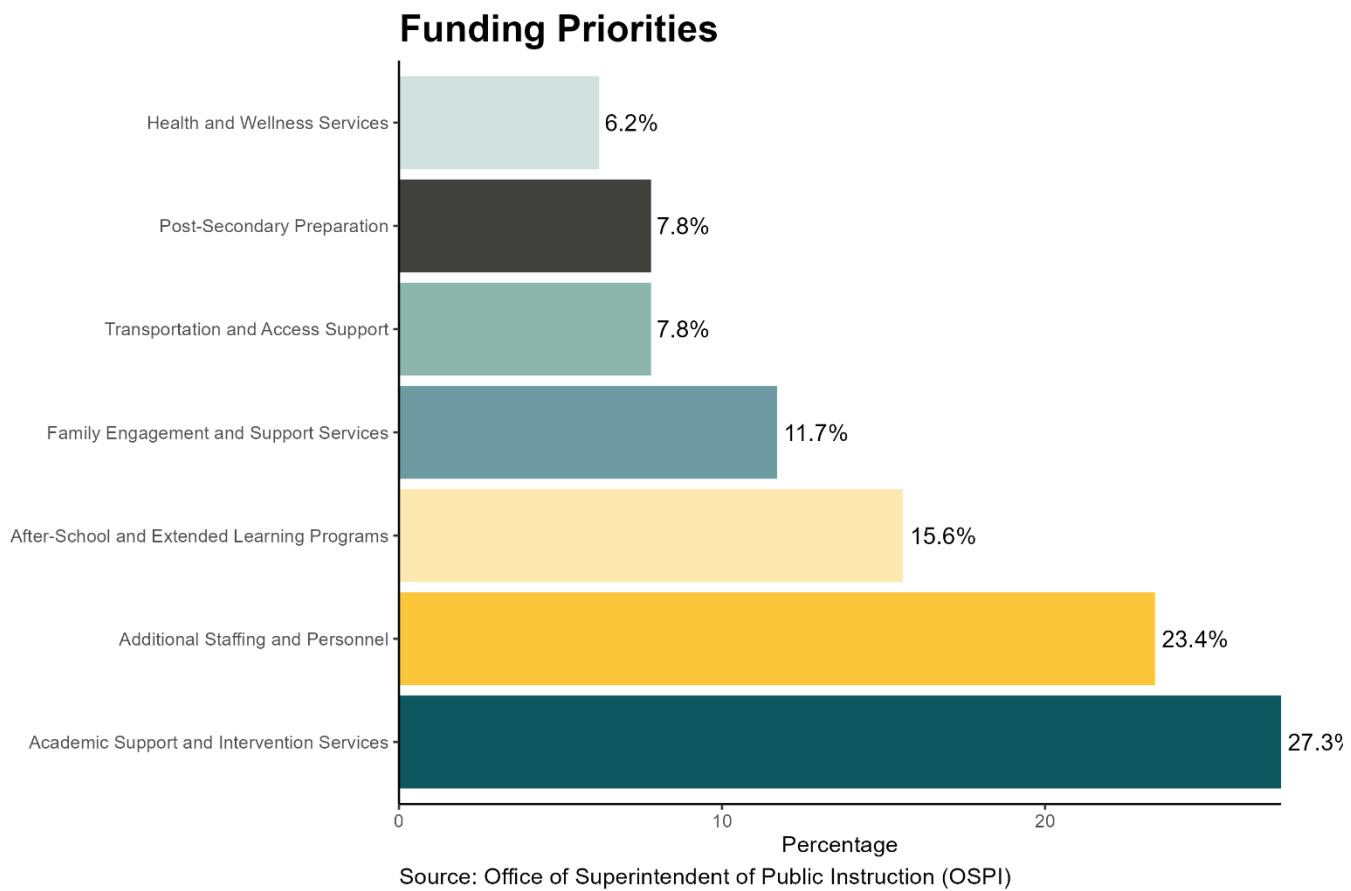
Several innovative solutions were suggested, including field-based tutoring programs, integrated health services in schools, and comprehensive service models that would integrate academic support, family engagement, wraparound services, and cultural responsiveness into holistic service delivery approaches.

Specific recommendations include establishing eligibility criteria that expand from the migratory seasonal farmworker criteria to support non-migrant seasonal farmworker children, implementing comprehensive professional development for education staff, and creating family engagement programs that accommodate work schedules and cultural needs. Enrichment opportunities such as access to museums, science installations, and cultural events would strengthen community connections, while career pathway programs could allow students to earn credit through real-world learning experiences.

Funding Priorities

Adequate funding stays a critical barrier, with respondents calling for more allocations similar to migratory student programs that would include non-migratory students of seasonal farmworkers, funding for comprehensive support, and the ability to access district rollover funds to sustain programming. Academic support services appeared as the most frequently mentioned priority across organizations, with 27% of respondents saying they would use added funding to expand academic support services. Staffing and personnel needs were consistently emphasized across nearly every response, with 23% of respondents noting they would dedicate funding to hiring more staff to support students. Organizations recognize that addressing the complex needs of seasonal farmworker families requires coordinated, multifaceted interventions that support both students and their families through comprehensive, culturally responsive service delivery models. A full breakdown of key funding priorities can be found in Figure 1 below.

Figure 3: Funding Priorities Summary



RECOMMENDATIONS

Proposed Definition of "Student of a Seasonal Farmworker"

The scope of work for this study includes proposed phrasing for a state definition of a child of a seasonal farmworker that reflects the realities of agricultural work today. Factors such as a lack of affordable housing, concerns about school stability for their children, or other economic concerns have led to more families staying in one community rather than migrating across the state, resulting in ineligibility for the MEP program, but not need. Interviewees report that the COVID-19 pandemic also affected migration trends.

During the interviews, school staff shared that non-migratory seasonal farmworker children need access to and would benefit from similar support to the MEP. Interviewees shared that children would benefit

from an established definition of a seasonal farmworker child broader than the migratory child definition, and a state-funded program to allow more Washington students needing services to receive them. Interviewees unanimously agreed that the needs of students and schools should be considered to align with the national rate of over 80% of farmworkers as non-migratory.¹⁴

Based on that input, a proposed *state* definition was included in the survey so feedback from a broader group of school staff could be gathered. While multiple survey respondents recommended expanding the federal migratory student definition to include non-migratory seasonal workers, these recommendations fell outside the scope of work in the study. The following definition was developed for consideration by Washington's lawmakers.

A "Child of a Seasonal Farmworker" is a person who is 21 years of age or younger, eligible for free public education, and is the dependent of at least one parent, guardian, or spouse whose principal employment is in non-farm owning agricultural work for at least part of the year or independently conducts seasonal or temporary agricultural work.

Based on these findings, Koné Consulting identified four key recommendations:

Create a Mirror State-Funded Program that Serves All Students of Seasonal Farmworkers, Without Consideration of Migratory Status

There was strong agreement across the state that Washington seasonal farmworker children and schools would benefit from a mirror state-funded program that provides the same support to students as the MEP program, only for students of non-migratory seasonal farmworker families. Staff shared the most important service components of the federal MEP that could be adopted in a state-funded program, including academic support, more school advocates and recruiters, more funding to assist with technology access at home, and before and after-school transportation to create access to academic support. They also suggested setting up tracking systems, so schools don't lose track of children of seasonal farmworkers who are no longer eligible for MEP due to no longer migrating.

Enhance School Staffing to Better Support the Academic and Non-Academic Needs of Students

If funding were available for a mirror state-funded program to support non-migratory students, school officials noted it would be helpful to create Community Navigator positions. These roles would focus on addressing students' socio-economic needs, such as housing and food assistance, healthcare, and mental health supports, and connecting families and students with available services and resources. Increasing staff could also provide more advocacy for students and relieve some of the workload from current personnel. Currently, graduation specialists and student advocates are instrumental in helping

¹⁴ <https://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/farm-economy/farm-labor>

students and their parents navigate the educational system, but they are often the only people in the school building with expertise in the needs of seasonal farmworker migratory families. Staff believe providing similar support for non-migratory students of seasonal farmworkers would improve student resiliency.

School employees also recommended requiring all staff in districts with significant numbers of students of seasonal farmworkers to attend a seasonal farmworker student cultural competency training with a focus on multilingual, low-income, and culturally diverse students.

The recommendation is to frame the training through the student lens and emphasize student safety, trauma-informed approaches, and creating a sense of belonging for students, including examples and practical, actionable ideas for support. By focusing on the student as a seasonal farmworker and not their migratory status, staff can provide continuous support even if the student no longer qualifies for MEP, but whose family continues to be seasonal farmworkers.

Expand Academic Support Opportunities for Students of Seasonal Farmworkers Through Increased Inter-Agency Collaboration

Local and state experts suggested there are untapped opportunities for increasing collaboration between OSPI, the Educational Service Districts, and other state programs that provide needed services. For example, interviewees suggested there is an opportunity to collaborate with DCYF to provide other childcare and early learning, and summer programs to students of seasonal farmworkers.

Another interviewee suggested stronger ties between the Housing Division in the Department of Commerce to identify more housing-related services for seasonal farmworkers and their families. Similarly, there may be opportunities to strengthen ties with the food and cash assistance programs administered by the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS), including the DSHS Mobile Office that has the capacity to deliver remote eligibility services through eight mobile vans that operate throughout the state.

At a minimum, there is an opportunity to provide state-funded services to formerly migratory seasonal farmworker children whose families continue to work in agriculture but are no longer eligible to receive supports through the Title I Part C Migrant Education Program. This could be a preliminary step while further study is conducted to identify the number of students whose families continue to work in the agricultural industry.

Improving Measurement Outcomes

Two more program enhancements were thematic in the data collected. One theme was the need to provide more funding to assess students and track youth development outcomes, like Social and Emotional Learning (SEL), Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), mental health, and family

engagement. Another common suggestion was to use educational equity indicators as a model for measuring student outcomes, including measuring students' sense of safety, belonging, ownership of their learning, and connecting their learning to their own lives and goals.

CONCLUSION & NEXT STEPS

This study relied on qualitative data gathered from a representative sample of school and state agency officials and farmworker parents. Every effort was made to ensure geographic, socio-economic, and ethnic diversity amongst the sample participants; however, there is an opportunity to conduct additional population-level research on seasonal farmworker students across the state. For example, the study did not include recent sub-state data on the total number of seasonal farmworkers (settled, shuttlers, and migratory) doing farmwork, or the total number of students of seasonal farmworkers (migratory and non-migratory) enrolled in Washington public schools. Data could be collected to find the percentage of seasonal farmworker students enrolled in school districts across the state, which could inform potential funding models.

Other comparative analysis that could be done with more time and data collection include further understanding the causes of attendance problems with students of seasonal farmworkers, the comparative frequency of absences for students of settled, shuttler, and migratory farmworkers, comparative data on dropout rates between MEP students and non-MEP children of seasonal farmworkers, as well as disproportionate discipline rates and attendance rates for these groups. Overall, this study demonstrates the evolving nature of seasonal agricultural work across Washington.

Study Barriers

Student Population Estimates

When asked to estimate the number of children of seasonal farmworkers in their schools who did not qualify for MEP services during the past school year, responses varied significantly.

While the largest group of respondents (42%) reported not knowing this number, the majority (58%) indicated having at least one seasonal farmworker (non-migratory) student in their schools. The distribution of responses shows 26% serving 1–50 students, with smaller percentages serving larger populations: 8% each serving 51–100, 101–250, 251–500, and over five hundred students, respectively. Notably, three respondents (8%) reported serving more than five hundred seasonal farmworker (non-migratory) students, highlighting the substantial number of children of seasonal farmworkers who fall outside MEP eligibility requirements.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

OSPI and Kone Consulting would like to thank and acknowledge the stakeholders who participated in the interviews and survey for sharing their perspectives on the needs and educational experiences of seasonal farmworker students. We also deeply appreciate the seasonal farmworker families we met with and who took part in a focus group for being open to meeting with us and sharing their experiences. Their participation and lived experience were vital to the development of this report. We are also grateful for the organizations that helped us connect with seasonal farmworker families in the community, including the Quincy School District, Community to Community - Mount Vernon, Burlington School District, Educational Service District 123 - Pasco, and EPIC Early Learning - Bridgeport.

We would also like to thank our advisory group members for their time and the guidance they provided throughout this process.

REFERENCES

Adams, J (2024). 2024 Agricultural Seasonal Workforce Services: Legislative Report. Washington State Economic Security Department.

Briar, C., & Miller, M. (2023). The needs of farmworkers in Washington State: Preliminary report. (Document Number 23-12-4101) Olympia: Washington State Institute for Public Policy.

Delgado, D., & Becker Herbst, R. (2018). El Campo: Educational Attainment and Educational Well-Being for Farmworker Children

Economic Research Service (USDA). Farm Labor. Updated June 13, 2025.
<https://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/farm-economy/farm-labor>

Gutierrez, L. (2023). Educación in Our Own Terms: Survivance Amongst Latinx Migrant and Seasonal Farmworkers in K–12 Schools and Beyond

Jasis, P. (2021). Harvesting hope and solidarity: education and organizing with migrant farmworker families

National Agricultural Workers Survey (no date) DOL. Available at:
<https://www.dol.gov/agencies/eta/national-agricultural-workers-survey#:~:text=The%20latest%20reports%20are%20available%20on%20this%20site,were%20conducted%20in%20fiscal%20years%202021%20and%202022>. (Accessed: 05 November 2025).

Schmitt, A.M., Horner, S.L., & Lavery, M.R. (2020). The Impact of Summer Programs on the English Language Scores of Migrant Children

Sizemore, L.L.M. (2023). The Impact of the Migrant Education Program on the Children of Seasonal Farmworkers

Smith, J. (2020). Teachers' perspectives on communication and parent engagement in early childhood education programs for migrant farmworker children

Smith, J. (2019). Voices from the harvest: The role of language, identity, and life experience in the education of young children of migrant farmworkers

Washington | Economic Impact of Agriculture. (2022). Uada.edu. <https://economic-impact-of-ag.uada.edu/washington/>

Washington State Legislature. (2022). Engrossed Substitute Senate Bill 5693: Supplemental Operating Budget. Washington State Legislature

APPENDIX A:

Key Findings

The following section breaks down the study findings based on the data collection method.

Interviews Results

Through semi-formal interviews, Koné learned that the nature of seasonal farmwork in Washington is changing. It is more common now for seasonal farmworker families to establish permanent residency instead of migrating for work. One of the reasons farmworker families aren't migrating is because of the difficulty in finding affordable housing, especially in the Puget Sound region. Once a farmworker family finds an affordable place to live, they don't want to give up their housing, so it's more common now for parents to be "shuttlers" – temporarily leaving the community for seasonal work and leaving their families in the care of older siblings at home. Also, parents believe in the importance of education and don't want their children to have interruptions in their educational experience. Finally, some producers have made investments to improve farmworker conditions, like providing permanent housing and creating full-time positions on their farms, which is more feasible now as farm work becomes more automated, requiring year-round staff to maintain the equipment. The combined impact of these varied factors likely explains why, nationally, 83% of farmworkers are considered settled.

Koné also learned that many children of seasonal farmworkers who don't qualify for MEP support because they are settled demonstrate similar needs for academic and support services as provided to eligible migratory children. Both groups experience prominent levels of poverty, food insecurity, and housing instability. Students often work long hours or take on family responsibilities, impacting their energy, attendance, and school engagement. Study participants shared that a lack of access to healthcare and mental health services is common. Technology access, especially in rural or remote areas, remains a major gap. This creates a barrier for students, as access to technology is often necessary for homework, college applications, and school communication. Finally, language access was included as a continuing issue for students who speak less common Indigenous languages like Mixtec or Mam.

Academic Support Needs

The most common academic support needs reported by interviewees focused on older high school students and early learning pre-k children. Barriers to attendance related to older children due to caregiving for farmworker siblings and the parents who are "shuttlers" create other job or housing changes that lead to frequent absences. Koné also heard about the lack of school readiness, particularly

for young children of seasonal farmworkers, because access to affordable early learning opportunities is limited. Participants stated that both migratory and nonmigratory students are subject to disproportionate discipline rates, often tied to cultural misunderstandings or instability at home. Some school staff described instances where they were able to intervene before inappropriate disciplinary measures were taken against a student. School officials reported that academic performance is generally lower for students of seasonal farmworkers, with students showing slower academic growth due to these barriers.

Challenges with academic performance also affect graduation rates for children of seasonal farmworkers, especially those students whose families still work in agriculture but no longer migrate. Interviewees reported that students of seasonal farm workers who do not qualify for MEP face higher dropout risks due to no longer having access to program supports offered by the MEP. School staff declared a need for more classroom and school support to assist students who do not qualify for MEP. There is a need for additional staff members to provide support in the classroom and within the school (e.g., multilingual paras, student advocates, student graduation specialists, etc.) In addition, staff are spending more time helping families cope with financial struggles (finding affordable housing, food, and medical care), which is important, but takes away from the time they have available to provide academic supports for students.

Focus Group Results

Across all five focus group communities in Washington, farmworker families described being trapped in an economic paradox that directly undermines their children's educational opportunities. Parents consistently report earning just above poverty thresholds, which disqualifies them from financial aid while remaining unable to afford college costs or basic necessities, creating what families call an "income cliff" where working harder actually reduces access to needed support. This economic squeeze intersects with pervasive educational discrimination, as parents across communities described how teachers favor other students over Latino children, assume Latino students will fail, and create systematic barriers for English learners through practices like automatic grade retention and bureaucratic obstacles that delay graduation.

The current immigration enforcement climate has created a mental health emergency that directly disrupts educational outcomes, with students experiencing daily terror about family separation leading to school absences, declining grades, and psychological trauma. Children are prematurely taking on adult responsibilities, worrying about caring for siblings if parents are deported, while living in constant fear. This transforms normal activities like going to school or the grocery store into sources of anxiety. Mount Vernon families provided particularly detailed accounts of children experiencing depression and attempting suicide, while parents across all communities reported schools providing inadequate mental health support for immigration-related trauma.

Perhaps most frustratingly for families, current MEP eligibility requirements create a paradox where achieving housing stability actually removes access to educational support services their children still desperately need. Parents argued that all agricultural worker families have identical educational needs regardless of mobility patterns, calling for additional programs or support services to serve the entire agricultural worker community rather than only those who move frequently. While families who had children enrolled in MEP at some point in time expressed satisfaction with existing Migrant Education services - particularly praising unique opportunities like university exploration programs and flexible early childhood services - they consistently advocated for a program that would focus on agricultural work status rather than mobility requirements.

The voices from these communities paint a picture of essential food producers seeking basic dignity and equal access to educational opportunities for their children. Despite facing systematic barriers, including rapid housing cost increases, technology and communication gaps with schools, and limited career guidance for youth who reject agricultural work. Families emphasized their critical economic contributions while advocating not for special treatment, but for comprehensive, culturally responsive support systems that would allow their children to thrive alongside their peers.

The themes below summarize key findings across all five focus groups:

- **Economic Barriers and the "Income Cliff"** – Families earn just above poverty thresholds, disqualifying them from financial aid while remaining unable to afford college costs or basic necessities, yet needing access to more services for an equitable baseline.
- **Systematic Educational Discrimination** – Teachers and administrators consistently favor other students over Latino students, assume Latino children will fail, and create different disciplinary standards based on race.
- **Immigration Fear Creating Educational Crisis** – Daily terror about family separation is causing widespread school absences, declining grades, and mental health trauma among students who already face barriers with attendance and grade assessment.
- **Program Eligibility Paradoxes** – Families who achieve housing stability lose access to Migrant Education services despite having identical needs.
- **Rejection of Agricultural Work Without Alternatives** – Young people refuse agricultural work due to poverty wages yet face limited alternatives between expensive higher education and undesirable farm labor.
- **Housing Crisis and Community Displacement** – Rapidly rising housing costs are forcing longtime farmworker families out of communities where their children attend school.

- **Mental Health Crisis and Intergenerational Trauma** – The intersection of immigration fear, economic stress, and educational discrimination has created a youth mental health emergency that schools are unprepared to address.
- **Communication Gaps and Technology Barriers** – Schools rely on technology and communication methods that exclude non-English speaking parents and rural communities, creating additional barriers to accessing educational resources.
- **Youth Taking on Adult Responsibilities** – Immigration fears and economic pressures force teenagers to assume adult responsibilities, derailing normal adolescent development and educational focus.
- **Lack of Career Guidance and Future Planning** – Students lack exposure to career possibilities beyond agricultural work and receive inadequate support for post-secondary planning.
- **Calls for Fundamental Program Reform** – Parents consistently urged access to a program to serve all agricultural workers' families, regardless of mobility patterns.
- **Recognition as Essential Workers Seeking Dignity** – Farmworker families emphasized their role as essential food producers who deserve equal access to educational opportunities for their children.

Results by Region

Mount Vernon – Families shared deeply personal accounts of how deportation fears and educational discrimination have created a mental health crisis among their children, with some attempting suicide, while emphasizing their role as essential food producers who deserve basic dignity and support for their children's education.

Quincy – Parents described being trapped in an economic "income cliff" where they earn too much to qualify for financial aid but too little to afford college, while expressing frustration with rising housing costs that threaten their ability to provide stable educational environments for their children.

Burlington – Families articulated the counterproductive nature of current MEP eligibility requirements through the powerful metaphor of constantly uprooted trees, explaining how achieving housing stability paradoxically removes access to the educational support services their children still desperately need.

Pasco – Parents provided explicit accounts of racial discrimination in schools and justice systems while expressing program satisfaction rates, emphasizing the burden placed on oldest children to "save" their

families and requesting additional support services for non-migratory children of seasonal farmworkers to serve more students.

Bridgeport – Families highlighted the success of early childhood programming while exposing severe administrative racism and bureaucratic barriers affecting older students, particularly describing how English learners face automatic grade retention and credit transfer obstacles that delay graduation.

Survey Results

For the list of survey questions, see Appendix C

Koné conducted a survey of staff across the state who provide academic or other support services to seasonal farmworkers and/or their children. A total of 109 survey responses were collected. Of these, 35 were removed from the dataset due to the surveys being incomplete, with 50% or more of the questions left unanswered. After these removals, the final dataset consisted of 74 responses, which form the basis for the analysis.

Education-related services

Survey respondents who serve children of seasonal farmworkers not eligible for the Title I Part C Migrant Education Program (MEP) provide a variety of education-related services. The most offered services included bilingual and multicultural instruction (70%), supplemental academic programs (61%), summer school programs (58%), and academic instruction (58%). Nearly half of the respondents (48%) indicated they also provide student leadership opportunities. Less frequently offered services include internships (9%), while no respondents reported providing instructional training.

Other services and supports

Survey respondents reported providing a range of other services and support for children of seasonal farmworkers who do not qualify for MEP services. The most provided services were behavioral and mental health support alongside access to technology, including internet connectivity, with nearly two-thirds of organizations (64%) offering these resources.

Transportation services and cultural engagement opportunities were also frequently provided, with 61% of respondents indicating their organization offers these supports. Half of the respondents (48%) selected healthcare services. Housing support was less commonly selected, with 21% of respondents selecting this option.

While the staff survey indicated a variety of opportunities were available to students and families, parents noted these services and resources as lacking or limited. This could be due to limited information shared with students and families regarding the services available to students.

Core Questions

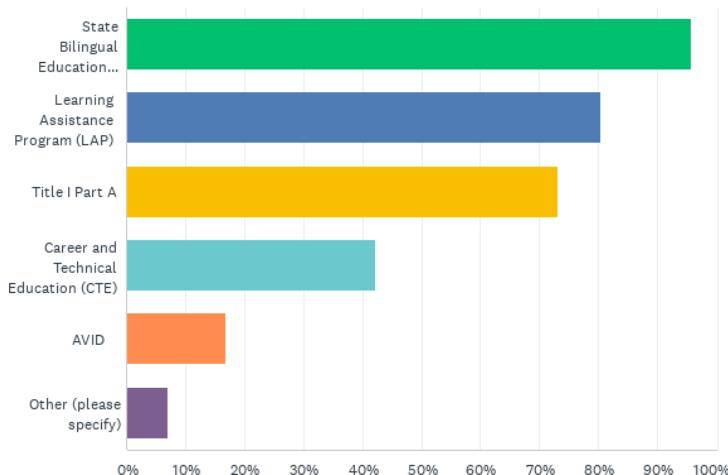
The following is a summary of survey data collected from all staff who serve seasonal farmworker children (MEP and non-MEP eligible).

Co-enrollments

The survey asked all respondents to share which program children of seasonal farmworkers are most likely to be co-enrolled. The most common program selected was the State Bilingual Education Program (96%). The Learning Assistance Program (LAP) was selected by 80% of respondents, Title I Part A was selected by 73%, and Career and Technical Education (CTE) was selected by 42%. AVID was the least selected co-enrollment, with only 17% of respondents selecting this option. 5 respondents selected other - write-in responses of other co-enrollments include FFA Juntos, GEAR UP, 21st Century, College in the High School, and McKinney Vento.

Figure 4: Survey Results of Co-Enrolled Programs for Children of Seasonal Farmworkers 2025

Q12 Which programs are children of seasonal farmworkers most likely to be co-enrolled in?
Select all that apply.



System-level needs

- **Changing nature of seasonal farmwork.** Seasonal farmworkers are increasingly choosing to settle permanently in communities rather than migrate.
- **Expanding educational pathways.** Students of seasonal farmworkers face limited awareness of

career and educational opportunities beyond agriculture, requiring expanded outreach and guidance.

- **Funding sustainability challenges.** Reduced full-time equivalent (FTE) positions create a cycle where fewer service providers lead to decreased funding, which further limits staffing capacity.

Operational level needs

- Need for **more academic support**, including attendance support, school readiness programs, tutoring, and additional classroom support staff.
- Need for **cultural competency training for teachers and staff** to build understanding of farmworker family lifestyles and the impact on attendance and engagement.
- Need to **create a program** to serve *all* children of seasonal farmworkers, not just migratory students.
- Enhance **communication** with parents and advocacy for students.
- Improve **outreach, awareness, and build trusting relationships** between families, graduation specialists, and student advocates.

Student level needs

- **Dual language** curriculum and programming to support bilingual learners.
- **Career exploration** programs that connect students to diverse pathways.
- **Transportation** for after-school activities, field trips, summer school, and other enrichment programs.
- **Tutoring and academic support.**
- **Mental health support** and healthcare access, particularly important as farmworker communities face increased targeting and stress.
- **Financial aid** guidance and scholarship support.
- **Technical assistance** with applications and **technology support**.
- **Housing support**, as seasonal farmworker families often face overcrowded conditions due to high living costs.

APPENDIX B:

Interview Protocol

WA OSPI – Students of Seasonal Farmworker Needs Assessment Interview Protocol

Introduction:

Thank you for your willingness to be interviewed today. Koné Consulting has been hired by the WA State Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) to conduct a study on the factors affecting opportunities for children of seasonal farmworkers. This study focuses on **school access, performance, and post-secondary opportunities**, as part of a legislative mandate (ESSB 5950) and in collaboration with the WA Department of Agriculture and L&I.

Unlike the children of migratory agricultural workers and fishers¹⁵, who may qualify to receive supplemental academic and other support services funded by federal grant dollars (through Title I, Part C, Education of Migratory Children), the children of *nonmigratory* seasonal farmworkers may not have access to additional resources or supports even though they may have similar experiences as migratory children or recently settled out of a migratory lifestyle within the last 36 months. Our interview with you today is to better understand your perspective on the needs of the children of seasonal farmworkers who *do not* migrate.

We are beginning our work by conducting interviews to hear a variety of perspectives on the current state of services. My name is [interviewer name] and I will be conducting the interview today. Also, with us is [note taker name] who will be taking notes. The interview will take roughly 30 minutes to complete. Do you have a hard stop time that we should be aware of?

We have a list of prepared questions we will be asking today, and we will be taking notes, but these notes will not be shared with OSPI and nothing you say will be attributed to you by name in our report. If there is something sensitive about which you want us to take extra care in how the information is used, just let us know.

Do you have any questions for us before we begin?

¹⁵ Oki tcwqt {"ej kf "o gcpu"c"ej kf "qt" {qwj "y j q"o c f g"c"s wc nkh{ki "o qxg"lp"y j g"r tgegf kpi "58"o qpvj u"cu"c" o ki tcwqt {"ci tlewnwtcnly qtngt"qt"c"o ki tcwqt {"duj gt="qt"y kqj ."qt"q"lqlp."c"r ctgpv"qt"ur qwug"y j q"ku"c"o ki tcwqt {"ci tlewnwtcnly qtngt"qt"c"o ki tcwqt {"duj gt0

Introductions & Organizational Background

1. **Organizational Background:** Please tell us a little more about what your organization does, and how that relates to seasonal farmworkers and/or their children.
2. Do you serve the entire state or a specific geographic area?
3. Are there specific subpopulations that you focus on in service provision? (Specific countries of origin, or type of farmwork, etc.)
4. How many people (farmworkers or their children) would you say you serve?

Definition of “Child of a Seasonal Farmworker”: For the purposes of this study, we are establishing a definition of a child of a seasonal farmworker. Does your organization/agency have a working definition, and if so, what is it?

Factors that Impact Children of Seasonal Farmworkers Compared to Migratory Students

We are examining the factors that impact nonmigratory children of seasonal farmworkers, like those that impact migratory students. First, it would be helpful to understand your perspective on **migratory students**.

5. How does your organization/agency/school provide services or refer migratory students to services?
6. In your experience, how does being a migratory student impact:
7. School and program access?
8. How about school readiness?
9. How about school performance, like attendance, grade promotion and retention?

10. How about performance on state assessments, academic growth, and graduation rates?
11. How about school discipline rates?
12. How do the needs of migratory students impact the ideal teacher qualifications and years of experience?
13. What about migratory students who no longer qualify because their families have settled into a community? Is this something you have observed, and if so, how do their needs change (or not)?
14. What are you noticing in areas that are transitioning away from agriculture- is there an industry for students to transition into, and how is that working

Next, we'd like to understand how you see the needs of the **children of seasonal farmworkers that *don't migrate* and how that compares to migratory students.**

15. Does your organization/agency/school also provide services or refer the children of seasonal farmworkers to services?
16. In your experience, how is being a child of a seasonal farmworker that *doesn't migrate* compared to migratory students related to:
17. School and program access?
18. How about school readiness?
19. How about school performance, like attendance, grade promotion and retention?
20. How about performance on state assessments, academic growth, and graduation rates?
21. How about school discipline rates?

Recommendations on Programs and Program Access

22. Do you know the extent to which either the children of seasonal farmworkers or migratory students receive the services they need?

23. Are there needs or gaps related to programs that address:

- Poverty (Socioeconomic status)?
- Limited English proficiency?
- Limited family engagement with schools?
- Limited access to health support & nutritious meals?
- Technology supports in the home and community, especially in rural and remote locations?

24. Have the recent federal administration changes on immigration and the Dept of Ed impacted the needs of communities and/or their willingness to access and apply for educational services?

25. What suggestions do you have to improve programs or program access?

Closing

26. We are seeking existing data about the needs of the children of seasonal farmworkers. Do you have, or are you aware of, existing reports or data sources that could help us better understand these needs?

27. Whom else would you recommend we interview as an important stakeholder?

28. As a part of this study, we want to speak directly with seasonal farmworkers about the needs of the children in their care. Could your organization/agency/school help us connect in a way that protects the privacy and safety of the families?

29. We will also be conducting a survey and will need assistance getting the word out about it and encouraging people to fill it out. Is that something you can help us with?

30. Anything else you'd like us to know?

APPENDIX C:

Focus Group Protocol

WA OSPI – Students of Seasonal Farmworker Needs Assessment Focus Group Protocol

Opening Statement

- Welcome! We appreciate you coming here today to discuss your thoughts on the factors impacting opportunities for children of seasonal farmworkers.
- Koné Consulting has been hired by the WA State Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) to conduct a study that focuses on **school access, performance, and postsecondary opportunities**, as part of a legislative mandate (ESSB 5950) and in collaboration with the WA Department of Agriculture and L&I.
- Unlike the children of migratory agricultural workers, who may qualify to receive supplemental academic and other support services funded by federal grant dollars, the children of *nonmigratory* seasonal farmworkers may not have access to additional resources or supports even though they may have similar experiences as migratory children or recently settled out of a migratory lifestyle.
- Our focus group with you today is to better understand your perspective on the needs of the children of seasonal farmworkers who **do not** migrate.
- My name is [facilitator name] and I will be leading the focus group today. Also, with us is [note taker name] who will be taking notes. This discussion will last for 90 minutes.
- We have a list of prepared questions we will be asking the group today. We will be recording this session so we can review the conversation later. Some of what you say may be quoted in our final report, but nothing you say will be attributed to you by name and you all will remain anonymous.
- Can everyone give us a verbal agreement that you're comfortable with us recording today?
- Does anyone have any questions before we begin?

Group Agreements

Great, let's get started with the focus group discussion. We have a few group agreements that will help make this a productive conversation.

- What is said here, stays here.
- Be respectful of each other's opinions.

- Expect and accept a lack of closure.
- Offer what you can. Ask for what you need.

Brief Data Share

We've been conducting interviews with folks at the schools and community organizations and now we would love to hear from families directly. Here are a few things we've learned from the interviews...

- More farmworker families are staying in place instead of migrating.
- Nonmigratory children of farmworkers lose eligibility to the Migrant Education Program (MEP), despite having similar needs.
- Students in farmworker families often work long hours or take on family responsibilities, impacting their energy, attendance, and school engagement.
- They also experience limited access to healthcare services.
- Technology access remains a major gap.

Migration and instability (job/housing changes) lead to frequent absences and disproportionate discipline for these students.

MEP Eligibility & Definition

Under the Title I Part C, Migrant Education Program (MEP), a child qualifies as migratory if they are under 21 years old and eligible for free public education. They must have moved within the past 36 months due to economic necessity, either as a migratory agricultural worker, or to join a parent, guardian, or spouse in such work. The move must involve a change in residence and school district, a shift between administrative areas in a single-district state, or a migration of at least 20 miles to a temporary residence in large school districts. This means some students of seasonal farmworkers will not qualify if their family has settled into a community. Let's talk about this eligibility requirement...

- Are you familiar with this definition?
- In your experience, what usually happens when a child no longer qualifies for the Migrant Education Program?
- How might a student's needs change once they are more settled in a community?

Recommendations on Programs and Access

In your opinion, has your child been able to receive the services they need?

If your child participated in the MEP program, what was the most useful support they received?

What would help improve programs to address needs related to...

- Socioeconomic status?
- English language learning?
- Family engagement with schools?
- Access to health supports & nutritious meals?
- Technology supports in the home and community, especially in rural and remote locations?

Do you have any other suggestions to improve programs?

APPENDIX D:

Survey (Alchemer)

Welcome!

What is the purpose of this survey?

OSPI is conducting a study on the factors affecting opportunities for children of seasonal farmworkers, with a focus on school access, performance, and postsecondary opportunities. This study reflects the needed supports for children of seasonal farmworkers (migratory and non-migratory, with an emphasis on non-migratory).

How long will it take?

The survey will take roughly 10–15 minutes to complete.

What will happen with my responses?

Your participation is voluntary, and all responses will be kept confidential. Your name is not connected to your responses. You are free to stop at any time during the survey. Information from this survey will help inform the OSPI Seasonal Farmworker Study, which will be shared with the state legislature.

Thank you for taking the time to share your thoughts and experiences with us.

Survey Questions

1. Does your organization provide academic or other support services to children of seasonal farmworkers?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. Unsure
2. Does your organization provide academic or other support services to children of seasonal farmworkers who *no longer migrate* and *do not* qualify for the Migrant Education Program?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. Unsure

Services for Children of Seasonal Farmworkers Who Do Not Migrate

3. What types of education-related services and supports do you provide for children of seasonal farmworkers who are not eligible for the MEP? Select all that apply.
 - a. Supplemental academic programs to assist in the achievement of state academic standards
 - b. Bilingual and multicultural instruction
 - c. Academic instruction
 - d. Instructional training
 - e. Preschool/kindergarten readiness programs
 - f. Family home visiting and academic counseling services
 - g. Parental involvement, including language supports
 - h. Student leadership opportunities
 - i. Summer school programs
 - j. Secondary credit accrual
 - k. Grants for supplemental secondary services, dropout prevention and retrieval, and alternative education programs
 - l. Dissemination of information
 - m. Financial aid assistance for post-secondary education
 - n. Access to supports for post-secondary planning
 - o. Personal, academic, and career counseling
 - p. Tutoring and academic skills building instruction and assistance
 - q. Internships
4. What other services and supports do you provide for children of seasonal farmworkers who are not eligible for the Migrant Education Program (MEP)? Select all that apply.
 - a. Healthcare services
 - b. Behavioral and mental health support
 - c. Transportation
 - d. Housing support
 - e. Access to technology, including internet
 - f. Other (Please Specify)
5. What Languages are your services provided in?
 - a. English
 - b. Mandarin
 - c. Russian
 - d. Somali
 - e. Spanish
 - f. Vietnamese
 - g. Other (please specify)
6. In the past school year, approximately how many children of seasonal farmworkers in your school(s) did *not* qualify for the MEP?
 - a. 1–50

- b. 51–100
- c. 101–250
- d. 251–500
- e. 501+
- f. Unknown

About Your Organization

7. What position in your organization (OSPI, ESD, or local school district) do you represent?

- a. School Administrator
- b. Program Director/Coordinator
- c. Academic Support (Certified)
- d. Academic Support (Classified)
- e. Non-classroom support e.g., Graduation Specialist or Advocate, Health
- f. Recruiter for MEP-eligible students
- g. Other (please specify)

8. In which county or counties does your organization provide services to the children of seasonal farmworkers?

Adams County	Asotin County	Benton County	Chelan County	Clallam County	Clark County	Columbia County
Cowlitz County	Douglas County	Ferry County	Franklin County	Garfield County	Grant County	Grays Harbor County
Island County	Jefferson County	King County	Kitsap County	Kittitas County	Klickitat County	Lewis County
Lincoln County	Mason County	Okanogan County	Pacific County	Pend Oreille County	Pierce County	San Juan County
Skagit County	Skamania County	Snohomish County	Spokane County	Stevens County	Thurston County	Wahkiakum County

Walla Walla County	Whatcom County	Whitman County	Yakima County			
--------------------	----------------	----------------	---------------	--	--	--

9. Which populations does your organization work with? Select all that apply.

- a. Parents and families of nonmigratory seasonal farmworkers
- b. Children of nonmigratory seasonal farmworkers
- c. Parents and families of migratory seasonal farmworkers
- d. Children of migratory seasonal farmworkers
- e. All the above
- f. Other (please specify)

Program Needs and Access for Children of Seasonal Farmworkers

10. Please indicate to what extent you agree with the following proposed definition:

A "Child of a Seasonal Farmworker" is a person under 21 years of age who is eligible for free public education and is the dependent of at least one parent, guardian, or spouse whose principal employment is in non-supervisory, non-farm-owning agricultural work for at least part of the year.

- a. Strongly agree
- b. Agree
- c. Neutral
- d. Disagree
- e. Strongly disagree

11. What changes would you make to the definition above, if any: [Text Box]

12. Which programs are children of seasonal farmworkers most likely to be co-enrolled in? Select all that apply.

- a. Title I Part A
- b. Learning Assistance Program (LAP)
- c. State Bilingual Education Program
- d. AVID
- e. Career and Technical Education (CTE)
- f. Other _____

13. Which of the following education-related supports do children of seasonal farmworkers need? Select all that apply.

Category
Supplemental academic programs to assist in the achievement of state academic standards
Bilingual and multicultural instruction
Academic instruction
Instructional training
Preschool/kindergarten readiness programs
Family home visiting and academic counseling services
Parent involvement, including language supports
Student leadership opportunities
Summer school programs
Secondary credit accrual
Grants for supplemental secondary services, dropout prevention and retrieval, and alternative education programs
Dissemination of information
Financial aid assistance for post-secondary education
Access to supports for post-secondary planning
Personal, academic, and career counseling
Tutoring and academic skill-building instruction and assistance

Internships

14. What other supports do children of seasonal farmworkers need?

Category
Healthcare services
Behavioral and mental health supports
Transportation
Housing support
Access to technology, including internet
Opportunities to engage in cultural events and activities
Other (please specify)

15. What specific program improvements would you recommend to better support children of seasonal farmworkers? [Open-ended response]

16. What opportunities are available for students of seasonal farmworkers who are interested in transitioning out of the agricultural sector? [open-ended response]

17. Please indicate to what extent you agree with the following statement:

The State of Washington should provide additional funds to support children of seasonal farmworkers who do not migrate.

- a. Strongly agree
- b. Agree
- c. Neutral
- d. Disagree
- e. Strongly disagree

18. If the state were to provide additional funds to support the academic and other needs of children of seasonal farmworker families, how would your organization use the funds? (open-ended response)

19. Please share any additional insights or comments about the educational experiences of children of seasonal farmworkers. [Large text field]

Thank you for your time and expertise in completing this survey!

APPENDIX D:

Annotated Bibliography

Adams, J (2024). 2024 Agricultural Seasonal Workforce Services: Legislative Report. Washington State Economic Security Department. This biennial report, published by the Washington Employment Security Department (ESD), provides an analysis of the state's agricultural labor force, with a focus on the H-2A foreign labor program. It outlines the responsibilities of the Agricultural Seasonal Workforce Services (ASWS) division, including processing H-2A applications, conducting field checks, and improving domestic farmworker recruitment. Between 2023 and 2024, Washington saw a record number of H-2A foreign worker requests, ranking fourth nationally as of March 2024. In collaboration with the U.S. Department of Labor, ASWS hosted a major Employer Roundtable in Pasco to provide updates and compliance guidance. While a 2022 state audit confirmed compliance with federal H-2A standards, a 2023 federal review identified a few issues, all of which have since been addressed. The ASWS Committee recommends improving referral tracking, communication tools, and language access. Despite rising demands, program funding has remained flat, prompting Employment Security to request additional resources to enhance ASWS operations and domestic farmworker recruitment.

Briar, C., & Miller, M. (2023). *The needs of farmworkers in Washington State: Preliminary report. (Document Number 23-12-4101)* Olympia: Washington State Institute for Public Policy. The *Needs of Farmworkers in Washington State Preliminary Report* defines farmworkers as non-supervisory individuals employed in agriculture, including crop and livestock production and food packing. Migrant seasonal farmworkers often travel to meet changing labor demands.

Washington's agricultural sector employed over 113,000 farmworkers in 2022, particularly in counties like Yakima, Grant, and Chelan, and leads the nation in producing crops such as apples and hops. Unlike many states, Washington provides legal protections for farmworkers, including rights to collective bargaining and overtime pay. However, workers still face significant challenges such as high injury rates, exposure to hazardous conditions, wage theft, discrimination, and barriers to housing, healthcare, and food security. In response, the Washington State Institute for Public Policy is partnering with Latino-led organizations to conduct a 2024 statewide survey of at least 200 farmworkers to gather data on working conditions, health, and access to services. Findings and policy recommendations will be published in a final report in June 2025.

Delgado, D., & Becker Herbst, R. (2018). *El Campo: Educational Attainment and Educational Well-Being for Farmworker Children*: This community-based participatory research study explored the educational well-being of Latino/a youth from farmworker families in South Florida. Using focus groups with farmworker children (n=18), parents (n=12), and educational service providers (n=8), researchers identified six themes affecting educational outcomes: migration experiences, community

resilience, education as "mi futuro" (my future), barriers to educational attainment ("estudiar en vano"), challenges navigating the school system, and desire to "seguir adelante" (move forward) beyond agricultural labor. Applying a social ecological framework, the researchers highlighted how factors at individual, interpersonal, institutional, community/society, and policy levels interact to impact educational well-being. The study found that while parents and youth highly value education, they face significant barriers including parents' limited English proficiency, immigration status concerns, long work hours, and structural inequities. Recommendations include culturally responsive support services, redefined parental involvement approaches, strengthened school-family partnerships, and policy reforms to enhance educational opportunities for this marginalized population.

Economic Research Service (USDA). Farm Labor. Updated June 13, 2025.

<https://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/farm-economy/farm-labor> The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Economic Research Service's Farm Labor page provides an in-depth overview of the U.S. hired farm workforce, detailing long-term trends, demographics, wages, and labor programs. It explains how mechanization reduced the need for labor from 1950 to 1990, with employment stabilizing in recent decades. Most hired farmworkers are foreign-born, largely from Mexico and Central America, with an aging workforce and increasing share of women. Real wages have steadily risen, though they remain below non-farm averages. Labor accounts for about 10% of gross farm income, with higher shares in labor-intensive crops. The page also covers the growing use of the H-2A guest worker program—now supplying over 300,000 temporary visas annually—and the role of wage regulations like the Adverse Effect Wage Rate. Migration patterns have shifted, with most workers now settled rather than migratory. The summary is based on a wide range of federal data sources, making it a valuable reference for understanding agricultural labor dynamics in the U.S.

Gutierrez, L. (2023). Educaci6n in Our Own Terms: Survivance Amongst Latinx Migrant and Seasonal Farmworkers in K-12 Schools and Beyond: This ethnographic study examines how Latinx migrant and seasonal farmworker (MSFW) students engage in "survivance" — active presence and resistance — when transitioning from traditional K-12 schools to High School Equivalency Programs (HEP). Using interviews and observations with six MSFW students in a Midwest HEP program pursuing their GED, the researcher challenges the deficit narrative of "dropping out" and instead reveals how students strategically "opt out" of inequitable K-12 environments. Drawing on San Pedro's Environmental and Internal Safety Zone theory and Vizenor's concept of Survivance, the study demonstrates how participants faced significant barriers in K-12 schools, including credit transfer difficulties, low teacher expectations, and lack of cultural affirmation. The findings show that pursuing a GED through HEP represented a collective form of resistance, supported by family networks and aspirations for better futures beyond agricultural labor. The author reframes MSFW students' educational decisions as active agency rather than failure, arguing they were "pushed to drop in" to more meaningful education on their own terms when K-12 schools failed to provide a supportive and affirming environment.

Jasis, P. (2021). Harvesting hope and solidarity: education and organizing with migrant

farmworker families: This ethnographic study examines how Mexican and Mexican American migrant farmworker parents in Southern California advocate for their children's education.

Through interviews and observations of parent meetings, Jasis explores what motivates these parents to become educational activists despite challenging circumstances including poverty, language barriers, and social marginalization. The study reveals how these parents develop solidarity networks to support each other, share information about educational rights, and collectively engage with schools. Their activism is driven by a strong belief in education as a path out of poverty and a deep commitment to helping not just their own children, but all migrant children succeed academically. The research highlights the importance of creating equitable school-family partnerships and recognizing migrant families' cultural capital as assets rather than deficits. Jasis concludes that schools must take proactive steps to engage migrant parents, including implementing early identification of migrant students, creating migrant parent councils, and providing professional development for school personnel about migrant communities.

Schmitt, A.M., Horner, S.L., & Lavery, M.R. (2020). The Impact of Summer Programs on the

English Language Scores of Migrant Children: This study investigates whether summer Migrant Education Programs (MEPs) in Northwest Ohio prevent English language learning loss among K-4 Latinx migrant students. Using a quasi-experimental design with 246 students, researchers found significant gains in both conversational and academic English proficiency rather than the expected summer decline. While program effectiveness varied by school site, benefits were consistent across grade levels, contradicting the "Faucet Theory" of summer learning loss for disadvantaged students. The findings provide empirical support for continued funding of MEPs, demonstrating their value in supporting educational continuity for children of migrant farmworkers.

Sizemore, L.L.M. (2023). The Impact of the Migrant Education Program on the Children of

Seasonal Farmworkers: This capstone study examines the effectiveness of the Migrant Education Program (MEP) in supporting the educational needs of children from migrant farmworker families in Monterey County, California. Through literature review and interviews with teachers and county education officials, Sizemore investigates how MEP services impact academic achievement and social development. The research highlights several key issues: communication gaps between MEP staff and classroom teachers, program implementation challenges due to budget constraints, and variations in service delivery across schools. While the MEP theoretically offers comprehensive supplemental services including tutoring, summer programs, and college preparation, the author found that staffing limitations and resource constraints often prevent the program from fulfilling its potential. The study concludes that despite these challenges, the MEP remains vital for addressing educational inequities faced by migrant students, and recommends improved coordination between schools and MEP staff, better tracking of service implementation, and increased awareness among teachers about available resources.

Smith, J. (2020). Teachers' perspectives on communication and parent engagement in early childhood education programs for migrant farmworker children: This article examines communication practices between teachers and migrant farmworker families in Head Start programs in the Great Lakes region. Through qualitative interviews and focus groups with teachers, it explores how shared language and cultural understanding facilitate stronger connections with families. The study highlights the challenges English-only teachers face, the limitations of relying on interpreters, and the effectiveness of face-to-face communication. Smith identifies strategies such as field visits and flexible scheduling that help teachers overcome barriers to parent engagement, emphasizing the importance of bilingual staff in building trust with migrant communities.

Smith, J. (2019). Voices from the harvest: The role of language, identity, and life experience in the education of young children of migrant farmworkers: This ethnographic case study examines how beliefs, identity, and family experiences contribute to the early education of children from Mexican migrant farmworker families in the Great Lakes region.

Through interviews with three family members (a father, grandmother, and mother) whose children attended Migrant and Seasonal Head Start programs, the researcher identified four key themes: the critical importance of Spanish language maintenance for cultural identity, the value of "responsibility" in child-rearing, the use of parents' labor experiences as educational motivation, and the view of education as a path to upward mobility. Parents positioned themselves as "first teachers" while valuing bilingualism for both cultural preservation and practical opportunity. The study addresses significant research gaps regarding migrant farmworker families with young children and recommends that educators incorporate families' cultural values and knowledge when developing educational approaches. This research contributes to a broader understanding of how non-dominant communities engage with formal education systems.

Washington State Legislature. (2022). *Engrossed Substitute Senate Bill 5693: Supplemental Operating Budget*. Washington State Legislature: Engrossed Substitute Senate Bill 5693 provides funding for various state programs, including oversight and enforcement related to seasonal farmworkers. The bill allocates resources to the Washington Department of Labor and Industries (L&I) to investigate and enforce wage and hour laws, workplace safety standards, and protections against harassment, discrimination, and retaliation for farmworkers. Additionally, the budget supports audits assessing L&I's effectiveness in administering these programs, ensuring compliance with labor laws, and improving service delivery. These provisions aim to enhance labor protections for seasonal farmworkers and strengthen the enforcement mechanisms safeguarding their rights.

LEGAL NOTICE



Except where otherwise noted, this work by the [Washington Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction](#) is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution License](#). All logos and trademarks are property of their respective owners. Sections used under fair use doctrine (17 U.S.C. § 107) are marked.

OSPI provides equal access to all programs and services without discrimination based on sex, race, creed, religion, color, national origin, age, honorably discharged veteran or military status, sexual orientation including gender expression or identity, the presence of any sensory, mental, or physical disability, or the use of a trained dog guide or service animal by a person with a disability. Questions and complaints of alleged discrimination should be directed to the Equity and Civil Rights Director at 360-725-6162 or P.O. Box 47200, Olympia, WA 98504-7200.

Download this material in PDF at [OSPI Reports to the Legislature web page](#). This material is available in an alternative format upon request.



Washington Office of Superintendent of
PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

Chris Reykdal | State Superintendent
Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction
Old Capitol Building | P.O. Box 47200
Olympia, WA 98504-7200