

SECTION 2

Tutors and Tutoring

Currently there are approximately five thousand migrant English language learners (ages 3 – 21) receiving services from the NYS Migrant Education Program. Although Migrant Education Outreach Programs provide varied services throughout the state, every program provides one-on-one tutoring.

There is overwhelming research illustrating the benefits of one-on-one tutoring in improving students' grades, study skills, and confidence levels (Hartzog, 2007.) For school age children and youth, research indicates that one-on-one tutoring may be the most effective after-school activity for improving academic achievement (Southwest Educational Development Laboratory.) Adults who had no opportunity to attend school, or who left school early, often succeed in one-on-one instruction (Siedow, 2005.) There are two methods of tutoring:

- **Strategic tutoring** – Where students are not only prepped for assignments, quizzes, and tests but are also taught how to master the learning strategies for the particular subject. Tutors focus on the importance of students becoming independent, life-long learners.
- **Assignment-based tutoring** – Where students are given assistance with specific work or homework assignments assigned by their teacher.

Although many of the MEOP tutors serving English language learners are bilingual and bicultural, many are not. “Ninety percent of U.S. public school teachers are white; most grew up and attended school in middle class, English-speaking, predominantly white communities and received their teacher preparation in predominantly white colleges and universities” (Gay, Dingus and Jackson, 2003 and Berube, 2000.) Howard notes in his recent

article, *As Diversity Grows So Must We*, that all educators regardless of their race or ethnicity need to develop cultural competence, which he defines as “the ability to form authentic and meaningful relationships across differences” (2007).

Funds of Knowledge – Activating Prior Knowledge

Many tutoring sessions are held in the students' homes. This is an important opportunity for tutors to better understand their students and their families, and to build authentic and meaningful relationships. Instructional practices can be developed, transformed, and enriched by drawing upon the existing funds of knowledge in minority students' households.

“Funds of knowledge” (Moll, Amanti, Neff and Gonzalez, 1992) refer to those historically developed and accumulated strategies (e.g. skills, abilities, ideas, practices) or bodies of knowledge that are essential to a household's function and well-being. In migrant families obvious funds of knowledge include farming, animal husbandry, construction, trade, business, and other languages and cultures. By recognizing these funds of knowledge, tutors are able to link instruction to children's prior knowledge, support the development of a positive attitude toward learning, and create a strong bond between the home and school.

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Caring Adults

In 2003, the NYS Migrant Youth Program designed and implemented a study titled "Perceptions of Why Migrant Students Drop Out of School and What Can Be Done to Encourage Them to Graduate." One of its findings indicated that students identified "the need for a caring adult to be of major importance in encouraging them to stay in school and graduate."

Sanacore (1998) has also surveyed the research on the positive relationship between caring adults and children's literacy learning, saying that "caring adults seem to be the most important factor for helping young people rise above their at-risk environment and lead successful lives."

Maeroff (1998) suggests four ways of building support for students:

- **Sense of connectedness** – providing them with a sense of connectedness helps students to be successful because they gain a feeling of belonging to an academic enterprise, brought about when support systems are developed to help students navigate systems and obstacles. This feeling is strengthened when schools establish bonds with the community, neighborhood, and home.
- **Sense of well-being** – usually involves having access to a wide range of services and activities including medical, dental, psychological, tutorial, mentoring, and after-school recreation. It is especially important in impoverished families and neighborhoods.

- **Sense of academic initiative** – an essential factor in educational success and a formidable challenge, especially in neighborhoods where academic achievement seems unrelated to young peoples' lifestyles. Students benefit from a variety of factors, including high expectations, self-discipline related to good study habits, persistence, and authentic and meaningful instruction.
- **Sense of knowing** – helps establish a sturdy foundation for achieving further intellectual outcomes: "Those who know have a firmer basis for knowing more."

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Stages of Uprooting

Christine Igoa describes stages of uprooting that immigrant children go through in “The Inner World of the Immigrant Child.” Through her observations and experiences she illustrates the depth and range of emotions that are the source of many of the behaviors that we also observe in migrant children. As a result of high mobility, migrant English language learners may experience the phenomena of uprooting to an even higher degree than the immigrant children she describes in her book.

The stages of uprooting are: mixed emotions, excitement or fear in the adventure/journey, curiosity, culture shock: depression and confusion, silent stage and assimilation or acculturation. Not all immigrants experience each stage though Igoa has found that all of her students go through the silent stage. She describes it as the stage when children experience the school culture as different from their own and when their inability to communicate with peers is caused by language or cultural differences. She regards the silent stage as a period of incubation during which the child must be provided with a warm and nurturing environment that makes it safe for him or her to eventually break out of the shell. This stage is experienced by immigrants of all ages. Migrant tutors and outreach workers are well positioned to support their students through this phase.



Summary

In summary, one-on-one tutoring provided by caring adults, who thoughtfully and strategically provide educational services to migrant English language learners, is grounded in current research. This research consistently demonstrates the effectiveness of one-on-one tutoring and the importance of caring adults for facilitating literacy development and academic success.

