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Beneficial Approaches to Working With Migrant Students

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Concordia University–Portland

College of Education

Doctorate of Education Program

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Beneficial Approaches to Working With Migrant Students

Pete Cade

Concordia University–Portland

College of Education

Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the College of Education

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Education in

Higher Education

Edward Kim, Ph.D., Faculty Chair Dissertation Committee

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Concordia University–Portland

2019

Abstract

The migrant student population in the United States continues to rise. This increase in numbers places this unique group of students in thousands of classrooms across the country. Their mobility rates can significantly increase the number of classrooms affected and the number of teachers who must understand their plight. This single qualitative case study explored migrant students' academic experience, for the purpose of establishing best practices for the educational system to best support them. Using Maslow's hierarchy of needs and multicultural education as the theoretical framework, the researcher analyzed the perceptions of effective practices from twelve college-educated professionals who were once migrant students as well as six of their former teachers. Four major themes surfaced after semistructured interviews with all participants: working to understand the migrant student lifestyle is necessary; individualized and supplemental instruction works to close learning gaps; experiences that motivate gains and celebrate milestones are essential to success; and utilizing all resources available, including parental involvement, is key to success. Implications of these findings for future study are discussed.

Keywords: migrant education, multicultural education, learning gaps, equity pedagogy, marginalization, individualized instruction, supplemental instruction

Dedication

Praising God for his abundant blessings is forever an honor. This process has been strenuous, lengthy, and sometimes seemed impossible, but His faith in me always prevails. My wife, who has been my biggest supporter, deserves so many accolades for enduring my emotional imbalances throughout the last 4 years. My work on this meant sacrifices on her behalf and for that I am eternally grateful. For my children, I hope that witnessing my endurance, even when things looked bleak, motivates both of you to do more and be more. The sky is the limit!

I dedicate this achievement to my mother Ramona. At the start of this journey, your battle with Alzheimer's was just starting to reveal mild symptoms of dementia. Now, in its much more aggressive stage, while you may not remember me, I will forever hold our memories in my heart. As my first teacher, you have always been my inspiration. To my dad, mom's number one caretaker, thank you for teaching me grit and the value of hard work. Throughout this study, I was subjected to hundreds of flashbacks from our days of migrant farmwork. While reminiscing of the long summer days, toiling in the hot fields is never pleasant, I am reminded of why I focused on my education in order to break the cycle of our struggles.

Lastly, I wish to dedicate this research to the countless migrant families who work diligently to provide for themselves in order to live the American dream. The work that you do is noble and should never be belittled. Migrant children are capable children and we must all work together to ensure that they always feel important and talented enough to defy all of the odds. *¡Si se puede!*

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Reflecting on the amount of time, energy and work put into this dissertation, it is crucial that I recognize those who assisted along the way. First, a sincere and heartfelt thank you to Dr. Edward Kim for his guidance, expertise, and patience. I was not always the easiest to steer, and I appreciate you sticking it out with me.

I also have great love for the student participants who agreed to be interviewed. Thank you for sharing your stories and experiences. Congratulations to each of you for always looking forward and keeping your eyes on the prize. Much appreciation to the teacher participants as well. Your dedication to leave no child behind is powerful in so many ways. Lastly, I wish to acknowledge Mr. Juan Medina for connecting me with many of the student participants. Your work with the migrant community is respected.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Since the 1990s, survey numbers have cited immigrants as making up 5% of the United States population. The figures more than doubled to 11% by the early 2000's. Statistics from 2014 indicated that U.S. migrant population was 13% (Migration Policy Institute, 2014). Coupled with this rise in immigration was the rise in the number of American-born children with immigrant parents. A 2005 report indicated 25% of all children in the United States lived in immigrant families (Hernandez, Denton, & Macartney, 2008).

As migrants enter the United States, their limited English skills lead many to agricultural farm work that follows the crop seasons across the country. Most migrant children live below the poverty line, with incomes of less than \$10,000 annually (U.S. Department of Labor, 2010). The erratic enrollments of migrant students into U.S. schools makes it difficult to pinpoint specific practices to best support them academically. A large-scale study conducted by the U.S. Department of Education (U.S. DOE; 2002) found that principals and teachers held these students to low expectations, which mirrored the students' poor performance.

Established by the U.S. DOE in 1966, the Migrant Education program has spearheaded efforts to meet the educational and social needs of the unique migrant student population (U.S. DOE, 2017). As a result of the students' experiences and lack of stability, they need extra support and attention to be successful in the classroom (Free & Križ, 2015). Furthermore, these students arrive on unfamiliar campuses where their cultural differences forfend assimilation and attract discrimination and xenophobia. When these students begin to see themselves as outcasts and in the midst of an obvious achievement gap, some students decide to drop out of school (Free, Križ, & Konecnik, 2014). Determining protocols to help migrant students avoid such adversities and best approaches to their learning are vital to the success of migrant education.

By criteria defined by the U.S. DOE, Title I Part C, a migratory child is a child (ages 3–21) who (a) is a migratory agricultural worker or a migratory fisher; or (b) has moved within the preceding 36 months, in order to accompany or join a parent, spouse, or guardian who is a migratory agricultural worker or a migratory fisher who (i) has moved from one school district to another; (ii) in a state that is comprised of a single school district, has moved from one administrative area to another within such district; or (iii) as the child of migratory fisher, resides in a school district of more than 15,000 square miles, and migrates a distance of 20 miles or more to a temporary residence. (U.S. DOE, 2017, § 200.81)

The most recent data from the U.S. Department of Education for the 2016–17 school year illustrated that in 49 states, migrant education programs have served a total of 202,224 students in preschool through 12th grade, including an additional 17,395 out of school youth (U.S. DOE, 2017).

The lifestyle of traditional migrant students creates barriers and inequalities in their learning. Constantly changing schools, enrolling late and withdrawing early, and being unable to speak English all work against them in their educational endeavors, stifling their goals of being gainfully employed contributors to their communities. The struggle to adjusting culturally and connect with peers and educators has created a need to repeal and validate the common practices currently in place. Irizarry and Williams (2013) argued that the academic and interpersonal struggles of migrant students stem from their families' lack of trust in the U.S. educational system. In examining what both migrant students and teachers of migrant students see as inevitable to their success, it is possible to isolate a set of systems, models, and mindsets to best teach this exclusive student population.

The 2010 U.S. Census Bureau report identified Hispanics as the largest ethnic group in the United States, with children enrolled in public schools who speak languages other than English. Approximately 80% of migrant students come from a Hispanic background, and one third of these migrant students have been born outside of the United States (Grisham-Brown & McCormick, 2013). Mexicans are the largest subgroup of English language learners (ELLs) in America's schools (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010).

As this unique migrant population travels the country in search of agricultural work, the length of migrants' temporary residence depends on the particular crop and its harvesting window, and the stay can be interrupted by changes in weather. The ill-effects of migrant circumstances include the challenges of educational success. Insufficient resources and personnel can cause migrant students to be placed into inappropriate courses that reduce their actual potential for success (Olwig & Valentin, 2015). Concurrently, the same language challenges intensify alienation and prejudgments that cause them to feel oppressed.

Migrant parents themselves often are unable to advocate for their children, as they are unaware or ill-advised of how the public education system operates or their children's right to education. The value of parental involvement in public education has been firmly established as an important component of the academic success of all children, yet few studies have examined this construct from the frame of reference of migrant parents who are often marginalized by the educational system. Keeping records from each school transfer makes the process difficult, taking students away from being educated (Dronkers & Korthals, 2015). In sum, migrant students are at a disadvantage and their road to success is fraught with challenges.

Migrant workers of all backgrounds and ethnic groups share common experiences and struggles, including poverty and racism. This study, however, centered on Mexican-American

migrants, who make up the majority student population in the United States (Kossek, Meece, Barrat, & Prince, 2005). Migration by Mexicans into the United States originated with mass deportations that occurred prior to the Mexican War, when Mexico's economy collapsed forcing many families north. Their migration was essential to their survival, and their journey is a dangerous one. In current news, their struggles to enter the United States legally or not still remain.

Statement of the Problem

A majority of migrant students across the country struggle to achieve educational success because of the problem of developing and providing best practices in migrant education. Téllez and Varghese (2013) explained that most education experts have ignored the education of language learners and the professional development of bilingual educators while simultaneously advocating for multicultural education. Additionally, migrant students who are instructed in their home countries arrive in the United States with varying knowledge, skill, and strategies for approaching and solving problems (Schleiler, 2015). The lack of multicultural education focused on bringing about educational equality continues to be a barrier for minority students (Banks, 2010).

Despite migrant student success stories, they are limited in comparison to those who fail. But from these success stories best practices for all migrant students can be developed. In 2012, the American Psychological Association (as cited in Vega, Lasser, & Plotts, 2015) identified an array of challenges that require those involved in their education, including administrators and teachers, be prepared to manage. Appropriate assessment and placement, mental health needs, and socio-emotional impacts of discrimination must be understood by educators to provide proper services (Vega et al., 2015). Stemming from relocation, language barriers, and cultural

differences, the problem with inequalities between migrant students and their non-migrant counterparts must be examined to effect a reversal of its outcomes.

Learning the English language is required for success in American schools and is not easy. Moving from school to school at irregular intervals adds to the difficulty, and district services and programs provided vary. English language proficiency is an obstacle for many immigrant children. Early proficiency in the language is a crucial factor, closely related to positive academic achievement and graduation (Tavassolie, Lopez, DeFeyer, Hartman, & Winsler, 2018). On the 2017 National Assessment of Educational Progress, ELLs in fourth grade scored 40 points below non-ELLs in reading. ELLs at the eighth-grade level saw ever greater gaps at 47 points in reading (Nation's Report Card, 2018). The proficiency gaps varied from state to state; however, the need to make universal improvements is evident. Inevitably, there are differences in how each school district serves their migrant and ELLs. Establishing consistent approaches and levels of support could systematically take a defective system and turn it into one that is aligned with methodologies with proven results.

Issues for migrant students continue to grow as accountability through high-stakes testing becomes more prominent. This practice in itself has isolated undocumented migrant students who are not proficient enough to complete the assessments successfully (Green, 2003). As a general practice, these critical assessments are administered strictly in English (Contreras, 2011). Unfortunately, migrant students predominantly attend schools where teachers are less experienced with preparing their students for annual standardized assessments (Contreras, 2011).

Schools have a critical role to play in the settlement of young people as well as in facilitating transitions to citizenship and belonging (Cassity & Gow, 2005). With the dramatic increase of a migrant influx into our country, there is an urgent need to educate them fairly and

appropriately. Although researchers have spotlighted the problems and inadequacies in providing educational support to these students, additional scholarship is needed that focuses on how to best serve them. Studying this problem can result in a positive contribution that offers solutions to the problem rather than merely examining the forlorn issue that continues to expand.

Nature of the Study

In this qualitative study, I used a case study design to examine the educational experiences of former migrant students and teachers of migrant students. Centered on interviews with teachers about their experiences, the information I obtained led to a set of best practices. Berg (2007) described the value of the interview as one builds not only a holistic snapshot and detailed views of informants but one that enables participants to “speak in their own voice and express their own thoughts and feelings” (p. 96). Carefully documenting the experiences of participants can reveal perspectives that pinpoint patterns for success.

Using purposeful selection, participants in this study were verified as former migrant students who had graduated from an accredited college or university. These students were recruited through referrals from the local migrant education office personnel. In addition, I posted recruitment flyers on social media. I then contacted potential participants via email or a phone call. Interviewing students who had defied the odds while breaking barriers was crucial to illustrating the abilities and capabilities of migrant students. Interviewing migrant educators who have been proficient in their work with migrant students added to defining the methodology required to support student achievement. The interview questions for each group (see Appendices A & B) prompted an interchange positioned on approaches and convictions toward student success. Throughout each interview, students were invited to share personal encounters

and involvement, both positive and negative, that they believe shaped their educational experiences.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study was derived from both Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory and multicultural education. Having been a migrant student and now a teacher of migrant students, I have an insight into both contexts. Critical to effecting change is identifying methodologies, including but not limited to positive student–teacher relationships, which is the backbone of multicultural education, while simultaneously debunking misconceptions about their capabilities. Understanding that such relationships cannot be formed without first building trust and meeting basic needs is fundamental.

In this research I examined what successful college-educated, former migrant students perceived to be their former teachers' instrumental practices that contributed to their academic success. Prior research on migrant students has addressed disparities and barriers of students but has given little attention to those migrant students who defy the odds. Having excelled personally as a migrant student, and attempting to decipher the rationale for the success of an inadequate number migrant students, I focused on student perspectives on the instruction and educational experiences that they received, the stratagem of effective student–teacher relationships, and the practices of successful teachers in educating their migrant students.

Low-income students who have strong teacher–student relationships have higher academic achievement and have more positive social-emotional adjustment than their peers who do not have a positive relationship with a teacher (Murray & Malmgren, 2005). Marzano (2003) studied the practices of effective teachers and suggested “an effective teacher–student relationship may be the keystone that allows the other aspects to work well” (p. 91). Migrating

from another school or state adds to the level of adjustments necessary to succeed in a new learning environment. Whitaker (2013) argued that teachers must ensure they are meeting academic and emotional student needs. Creating classroom environments that promote positive cultures with healthy interactions can motivate students to learn more.

Research Question

What are best practices by teachers in the provision of education for migrant students?

Purpose of the Study

The principal focus of this qualitative study was ascertaining best practices for educating the U.S. migrant student population. The Federal Office of Migrant Education was established to remediate the academic deficiencies that many migrant students face. The number of migrant students who lack English language proficiency or require remedial instruction is large (Lundy-Ponce, 2010). Their burden is multiplied as migrant parents have the lowest levels of education of any other occupational group (Lundy-Ponce, 2010). Considering that migrant students have the highest-dropout rates in the nation (Lundy-Ponce, 2010), efforts to examine modes for their success are necessary in order to increase rates of graduation attainment.

As families continue to migrate into the United States, the teachers of migrant students must work in synergy with their students and their families as well as community partners to create systems of support and success. With migrant students becoming more of the norm in a growing number of classrooms nationwide, educators, school administrators and all educational stakeholders must recognize the realities of these students' experiences and unique needs (Nevárez-La Torre, 2011). The objective of this study was to identify what migrant students and their teachers see as hurdles, while isolating commonalities that will result in developing specific and strategic best practice approaches to intensify their graduation rates. Aware that there are

evident gaps in the educational system that cause migrant students to not have the same opportunities, through this research I embraced the need to improve the skillset of educators in working with migrant students in classrooms across the country.

Definitions of Terms

The following definitions of terms are provided as they apply to the purposes of this study:

Bilingual education: The use of two or more languages in educating students in part or all of the school curriculum (Green, 2003).

English language learners (ELLs): Students who are unable to communicate fluently in English, typically coming from non-English speaking homes and require modified instruction in learning the English language to support them in their academic courses (Glossary of Education Reform, 2018).

Equity pedagogy: The customization of teaching methods by teachers to best support their diverse students in order to develop their academic success (Banks & Banks, 2010).

Marginalization: A process in which subgroups of people are excluded by the dominant society. Used in economic and/or political contexts in reference to rendering individuals or ethnic groups powerless by more powerful individuals or ethnic groups. Migrant families, are normally marginalized and treated as insignificant from society because of practices, policies, and programs that only meet the needs of the dominant group (Yee, 2005).

Migrant Education Program (MEP): A federally funded program with the purpose of identifying eligible children and providing education and support services (U.S. DOE, 2018).

Multicultural education: The concept that each and every student, regardless of culture, race, ethnicity, language, social class, gender, exceptionality, or religion are entitled to a quality and equality-based education (Banks, 2010).

Provision: The action of providing or supplying something for use. All students with limited English proficiency must be properly identified and assessed to ensure the provision of appropriate services (U.S. DOE, 2018).

Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations

Assumptions

Relative to research, Simon and Goes (2013) characterized assumptions as beliefs that are essential to conducting the study but cannot be proven. Denzin and Lincoln (2008) stated all research is interpretive and is guided by the researcher's set of beliefs and feelings about the world and how it should be understood and studied. A general assumption of migrant children is that the majority of them live in poverty and struggle to learn the language and quickly assimilate themselves into an academic environment (Baraldi, 2014). Adopting the idea that poverty equates to apathy could prove to be misleading. The reality of this assumption may be that living in poverty may serve as a catalyst for breaking barriers and gaining success (Irizarry & Williams, 2013). Students' abilities to grasp a new language and new concepts swiftly while simultaneously making personal connections with new peers could be a main factor in their success. This homogenous perception may prove to be undependable.

Limitations

The first limitation was that for the study to have merit, each participant needed to be honest and open in his or her responses. In respect to immigration status or other related fears, some participants may not have shared their full stories and perspectives. To minimize the

perceived threats, I emphasized the study's clause of confidentiality, provided them with opportunity to ask questions, and reminded them of their ability to withdraw from the study at any time and for any reason. Reliability and validity issues may be caused by the participant's reluctance to be completely straightforward in their replies (Creswell, 2014). Additionally, this case study was focused on a small group of migrant educators who may share different mindsets of those with no experience with migrant students who were not interviewed. This limitation may have hindered beneficial, outside perspectives relevant to the findings. The information cannot be generalized to include all successful migrant students because this study was an undersized glimpse at a very wide ranging population. The migrant students and their teachers interviewed for this study may or may not have reflected the opinions and challenges that their counterparts across the country may reflect.

Another limitation of this study was the location. The results were specific to a rural, agricultural town in Florida, and may not generalize to other agricultural communities or states or to other public schools that the participants have graduated from. Not limiting access to other applicable participants from an array of geographic locations could help to provide additional input in addressing the research focus.

Delimitations

Delimitations are the characteristics within a study that are a result of the limitations defined in the scope of the study (Simon & Goes, 2013). Delimitations of this study included establishing boundaries around the study's sampling. Using only local referrals to identify participants served as a delimitation as opposed to utilizing participants who had been referred from outside areas. Because the student participants were all migrants, each may have had unique experiences as a result of the particular state, region, or school from which he or she

migrated. The scope of this study was delimited to migrant college-level graduates and migrant educators. Not gaining insights from those migrant students who attended but did not graduate college was also a chosen delimitation.

Significance of the Study

The equalitarianism mindset maintains that all members of the human race should be treated equally (Winegard, Hasty, & Clark, 2018). In the realm of education, some students require additional, often individualized or differentiated support, to reach their maximum potentials (Walker, 2013). Migrant students are typically the farthest behind their peers and require exceptional instructional strategies in order to close the achievement gap. Resilience is required from students who feel both inadequate and incompatible as a result of their lack of English language acquisition and migratory lifestyle (Adelman & Taylor, 2015). While resilience is a key trait for anyone seeking success, leveling the playing field for those who need added help is true equity.

Researchers who have examined the course of migrant education have described migrant students as “invisible children” and one of the most helpless and disadvantaged groups of students due to the nature of their family’s hardships when pursuing agricultural work in various counties and states (Cranston-Gingras & Paul, 2008). Their road to survival is endless as their mobility is dependent on circumstances beyond their control including weather, employment opportunities and harvesting patterns. As a result, migrant students are also overlooked because many live in temporary housing provided by their employers that is often secluded and miles away from the school (Adelman & Taylor, 2015). The hindrances and situations that complicate the identification and assessment process make it difficult to provide them with constant and ongoing support required by any student failing academically.

For decades, migrants have been one of the most academically vulnerable groups in the United States. The economic, health, and work-related problems they face translate into lower academic achievement and higher dropout rates (López, Scribner, & Mahitivanichcha, 2001, p. 253). The working estimate of migrant student graduation rates in high school is roughly 45–50% (U.S. DOE, 2018). Thus, there is a strong need for change in provides services, support, and standards for quality experiences.

The culture and lifestyle of migrant students differs from those of students born in this country and living at a permanent address. Migrant students using techniques that support their learning while including their way of living into the curriculum could enhance motivation needed to make them feel embraced by their teachers and peers (Nieto, 2000). The majority of teachers in this country are White European-Americans. Many lack training in teaching students who come from culturally diverse backgrounds and lack understanding of cultural norms that often can make a student feel uncomfortable, out of place, or isolated (Goldenberg, 2013).

The intent of this study was to bring about a deeper understanding of how to best provide educational services to the migrant student population. An approach that ensures an appropriate, adequate, and applicable educational experience is key to these students' success. Discovering parallels and corresponding attributes in what successful migrant students deem as invaluable to their achievement will be significant in the work that future educators will embark in. With limited information on mobile migrant students, school teachers might act more on the basis of negative stereotypes, fostering low expectations for academic performance and displaying a lack of investment in their progress (Guyll, Madon, Prieto, & Sherr, 2010). As educators learn to consider the individualized needs of this subgroup, mindsets and the success rate of these students can be transformed.

Summary

This prefatory chapter provided a justification for the need to explore and define specific and strategic best practices in the provision of migrant education. Defining migrant students and outlining their unique circumstances and difficulties is key to understanding the complexity of how to best improve amenities being delivered to them. The gaps in their education resulting from their frequent mobility make it a difficult trek toward their ultimate goal of graduation. Dropping out of high school can lead to lost productivity, lower tax revenues, and a higher cost of public services with negative consequences for all students, not just those from migrant families (Levin, 2009). Providing quality-based opportunities for all students to succeed in the U.S. public education system exemplifies educational equity and social justice.

With the influx of people immigrating into the United States from all over the world, the country's demographics are changing. The majority of today's immigrants into the United States are from Central America, predominantly Mexico (Wright, 2010). Resulting from the evolving demographics is an increase in diversity in our schools. These newly enrolled students come with their own gifts and talents, but their English language acquisition is nonexistent or minimal. Consequently, these new students require specific attention to meet their needs. A pedagogy of equity can only occur when teachers work to modify their teaching in order to facilitate the learning of students from different racial, cultural, and social-class groups (Banks, 2010).

Public schooling was not initially created with the backgrounds and experiences of the marginalized and poor in mind. As a result, migrant groups of students continue to receive below-par services, minimizing their success rates and lowering their attitudes about their capabilities. Past research on migrant students has shown these students struggle with self-esteem, depression, isolation, and rejection (Free & Križ, 2016). This research was intended to

enhance current systems and approaches with the sole goal of ensuring the students equity while capitalizing on what their experiences can lend to the classrooms of today.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Migrant farm work is one of the most labor intensive yet undercompensated jobs in the country. The work farmworkers do is strenuous, their travels bring about disturbing stresses, and the struggles only intensify for their children looking to infuse themselves in unfamiliar territory (Araujo, 2012). The barriers for the achievement of migrant students are abundant, and the approach from educators that works best for them involves consideration, inclusion, and genuine compassion. From a lack of access and resources to language and disproportionate attendance rates to disparate discipline practices, the needs of this unique student population are overwhelming and require a valid examination to support meaningful changes. Because of insufficient support, the migrant population is the most undereducated major subgroup in the United States, with a dropout rate significantly higher than that of any other group (Romanowski, 2003). To improve school climate and stabilize the responses to minorities as nondiscriminatory and effective, the U.S. DOE and the Department of Justice have provided guidance to schools nationwide. The goal of creating safe and positive climates can improve chances for academic success and closing the achievement gap should be at the forefront of all educational stakeholders (U.S. DOE, 2014).

In the United States, where migrant children move across the U.S.-Mexico border routinely, teachers are affected not just by how well students can read and write in English but also by the varying literacy values that students bring to the classroom (Casas, 2014). Equally, students are affected by the different ways that literacy is posed in their home contexts and in their new ones (Casas, 2014). Researchers recommend that in order for indigenous students to be successful academically, teachers must understand their indigenous identities. The task is difficult, however, when teachers and schools do not have the context to grasp the complexities

of these identities (Casanova, O'Connor, & Anthony-Stevens, 2016). To this end, Casas (2014) maintained American educators would benefit from recognizing that, for some students, the value of education lies in the way that it leads to immediate work, rather than achieving social mobility.

The gap in student discipline must also be studied to understand how unbalances might contribute to achievement disparities (Gregory, Skiba, & Noguera, 2010). Examining race and culture and how they may generate differential treatment in the area of discipline is critical to establishing grounds for excellence or failure among the migrant student population. Miles and Stipek (2006) found that minority students may become frustrated and disgruntled, triggering a lower sense of confidence, thus resulting in a higher rate of school disruption. Teachers with low standards and expectations of certain subgroups can add to the dilemma. Banks (1993) contended that a dimension of "equity pedagogy" will help teachers to understand the need to change their methods in order to allow diverse groups to achieve. With added focus on the achievement gap, which ranks minority students at the bottom of all gains scales, alarmed researchers, policymakers, and educators are now concentrating on the evident association between academic achievement and discipline (Russ, 2014).

The purpose of this research was to investigate the approaches used by educators to work with migrant, ELLs and assess those who deliver the most beneficial results. Using Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory, I investigated how this theory relates with the methodology and practices necessary to best approach migrant students. Past research suggests that support for migrant students lagging academically requires more than foundational skills and grade-level content expectations (Irizarry & Williams, 2013). Cultural differences as well as the capabilities, biases, and abilities of their teachers must be addressed (Irizarry & Williams, 2013).

Romanowski (2003) contended that the obstacles to the educational success of migrant students stem from teachers' lack of understanding of their own beliefs about migrant students, which are often influenced by prejudices that guide their behavior and actions.

Over the years, varying levels of misperceptions among White teachers and migrant students as well as ELLs have persisted (Au, 2017; Lurie, 2005). Some teachers have used social media to share their opinions and misinformation. During a February 2017 "National Day Without Immigrants" demonstration, numerous teachers were reprimanded by their employers for their negative rants on social media. A California high school teacher at a school that is 90% Hispanic posted, "Small classes, trouble makers were gone. Fantastic Day" (Chasmar, 2017, n.p.). In a district in Florida with a high migrant student population, a teacher posted a tweet demeaning the families of students in her class. Her post, in part, advocated for massive deportation. The teacher stated, "The funny part about immigrants staying home is the rest of us who pay for them are here at work like we've always been" (ABC10 News, 2017, n.p.). Such statements illustrate the need to make changes to ensure that all students are respected and valued. This racist message that migrant students are not welcome in schools, labeled as "bad" and "illegal," conveys the need to reevaluate who should be teaching our children (Au, 2017).

Maslow (as cited in McLeod, 2017) acknowledged that human motivation is based on an individual's needs being met. The need to belong and feel value and self-worth, which in turn leads to self-efficacy, must be met in order to grow academically and emotionally (Maslow, 1954). Within the classroom, students need to feel integrated with their teachers, classmates, and instruction. Such students are more inclined to be engaged and return to school each day eager to learn. Being excluded or treated inversely because of their skin color, home language, or migrant status, is nonproductive. Teachers need to be prepared to understand and support students as they

transition into a new learning environment with new peers to teachers triggering their motivation. While teachers have limited influence on the home lives of their students, their influence is endless once students come into their care. Many migrant students struggle academically and emotionally in the classroom because of their lack of trust in the U.S. educational system (Irizarry & Williams, 2013). Taking on the challenge of building relationships built on respect and commitment to goal attainment is a crucial responsibility for effective educators of migrant students.

Like all parents, parents of migrant families want their children to have better prospects than their own parents bestowed upon them. Meyers (2012) asked whether migrating from a developing to a developed nation expand and enhance family resources, or do the economic disparities coupled with the pressures of surviving as an immigrant force them to choose work options over completing their education (Meyers, 2012).

A gripping documentary that premiered nearly 60 years ago publicized the conditions of migrant workers with a close look at the interrupted education of the children who migrate alongside them. *Harvest of Shame* (CBS, 1960), narrated by prominent journalist Edward R. Murrow, served as a catalyst for establishing the U.S. Office of Migrant Education and propelled efforts to study their situation. With the passing years, Murrow explained that some advancements, albeit limited in nature, into understanding the difficulties of migrant children have been made. In his closing message, Murrow contended the best hope for the future of the migrant population lies in the education of their children (CBS, 1960). It is this poignant message that drives this research.

Conceptual Framework

The review of the literature is clear as it relates to valuable approaches in working with migrant/ELL students with positive results. The theory that approaches that embrace, accept, and work to understand the needs of this unique student population drives the focus of this inquiry. The narrow conception of teachers who see multicultural education as merely content integration rather than a restructuring that allows all students to acquire knowledge, attitudes, and skills needed to function successfully in a diverse world (Banks, 1993). Understanding that education plays a critical role in allowing migrant families to close the achievement gap is key to providing them with effective resources (Krause, Rinne, & Schüller, 2015). The resources, however, must be genuine and must be provided with confidence and optimism. Regardless of their country of origin, new country of residence, or intranational migrations, the approach that utilizes empathy joined with strategic and meaningful tactics yield the most positive results. Irazarry and Williams (2013) argued that educators and researchers must consider the variables that affect not only the test scores of migrant students but their self-perceptions and overall achievement in life via reinforcements.

Although Banks and Banks (2002) argued that multicultural education is a required component of a quality-based education, the reality is that most educators see it as added advantage or only necessary when a predicament arises. Ameny-Dixon (2013) explained that multicultural education increases student productivity, helps to overcome prejudices, builds interpersonal communication while creating a cultural awareness, and preventing social conflicts. Mann (2014) contended that because *equality* has become synonymous with “leveling the playing field,” educators must make *equity* synonymous with “more for those who need it.” Aspiring for equitable multiculturalism should be the common goal (Mann, 2014).

Arguing for education that is uncompromising and deliberate as well as calculated and nurturing is the conceptual framework that drives providing migrant/ELL students with an educational program that is nothing less than productive. Within a neo-liberal policy framework, value is attributed to students who shape themselves to meet the neo-liberal ideal. In essence, only those students who contribute to their school's pool of talent are valued (Devine, 2013). This creates a tension for students in terms of how they position themselves in such a stress-filled, value-focused environment that is only concerned with scores (Devine, 2013). Rather than place the focus on high-stakes testing and the drilling of facts to close the achievement gap, schools must prioritize building a culture that supports the ideology that every student from every background has value (Kugler, 2018). This paradigm shift will require a mindset that is both all-inclusive and creates a culture of student empowerment based on self-worth where everyone is seen as capable and respected.

In respect to Maslow's hierarchy of needs, the notion that people are motivated to achieve basic and specific needs and that some of those needs take precedence over others is represented in the research that supports the approaches that best meet the needs of migrant/ELL students. Maslow (as cited in McLeod, 2017) argued one's most basic need is physical survival, which motivates behavior. Thus, teachers serving migrant students should be diligent in monitoring that fundamental physical needs are taken care of. Romanowski (2003) explained that migrant children often experience several hardships relative to poverty. Over the last 70 years, the National School Lunch program has provided nutritional and low-cost or free lunches to qualifying students each day (Gunderson, 2017). While this program has helped to provide relief to migrant students who come to school hungry, there is an abundance of work to do in educating them and their parents on eating well and its effect on learning

As migrant students work to build trust and fit in with their community, they commonly experience trauma, and their confidence is shaken and abilities are stifled (Romanowski, 2003). Additionally, the migrant perspective from students is that they do not feel welcome in their new schools (Irizarry & Williams, 2013). A review of the literature suggests both students and teachers are culpable in sending messages that oppose inclusiveness. Devine (2013) noted that dilemmas arise because teachers value migrant students differently in their interactions with peers as well as with their teachers.

According to Maslow, love and belonging needs include the student's desire for strong relationships with their peers (McLeod, 2017). Although language barriers can hinder relationship-building among migrant students and new classmates and teachers, several bodies of research provide strategies for moving beyond the obstacles. Understanding the uniqueness of the diverse experiences that migrant families and their students bring can enrich the campus at large (Rodriguez-Valls & Torres, 2014). Hiring bilingual instructors and support staff and providing culturally sensitive curriculums and opportunities to highlight student differences can help overcome linguistic limitations and strengthen unity (Torrez, 2014). Salinas (2013) argued that school leaders need to recognize and collaborate with their migrant population to better understand the cultural discontinuity that exists between the mainstream population and the migrant families.

Near the top of Maslow's hierarchy of needs model is the need for esteem, which includes the needs for students to feel a sense of competence and achievement (McLeod, 2017). For migrant students already behind academically due to gaps in learning, esteem can seem far from grasp. As social spaces, schools are instrumental in the construction of migrant childhoods and identities (Devine, 2013). Intercultural pedagogy emphasizes the need for involving migrant

students in positive relationships in school, rising above stereotypes and creating environments where diversity is valued (Baraldi, 2014). When students feel validated, their academic performance is enhanced and inspiration is undoubtedly stimulated. Attitudes and behaviors of teachers directly affect student behaviors and attitudes and may cause them to exhibit matching behaviors and attitudes (Yilmaz, 2016). Migrant students carry their linguistic and cultural richness with them wherever they go, however, when their teachers fail to recognize their strengths and use them to their advantage, their students struggle to adapt (Rodriguez-Valls & Torres, 2014).

At the peak of the hierarchy of needs framework is the quest for self-actualization, wherein individuals reach their true potential (McLeod, 2017). The review of the literature on migrant education cites several programs focused on increasing both high school and college graduation rates for this unique population. A multitude of summer migrant education programs (SMED) strategically located across the country provide students with opportunities to “catch up” from their lapses in learning as a result of migration. Funding for such programs is limited and dwindling, and without proper support or resources their attempts to take students to advanced levels of education fail to support them in realizing their potential (Torrez, 2014). Few studies have focused on some of the impressive gains that migrant children have made and even fewer studies on those who have succeeded in schools have been published (Aruajo, 2012). Nevertheless, those success stories are out there and within them lies the key to understanding the best approaches in taking them from learners to leaders.

Review of Research Literature and Methodological Literature

A migrant student, as defined by federal law, is a person who does not yet have a high school diploma and has traveled outside the school district to enable themselves or their parents

to do agricultural labor within the past three years (34 C.F.R. § 200.40[c]). Relative to this unique student population, Public Law 93-380 was amended in 1966 to include migrant children. Consequently, there have been additions in federal programs aimed at supporting migrant farmworkers and their families. A majority of these programs consist of migrant education programs embedded in or affiliated with public schools with millions of federal dollars attached to them. As promising as they have proven to be, a review of the literature indicates that it is the approach, implementation or fidelity of each individual migrant program that makes a difference in migrant student success.

Educating Migrant Students

The prominent findings of the reviewed literature point at teacher attitude as an integral part of positively educating their migrant students. Several studies suggest a direct correlation between educators and their attitude or perception toward immigrants (Camata, Ybañez, De los Reyes, & Inocian, 2016). Effective teachers, however, can make the demanding situation seem less strenuous and viable learning possible. Lea (2012) explained that a teacher who best promotes his or her students is one with a cultural knowledge and understanding and open to making the adjustments required to provide their students an education adapted to their needs.

A study completed to analyze the No Child Left Behind Act (2001) revealed that many general education teachers also recognized the unsympathetic attitudes of fellow teachers who see their migrant/ELL students as “them” while making statements that describe these students as not belonging (Rouse, 2013). By confronting these attitudes and barriers, well-intentioned teachers can bring forth effective approaches for each of their deserving students. If schools are to be instrumental in the settlement process of incoming migrants, positive and welcoming attitudes to these students would appear to be essential (Taylor & Sidhu, 2012). Teachers of

migrant students must remain sentient of the realities of living as a migrant student with their families in conditions that are less than adequate (Irizarry & Williams, 2013). Taylor and Sidhu (2012) conceded that despite the research that suggest what migrant teachers can and should do, there is limited research on what such teachers are actually doing to provide amicable and earnest support to migrant students.

Social capital through strong familial connections within the migrant community is a formidable theme throughout the research (Salinas, 2013). Relative to approaches used in working with migrant students, various studies cited teaching methods that complemented and interconnected with the cultural attributes of the migrant students that they worked to foster. For example, “homed-homelessness” is not a dichotomy for migrant students who travel in order to keep a home. For these students the concept of home differs from their peers and teachers who have never lived the migrant lifestyle (Nevarez-La Torre, 2011). To approach these students in a manner that is sensitive to their culture, changes in perceptions need to be made clear to all stakeholders who work with this unique population (Nevarez-La Torre, 2011).

Language

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 2018) conducted research across 26 countries showing that more than 50% of students who dropped out of school did not speak the language in which they were being educated. A 2012 report by the American Psychological Association noted that Latino students in the United States who spoke one language at home and another at school were at increased risk of graduating late or dropping out of high school (Vega et al., 2015)

Language barriers coupled with limited community stays compound the challenges migrant students face as they try to fit into a public education system (Vocke, Westing,

Applegate, & VanDonkelaar, 2016). Being proficient in the English language is essential in U.S. public schools (Crosnoe, 2006). When migrant students enter school with extremely limited English language acquisition their challenges are multiplied. Having to master academic content while simultaneously learning a new language is a grand expectation. Hakuta, Butler, and Witt (2000) maintained that it can take up to two years for most ELLs to learn social English, and that it can take five to seven years or longer to master English in its academic format.

Not all language-minority students have the same trajectory for school success. Students who begin kindergarten with proficiency in English have academic trajectories similar to non-ELLs, whereas students who enter school at a later grade level with limited English proficiency do not fare as well, demonstrating weaker learning trajectories that are quite divergent from their non-English language learner peers by the end of elementary school (Vaughn et al., 2017).

Accompanying the achievement gap for these migrant ELLs is the critical issue that they are in need of high quality teachers in the classroom. The number of certified bilingual and English as a second language (ESL) teachers needs to increase and so does the instructional capacity of teachers serving ELLs in the mainstream classroom (Rodriguez, Abrego, & Rubin, 2014). Migrant students may encounter vastly different teaching strategies in regards to learning English. School schools provide migrant students with English support while learning grade level content, other schools may only be learning English, and in still others they may be learning English with a simplified curriculum. The types of language support and availability of bilingual education that migrant students receive is crucial to how they learn English (Wright, 2010). Tellez and Varghese (2013) found that bilingual education teachers must possess a critical perspective as they are constantly working against political and social forces that seek to disempower, or at least not help to empower marginalized communities.

Social and Emotional Needs of Migrant Students

While educational attainment is termed as achieving the highest level of schooling possible, educational well-being refers to having a nourishing environment that promotes educational attainment (Delgado & Herbst, 2017). The struggle of the migrant population is not only physically strenuous with the expectations of the hard labor of agricultural farm work but emotionally draining as well. For children, the emotional stress is multiplied as they spend their days in classrooms with strangers who look, speak and act differently. For weeks after a move, migrant families face the process of anonymization (Rodriguez-Valls & Torres, 2014). Nordstrom, McKibben, Baldauf, Tachieva, and Harding-Pittman (2012) described anonymization as a loss of identity particularly when issues of language and poverty exist. Because of the transitory and unstable nature of the migrant life, feelings of fear and temporary existence can have negative educational consequences (Free et al., 2014).

In conjunction with the feelings of non-belonging, youth from families who have immigrated into this county report high rates of stigmatization, distrust of authority figures, and feelings of hopelessness, anxiety, frustration, and dreading the future (Sulkowski, 2017). Having limited English proficiency not only hinders their academic progress but leads to social isolation (Grisham-Brown & McCormick, 2013). Fearing embarrassment as a result of their level of skill with the language, many students enrolled in migrant education programs avoid being vocal in class (Lorimer, 2016).

Early adolescence is a crucial phase in the educational trajectory of Latino/a youth as they make decisions between academic aspirations beyond high school or a path of disengagement, poor performance and disruptive behavior (Delgado & Herbst, 2017). Given that 80% of immigrant children are at some point separated from their families, migrant youth are at

risk for traumatization on the journey into the United States, acculturative stress and transgenerational damage (Phipps & Degges-White, 2014). These socio-emotional sufferings can be detrimental to educational attainment and other aspects of personal well-being (Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 2009).

Employing professionals who can provide appropriate emotional care to migrant students in a school setting is critical to meeting the unique needs of the whole migrant child. Teachers, guidance counselors, and school psychologists require the tools to manage a number of social and emotional needs. Fostering a sense of community that is inclusive of the emotional state of diverse groups that helps promote trust and respect is essential (Vega et al., 2015). The 2013–2014 National Agricultural Workers Survey reported the average level of completed education was eighth grade (National Center for Farmworker Health, 2017). If the focus is to graduate higher numbers of migrant students, meeting their basic needs is essential to their success. The disconnect that they experience between home and school culture must be addressed in order to elevate motivation while decreasing dropout rates.

Cultural Differences

Cultural barriers are evident differences between two or more cultures that lead to communication breakdowns and misunderstandings. The cultural barriers that exist between Mexican migrant students and their families and the school system often lead to educational challenges for migrant students. These cultural barriers may include students who do not make eye contact out of respect or parents who do not go to the school because they feel that would be disrespectful to the teacher. Several cultural barriers exist between migrant students, their families, and the school system. These barriers often bring about misperceptions that in turn lead to challenges for migrant students and their teachers. Alsubaie (2015) asserted that because the

culture of teachers and students affect the education process, the relationship between culture and education is crucial. Because of the vitality of the link between culture and the educational setting, the education should reflect respect and be appropriate for students and their cultures in order to enhance achievement and build confidence (Alsubaie, 2015). The National Association for Multicultural Education (NAME; 2018) maintained that when students learn within a culturally diverse environment, a positive self-image develops as well as their way of thinking that develops their sense of self and value for their position in society.

Similar to their children in the classroom, parents of migrant students must learn to adapt to new cultural norms. These older family members bring their own opinions and insight about education, teachers, and the regard for each. These ideologies are framed from their religious and cultural practices, their own schooling experiences, and the basis for leaving their country of origin (Adelman & Taylor, 2015). For many migrant parents, their previous experiences may have marred their trust in teachers and administrators, and institutional racism could have influenced their belief that higher education is a positive thing (Quiñones & Marquez-Kiyama, 2014). Consequently, when the migrant students learn to cope in the new environment at a faster rate than their migrant parent, they soon find themselves taking on adult tasks such as serving as a translator. This shift in roles adds to the stress of feeling adequate or capable (Adelman & Taylor, 2015).

Resources for Migrant Students

Schools working diligently to provide avenues for success for their migrant populations hire strategically to maximize support. Staffing schools with paraprofessionals who are able to communicate with their migrant students is vital to influencing knowledge attainment. Native-language support teachers' work with the expression "in the middle of a pedagogical triangle"

through cooperation with the students and teachers and by acting as liaisons between the school and home (Virta, 2014). Despite the success of these support systems, the added staff can be costly and often difficult to find and schedule, particularly in schools where migrant populations were limited forcing staff to be shared across schools. Moreover, the ethno-specific staff feel vulnerable in their positions as they are commonly isolated from other teachers and treated as outsiders, much similar to the students that they are assigned to edify (Virta, 2014).

While placing qualified support staff is vital to the success of migrant students, their certified teachers are their greatest assets. As advocates for the learning of their students, the most beneficial educators of migrant children seek out any deficiencies. Although outright discrimination is not cited in the review of the literature, it can be perceived that many teachers do not understand their migrant students, and their lack of respect for their experiences triggers them to prune compassion (Free et al., 2014). Migrant educators, especially those who have been migrant students in their earlier lives are able to share the same values and beliefs as well as incomparable experiential capital (Free & Križ, 2016). Migrant students, especially, should always believe there is trust and coherence in their education, as cultural conflicts can hinder their motivation and generate identity problems (Lea, 2012). Taylor and Sidhu (2012) asserted that the adoption of inclusive approaches for both teaching and learning is what makes for “good practice.” By providing meaningful, genuine, and intensive language and learning support and then quickly mainstreaming them as they acquire basic literacy skills, students are made to feel like viable learners within their new campus (Taylor & Sidhu, 2012).

Principals and school leaders play a major role in the critical task of policy making and implementation for each of their migrant students. More vital are the classroom teachers who interact on a more personal and primary level with their students (Ficarra, 2017). Their training

and development centered on issues of multiculturalism and the experiences of the migrant lifestyle are needed before attending to academic needs (Ficarra, 2017). Other works specify that in-classroom learning is not enough, but that teachers should participate in service-learning within the refugee community as part of their teacher preparation program (Lund & Lee, 2015). Ficarra (2017) maintained that while many advocate for collaboration when supporting migrant students, few seem to be writing about such collaborative work, perhaps due to the complexity of proper and effective collaboration that includes all stakeholders.

Instrumental in establishing some continuity in the instruction of many migrant students are countless summer migrant education programs (SMEDs) ready to take in students who have traveled to follow agricultural employment. Typical SMED programs provide students with interventions in specific content areas, opportunities for credit accrual and individualized instruction to practice and enhance reading skills (Vocke et al., 2016). Even with the best intentions, however, the program directors cited inconsistent program evaluations, availability of services, and differences in state educational requirements as barriers to maximizing their effectiveness. In general, migrant programming is varied in its focus and its success, mostly due to a lack of consistent and organized research (Vocke et al., 2016)

With nearly one third of the country's migrant students living in California, the state established the Migrant Student Information Network (MSIN) for the purpose of providing appropriate supports to this penurious population (Miller, 2017). Through this network, the systems in place allow educational stakeholders expedited access to accurate and updated information relative to the student's academic history, saving weeks of time that can be taken up tracking a locating such data (Miller, 2017). Because not every migrant student is fortunate enough to be tracked via the MSIN, migrant educators often are forced to undertake added

administrative duties to help guide their migrant students through the school system (Free & Križ, 2016). Tasks include identifying them as eligible for MEP services, ensuring that they receive language testing, and appropriate credit transfers (Free & Križ, 2016). As noble as the efforts are, there is a dire need for a universal system that tracks each migrant student in a reliable and accessible format.

As these migrant students come to school with none or limited English skills, approaches to accelerate and extend their progress have been employed with restricted success. Troia (2014) highlighted the Fast ForWord Language program, a computer-based intervention program designed to swiftly develop auditory-perceptual and spoken language communicative competence. While both the preliminary and secondary experimental clinical studies were encouraging, the results did not merit efficacy for the program (Troia, 2014). Additionally, Troia (2014) cited the research as inconclusive as the measurement protocols were inconsistent in measuring literacy achievement. Thus, the FFW data should be reviewed and examined with caution. The research itself, however, played a key role in comparing direct instruction to that of a computer program relative to supporting ELLs.

Limitations to Supporting Migrant Students

Families who are vulnerable to U.S. Immigration policies are reluctant to interact with any group that could reveal their immigration status. These families require the education system to lead efforts that work to assist and stabilize this susceptible yet promising group of students. Because the research indicates that having an unauthorized immigration status is an affront to students' academic success, tactics to develop these students and to build trusting relationships with them and their families must be differentiated (Sulkowski, 2017). Schools must also work to connect their migrant families with agencies specific to their needs. Sulkowski (2017) contended

while being mindful of the worries of their migrant assignments, educational leaders should focus on linking them to social service agencies, human rights workers, immigration attorneys, or any organization working directly to aid immigrants, regardless of their status.

The literature discusses limitations and inconsistencies in past studies about how to best meet the needs of migrant students. Because of the mobility of these students, much of the data are inconclusive or involve small sample sizes, which restrains the scope of each study. Often many of these students entered the country or migrated at different times or frequencies and have undergone an array of experiences. Thus, additional studies would be required to confirm the stability of any reported findings (Makarova & Herzog, 2013). Likewise, dependent on their immigration status or comfort level with the researchers, information disclosed within interviews or surveys may not be accurate (Carter, Reschly, Lovelace, Appleton, & Thompson, 2012). Moreover, as programs are put into action, financial support is essential for their maintenance and sustainability in order to actively employ models and approaches to empower migrant students and their families (Free & Križ, 2015).

Review of Methodological Issues

This study focused on identifying best practices in educating migrant students. Thus, a qualitative method was the most reliable research approach. Via interviews, participants shared their insights into what motivates them to succeed. For various reasons, the migrant population is reluctant to voice their stance on their needs and aspirations. Deportation is always possible; thus, the task of identifying those who do not wish to be identified becomes more complicated (Miller, 2017). Qualitative research is the proper method of choice when the desire is to empower participants to not only share their stories but to abate the imbalanced relationship that can exist between a researcher and the potential subjects of their study (Creswell, 2013).

Many of the studies I reviewed were limited by the small numbers of participants. Vocke et al. (2016) aimed to gain the perspectives of 38 migrant summer program directors. Interviewees spoke about the challenge of compiling data relative to migrant education because of the populations' mobility. Nevárez-La-Torre (2011) found it difficult to locate research that addressed the reality of migrant ELLs relative to their education. Adding to the challenge is that most of the literature has ignored student mobility as a critical issue of research or did not identify transient ELLs as a specific group in schools (Nevárez-La-Torre, 2011). Patton (2015) asserted that having an adequate sample size provides for a closer representation of the population while avoiding the influence of outliers or extreme examinations. Creswell (2013) contended that because qualitative research is intended to expose the information rather than to generalize it, having access to adequate numbers of participants best supports a study's reliability. Through various appraisals, gaining an awareness and understanding of what best motivates and incites a desire to succeed academically will reveal best practices when providing services to those participating in migrant education.

In recent years, through the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program, stakeholders can better track students of illegal migrant status. With the intent of providing deportation protection to those who as children were brought illegally into the United States, DACA has been seen as affirmation that immigrants are valued (Lord, 2017). Additionally, DACA has been instrumental in kick-starting efforts to build relationships with the migrant population so that accurate data can be collected (Pope, 2016). Simultaneously, there is a wide difference in higher education tuition costs and financial aid policies across states for DACA participants, making its applicability limited (Hooker, McHugh, & Mathy, 2015). The status of the DACA program is being threatened, jeopardizing the protection of all recipients (Gomez,

2018) Research has shown that DACA has helped to increase the wages of eligible members as well as reduce the number of households living in poverty causing concern about rationales for its uncertain future (Amuedo-Dorantes & Antman, 2016; Gonzales Terriquez, & Ruszczyk, 2014). Seif (2014) suggested that because research on immigrant youth is unavailable through the government, it is most often retrieved through trusting relationships, which I established during my interviews with the participants.

The literature review revealed that research on undocumented students has been conducted in migration studies, education, anthropology, psychology, and sociology (Sief, 2014). Because the emphasis of qualitative research is on the personal perceptions and experiences, I needed to understand multiple realities rather than a few (Creswell, 2013). Thus, in this study, I concentrated on what the migrant participants interpret as necessary for their educational success, coupled with the viewpoints of educators who have worked successfully with migrant students.

Synthesis of Research Findings

Collectively, the research on how to best support migrant students pointed to a nurturing, empathetic, and committed approach. While the research is limited and inconclusive, the migrant students seem to perform best when the opportunities to do so are genuine, individualized, and purposeful. Because of differences in language, culture, and beliefs from their non-migrant counterparts, migrant students are often misunderstood and underappreciated (Casanova, O'Connor, & Anthony-Stevens, 2016). Despite their predicaments, many migrant students have overcome the odds against their academic success.

My review of dozens of elements of migrant education led to several conclusions. First, effective teachers of migrant students must do more than just teach. Free and Križ (2016)

examined how migrant educators can help their migrant students and their families navigate a system that can be hostile to their needs and experiences. In addition to academic support, operational migrant teachers provided emotional backing to aid students in building their resiliency to systemic adversities (Free & Križ, 2016). Irizarry and Williams (2013) cited research showing that because of their academic lag, migrant students require more than a basic delivery of curriculum. These students need attention focused on their abilities and trusting bonds to push them to believe that their teachers genuinely want to reach them their potential (Irizarry & Williams, 2013).

Equally important is the need to be inclusive of the culture of the migrant students looking to fit in and make their mark. Effective migrant educators can best support migrant students overcome barriers by teaching lessons that draw on the culture and community of migrant students' strengths and resources (Free & Križ, 2016). In summer migrant education programs, the teachers involved said to get the best results they must be open to learning about migrant culture while simultaneously integrating that knowledge into both the curriculum and social interactions (Romanowski, 2003). The evaluations and analyses of other MEPs have shown that implementing programs centered on lessons dealing with poverty, cultural barriers, cultural studies, and migration positively affect the success of their students academically as well as the parents' support of their child and their school (Free et al., 2014). Recommended guidelines suggest that the classroom instruction, materials, environments, and communication align with the diversity of the students and the families enrolled (Grisham-Brown & McCormick, 2013).

Across studies, the need for consistent and sufficient financial subsidies as well as access to distinct support were vital to meeting the needs of migrant students. Financial support for such

education programs must provide participants with the tools necessary to be productive citizens and to supply them with vital skills to succeed academically, socially, and emotionally (McGinnis, 2015). Because migrant youth and their families face unique challenges to positive mental health functioning and success in the classroom, providing ample and appropriate personnel to guide them is key (Vega et al., 2015). Training teachers, purchasing appropriate resources, and appointing strategic staff to bring about positive transformation can be costly. Relative to funding, when reporting data of migrant students served, the numbers are skewed due to the rigidity of the criteria for participation. Despite funding, the number of students meeting the federal migrant definition has decreased, as the criteria to participate and receive educational services in migrant programs is more regulated (Vocke et al., 2016).

Critique of Previous Research

Although migrant education has been in existence for decades, the research associated with its conformity and implementation to meet the diverse needs of today's migrant student is incomplete and restricted. Because of the frequency of relocating for purposes of following agricultural work, study results are often limited by the number of participants, thus providing generalized information (Salinas, 2013). Moreover, as more and more migrant students are identified and programs are put into practice, much of the research work is still new and not homogeneous across the country (Virta, 2014). Along the same lines, there is still much to learn about the experiences of migrant farmworker students in public schools (Araujo, 2012). The lack of research focusing on what schools are doing to migrant students leaves gaps in identifying worthwhile educational strategies (Araujo, 2012).

Rodriquez-Valls and Torres (2014) pointed out that when working with the migrant population, educational agencies should consider the inclusivity of their programs as the target

groups continues to fluctuate between mobility and belonging. The mobility of the migrant students and their families forces this exclusive group to drift in and out of schools without much attention. This, then, becomes a lost opportunity for the students and for the communities and schools where they reside temporarily, where their needs cannot be properly identified (Rodriguez-Valls & Torres, 2014). Furthermore, current anti-immigration sentiments throughout the country have caused concern for many migrant families fearing deportation, resulting in increased mobility to safeguard them from being reported (Sulkowski, 2016). This constant movement adds to the difficulty in effectively and reliably studying the academic progress of a consistent group of participants.

Even with the assortment of migrant education programs that have been examined over the years, past evaluators of their worth have struggled to prove their legitimacy. An effective formative program evaluation must identify barriers and solutions to the key elements of critical and timely information needed for improvement (Vocke et al., 2016). Critics, including migrant program directors, described the evaluations in place as incoherent with models that did not allow them to evaluate their own programs (Vocke et al., 2016). A unified evaluation system at the state level could be useful in providing insight into what works, rather than current state-directed evaluations that are episodic and only concentrate on accountability, which stifles program improvement (Vocke et al., 2016).

To examine the educational advancement and progression of migrant students, researchers must examine age, gender, frequency of migration, and whether the child is a first-generation or second-generation migrant. The variation or lack of programs at each site of attendance is also influential. Rouse (2013) explained that questions about how much language should be acquired during a timeframe and what goals and standards should be assigned to

migrant students still need to be addressed. As the diversity of migrant populations in the country swells, educational systems must be prepared to support the best practices to support students' optimal performance (Grisham-Brown & McCormick, 2013). Much more research is needed to establish those best practices.

Summary

Understanding the exclusive historical background, distinctive experiences, and complex barriers that oppress migrant families requires additional research. Those who have not migrated with limited resources, language skills, and knowledge would likely struggle to succeed. In looking for the best approaches for educating migrant students, it is necessary to consider what skills and capabilities they bring with them and use that to support instruction. Few studies have focused on the impressive gains that numerous migrant students have been able to achieve, thus hindering those looking for ways to aid them in overcoming impediments (Araujo, 2012). The “navigational capital,” or one’s ability to move successfully through institutions not designed for their success, is one that should be focused on as scholars continue to look for best practices in instructing migrant students (Araujo, 2012).

The research suggests there are too few studies on effective instruction of migrant students. Navarez-La Torre (2011) noted the difficulty of investigating how best to educate migrant ELLs, adding that the dilemma stems from students’ invisibility to teachers despite their growing numbers in each classroom. With the interruptions of their education due to migrating, coupled with the inability of schools to adequately meet their needs, there is much to be analyzed through interviews (Romanowski, 2003). Moreover, with the issue of refugees under scrutiny, research is needed that notes migrants’ positive contributions to the nation’s welfare and duplicate constructive efforts to bring each migrant student to their highest potential.

The research presented in this chapter illustrated the urgency in streamlining the constructs of migrant education so that each student from this unique population receives an equitable educational experience. Pinpointing effective approaches while identifying nominal and unsuccessful methodologies that have proven to be ineffective continues to require research. The current research relative to instructional strategies and working systems exclusive to migrant students is limited or out-of-date. There is an abundance of research focused on the various barriers that migrant students encounter (Miller, 2017; Romanowski, 2003; Torres, 2014; Sulkowski, 2017). Much attention has been given to cultural, linguistic, and mental health hindrances; however, the disproportionate interest in identifying the most effective approaches to minimizing these barriers is alarming. Identifying the struggles of migrant students is imperative to distinguishing and isolating programs, modalities, and tactics to curtail the obstacles and maximize the potential of every migrant student. The study at hand is intended to provide important insight into the lives of migrant farmworker students and what it takes to take them to higher levels of academic success.

Chapter 3: Methodology

The purpose of this qualitative study was to identify the best approaches to providing educational support to migrant students. This unique population attends schools across the country, and despite many success stories, the majority of these students fail to attain academic achievement in the classroom. Interviewing former migrant students and their teachers who have helped to shift perspectives relative to the capabilities of migrant students was instrumental in better understanding the practices that work best.

Yin (2014) defined case study research as empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth. Merriam (2009) explained that using a case study should be based on the purpose of the research and the research question. A case study can bring about change and progress (Merriam, 2009; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2014). The knowledge I gained about the lifestyles, experiences, and capabilities of migrant students may lead to improvements in their academic success rate.

Through comprehensive interviews, the participants addressed the circumstances connected to the problem. Centered on strategies and tactics that incited and encouraged accomplishment for some and not others, the findings represented avenues to implement in order to best support these students. In the study, qualitative data were collected through interviews to help to clarify the migrant lifestyle, its challenges, and how these challenges create barriers in the classroom. Creswell (2009) contended that effective interviews should not only be illustrative in detailing experience but reflective and critical. The interviews conducted with the migrant students allowed for introspective findings that could not be revealed using an alternate methodology.

Correspondingly, interviews of the former teachers of participating migrant students were intended to reveal best practices for teaching these distinct students. Teachers who are best prepared to acknowledge the experience of migrant farmworkers and their children can help eliminate stereotypes, low expectations, and injustices, which, in turn, may encourage students to perform better academically (Martinez, 1996).

This research study was guided by one focused research question: What are best practices of teachers in the provision of education for migrant students? Given the numerous challenges and barriers that affect the success of migrant students, focusing on this question produced authentic and valuable conclusions relative to reducing their rate of failure in the classroom. The goal of uncovering the most beneficial approaches to support their success was beneficial as educators continue to make efforts to understand their needs in order to better serve them.

Purpose and Design of the Study

Harrison, Birks, Franklin, and Mills (2017) stated case studies are selected for their uniqueness in being in depth studies of a distinct situation rather than a large-scale survey. Key to this study was selecting individuals who had genuine experiences relative to its focus and collecting information about the context of these stories. This case study research was intended to provide critical information into what catapults migrant learners to achievement status, while delineating approaches not proven as favorable or constructive.

With the purpose of disclosing the best approaches to use when teaching migrant students, I considered distinct and proven methods to enhance student performance at all grade levels. Diccico-Bloom and Crabtree (2006) contended that the ultimate purpose of the qualitative

research interview is to add to a body of knowledge that is conceptual and theoretical and is centered on the meanings that life experiences hold for those being interviewed.

An added component of the research included interviews of teachers who have worked directly with the migrant student participants. Their perspective based on experience and rates of success was critical when comparing and contrasting it to student opinions. Triangulating the findings between student and teacher perspectives aided in increasing the level of knowledge about the topic while simultaneously strengthening the researcher's position from a variety of aspects (Venables, 2014). With the intent of gaining feedback from a number of corresponding teacher participants, the interviews were in both electronic and face-to-face format, inclusive of targeted questions seeking perspectives on migrant education. These interviews were provided to former teachers of the participating migrant students noted as significant to their success. Interviews were conducted in an applicable manner to provide an avenue for unambiguous responses, which is atypical from other types of methodologies.

Research Population and Sampling Method

The focal population of this study was former K–12 migrant students from the local public schools system who had earned a college degree. Students taking part were currently or had been assigned official migrant status via identification and recruitment by migrant staff. While some participants may have had an expired migrant status because immobility over the course of three years, their experiences and points of view continued to be relevant to the inquiry. Student candidates were selected to participate based on their graduation status from a credentialed college or university. Enlistment of each interviewee was the result of the recruitment of qualifying participants responding to a flyer soliciting contributors (see Appendix C). Social media forums were also utilized to acquire candidates. To limit students' fears about

participation in the study impacting their immigration status, interviews were conducted at the location of their choice.

The teachers who took part had the participating migrant students in their classrooms and were recognized as notable in their success. Discovering how they accommodated their students' lack of instruction because of mobility was key to distinguishing what works from what does not. I selected teacher participants based on conversations with students. Teachers who were no longer local residents were contacted via email in order to set up appropriate interviews.

Student sampling was determined based on their verbal confirmation of having been formerly identified as migrant per their mobility. This confirmation assured that students had previously met the requirements to be identified as migrant and received migrant services. Efforts to interview students who had entered school at varying grade levels and with varying levels of success allowed for a reliable cross-section of participants. I interviewed 12 former migrant students, each 18 years or older, with varying levels of involvement in the migrant program and with migrant services

Additionally, teachers of migrant students also took part. Following student participant interviews, teachers named as influential and who had worked with participating migrant students were invited to take part in an interview. As part of an initial inquiry within the interview form (see Appendix B), teachers indicated their years of experience and degree level and specialty. They provided their perceptions about how such students interact, learn, and respond in the classroom. The study included six teachers from Grades K–12, with several years of experience at varying grade levels and subject areas.

Instrumentation

To gain a comprehensive understanding of the struggles and barriers migrant students and their families face, as well as what stimulates and motivates them to triumph, I took detailed and comprehensive notes during interviews. Interviews with students focused on their attitudes about school, with questions centered on past experiences, current goals, and their perceptions on what approaches work best and why (see Appendix A). As a former migrant student, my intent was to use a more reciprocal style interview where we approached equality in questioning, interpreting, and reporting. Sharing my own experiences with interviewees aided in making needed connections and for illustrating compassion and understanding. Creswell (2013) explained that this tactic maximizes the degree of openness and candidness for more accurate and honest responses.

Similar to the student interview form, I used a semistructured questionnaire when I interviewed teachers (see Appendix B). Teachers were asked to share their mindset on how best to teach migrant students, provide examples of specific experiences to support their responses, and provide input centered on what they see as critical to best support the problem. The initial section of the teacher interview asked them to provide years of teaching experience, grades taught, and related certifications. This information aided in validating their expertise and in defining patterns of thought based on like viewpoints.

Data Collection

The data collection process was in accordance with the parameters set forth through Concordia University. Upon obtaining approval from the appropriate Institutional Review Board, the comprehensive data collection followed all guidelines within the letter of recruitment for applicable teachers (see Appendix D). The details of each participant's interview were recorded

using an audio device to ensure accuracy and maintain the integrity of each response. Once I transcribed each audio recording, they were deleted as directed by the Concordia University Institutional Review Board.

One-on-one interviews were documented separately and noted as specific to each participant at a location of their choosing. Students and teachers were instructed to respond from their own mindset so that all responses were personalized and objective. The questions asked of each participant were explicit and defined with the intent of garnering genuine estimations on what they deemed as best practices for educating migrant students (see Appendices A & B). Dörnyei (2007) suggested that the interviewer should establish an appropriate atmosphere in order to foster ease for interviewees to encourage them to talk freely. To this point, I created a strong rapport with all participants, explained the focus of the interview and the need for honest and matter-of-fact responses. Interviews were scheduled for 60-minute blocks, but I allowed for additional time for participants who wished to provide further details about their experiences and perceptions.

Students were given the option of providing documents to help guide or supplement the interview. Presenting report cards, specific assignments, assessment results, certificates, photos or letters of recommendation was effective in helping them recollect and provide examples of positive aspects of their educational careers while lending themselves to experiences that can be noted within the interview. While these documents were not requested or collected for use in the study, any artifacts disclosed or discussed were noted in the transcripts in efforts to understand their role in motivating continued success. During the semistructured interviews, I had a chance for additional probing, elaboration, and requests for clarification. Once all questions were

presented, interviewees were given the opportunity to add any information or details that they felt were relevant but were not queried.

I attended to the ethics of interviewing the students. Cohen, Manion, and Morison (2007) explained that interviews themselves are intrusive as they delve into the private lives of respondents. As a result, the participant's time and sensitivity level of questions were valued. Participants were assured that participation was voluntary and the information collected was confidential. Furthermore, if any participant was more comfortable responding to the questions in Spanish, I offered to conduct the interview in Spanish with translation within the transcribing process. My fluency in the Spanish language added to the receptiveness and approachability with participants and positively supported any distress or concerns from participating. No interview took place in Spanish; however, some phrases in Spanish were sometimes used as interviewees described experiences. These insertions helped convey terms that were unknown in the English language.

Teacher interviews were facilitated using guiding questions (see Appendix B) prepared to steer the interview toward meeting the objectives of the research. Teachers were given the option of viewing the guiding questions prior to the face-to-face interview in order to help prompt their stance on educating migrant students. An audio recording device was also used during teacher interviews to ensure accuracy when transcribing. All interview notes and recordings were expanded and transcribed within 24 hours of each interview for accuracy and to diminish errors or omissions.

Identification of Attributes

The attributes that defined and guided this case study included student levels of engagement, motivation and achievement, teacher approaches, teacher attitudes toward migrant

students, and their willingness to ensure student success. The skills, training, and experiences of each teacher, coupled with the capabilities and level of aspiration from the students, shaped the results of the study, as the aim was to connect migrant student success with teacher approaches.

While the study was centered on identifying best practices for working with migrant students, distinctive attributes of the teachers and the students interviewed were compared to make connections within both participant groups. Students with high self-esteem are more likely to have positive relationships with adults and teachers (Orth, Robins, & Widaman, 2012). These relationships and their related social outcomes affect students not only in the classroom, but in their future educational and career outcomes (Orth et al., 2012). Linking teacher approaches to student engagement and student attitudes to motivating approaches was useful in supporting efficacious methodologies.

Data Analysis Procedures

This focused research study was qualitative and used inductive content analysis to support the development of theory and identify themes through recordings and other verbal material. Implied in its name, this type of analysis relies on reasoning inductively, where themes emerge from the data through repeated examination and comparison (Saldaña, 2009). The use of inductive analysis made for a clear-cut and uncomplicated manner to arrive at a conclusion via evaluation questions that are purposeful and deliberated. Strauss (2008) noted the methodology of qualitative research is suitable for researchers intending to ascertain and/or theorize prominent issues. To discover what approaches work best for migrant students, I conducted interviews to clarify perspectives and misconceptions. Via detailed interviews and centered, meaningful discussions, the qualitative investigations streamlined the realities while bringing definition to the research question.

Once the transcriptions of all interviews were completed, I began open coding the data in order to begin to reflect on and take ownership of the data (Saldaña, 2015). In reading through the data, relevant words, phrases, or sections were labeled. Creswell (2013) suggested coding by recording significant statements, and tabulating the meaning from the statements separately. Following this protocol, I focused attention to common annotations during the interviews and the transcription process in order to code significant statements. Doing so was helpful in forming overarching frames of analysis. These general ideas allowed me to classify the data according to guiding frames of reference. Using the frames of analysis approach when reviewed the data supports in providing sound results when identifying relationship within data as a whole (Amos Hatch, 2002). Implementing a strategic system of classifying, coding, and organizing the themes that emerged, while concurrently evaluating the parts of the text against the whole allowed me to see significant patterns to be outlined within the findings.

Interviews

The interviews utilized were semistructured, with an opportunity for participants to provide their relevant points of view on what approaches they believed best benefit the educational growth and learning of migrant students. A worthy qualitative interview includes the two key features of having a natural flow and being rich in detail (Dörnyei, 2007). These specifically characterized interviews can be achieved only when the interviewer is concentrated on listening and not just speaking.

Interviews with each participant were recorded, transcribed, and coded for patterns and themes. Coding was fundamental in drawing conclusions and reaching a finite consensus on findings (Charmaz, 2006). Assembling the results relative to common phrases and significant claims supported the process of a holistic analysis. Both the student interviews and the teacher

interviews were dissected for parallelisms with the aim of answering the research question. The coding for these interviews was initially used to separate what each successful migrant student sees as contributory to their success. Follow-up coding for subgroups allowed for classification of academic experiences, teaching/learning models, curriculum, and personal impressions and influences.

The analysis and interpretation of the data was a fluid, thorough process which involved the steps of rereading responses, coding and categorizing, and identifying patterns and connections within the categories. I used an Excel spreadsheet to help simplify the process while working to track the data and group key identifiers for linking associations. Creswell (2013) warned that the data that can be generated from interviews can be voluminous. Constant checks of notes and data were required to ensure that the findings coincide with the data. Focusing on the central research question and the data that were most directly connected to the questions helped to ensure that the findings coincided with the data and that the information included was relevant to the specific content.

Limitations of the Research Design

Every study is vulnerable to limitations that could affect the process and findings (Creswell, 2013). The limitations in this study include the small sample size. Patton (2015) stated the sample size is influenced by resources available and the objectives of the study. In this study, the participants, while limited in number, were unrestricted in providing thorough and purposeful interviews.

Going into a research study with biases and presumptions can be a limitation. As a former migrant student with my own sentiments regarding the research question, I needed to remain objective and withheld judgment with any of the responses. Understanding that both

times and expectations have changed since my participation as a migrant student was necessary so that the research could be conducted without partiality. Clarifying such researcher bias from the inception is important to the reader's understanding of the researcher's position as well as any assumptions that may impact the findings (Creswell, 2013).

I interviewed only former migrant students who are now adults. While extending the study to include school-aged migrant students would have added to the range of possible research conclusions, such students might have provided results that were less genuine and more pandering. Making the decision to interview former migrant students who have had success supported responses that were reflective, mature, and based in comprehensive experience. Moreover, because many of the participants may not have been active migrant students at the time of interview, their recollection of events over time may have diminished the reality of their responses.

Validation

Credibility

With the general desire to maintain validity and credibility, specific measures were taken to adhere to Concordia University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) policies and protocols and protecting the confidentiality of each participant. As a prerequisite, each participating student and teacher were provided with information assuring them that their involvement was voluntary and that they may withdraw from participating at any time. Creswell and Miller (2000) indicated that validity is the strength of qualitative research and is based on the accuracy of the findings from the researcher's standpoint. Thus, the accuracy of the information collected can only be acceptable when all participants have a clear understanding of their expectations, roles, and candor without restrictions. A clear understanding of the goal of the

research was vital. The population sample of migrant students selected were former migrant students confirmed through previous enrollment records with the district's migrant education office. This ensured that each student interviewed had authentic migrant experiences and was relating information based on their own experiences as a migrant.

Dependability

Yin (2014) explained that external validity results when thoughtful questions are asked and good listening is exercised. An element of dependability is founded on spending a sufficient amount of time with each participant. Allowing each interviewee to respond fully and providing them with ample time to consider each question enhanced reliability. To check on the reliability of the interpretation of the responses, member checks were applied. The member checking process involved sharing data, analysis, interpretations and conclusions with all participants in order to verify and judge their accuracy and credibility (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Member checks took place during and after each interview. As the researcher, I restated or summarized information and then questioned the participant to determine accuracy. This method of summarizing or restating responses will allow one to see whether responses have been interpreted with utmost accuracy (Harper & Cole, 2012).

To intensify credibility, I also triangulated the data (Creswell, 2013). Data source triangulation refers to the corroboration of multiple sources of data (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Yin 2014). Interviewing both former migrant students and their former teachers provided different perspectives on the same topic. Angen (2000) cited data triangulation as utilizing multiple sources of data to support research findings. In a qualitative study, data triangulation is a valid method for ensuring that the research is comprehensive, and well-developed. It also ensures that the research study grants a deeper understanding of the phenomenon. Upon

triangulating the data sources, it is understood that when all sources looking at the issue, regardless of their point of view, produce similar outcomes, then the dependability of the results are enhanced.

In each study, researchers should establish the protocols and procedures necessary for a study to be considered worthy of consideration by readers (Amankwaa, 2016). Trustworthiness within qualitative research is centered on establishing credibility, transferability, confirmability and dependability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Trustworthiness is a useful modus that researchers can persuade themselves and readers that their research findings are worthy of attention (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Remaining focused on ensuring the credibility of the process, supported the value, trustworthiness and reliability of this research and its findings.

Expected Findings

Expected findings included isolating key best practices for working with migrant students for optimal positive results. Identifying what works best for this unique student population can help future teachers who may not have experience with the needs of such students. As a former migrant student, I needed to mitigate my bias as a successful student. I could not expect that my narrative would mirror that of each participant and needed to remain objective and balanced. I expected that those teachers who have found success with working with migrant students would exhibit a positive attitude and would relay practices that incorporated encouragement and self-efficacy. Simultaneously, I expected that the successful students interviewed who found success in the classroom, would describe themselves as eager to learn, with persevering qualities while citing inspiring and emboldening educators as central to their achievement.

Using interviews to collect data, I expected responses would expose viewpoints, judgments, and sentiments relative to how migrant students learn best and the distinction

between working and nonworking strategies to best meet their academic needs. As perspectives were revealed, it was necessary to categorize data based on commonalities. Collectively, it was expected that the study would discover specific and defined methods and approaches for migrant teachers to use with their students in return for positive results. In the future, I plan to provide educators and administrators with pertinent knowledge to help them support migrant students effectively. Consequently, cultural, language, and social barriers will also be disclosed in order to better close the achievement gap.

Ethical Issues

Being ethical throughout the research process is essential in ensuring that the results are deemed credible and trustworthy throughout the scientific community (Miller, Birch, & Jessop, 2012). From protecting private information from all participants to solidifying proper consent from the IRB, I took measures to maintain the integrity of the study. All interviewees were assured their participation in the study was strictly voluntary and that all responses would be confidential via the use of code names versus actual names. Conducting necessary interviews in Spanish for those who might require it added a layer of transparency by warranting that all directions, expectations, and goals are clear and well-defined.

Prior to organizing formal interviews, I partook in efforts to have participants see the process as confidential. I met with or spoke with the recommended participants beforehand and gave details about the study's elements, the process, and participant requirements. Answering all questions while emphasizing confidentiality aided in heightening awareness and decreasing apprehensions relative to the study. I assured them their identities would be protected so the study would be conducted ethically from the commencement of the research and throughout the process. At the onset, it was explained to participants that their taking part was voluntary and

they may refuse to continue at any time. Data from all interviews were stored in a locked file cabinet and shredded once coded and analyzed.

Conflict of Interest Assessment

As the interviewer from the small local community, I assured that I had no conflict of interest between myself and the participants. This was accomplished through a random selection of student participants from a bank of former migrant students and teachers of migrant students. Once they were notified of their eligibility and my desire for them to participate, I briefed candidates on the study and their role moving forward. At this point, candidates had the opportunity to elect not to participate. I adhered to the questions outlined in Appendix A and B without veering into topics unrelated to the study's focus. Moreover, I avoided conflicts of interest by confirming I had no personal relationship with any of the participants or members of the Concordia University Institutional Review Board.

Researcher's Position

As one who has experience as both a migrant learner and a migrant teacher, selecting this topic of study originated with a genuine desire to understand how to ensure that migrant students receive beneficial instruction. I have faced both negative and positive experiences in the academic setting. I believe that educators who see all students as capable learners, regardless of their background, economic status or capabilities, will reap the most rewarding results. Because of my personal experiences as a migrant student, I anticipated illustrating a state of reflexivity when interpreting the study results. Berger (2015) described reflexivity in qualitative research as being exhibited when the researchers can share some of the same experiences with the participants in his or her study.

Many schools and school districts that serve migrant students have established programs and practices to help with the transition and education of such students. Although their efforts are well intended, much more can be done. The efforts currently in place can be ineffective due to personal biases that continue to exist about the migrant population. Jasis and Marriott (2010) explained that “Often, lower school performance by Latino students from low-income families is accompanied by negative perceptions on the part of their teacher about the parents’ role in their children’s schooling” (p. 129). These perceptions have the ability to stifle the academic growth of migrant students. On this factor, it is obligatory that we assess what and how migrant students feel about their connections with their teachers.

I intended to attempt to set aside my biases and personal discernments and be attentive to individual student responses without injecting subjective opinions. The researcher’s position is that while findings may be in accordance with outlined predictions, new approaches and/or tactics may be realized through participant interviews.

Summary

The ultimate goal of this study was to identify a set of beneficial approaches to working with migrant students. This unique population has distinctive experiences and barriers that must be addressed carefully and strategically. In this chapter I provided a detailed outline of the process I used to realize the study’s objective. I explained my rationale for selecting the qualitative approach and provided details of the sample population, data collection and analysis techniques, limitations and delimitations, ethical issues, and my position as the researcher. In Chapter 4 I will provide the findings.

Chapter 4: Data Analysis and Results

This qualitative case study was designed to identify best practices in migrant education. I conducted individual dialogues with former migrant students who are now professionals with college degrees to gain insight into their perspective relative to teaching and learning. As part of thorough interviews, the 12 participants shared their experiences growing up as migrant students and the struggles that they encountered in the classroom. Additionally, participants acknowledged former teachers who they recognized as instrumental in delivering distinct approaches that supported them in their success. Six of those teachers were also interviewed in order to gain their specialized estimation on methodologies and strategies that best served their unique migrant student population. The study was centered on the following question: What are best practices by teachers in the provision of education for migrant students?

In this chapter, I present a detailed description of the two sample groups who participated in the study, the research method, and the process for data collection and its analysis. The first sample group consisted of 12 former migrant students. Seven of the student interviews were completed face to face, and the other five were completed over the telephone. The student interview form was used to structure the interview (see Appendix A). In response to Question 4, students told me about their favorite teacher or teachers and what made them special. The second sample group consisted of six of those former teachers students identified with Question 4. Two teacher interviews took place face to face and four took place over the phone. The teachers were provided the interview questions beforehand, but all interviews were semistructured. More details about the participants appear in the following sections, after which I review the research method. The results are provided in the sections that follow.

Description of the Sample

Twelve former migrant students who are currently college graduate professionals were asked to participate in the interview process. The select students were invited as a result of requests for referrals via social media. Prior to confirmation to take part, the participants each acknowledged having experienced migrating throughout their education as well as graduation from a 4-year program with a minimum of a bachelor degree. Six of the student participants were male and six were female. Those students who were in the local area were interviewed face to face and those who were out of state agreed to be a part of a phone interview.

As participants were interviewed, they were probed on former teachers whom they felt were instrumental in their success. Each student named one or two teachers and the names of those teachers were noted. I located six teachers who agreed to take part in the study. These teachers make up the second group of participants. Their input as teachers of former migrant students were used to isolate common themes shared with the initial group of student participants.

Description of Participants

In this section, I described the student participants first and then the teacher participants. This section provides a comprehensive description of both students and teacher participants outlining their contributions to the study. The following section provides distinct accounts of each student participant's encounters as a migrant student. Background information appears in Table 1, including their degrees, the various states that each of them migrated to and approximate number of schools attended.

Following the student descriptors is Table 2, which outlines teacher participant capacity. It provides a quick reference of the years of experience, grade levels taught, and

certification/degree levels. Table 2 is immediately followed by brief descriptors of each of the teacher participants. Their fundamental philosophies on educating migrant students is critical to how they worked to successfully educate their migrant students. Their approaches are presented in greater detail within the identification of common themes.

Description of Student Participants

Chelsey. A graduate of the University of Notre Dame, with a master's degree in education, Chelsey and her family migrated to pick both watermelon and corn in the state of Georgia during the summer months. She cited her parents as instrumental in her success as they saw an importance in education. They illustrated this by only having her and her siblings migrate during non-school months, whenever possible. Teachers who taught her to set small attainable goals and that pushed her to respond and participate in class discussions were noted as positively influential. For Chelsey, success in school was catapulted by teachers who worked to not make her feel less than anyone else. Her favorite teachers acknowledged her and saw her migrant lifestyle as something that made her unique, rather than use it to take away from who she was. As a migrant student, however, not all of her experiences were positive. "I remember feeling really out of place, like I was behind. I was always less likely to respond during lessons, because I felt like I hadn't built that rapport and was scared of my teachers."

Table 1

Overview of Student Participants

Student Pseudonym	Number of schools attended as a K–12 migrant student	States where education was received	College attended / degree(s) earned
Chelsey	8–10	GA, FL	University of Notre Dame Bachelor's/Master's in Education
Jesus	6–8	FL, GA	Colgate University Bachelor's in Psychology
Dina	10–12	FL, GA, MI	Florida Gulf Coast University Bachelors in Social Work
Bernardo	3–5	FL, SC	University of Florida Bachelor's in Business Administration
Adriana	8–10	FL, GA, DE, MI	Michigan State University Bachelor's in Human Development and Family Studies
Juan	12–15	FL, GA, SC, NC, TN, VA	Ohio State University Bachelor's in Criminology/Sociology
Yasmin	12–15	FL, GA, SC, NC, TN	Nova Southeastern University Bachelor's of Science in Nursing
Maria	8–10	FL, SC	Florida Gulf Coast University Bachelor's/Master's in Education
Fernando	12–15	FL, TN	Florida International University Bachelor's/Master's in Architecture
Luis	8–10	GA, FL	Michigan State University Bachelor's in Interdisciplinary Studies
Joaquin	10–12	FL, GA, SC, MI	Florida State University Bachelor's/Master's in Accounting
Marianna	12–15	FL, GA, TN, VA	Michigan State University Bachelor's in Criminology

Chelsey taught middle school in Texas for several years and now serves as a human resources manager for a statewide nonprofit that provides childcare and education to several thousand migrant children each year. Reflecting on her education, Chelsey affirmed that today's teachers need to create discussions on diversity so that everyone is represented. In her estimation, teachers who don't invest in each one of their students are not investing in themselves as effective educators. She added that teaching migrant students the value of having grit and to not be deterred by the constant changes in schools can be influential in helping them beat the odds.

You have to visualize your path and that is part of the challenge especially when your parents don't understand what it takes or means to be successful educationally. You are overwhelmed and often don't know where to start. Having a visual and setting goals of what need to be done in order to get from here to there is essential.

Jesus. Currently an operations manager at Amazon, Jesus most respected the educators who pushed him while refusing to accept excuses. His most memorable teacher catered to the varying learning styles and Jesus respected the manner in which he would interact with all students. Never feeling left out, this particular educator was consistently uplifting, boosting his esteem. Learning English was a barrier for him, but he accomplished it as a result of inducements and motivational experiences. Jesus appreciated recognitions and awards, academic competitions, reading incentive programs and opportunities that encouraged him to contend for accolades. "Getting a certificate for reaching a goal did so much for me," he recalled. "Every time I earned one it reminded me that I was capable. I still have every single one of them." Never wanting to let anyone down, especially those who emboldened him, he acknowledged that when teachers go above and beyond, it creates a sense of reciprocation.

Jesus asserted that teachers of migrant students must be willing to understand their perspective and nurture them towards seeing themselves as capable. Always appreciating extrinsic rewards, he also regarded intrinsic support as critical. Grateful for graduating both high school and college, both were achievements that he never saw as happening early in his education. The teachers who built him up with confidence made all of the difference. Obtaining his bachelor's degree from Colgate University, at the time of the interview he was working toward his MBA.

Dina. Dina's father passed away when she was just 3 years old. The migrant life was all her mother knew, and it was the life that they continued to live in order to keep food on the table. Traveling from Florida to Georgia to Michigan and then back to Florida, Gina remembered picking varying crops alongside her mother. Because she often missed school, Gina always felt she had to work twice as hard. "Playing catch-up in school seemed to be how I always lived my life growing up. It was draining, it was discouraging, and it never seemed fair." She had decided to quit school in the ninth grade until Ms. Nelson, a speech teacher, helped her discover her talents and see herself as capable. Ms. Nelson pushed her to apply to college. She was accepted to Florida Gulf Coast University where she earned her bachelor's degree in social work. Dina is now a graduate student at the University of South Florida working toward her master's degree via an advanced standing program, which will allow her to graduate in 12 months.

Dina attributed her accomplishments to her mother, coupled with the services of the migrant resource center at her high school. Her mother constantly reminded her that "education is the way out." Although her mother was seldom able to attend parent conferences, Dina knew that her mother valued the benefits of teaching and learning. The support that her mother could not provide was subsidized by a resource center housed at her high school campus. Specifically

designed for migrant students, the center provided her with school supplies and access to technology and tutoring. “Having all of the necessary resources is important,” she asserted. “When you have what you need to get the job done, then you are on the same playing field with everyone else. You no longer feel like an outcast.” Dina credited site-based programs like the one at her alma mater for making sure that she was equipped with what she needed, while simultaneously alleviating the stresses of her already harrowing lifestyle.

Bernardo. Serving today as the vice president of a prominent local bank branch, Bernardo cited his work ethic as his greatest attribute. Working in the fields and migrating year after year while in elementary school opened his eyes to what defines hard work. He was retained in first grade because his family’s summer migration pattern did not allow him to attend summer school. In high school he recalled his guidance counselor providing much needed emotional support after being told by a teacher that he was not cut out for college. The guidance counselor’s guidance provoked him to apply and eventually earn a scholarship. He explained, “Those migrant students who dropout have the work ethic and grit to achieve, but they don’t have anyone there to tell them what they need and the resources available to get there.”

Immediately after high school graduation, Bernardo was diagnosed with cancer. For most, this would signal the end to a positive future, but after coming this far, quitting was no longer an option. As planned, he moved four hours away to live the next four years in his college dorm. He began his first semester of college while undergoing chemotherapy, and his desire to prove himself pushed him through to graduation. Today, Bernardo holds a bachelor’s degree in business administration from the University of Florida in with specific licensures from the Florida School of Banking. The favorite part of his job involves community involvement. Giving back to others who are now where he once was is what drives him to continue to dream big. “As

adults who have been through serious struggles, we have to make the time to reach out and tell the next generation that they too can go far. The right words can go far.”

Adrianna. The recollection of travelling to Georgia each year to pick watermelons was still vibrant in Adrianna’s memory. The family tried leaving school a month or two early each year in order to bring back watermelons to sell at the farmer’s market so they would not have to move over and over each year. Her family would take turns travelling to bring back loads of watermelons, simultaneously keeping her from attending school. During this time period she was either picking watermelons or selling them. Adrianna credited her self-confidence from her days of selling. “Talking to people I had never met and persuading them to buy from us really got me out of my shell. This is how I learned to speak out and developed my outgoing personality.” This poise and self-assurance drove her to apply to college. After being accepted to Michigan State University as part of their College Assistance Migrant Program (CAMP), Adrianna continued her employment as a migrant farmworker when she could not find a summer job. Having earned a bachelor’s degree in human development and family studies, she now wanted to work with students and families to educate and provide them with the resources necessary to break the cycle of poverty. She is currently employed as a postsecondary advocate where she supervises and tracks the academic success of 75 minority students. Her role allowed her to be a motivator and advocate for students who may not know where to find the help that they need.

In middle school and high school, Adrianna was extremely interested in history. She maintains that teachers of migrant students should work purposefully to keep classrooms diverse, using the students’ backgrounds as teaching points. Adding that many history textbooks are one-sided and that various cultures are not portrayed across the content areas, she believed that today’s educators must provide them with such experiences even if it requires digging. She

acknowledged parental support as instrumental to her accomplishments. She clarified that while parents are key, migrant students often must push themselves due to the sacrifices that are often made to make ends meet. She asserted:

Teachers often think less of our parents because they don't show up to parent night or report card pickup night. It isn't that education is not a priority. In fact it is the opposite. If they don't work, bills don't get paid and their children suffer. Teachers need to realize that not everyone works a 9 to 5 schedule and can take off in the middle of the day to meet with a teacher.

Juan. Having earned a bachelor's degree in criminology and sociology from Ohio State University, Juan now serves as case manager in the Ohio attorney general's office in the consumer protection department. He chose this profession to help those who do not have the resources or capabilities to help themselves. He connected his work of today as a give-back for all of those who did the same for him and his family. Enduring the necessity to travel from Georgia to South Carolina and then to Tennessee and Virginia to harvest tomatoes and peppers, he needed huge support to fill the gaps when he reenrolled in school. The teachers who saw him as more than a temporary student made an impact on him.

Strangely enough, I was always grateful to be a migrant student. Travelling was how I learned about tolerance and tenacity. I understood that it was part of what my family did and I could either hate it or embrace it.

While he conceded that his parents always pushed him to persevere, he acknowledged the certain type of teacher that stirred his thirst to succeed. Animated teachers who made him feel no less than his classmates and who were consistently positive were his favorite.

Juan considered it an honor to have experienced the life of a migrant student. The strong friendships that he made were just as numerous as the schools he attended, especially those made at the high school level. He credits school fieldtrips and engaging classroom experiences for exciting him instead of distressing him when it was time to change schools. Knowing that a new environment meant new opportunities to learn and see things helped to keep him enthused. A lover of books, Juan always had one in hand and appreciated those teachers who understood his passion and made sure that he had plenty of books to read as he traveled to his next venture. The teachers who respected him as a genuine person and not just a transient student helped to shape not only his personality but his candid zest for life.

Yasmin. Following the harvest was an opportunity for Yasmin to meet new people, explore new cultures, and see the “real world.” Yasmin explained that tackling adversity with an optimistic attitude was key to her earning her Bachelor of Science degree in nursing from Nova Southeastern University. She remembered always starting school out of state and then coming back to her home as soon as the local crops were ready for harvesting. Spanish was her primary language and she recalled how it impeded her learning. “It wasn’t enough that I missed school for weeks at a time. Not being able to speak English made everything so much harder.” Coupled with the learning gaps from the constant migration, her struggle was multiplied. Through it all, she set goals for herself and then raised the bar each time she met them. The goal of earning no grade lower than a C soon transformed to earning straight A’s.

Yasmin cites her success in school as being dependent on each one of her teachers. If a teacher treated her well and made purposeful attempts at helping guide her to catch up and master skills, she returned the favor by giving her all.

Failing or succeeding for me was often dependent on the teacher. For some reason, the teachers who were kind and patient were the ones who inspired me to push myself harder. The teachers that I remember most are the ones who sat me down and made sure I was on track to move forward. They would even give up their own lunch time to help me.

Explaining that a love for something pushes one to transmit it to others, Yasmin asserted that students have to be willing to work as well. Feeling accomplished, she was always compelled to repay her parents for their sacrifices. This was always her motivation. In respect to teachers of migrant students, she expects that they must take the time to understand the situation of their students, provide them with appropriate resources and treat them as able and knowledgeable.

Maria. A teacher today, it was Maria's educational experiences as a migrant student that stirred her to ensure that today's migrant students receive the quality experiences that they whole-heartedly deserve. She remembered that learning English was one of her first goals. Begging her older brother to teach her at every available opportunity, she became fluent rapidly, allowing her to excel in school despite changing schools from year to year. Migrating from Florida to South Carolina, whenever and wherever work was available, she never felt treated different. On the contrary, she always felt that the non-Migrant students always wanted to hear and learn about her lifestyle. While she admitted that her experience was not the norm, she is well aware that for most migrant students, the experience is highly dependent on the teacher and student resilience.

I was lucky in that my mom knew the importance of education and she did what she could to make sure that I didn't fail. She would often call on the neighbors who were a bit more proficient to come over and tutor me."

As a teacher with a master's degree in curriculum in instruction from the University of Florida, Maria cognized the need to hold all students to the same high standard. She explained that all students are qualified to learn and progress; however, some students who have gaps in learning may need extra time or support. "A good teacher meets the students where they are, regardless of where they come from." she stated. While teaching gives Maria much satisfaction, she feels the need to leave the walls of her classroom and go out into the community to mentor and get involved. She believed this should be the practice of all teachers in the hope of building strong rappsorts with both students and families. In her estimation, compassion and empathy can do much to propel migrant student engagement and feelings of self-worth.

Fernando. Enrolling in three different schools each school year was the norm for Fernando's family. Following the seasons of the harvest was their only means of income considering both of his parents were high school dropouts. Growing up, he would have never thought he would hold a master's degree in architecture. Referencing his unpredictable and always changing locale, Fernando described his frustrations with not being able to commit to much of anything. "Playing sports or joining a club was never an option because I never knew how long I was going to stay in one place. It was the same for making friends or getting comfortable in a classroom." Luckily for Fernando, he found his passion in art and found it to be familiar from school to school yet varied enough to excite him as he continuously migrated.

His skills in math, coupled with his adoration for all things art, is what steered him to seek a future as an architect. "Working in the fields taught me that I didn't want to get a job just to earn money. It pushed me to aspire to do something that I loved." Fernando remembered the first time his parents genuinely considered his art skills as impressive and backed his decision to pursue a college career. Despite their financial struggles, his parents always made sure that he

had what he needed so that he would never consider calling it quits. Fernando noted that teachers of migrant students should always take this same stance, explaining, “With all of the changes with moving, it is hard to prioritize school. Teachers need to understand that there are barriers and provide available resources so that the transitions are as smooth as possible.”

Luis. As a child Luis never thought he would attend college. His family consistently traveled to the Florida panhandle to pick tomatoes and then back to South Florida to harvest saw palmetto berries. He was active in sports, but they never took priority over his responsibility of pitching in to help pay the family’s bills. His ultimate goal was graduating high school, until he began to use the resources of his high school’s migrant center, which gave him resources like paper and use of the computer lab; more importantly, the staff understood his predicament but believed in his capabilities. Although he was fluent in English, his confidence was minimal, sensing that farm work and agriculture would be his career. “The teachers in the migrant center knew how to make me see myself as more than a farmworker. They even met with my parents so that they could understand the opportunities available to me.”

The Migrant Center connected him with Michigan State University and their college assistance migrant program (CAMP). Nervous about the transition, the university’s CAMP program provided a liaison as well as a mentor to ensure that Luis never felt alone or overwhelmed. “Not only did the program help pay for my books and other expenses, but they also helped me to get acclimated and comfortable with the college lifestyle.” Today Luis holds a bachelor’s degree in interdisciplinary studies and hopes to move forward towards a focus on psychology. His future aspiration is to provide critical therapy to individuals who need it most. “One-on-one help is what got me to where I am today. The fact that caring people took the time to support and encourage me made all of the difference in the world.”

Joaquin. Becoming a certified public accountant was always Joaquin's dream job. Doing it in our nation's capital, for an elite finance company, while earning more in a month than his parents earned in a year was nothing that he could have imagined. "I am an example of hard work paying off," is how he described his success story. Joaquin's parents came to the United States from Mexico, and Spanish was his first language. The oldest of six children, he was the first to toil in the fields, picking tomatoes alongside his parents. He remembers being paid by the bucket and calculating his family's earnings in his head as they worked. "We were paid 25 cents for each bucket of tomatoes that we picked. I was constantly tallying how much we had made and how much more we needed to pick to meet our daily goal." An aficionado of mathematics, numbers always excited him. Because he was good at them, he knew that he could use his skills to excel in school and seek a career relative to his adoration.

As he learned English, he came to understand that math was universal. Shifting from school to school, he never worried about not doing well in math class.

Being good at math gave me a sense of confidence. Even though I wasn't the best reader, I was always the best in math. The other students would ask me for help in math and I made lots of friends this way. I never felt like I didn't fit in or as if I wasn't as valued.

Joaquin believes that because of his strong number sense, teachers never saw him as incompetent. In retrospect, he sees his migrant experiences as positive and is thankful that attending various schools allowed him to see himself as adept in a broader setting. "When I saw that I was good at math everywhere I went, I learned a lot about my capacity." He asserts that when teachers of migrant students treat them as able and teachable, they will rise to the challenge. While attending Florida State University, Joaquin took on tutoring dozens of fellow students in all areas of math and recalled how these efforts helped to subsidize his scarce income.

Marianna. Marianna described herself as “intuitive and curious.” With a degree in criminology, both of these descriptors were perfect for her choice of career. Now working as a juvenile probation officer, she acknowledged her attributes for helping her succeed as a young student. In her work with the criminal justice system, she tells others about her struggles and help them to understand that hard work and perseverance is the only formula for success. Marianna came to the United States from Mexico when she was 11 years old. Her first school quickly immersed her in the English language and she recalled having to pick it up quickly in order to survive. “There was no one to translate for me and my teacher talked to me a lot with her hands,” she recalled. “I always wanted to learn, so I wasn’t shy and used the limited English that I did know to get by.” Within a couple of years Marianna learned the language and showed promise in all academic areas. Her best memories involved learning new phrases and teaching her non-Hispanic peers Spanish.

The teachers who did not accept excuses and challenged her to make gains were instrumental in Maria’s success.

It was just me and my mom and while she worked the fields I had to pull my weight in the classroom. No matter how hard school seemed, I always knew that her long days in the hot sun were always harder.

Because she was an avid learner by nature, Marianna noted the transitions from school to school were not difficult. Her curiosity allowed her to explore and learn from her new surroundings. Her optimistic attitude reminded her of how lucky she was to be part of a country that she respected and appreciated. Her life in Mexico was a world of difference. Her mother fled the country and her abusive father and consistently promised her that everything was going to be okay. Only in high school did Marianna learn her academic performance was on par to get her into college. She

always did well in school, but always thought that she would never be able to catch up with her peers. Still speaking with an obvious accent and never learning how to write in cursive, she just assumed that graduating high school would be her greatest achievement. Unique services provided to migrant students in her high school swiftly changed her mindset. Tutoring for college admission tests prepared her well. Additionally, the migrant program provided her with a tour of several colleges, which worked to intensify her desire to further her education.

Description of Teacher Participants

Mrs. Sanchez. The crux of Mrs. Sanchez's mindset regarding migrant students is that academic achievement is not beyond reach with proper parental support, school resources, strong and structured classrooms, and their innate drive. According to Sanchez,

Being outperformed by their non-migrant peers is no longer the norm. Every student has had some type of struggle, but what is unique about migrant students is that they have been faced with struggles and learned early on about work ethic and grit.

A former migrant student herself, Mrs. Sanchez realized how her experiences in farm-work molded her into the person that she is today. She is a prime example of the capabilities of migrant students and understands that building strong rapport and going beyond the walls of the classroom are the recipe for motivation. Her idea that bringing learning to life is derived from the various learning she acquired travelling the agricultural route and experiencing new communities.

Table 2

Overview of Teacher Participants

Teacher pseudonym	Number of years teaching migrant students	Grade levels taught	Degree(s) certifications endorsements
Mrs. Sanchez	10–16	K–8	Bachelor’s Degree in Elementary Education; M.A.Ed. in Curriculum & Instruction/ Instructional Technology
Mrs. Rickard	4–9	3–12	Bachelor’s Degree in Journalism English 6–12 Certification, K–6 Certification, Middle Grades Integrated Certification
Mr. Gonzalez	25+	9–12	Bachelor’s Degree in Physical Education and Health
Mrs. Garza	17–24	9–12	Bachelor’s Degree in Spanish M.A.Ed in School Counseling
Mr. Wells	25+	6–12	Bachelor’s Degree in Computer Science; 6– 12 Certification; M.A.Ed in Mathematics
Mr. Bodisson	10–16	6–8	Bachelor’s Degree in Education, English 6– 12 Certification, Middle Grades Integrated 5–9, ESOL Endorsement, Gifted Endorsement, Reading Endorsement M.A.Ed in Education–Reading M.A.Ed in Educational Leadership

Mrs. Rickard. Understanding the reasons for learning gaps in migrant students is the first step for Mrs. Rickard whenever providing services to her migrant students. Mistakenly believing that migrant work ended after the Great Depression, she was fascinated and intrigued when she taught her first group of migrant students. As she worked to identify learning gaps, she was frustrated with the tracking of data. “I wish that the education system was better at tracking student progress across district and state lines. Teachers who receive new migrant students have

no idea what curriculum, standards or assessments were used with them.” Additionally, Mrs. Rickard saw the current political atmosphere as an additional challenge for migrant students. She noted the fear of deportation and family separation increases stress and anxiety of frequently moving and changing schools.

Mr. Gonzalez. Currently a lead resource teacher in a high school migrant center, Mr. Gonzalez worked daily with migrant students in an effort to close the gap and best prepare them for graduation. The philosophy in the center is founded on individualization. Gonzalez believed the most successful students are the ones that take full advantage on the resources available to them. While some of the migrant students that he had worked with must be strongly encouraged to use its services, those who triumph are the ones who take full advantage of all of their services, enthusiastically and willingly. Self-motivation is key and is what can make or break a student’s exit from high school.

Mrs. Garza. As a high school counselor, Mrs. Garza recognized the need to get to know her migrant population. Establishing an open line of communication, not only with the students but with their parents, so that everyone understands the power of education, the available resources and the need to set goals is her methodology for creating success stories. As she saw it, “The key is to develop an atmosphere, from school to home, where the migrant students feels comfortable and understood.” Garza believed that with the right motivation, guidance, and opportunities, migrant students have infinite professional potential. She asserted that migrant parents are no different than non-migrant parents in that they want what is best for their children. “They know how hard migrant work can be and they certainly don’t want that for their kids.”

Mr. Wells. Working with migrant students for more than 25 years, Mr. Wells had witnessed the dependent learning style that most of them possess. “They will invest in you as

long as you are personally invested,” he asserted. Mr. Wells found that many rewards come from educating this unique group; however, he acknowledged that it can be very taxing emotionally. “I found that in addition to teaching them it is important to take an interest in their lives.” Additionally, Wells believed if a teacher understands a student’s home life the teacher can better relate to the student’s needs. Wells suggested that rigid classroom plans and too much structure can put them in unfamiliar situations, which in turn make the teaching and learning more difficult.

Mr. Bodisson. Now an assistant principal, Mr. Bodisson used his former classroom experience when working with teachers to hone their skills. Modeling as much as possible is his most critical piece of advice that he passes on to the teachers that he evaluates, noting:

Questioning, probing, and explaining your thinking is necessary when teaching migrant students. Once you see a student struggling, it is always important to pull that student aside, one on one, to incorporate whatever strategy works best for them.

As an administrator, Bodisson utilizes the same strategy to best understand students dealing with behavioral issues, understanding that each student is unique and requires individualized attention.

Research Methodology and Analysis

Within this qualitative study, I undertook a case study approach to gain insight into and investigate the approaches used to work with migrant, ELLs, and assess teachers who deliver the most beneficial results. One central question guided this study: What is best practice in the provision of education for migrant students?

Data collection and analysis included semistructured interviews, both in a face-to-face

format and over the phone. Because some of the students and teacher participants no longer lived in the local area, communicating with them to set up a proper phone interview was necessary. When analyzing the data obtained from the collective interviews, the inductive analysis model was used, looking first at the specific data and then searching for commonalities (Amos Hatch, 2002).

Data Collection

This study required two sets of data collection. The first was collected from 12 former migrant students who are now college graduates. The second set of data was collected from six teachers of migrant students who were identified as successful in working this unique group of students. I met with the student participants and conducted semistructured interviews. Once the student participant interviews were complete, I met with teacher participants and held semistructured interviews with them.

Semistructured Interviews

Students. Only one phase of data collection was used in this study, as there was no need for additional interviews. The student participants were interviewed first. All student interviews conducted each took approximately 60 minutes. The set of student participant interviewed occurred over a period of six weeks and took place at various locations, mostly fast food restaurants. Each student participant was asked the same questions defined in the student interview questions (see Appendix A). Ten questions were used as part of the student interviews. Student participants were allowed to expand on their responses if they so chose; however, no inquiries were made beyond the defined questions. The questions were designed to retrieve background information on their migrant and educational experiences. Follow-up questions invited them to provide input on the status of migrant education, their recollection of best

practices, and advice for working with migrant students. From their interviews, names of former teachers who they felt best supported their success in the classroom were collected. Question 4 asked student participants to tell about their favorite teachers and why they were named as such. All student interviews, whether face to face or over the phone, were recorded with the participants' permission. I used the No Notes application program to record and transcribe each student interview.

Teachers. I attempted to contact all teachers mentioned in the student interviews. Some of the teachers identified were not located or did not respond to a request to participate. Six of the teachers who were contacted agreed to be interviewed. Interviews were conducted using the teacher interview questions (see Appendix B). After all student interviews were completed, the teacher interviews took place. Teachers were apprised of the praising comments made by their former migrant students. Because the interviews took place during the summer months, only two of the teachers were available for face-to-face interviews, at agreed-upon locations. The remaining four teachers were interviewed over the phone. Each of the six teachers received the interview questions prior to their interview. This preview allowed them to consider their philosophies on teaching and learning, while recalling experiences, practices, and testimonials. Interview notes were combined to create a comprehensive record of all responses. The teacher interview questions focused on their educational philosophies, experiences with teaching migrant students, and the methodologies used with them. Specific questions were intended to gain their insights on effective practices and approaches that work.

Member Checking

Once the student and teacher interviews were complete, I read through all of the transcriptions from the No Notes application to check for accuracy. Notes from these

transcriptions were compared against my own notes to ensure precision and accuracy. Final transcriptions were provided to all student and teacher participants via secure email for their review. None of the teacher or students participants responded noting a need for changes, after which I moved forward with the initial data analysis. After each interview, both student and teacher participants were permitted to read and review transcriptions and analysis reports. Although each participant was given the opportunity to for data to be clarified or request changes, none asked for changes. This member-checking process helped to ensure that all participants' perspectives and input were shared in a transparent and accurate manner, enhancing the credibility (Harper & Cole, 2012). The following section denotes the steps followed in collecting the data.

Data Analysis

Students and Teachers

Because of the nature of the study, which was designed to isolate common themes from both migrant students and their teachers, the data analysis was initially separated into two groups. Next, I compared responses and began looking for similarities in context. The formal data analysis began by arranging the data at hand to a common format. The student interview data were arranged first. To best understand and familiarize myself with the data, I read the text several times while making anecdotal notes to common themes and prevailing details.

This process was repeated with the teacher interview data. Qualitative in design and using inductive content analysis, the ultimate goal was to identify themes. This type of analysis forced me to rely on reasoning inductively in order to interpret and code textual material. I used a set of codes to reduce and classify the responses from student and teacher interviews into more manageable data points. In that way, I could identified patterns and gain a more select insight.

Triangulating the data between student and teacher responses aided me in increasing my level of knowledge relative to the topic while strengthening my position from more than one aspect (Veenable, 2014). The questions presented in both the student and teacher semistructured interviews allowed me to identify and isolate universal ideas which was helpful in forming four overarching frames of analysis. These general ideas identified centered on (a) ideologies on migrant education, (b) factors impacting teaching and learning of migrant students, (c) elements for the successful education of migrant students, and (d) best practices for success. Hatch (2002) asserted that using the frames of analysis approach when reviewing the data provides sound results when identifying relationships within the data as a whole. Using these frames of analysis, I classified the data according to guiding frames of reference.

Following the frames of analysis, meaningful data were extracted and coded in line with the frames of analysis. Codes were created and designated to common text pieces and or phrases used by research participants. Seventeen clusters of common codes were labeled and organized within their respective category. I separated these subthemes into student and teacher categories (see Table 2). Thoroughly rereading the data and matching data to clusters within categories helped to ensure that all text was considered including multiple meanings within the participants' differentiating dialogue. To reduce the collected data and identify emerging themes, I regrouped codes with overlapping ideas and related concepts. This step reduced replication of categories, thus allowing me to organize the data into four main themes: (a) working to understand the migrant student lifestyle is necessary, (b) individualized and supplemental instruction works to close learning gaps, (c) experiences that motivate gains and celebrate milestones are essential to success, and (d) utilizing all resources available, including parental involvement, is key.

Codes and Themes

In Table 3 and the accompanying narrative, the codes and themes I identified are discussed.

Table 3

Overview of Themes and Codes

Themes	Codes students	Codes teachers
A. The need to understand the migrant student lifestyle	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of empathy for our instability • Feelings of not belonging • Treated as temporary students 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Empathy and compassion for all students • Making connections is fundamental
B. Individualized and supplemental instruction works to close learning gaps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Patience and genuine concern for success is critical • Work ethic is not the problem 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make efforts to assess academic levels/competencies • Identify learning gaps and teach to them
C. Experiences that motivate gains and celebrate milestones are essential to success	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intrinsic/extrinsic rewards are needed • College visits and prep beyond high school is paramount 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare them and help them plan for their futures • Frequent praise is key
D. Using all resources available, including parental involvement is key	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supplies and tutors help to level the equity • Use all resources available 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communicate with parents regularly • Educate parents about student capabilities and opportunities

Theme A: The need to understand the migrant student lifestyle.

Code 1: Lack of empathy for our instability. Student participants found that those teachers who took the time to learn about and understand their journeys as migrant students were easier to trust and learn from. In contrast, student participants who experienced negative

treatment from teachers who were unable to empathize with their situation recalled those experiences as detrimental. Adrianna shared that she was observant and could tell when a teacher was sincere.

I was fortunate to have had some very thoughtful teachers and it was easy to tell when a teacher was not happy about getting a new student in the middle of a semester. You can tell it was a burden for them.

Had they taken the opportunity to consider the burdens endured by the migrant student, perhaps their approach would have been different. For Juan, an empathetic teacher was a true teacher. “I just wanted to learn and when I came into a new class and felt welcomed by the teacher I was ready to learn.”

Code 2: Feelings of not belonging. It is understandable that when people have no permanent home, it can be difficult to find their place. The migrant student participants echoed this sentiment repeatedly, explaining that feeling “out of place” was traumatic each time they entered a new school, often two or three times every school year. Dina explained that these feelings were heightened when she was pulled out for remediation. “I already had anxiety because I felt like an outsider, and then I was pulled out for tutoring and I never really got to make friends or even connect with my teacher.” Chelsey experienced this level of alienation to a minimum in grade school and high school; however, she recalled experiencing it at a much higher-degree in college, where most of her classmates were non-Hispanic. “For me, it wasn’t until I entered college that I learned about feeling isolated and indifferent.” She added that these experiences influenced that way that she interacted with the migrant students that she taught when she went into the teaching profession. A sense of belonging, no doubt, improves motivation and happiness and for migrant students it can be the difference in success or failure.

Code 3: Treated as temporary students. Student participant Yasmin recalled her school's migrant center as a place where she always felt respected and understood. The schools that she attended in her travels to the north did not house migrant centers and often she suspected that she was not the priority because she would not be staying long. Yasmin argued that just because a student is migrant and will be leaving once the local agricultural season came to an end, it does not justify discounting them as students. "Migrant students are still students. They are very capable and should be treated like all other students." Jesus contended that while he realized that the task of bringing in and teaching new students after the start of school year can be daunting, it does not mean that their needs can be ignored.

Just because a teacher knows that a student will probably not stay long due to their migratory status it doesn't mean that they are not entitled to learn while they are there. I am sure it is stressful and they might feel as though it is okay, but it is not.

Code 4: Empathy and compassion for all students. Relative to making efforts to understand the migrant lifestyle, the teacher participants echoed their role in developing connections with ALL students. Mrs. Garza concurred that while all students require kindness and understanding, migrant students require a level of empathy and compassion that is sincere and well-intended. "Because they are already facing so many struggles and hardships at home," Mrs. Garza said, "school should be a place where they feel understood, where they are embraced and where they are respected." Mr. Wells stated, "Migrant students tend to be very dependent learners. They will invest only as long as you as a teacher are personally invested. It is emotionally taxing to teach migrant students and do a good job."

All teacher participants agreed that compassion is mandatory. Cultivating and modeling empathy is essential in all classrooms. Migrant students' lifestyle struggles, however, can shape how they see themselves as students, learners, and members of the school community.

Code 5: Making connections is fundamental. Three of the teacher participants spoke Spanish, which they cited as useful in helping them make connections with their migrant students. They recognize that this alone help with establishing connections and makes the teaching process easier when translation is needed. Non-Spanish speaking teacher Mr. Bodisson contended that building strong, positive relationships, believing in students, and showing them that you do helped him to be a successful teacher. Growing up as a migrant student herself, Mrs. Sanchez always shared with her migrant students her experiences allowing them to see that there is hope. "Not only did I share my story," Mrs. Sanchez said, "but I never shied away from giving them hugs and telling them I loved them." Each teacher interviewed discussed how making connections on a personal level increased the level of engagement of their migrant students, helping them to dispel fears and trust issues.

Theme B: Individualized and supplemental instruction works to close learning gaps.

Code 6: Patience and genuine concern for success is critical. Migrant students often arrive at new schools behind academically. The issue is typically the misalignment of standards and expectations from state to state. Teachers interviewed found that migrant students are extremely capable and that patience when guiding them to fill their gaps is critical. Mrs. Rickard admitted that teachers need additional training about migrant students and their unique situations. She herself always mistakenly believed that migrant work ended after the great depression. It wasn't until she began to work with migrant students that she came to learn about their unique situations. "Once I learned the cause of their gaps, I became concerned about the lack of equity

in their education and understood that I had to approach them with patience as I tackled knowledge gaps.” As a result of their migratory lifestyle, migrant students have witnessed an array of dispositions and have learned to detect teachers who are genuinely on their side.

Code 7: Work ethic is not the problem. The student participants interviewed indicated that doing the work was never an obstruction for getting them on par with their non-migrant peers. The migrant lifestyle taught them grit and perseverance. The challenges that they faced outside of the classroom were minimal compared to completing assignments, taking on a new language, or learning new concepts. Bernardo reported that migrant students know the need for hard work and are not less capable than other students their age. “We have the work ethic and are disciplined, we just need the tools and direction to get us to the next level.” Joaquin understood that because of his strong math skills, he was never labeled as incompetent, but saw his younger siblings suffer when some teachers tried to water down their instruction and treated them as inept.

Not believing that a migrant student can perform as well or better than a non-migrant student is assuming that they are not smart enough. Our struggles have forced us to work hard and we will do that when the circumstances allow us to.

Marianna, who considered herself lucky to have had competent teachers who cared and knew how to best approach her, understood that the learning gaps were inevitable.

From school to school, I would learn something that I had either already learned or that I didn’t understand. When I didn’t understand, it was usually because I had missed something that was previously taught. My teachers were always good about picking up on this and made the time to catch me up.

Luis experienced similar mismatches in his migrant travels, but considered himself fortunate to have been a quick learner.

I was always a good reader and never shy, so if I didn't get it I asked a teacher or a classmate. It was always extra work for me, but I was lucky to have had teachers that allowed me extra time or gave me extra support. They didn't just classify me as migrant and forgot about me. They found my strengths and worked on the areas where I was lacking.”

Code 8: Make efforts to assess academic levels/competencies. When migrant students enter a classroom several assumptions are made and most are left to catch on quickly and fend for themselves. Many schools do not or cannot offer specialized support to migrant students due to limited resources. While this is understood by the teachers interviewed, they collectively agreed that as their teacher you must meet migrant students where they are at and consider where the absences of knowledge are and create a plan of attack. Mrs. Rickard had worked with migrant students identified as gifted, so for her, assuming that they are unable solely based on their migrant status is unreasonable. “I have had gifted migrant students who were the top performers in my class. Migrant students have extra hurdles than most of their peers, but they can be just as successful.”

Mrs. Sanchez contended that looking at data is essential for the academic performance of migrant students, but she explained that it is most important to look at where they started off when they entered the classroom and how they grew throughout their stay. “It may take extra time for them to reach their grade level, but with the structure and fidelity and resources, they can attain it.” Data tracking is a significant part of working with migrant students, especially since their stays in a particular classroom may be brief. For teachers assessing levels of

achievement, setting goals and tracking them closely is a best practice. When a migrant student leaves, the data will support the efforts of both the teacher and the student. Regardless of what school lies next in their future, they will see themselves as learners and be stronger students because of it.

Code 9: Identify learning gaps and teach to them. All of the teachers interviewed were highly familiar with the misalignment of academic standards and expectations across the country. They understood that there is no established system in place to track their proficiencies from state to state. This makes it the teacher's responsibility to pinpoint where the learning gaps are and strategically work towards linking them. Mr. Bodisson stated, "For academic achievement of migrant students it is necessary to find the gap, to find the strategies that will help these students to bridge the gap, but also to meet their learning styles at the same time."

Time with migrant students is often limited. Identifying gaps can be accomplished formally or informally, however, it must be accomplished in a timely manner. Mr. Gonzalez reported that within his migrant center, progress monitoring happens often. "We meet as a staff weekly to discuss the lower-level students. We get feedback from classroom teachers and decide where to provide additional help." The teachers concurred that once the learning gaps are identified, the work to move forward must be strategic, purposeful, and swift. Students can move in and out of a school without warning, so preparing them for wherever they end up is the charge of each of their teachers.

Theme C: Experiences that motivate gains and celebrate milestones are essential to success.

Code 10: Intrinsic/Extrinsic rewards are necessary. Most people appreciate being rewarded for their efforts, and migrant students are no different. The one variable, however, is

that such rewards for them must be meaningful and consistent. Their seasonal stays in a particular geographical area creates feelings of apprehension and uncertainty. Rewards for meeting a goal or mastering a skill can be intricate in balancing the pressures of their home lives. Maria recalled sleeping outside at the farmer's market each day waiting for school to start. A reward at school would wake her from her sluggish state and spark her to press forward. Like Maria, Juan remembered having trouble staying awake in class after working long hours in the fields on weekends or in the packing house in the evenings:

Getting up and going to school was always a struggle, but once I was there my teachers had a way of making me feel alert. My favorite teacher was extra encouraging and really pushed me to do well. I still have all of my certificates that I earned in his class.

Jesus joked that his reward for going to school was the air-conditioning, because he had none at home or in the tomato fields. "I never wanted to let my parents down because I knew that while I was in school, they were sacrificing, giving their sweat and tears to provide for us."

Code 11: College visits and prep beyond high school is paramount. Several of the students I interviewed described having participated in college visits through their high school's migrant center. They collectively identified this experience as principal in helping them make the ultimate decision to further their education beyond high school. Marianna had the opportunity to visit several colleges while a junior in high school. Spending time on college campuses allowed her to get a firsthand look at her prospects and helped her to realize that the opportunity for her to attend was no longer far-fetched. "I remember seeing other students on college campuses that looked like me. Visiting colleges was what I think motivated me to keep going." Other students credited teachers and guidance counselors who helped them complete college acceptance applications and for best preparing them for the college lifestyle. For Fernando, it was an art

scholarship that allowed him to chase his college dream. He acknowledged that without support and directions on applying for it, it would have never happened. Luis remembered the teachers who constantly spoke about the option of attending college. “Just hearing over and over that I was college material made me eventually believe it.” Dina’s speech pathologist constantly reminded her about the importance of attending college. “I only saw her once a week, but every time I met with her, she talked to me about attending college.”

Code 12: Prepare them and help them to plan for their futures. The majority of students interviewed thought that high school best prepared them for college not only academically but socially. With the appropriate resources and support they gain the self-confidence and capabilities to pursue a higher education. Chelsey never forgot her high school assistant principal who took her under his wing and did all that he could to ensure that she was college ready. “He taught me to have grit so that I would never be deterred. I still use his lessons in my career today.”

Code 13: Frequent praise is key. Teachers interviewed understood that self-esteem can be an issue for migrant students dealing with the pressures of poverty and insecurity. They understand that parents of migrant students are often uneducated and overwhelmed and have little time or money to reward their children for doing well in school. Praising migrant students is vital to their success as a student, especially when the praise may not be happening at home. Mrs. Rickard expanded, “In my experience, migrant parents do the best that they can for their children. Every child is unique and deserves a teacher who sees him or her as a worthy candidate for education. They need to hear that they can do it.” Mrs. Sanchez explained that migrant parents often need to prioritize and don’t always put education at the top:

Some parents need their children to help at home with caring for siblings and chores. School is important to them, but sometimes it has to take a back seat in order to meet the demands of their home life. As teachers, we have to be diligent in our praise and continue to build up their self-esteem.

Theme D: Utilizing all resources available, including parental involvement, is key.

Code 14: Supplies and tutors help to level the equity. Migrant farm work does not involve great wages. Migrant students come to school with few resources and are appreciative of any supplies made available to them. Having the necessary supplies for learning, no doubt, helps to level the playing field and assists migrant students to feel prepared for the already challenging job of learning. Yazmin recalled getting supplies from her school's migrant center. "Getting a backpack filled with school supplies took the pressure off of my mom having to buy them for me. Having the right supplies, I had no excuse for not trying my best in class." Yazmin also was grateful for the personnel in her school's migrant center for helping her study for tests and editing her writing assignments. "I didn't have the advantage of going home and having my mom help me with my homework. Having people in place to take on this role saved me." Marianna recalled a program that gave backpacks and supplies to her at the start of each school year. "Without these donations, I would have not even wanted to go to school. I would have felt awkward."

Code 15: Use all resources available. Several of the students interviewed indicated that, without the additional resources provided specifically for them, high school graduation would not have been possible. For most, the support in the form of supplies, technology, and tutoring was a luxury. Adrianna explained that while her parents tried to help, she often had to seek out help from school:

I am glad that there were programs and people willing to help me out when my parents couldn't. No one in my family had ever gone to college, so I didn't even know where to start, how to apply for scholarships or financial aid.

Joaquin noted that he initially did not want to use his school's migrant center to ask for help, because he thought he would be made fun of. But he was relieved when he finally went in to ask for help.

I didn't want to go in there because I thought it was only for students who couldn't speak English. When I learned that I could use their computers, I was in there every day afterschool. It was a resource that I really came to appreciate.

Code 16: Communicate with parents regularly. Teachers often find that communicating with parents is a challenge. When attempting to contact the parents of migrant students, the challenge is multiplied. Many of their parents speak no English, lack cellphones, and are unreachable while they are out working in the fields. The teachers interviewed attest to the challenge but remained kept trying so that parents knew about their child's advancements. Mr. Wells commented, "They often do not understand the ability that their kids may have and as a result have very different goals for them." Mrs. Sanchez acknowledged it can be unfair to ask parents of migrant students to come in for conferences do to their work schedules. She used notes home and evening phone calls to make contact:

Migrant parents cannot just leave work and come in for a meeting. They count on every hour of work. Sometimes if it rains and they are unable to go to work, you might be able to connect with them. For the most part, you have to be willing to make time to meet with them on their schedules. Yes, it can be difficult but there are a lot of rewards in keeping them informed.

Code 17: Educate parents about student capabilities and opportunities. Teachers interviewed understood that parents of migrant students want what is best for them. Their differences in culture sometimes causes them to step back and not ask questions. Their respect for teachers as professionals is profound. While they will often not stop by the school or call to check on the status of their child, they are always grateful to hear from their teachers. Mr. Gonzalez explained that developing great relationships with the families of migrant students is just as important as the one developed with the student.

The parental piece is important. If they are informed they will be our allies. They come to this country for the opportunity it offers and for a better life. They encourage their children to take advantage of the education system and do well in school.

Mrs. Sanchez added that involving and educating the parents is always beneficial. She said learning from her students and families was “paramount”:

We [want to] educate the whole child and empower them with the tools to become productive. When the parents of migrant students hear what their child can do and learns about the opportunities available to them, they will do whatever they can to provide support.

Summary of Themes Identified

In the following section, each of the four identified themes are summarized with collective responses from both students and teachers. The main points from each of the two participant groups are presented as they relate to each theme.

Theme A: The Need to Understand the Migrant Student Lifestyle

Students. Interviewed participants agreed that teachers need to make a genuine effort to grasp a better understanding of what it means to be a migrant and how their lifestyle can effect

learning. Fernando recalled coming in to class tired from working the packing house the night before and the teachers who allowed him to take a nap during his lunch period. Another would bring him chocolate to improve his energy. For Yasmin, when a favorite teacher took the time to visit her home when was having trouble getting to school, she began to believe that she mattered. “When she took the time to understand and provide me and my family with some help, I knew that my education was just as important as everyone else’s,” explained Yasmin.

Teachers. Mr. Wells, now retired and proud of his work with migrant students, added that getting to know the students is obligatory. “Migrant kids will include you in their lives where other students see you as intruding.” Formerly a migrant student and now an educator herself, Maria saw empathy as a nonnegotiable when working with migrant students:

Sharing another person’s emotions from a different perspective is powerful in building connections. When a teacher makes the time and takes the time to see where these students are coming from and all that they have to struggle with, a heightened willingness to bring about real change is sparked.

Mrs. Sanchez echoed the need for compassion and understanding.

As simple as it sounds, patience and empathy need to be used because most migrant students come with much baggage and struggles. We have to let them know that this is ok and we need to teach them to use this baggage and struggle as part of their journey that they will hopefully continue to use as fuel. Some educators still look down at baggage and struggle as downfalls, but we need to see them as stepping stones and we need to be more open-minded.

Mr. Gonzalez asserted that establishing a comfort level with both the students and their parents is strategic and vital. “Once our migrant students feel comfortable enough to ask questions and seek assistance, the teaching process becomes easier.”

Theme B: The use of individualized and supplemental instructions help to close learning gaps.

Students. Each of the student participants stated their migrant status caused them to continuously trail their non-migrant peers academically. Hindering their performance either initially or consistently was leaving school a couple of months early, starting school a couple of months late, language barriers, and an array of social weaknesses.

Bernardo recalled being retained one year because his parent’s migrating pattern did not allow him to attend a mandated summer school session. He explained that most migrant students flunk out because they are unable to monitor themselves.

As a younger student, I needed teachers who knew what I needed and worked to strengthen my deficits. The grit and the work ethic is already there, but it is only with the proper guidance that I was able to see myself as competent enough to push forward.

Dina considered herself lucky to have had a teacher take her under her wing and not only educate her but motivate her:

She would meet with me once a week, just her and I. It was very impactful, especially when she began to push me to apply for college. I struggled in high school and I was ready for graduation because I didn’t want to continue struggling. The extra support and words of encouragement is what eventually changed my mindset.

Fernando contended that the best teachers in his experience were those that knew how and were committed to handling the stress and challenges that come with instructing students

who are failing for reasons beyond their control. He did best in classes where the teachers did not allow him to feel intimidated and provided individualized support every step of the way. “Not being treated as a seasonal or temporary student,” Fernando said, “but more as a real and capable student who could do the work if just given the chance is what made me feel confident.”

Student participant Dina remembered being segregated into sheltered type classrooms while in elementary and middle school. She did not like being placed solely with other ELLs who were behind due to their migrant situations. “Being pulled-out of our regular classrooms,” Dina said, “to teach us English only put us further behind the other students who were learning new math skills and science. Being isolated only made us feel irrelevant.”

Student participant, Luis, who identified Mrs. Rickard as a model teacher of migrant students, is aligned in theory with the importance of customizing instruction for more meaningful results.

I did my best learning in Mrs. Rickard’s class because she always stopped to make sure that I was getting it. I remember lots and lots of review and practice in her class, because she wouldn’t move on until she was satisfied with the learning. I learned so much from her. She was nice, she went out of her way and I respect her for that.

Teachers. Mr. Bodisson strongly supported the need to supplement instruction in order to teach explicit standards and skills. “Every migrant student is different and it is up to the teacher to find what strategies are needed.” Bodisson understood the desire to group migrant ELLs together so that they can support each other and collectively translate the instruction, however, he assesses this practice as a limitation to enhancing the learning

The problem with grouping students by their language and not their academic ability is that teachers teach to the lowest and many students will progress at a slower pace. When they are placed into more mainstream classrooms they are able to progress faster.

Relative to tailoring the instruction for migrant students, Mrs. Rickard contended that differentiation is critical when best supporting migrant students:

I think that it must be extremely difficult and confusing for students to attend multiple schools in different districts each year. Schools may teach the curriculum in a different order causing students to miss sections or repeating the same sections. Teachers may not be willing to work with students who need different things, because it is definitely additional work. Migrant students need teachers who will figure out the gaps in knowledge and be willing to do the extra work to help them close the gaps.

Theme C: Experiences that motivate gains and celebrate milestones are essential to their success.

Students. Each of the students I interviewed communicated the power of the relentless praise and celebration delivered by teachers who were key in their survival as students. From sincere words of encouragement to positive and meaningful feedback, these actions to them were unquantifiable. Others recalled unique experiences that pushed them to strive and prevail. Juan said he will never forget the exclusive opportunity to attend a young author's conference and visit with award-winning authors was an experience. It was an incentive for his efforts in writing, and he admitted it was one of the main reasons that he worked so hard to improve his writing.

It was extra hard for me to earn this reward, but it was worth all the work that I put into it. I am still not the best writer, but I will always remember this trip because it made my whole family proud and I got to celebrate with people from all over who liked writing.

Yasmin detailed her motivation as one developed on behalf of her parents.

I constantly felt like my success was paying back my parents for all of their sacrifices.

The field work that they performed involved long, hot, tiring days and my hard work was motivated by their determination for me to finish school.

For Joaquin, his motivation came from his peers. Regardless of the school that he was attending on any given year, his math skill impressed teachers and students alike. When his peers asked for help and we was able to do so his self-esteem heightened and it helped to make him feel as a fixture in the classroom, rather than the brown-skinned imbecile, who was still building his English vocabulary and who came to school with untamed hair and hand-me-down clothes.

When my teachers saw how strong my math skills were and they let me help my classmates when they were stuck, I felt like I belonged. I was happy to help and it gave me a sense of worth. At home, things were different because my parents worked such long hours. I had to help with my brothers and sisters and that was never a choice, it was what I had to do.

Teachers. A high school guidance counselor who continues to support migrant students, Mrs. Garza said many migrant students are self-motivated because of their migrant lifestyle. Recognizing that education is the one factor that can pull them out of the cycle of poverty, she explained that their drive comes from their daily experiences.

We have some migrant students at our school doing incredible things, sometimes outperforming the non-migrant peers. Because of their migrant lifestyle, which may include going hungry, trouble sleeping and sharing a home with another family, they are driven to do all that they can to one day live without having to struggle.

Mrs. Garza added that most of the migrant students that she has had the pleasure of working with have big dreams and a strong will. “They are competent and capable of doing anything that they set their mind to, but we have to give them the required attention that they deserve.”

Mrs. Sanchez held the same position, supporting the need to guide, influence and activate enthusiasm.

Students coming into this country are hungrier for success. A migrant family’s struggles can help fuel them, making them hunger for more. I’ve never shied away from giving my students hugs and telling them I love them, that I believed in them and that I wanted them to do well.

Sanchez asserted that many of the tactics that she uses with her migrant students are just standard best practices; however, she said she sometimes goes above and beyond to let them know how important they are:

I have attended their sporting events and birthday parties. If there was a student that was falling through the cracks, and I understood their home struggles, I found ways to reach them by either inviting them out to eat, or to the movies. Sometimes these outings were beyond my teaching salary, but they were essential to building lasting relationships and a love of learning.

Theme D: Utilizing all resources available, including parental involvement, is key.

Students. Eleven of the 12 student participants interviewed graduated from the same high school. The school is located in a rural agricultural community with a third of the student body identified as migrant. As a result, the district provides a migrant resource center that is housed within the school. Offering a computer lab, tutoring, and consumable resources such as school

supplies and backpacks, this support is not seen in most school settings. Fernando's experience with the school's migrant center helped him in his transition into college, even providing him and interested classmates with tours of local colleges and assistance in filling out scholarship applications.

These resources were not available in other schools that I attended and it was a great way to make sure that I was knowledgeable about what was out there. The center also helped me out when I was in a bind or needed extra help.

Adrianna said getting to know the needs of the migrant students and then ensuring that they have the resources to succeed is a required combination.

You have to provide them with the resources, even if that means showing them where to go and helping them get there. We are not all confident and self-sufficient. As much as we want to do well, we sometimes don't have the skills to ask for support.

For Adrianna, the resources continued at the college level. It was through her high school's migrant center that she learned about the college assistance migrant program at Michigan State University. The two programs worked collectively to ensure a smooth stress-free transition, even considering the change in climate.

Living in Florida, I was used to the heat. I had never even seen snow until I began attending MSU. The cold weather was unbearable, but the CAMP program went as far as making sure that I had an appropriate coat and shoes for the snow. They were not giving me an excuse to give up.

Jesus recognized his high school's migrant center as impactful and influential. He describes the personnel assigned to the center as understanding and empathetic from the perspective of the students that they served. "The extra resources and the extra pushes that they

gave me were always appreciated. The center always made you feel welcomed which made it easier to ask for a pack of paper or help with an assignment.”

Teachers. Mr. Gonzalez, who now manages his school’s migrant center, echoed the need to provide applicable resources in a reverential manner.

We must have high expectations for our students, we have to respect their lifestyle and guide them towards using the resources available to them. Our students who start school up north and then join us when the fieldwork up there is done, all say the same thing.

They feel like our school is their home, because this is where resources are provided and this is where they feel the most comfortable going to school.

Mr. Gonzalez added that the relationships are just as strong with the student’s families, often including them in the ins and outs of their child’s progress, struggles and breakthroughs. “If the parents are on board,” Mr. Gonzalez said, “it makes success easier for our migrant students to achieve success.”

The migrant center managed by Mr. Gonzalez serves an average of 80 to 100 students each school day. Whether students come in for supplies or for academic support, the services are tracked and used to access the benefits of the center. Their data are evaluated and correlated to the school’s graduation rate, the amount of migrant students who continue their education after high school and the amount of CAMP programs visiting the school to recruit students. The most compelling evidence, however, as cited by Mr. Gonzalez, is when the students come back after graduation to thank the staff members for the help they provided.

Mrs. Rickard explained that migrant resources are critical because most migrant students do not have the parental support to supplement the imparities:

Migrant parents do the best that they can for their children, but many have limited educations themselves and are not able to help their students as much as they would like.

When schools support parents and give them and give them tools to help their children, most of the parents are grateful and will implement the tools at home.

Rickard justified the need to fully understand and support migrant students in order to lead them to success. “Adequate school support including teachers, including support staff and parental support are required factors. Schools that address the need of the entire child and do not just focus on the academic piece will have more successful migrant students.”

While Mr. Bodisson believed that migrant parents want to be a resource for their children, he understands that they are limited in their abilities to help. “Migrant parents know more than anyone the struggles of a lack of education and opportunity and the impact it can have on their future.” Mr. Wells suggested that “migrant students and their parents deal with problems that their non-migrant peers will never have to deal with.” This added burden obliges schools to provide resources which will help to even the playing field. Mrs. Sanchez attests that when all available resources are utilized, the results are the most encouraging.

Academic achievement for migrant students is not a far-fetched goal with the proper parental support, suitable resources, strong and structured classrooms and of course the drive that the students themselves bring with them. When all of these structures are in place and present, any migrant student can succeed.

This mindset for Mrs. Sanchez is what she feels sets migrant students up for success. As she saw it, matching quality instructors with available resources and ensuring that their parents are in the loop are equally important.

Summary

Findings from the data analysis revealed that most approaches identified as best for migrant students are traditional best practices that should be utilized with all students. Because migrant students are often treated as “temporary students.” The sentiment is that the approaches used are not sincere or used with fidelity. The most profound and bearing finding is that both migrant students and their teachers concur on the need to understand both the lifestyle and struggles of the migrant student. Treating them as capable while rousing their self-esteem is fundamental to their success. Migrant students beseech that individualized academic guidance is necessary so that they best understand the gaps in learning presented as a result of their migrations. The teachers agreed that their work with migrant students must be strategic and well intentioned. Identifying gaps to streamline the learning so that it is aligned to the national standards as opposed to local and state standards is most beneficial.

Chapter 5: Discussion and Conclusion

With the population of migrant students on the increase in classrooms across the country, it is necessary for teachers to better understand their situations and identify practices that will best support them academically. The purpose of this study was to isolate the best approaches as recognized by former migrant students themselves who had gained success as college graduates. Coupled with their indicators for best results were the shared dogmas of their former teachers who had been characterized as influential by their former students. Insights from semistructured interviews were collected from two distinct groups: former migrant students and some of their former migrant teachers.

The purpose of Chapter 5 is to provide a summary of the results, followed by a discussion of the results in relation to the literature detailed in Chapter 2. Limitations of the study are also addressed. This section is followed by the implication of the results for practice, policy, and theory. This chapter concludes with recommendations for further study as well as closing comments relative to the study.

Summary of the Results

The purpose of this study was to identify best practices for successfully working with migrant students. The findings revealed that because this group comes with unique needs and experiences, it is important to approach them with unique and sometimes individualized methodologies. Much of the literature indicated that multiple factors must be addressed when meeting the academic needs of migrant students. Such factors include equity pedagogy, cultural respect, inclusivity, language, and access to resources.

The student participants and the teachers of migrant students agreed that treating migrant students as permanent students versus temporary students is the first step in establishing an

equity pedagogy. Equity pedagogy refers to “teaching strategies and classroom environments that help students from diverse groups attain the knowledge and skills needed to function effectively while creating a just, humane and democratic society” (Banks & Banks, 1995, p. 152). It speaks to treating all students equally with reverence and value. As a result of coming to school weeks or months later than most of their peers, migrant students come social anxieties that are only multiplied when teachers make them feel like outsiders. Feeling included and accepted as an equal is critical for thriving as a migrant student when friendships and relationships are often cut short.

The first theme isolated from the interviews is relative to working to understand the migrant student’s lifestyle. The students affirmed that when a teacher takes the extra time to get to know them and learn about their migrating experiences, family life, and travels, a special rapport is developed that can lead to an authentic teacher/student relationship. The teacher participants noted that when energies are put into building meaningful rapports with their migrant students, they open up, become participatory, and are able to feel worthy as a learner. Building strong connections is fundamental to all positive teacher/student relationships; however, migrant students require reliable and authenticated interactions that are frequent and specific. Every involvement in each school and classroom that they attend, while temporary in nature, becomes a permanent part of their everlasting identity.

The second theme addresses the need to provide individualized and supplemental instruction in order to close the many learning gaps. Both group of participants suggested learning gaps are inevitable and commonplace with migrant students. Regardless of how much a migrant student wants to succeed, the learning gaps that result from transferring from school to school and state to state is expected. The teacher participants explained that with varying

standards and expectations across the country, learning for migrants is never seamless. Depending on where, geographically, a student begins or ends the school year, learning loss is foreseeable. These learning gaps, if left unaddressed, will compound over time and increase in severity, potentially forcing students to drop out of school.

The students revered teachers who took measures to fill the learning gaps through individualized and targeted support. While most migrant students who travel across state lines may bring school records such as grades and test scores with them, they do not best reveal where a student is academically and they do not always mesh between school districts and states. Thus, steadfast teachers are forced to identify promptly any gaps and to work strategically to provide remediation. The students credited these efforts as critical to their overall success. The teachers understood that ignoring the need to assess and remediate accordingly would only work against them and impede their own success as teachers.

The third theme, also discussed by both groups of participants, was the benefit of providing experiences that motivate gains and celebrating milestones. For the migrant students who often felt out of place or not up to par with their non-migrant counterparts, being commended for specific achievements or triumphs did wonders for their self-esteem. Several students recalled how profound the earning of certificates or awards for reaching certain goals was. Having these certificates with them as they migrated to foreign schools in faraway states served as reminders of their potential. Motivation and incentives are what drive students to continue reaching and setting new goals. For those students interviewed, constant praise is indispensable as it acts as a driving force to combat the overwhelming struggles of the migrant lifestyle.

The teacher participants established that guiding and witnessing students grow and accomplish goals is the main reason that they went into education. For them, understanding that all students need motivation is fundamental to teaching. Simultaneously, these same teachers recognize that celebrating accomplishments leads to enhanced self-confidence. These teachers understand that migrant students often lack self-assurance and the need to heighten the applause and celebration is constructive and compulsory. They communicated a mutual understanding of the benefits of sending home awards and words of praise in their native language and ensuring that a phone call to their parent is made to include them in the celebration.

The fourth theme that emerged from both participating groups was the importance of utilizing all resources available, including parental involvement. All but one of the students interviewed graduated from the same high school. That school has housed a migrant center for numerous year which each of the students confirmed utilizing. Collectively, the students saw the migrant center as a contributing component of their academic victories. Noting that the center provided resources that they would have ultimately had to do without, each of them expressed gratitude for the availability of consumable supplies, technology and trained personnel.

The availability of meaningful resources is something most teachers never take for granted. Four of the six teachers interviewed worked on the same campus as the student participants. Having others to collaborate with and who understand the importance of equalizing the playing field through essential resources was vital to their success as teachers. Each of the teachers asserted that parental support is just as vital. The teachers said it was vital to conduct home visits, conferences in the parents' native language, and inviting parents in to discuss challenges and achievements. The teachers believed acknowledging that effective work with migrant students cannot be accomplished in isolation, suggesting the task of educating migrant

students is an intricate one that requires all stakeholders, along with their distinctive resources, to merge purposefully for prime results.

Discussion of the Results

To answer the research question at hand, it was necessary to interview those who had a first-hand experience with successful approaches and were positively impacted: former migrant students who excelled and went on to earn college degrees. In order to best corroborate their testimonials, it was important to interview those who provided the approaches: teachers of migrant students. Both sets of interviews suggested that success with migrant students relies on four themes: working to understand the migrant student lifestyle is necessary, individualized and supplemental instruction works to close learning gaps, experiences that motivate gains and celebrate milestones are essential to success, and utilizing all resources available, including parental involvement, is key.

While each migrant student had a distinctive story, many parallels were revealed. Regardless of what states they migrated to or how much school that each of them missed, the commonalities amongst what aided them academically were evident. None of the students saw the need for lowered expectations. Instead, they complimented those teachers who kept the expectations high, but understood that their migrant lifestyle called for understanding and patience. Being seen at times as “temporary students” did not support the trust-building that is required for students who have little opportunities to make connections before packing up and moving on to their next school. Their most favorable teachers were those who took the time not only to understand them but to understand their learning gaps, identify them, and incorporate methodologies to remediate.

Theme A: The Need to Understand the Migrant Student Lifestyle

As the first theme of this study, it was determined that it was essential to understand the migrant student lifestyle. Both student and teacher participants distinguished this premise of an accurate understanding as fundamental to building a relationship that would foster learning. Because the lifestyle of a migrant family is so unusual, it is often difficult for teachers to empathize with this type of student. Instability and change bring result in students' sense of not belonging and anxiety, which most teachers are not prepared to deal with. Student Jesus recalled the positive ways in which certain teachers would interact with him to help him feel secure and relaxed. "When you feel liked and worthy," he explained, "it makes you feel special and it makes you want to learn." Others referred to the need for compassion and consideration as vital to making them sense that they were just as significant as their non-migrant classmates.

The teachers concurred that meeting the social/emotional needs of each one of their students is what good teachers do. They also agreed that the need to get to know their migrant students at a deeper and more delicate level is a prerequisite to their learning process. "Most migrant students come equipped with high academic capabilities," noted Mrs. Garza. "Once they feel valued and not part of the minority their insecurities seem to disappear." Other teachers interviewed echoed her sentiments, maintaining that migrant students are fragile due to their experiences with poverty, language, and uncertainty as mobile learners. The contention that migrant students will always incur learning gaps was highly disputed by those same teachers, asserting that the learning will happen when the conditions are emboldening and nurturing.

Theme B: Individualized and Supplemental Instruction Works to Close Learning Gaps

Migrant students who miss numerous days of school each year to follow the harvest of crops with their families endure gaps in their learning. Traveling across state lines where the

curriculum standards and expectations vary only widens the gaps. Interviews with both the students and the teachers confirmed this common concern. Both groups acknowledged that the learning gaps can be overwhelming and are generally out of their control. The students interviewed revered those teachers who used their professional expertise to do what they could to hone in on missed skills and bridge students' learning. Respectful teachers who saw students' potential and did not discriminate against them as a result of their limitations are now revered as their best advocates.

The teachers confirmed that relying on deliberate individualized and supplemental instruction led to success in decreasing learning gaps among their migrant students. The result included producing accomplished, self-reliant migrant students who were equipped with the requisite proficiencies to further their education. The formula that each teacher used varied dependent on the needs of each student; however, each teacher described protocols that required investments of added time and energy. Two of the teachers interviewed discussed providing before and after-school support, while the other four detailed using their school's migrant center and its resources. The resources identified included communicating with parents via the home/school liaison, technology programs for practice, and mentoring.

Theme C: Experiences That Motivate Gains and Celebrate Milestones Are Essential to Success

The semistructured interviews also revealed the critical need for providing experiences that motivate gains and celebrating milestones with all migrant students. The students noted the array of benefits that come from positive praise and timely, genuine recognitions. They collectively described feeling lost or ill-equipped upon entering a new classroom late in the school year. When their teachers made them feel accomplished and adept and celebrated their

progress, it drove the students to strive for added gains, minimizing their initial feelings of distress. Marianna told of how proud the recognitions made her and how it in turn helped her to cease constantly doubting herself. Jesus remembered how he relished in challenges and competitions that required him to set goals and work diligently to meet them. His success in earning points and certificates for passing reading quizzes motivated him to press forward. Several of the students interviewed credited positive praise and celebrations for helping to offset their anxieties and building their confidence. Changing their mindset about their intelligence and abilities was seen as necessary in order to combat their feelings of constant defeat as they travelled from school to school amid continuous shifting.

Even though teachers are thoroughly trained to make learning fun and celebrate milestones, the teachers interviewed distinguished this as a nonnegotiable when working with migrant students. Understanding their lifestyle and the long-term stress that can come with it, they saw it vital to offer constant praise and intentional opportunities to celebrate. Mrs. Sanchez declared that migrant students are often not praised at home because of the workload or lack of skills from the parents, which can stifle their children's learning. The teachers agreed that migrant students come to school without a strong emotional base, and working to strengthen it should be a priority. Bringing joy and excitement into their lives, even if only during the school day, can be crucial in developing standards for living well, which include celebrating successes, establishing self-assurance, and recognizing potentials.

Theme D: Utilizing All Resources Available, Including Parental Involvement, Is Key

The final theme identified addressed the importance of utilizing all resources available, including parental involvement. All but one of the student participants had the amenity of attending and graduating from a high school that was equipped with a staffed migrant center,

which supported the students from the time they arrived at the school until graduation. For several students, it help support them beyond high school graduation, serving as a link between high school and college assistance migrant programs. The students each utilized the migrant center at varying regularities depending on their needs, for example, to secure basic supplies, use technology, and receive supplemental instruction from trained staff. The students described the level of engagement with the migrant center personnel as inviting and intimate. Working to make connections with their families to communicate progress aided in alleviating the feelings of burden that comes from living in poverty. Those who attended schools in other states for brief periods were reminded of the luxury of having a migrant center. When such resources are not available to students, they slide academically and require additional support upon their return to their home school.

The teachers interviewed indicated that all migrant students need such resources, but they knew that their school was atypical. Three of the teacher participants shared that they were indebted to the migrant center housed at their campus. They agreed that the resources have to be wanted rather than forced, noting a strong correlation between a skilled teacher who motivates students to seek extra outside support that is compassionate and accommodating. All teachers said migrant parents need to be involved in their children's education. Communicating academic standings, gains, and strengths to them in their native language allowed them to take important information with them in their travels. Additionally, the teachers described the advantages of empowering parents of migrant students so that they are better equipped to support them in their endeavors beyond high school. The final step in releasing the students to post high school ventures was informing parents about the opportunities available to their children and guiding them along the way to their children's college education.

Discussion of the Results in Relation to the Literature

The current literature related to best practices for teachers of migrant students to utilize for optimal success centered mostly on providing students with a nurturing, empathetic, and committed approach. Although past research is limited and inconclusive, the literature has suggested that migrant students seem to perform stronger when the opportunities to do so are sincere, personalized, and focused. Participants in this study provided distinctive insight into the methodologies necessary to best educate migrant students. The experiences of each of the participants will supplement the available literature while simultaneously providing insight for current and future teachers of migrant students and researchers. Within my literature review, I gathered that effective teachers of migrant students must work extra hard to bring about positive results. Much of the research also gave credence to the importance of the need to be inclusive of the migrant student culture. Additionally, school leaders need to find additional funding and access to better support for migrant students.

Araujo (2012) observed that the work migrant families do is strenuous and that their travels only add to the stress. He added that the struggles become intense for migrant students as they attempt to infuse themselves into unfamiliar campuses. The students I interviewed spoke about their struggles and substantiated the anxiety that comes when having to relocate and enter a new school. They shared the excitement of returning to their “home base,” where they spent the greater part of their school year and eventually graduated. The familiar campus with recognizable teachers brought them a sense of stability, even if only short-lived. The student participants echoed that the variances in learning standards and expectations made for much of the apprehension. Regardless of their capabilities, the learning gaps which were beyond their control often made them appear to be incompetent and unqualified to learn.

The teachers I interviewed who had been successful in working with migrant students echoed the need to understand the struggle of the migrant family. The teachers revealed that they had to approach their migrant students with caution because of the unique strains that moving and adapting to new situations can put on a child. Free (2016) argued that, as a result of their transient and unstable lifestyle, feelings of fear and temporary existence can negatively impact students' education. The teachers asserted that upon understanding what students endure in order to survive, an effective and caring teacher will work to remove the fears and bring about a sense of belonging. Relative to feelings of non-belonging, migrant students report high rates of stigmatization, distrust of authority figures, and feeling of anxiety, frustration, and dreading the future (Sulkowski, 2017). Maslow (as cited in McLeod, 2017) acknowledged that human motivation is based on an individual's needs being met. Ensuring that children's basic needs are met is vital in all classrooms. The teachers I interviewed shared educational philosophies grounded in Maslow's theory and saw it as imperative, especially in children of poverty and where English is a second language.

Teachers must also determine where to begin with instruction with respect to their children's learning gaps. Irizarry and Williams (2013) cited research suggesting that migrant children, because of their academic lags, require more than typical delivery of curriculum. The teachers I interviewed suggested they had to identify learning gaps and implement strategic methods to guide students to close those gaps while bridging them with new or common skills.

My research was designed to discover effective approaches to best support migrant students educationally. As the diversity of migrant population continues to grow, systems to support them educationally must be prepared to support the best practices for optimal results (Grisham-Brown & McCormick, 2013). The teachers whom I interviewed stated that being

successful with their migrant students always required extra efforts beyond the school day, and that training and support is essential for teachers struggling to make gains with this unique population.

The students acknowledged their own prior learning gaps and told of their frustration when the learning was either repeated or unconnected to prior schooling. As young students they did not understand that the gaps were beyond their control, and as a result they developed stigmas that decreased their motivation. Irizarry and Williams (2013) noted that support for migrant students with learning gaps requires more than foundational skills and grade-level content expectations. Explaining to students the cause of their academic lags, rather than allowing them to believe that they are incapable, could have saved them from unnecessary anxiety. Romanowski (2003) supported this idea, contending that obstacles to the success of migrant students stem from teachers' lack of understanding of their own beliefs about migrant students, which are influenced by prejudices that guide their behavior and actions.

Banks (1993) argued teachers must resist seeing multicultural education as merely content integration; rather, it should be viewed as a restructuring that allows all students to acquire knowledge, attitudes, and skills required to function with success in a diverse world. The migrant students I interviewed revealed positive experiences in which the teachers used their unique travelling experiences and backgrounds to help make connections, build trust, and bring them in as bona fide contributors to their classroom. This notion supports Kugler (2018), who suggested schools must shift their focus from using high-stakes testing and fact drilling to narrow the achievement gap and build a culture that supports the ideology that every student from every background has value. Each one of the student participants cited respectful teachers who treated them as learners with potential as a major contributor to their success.

The resources available to the student participants proved to be not only powerful but greatly appreciated. While past research has focused on summer migrant education programs rather than the on campus migrant center experienced by the participating students, their purpose for helping migrant students “catch up” are identical. The students consider themselves lucky to have attended a high school campus that provided the migrant center as a resource.

Unfortunately, such programs are limited in both location and funding. Torrez (2014) asserted that without proper funding, support, or resources, attempts to take migrant students to advanced levels of education will fail to support them in realizing their potential.

Consequently, the teacher participants expressed a great deal of gratitude for the migrant resources and support that they have been allotted. Confirming that the task of best educating a migrant student requires a team of compassionate and skilled professionals, the teachers understood that schools where some of their students came from may not have had the added resources. Virta (2014) explained that despite the success of these support systems, the added staff can be costly and difficult to find and schedule, especially in school where migrant populations are limited. The students maintained the value of the migrant center and described a contrast to their learning when enrolled at other schools that did not provide them with similar resources.

Limitations

Hatch (2002) described limitations as constraints that may affect the outcome of a study that are beyond control of the researcher. Limitations, due to their impacts, can often alter credibility and reliability for future studies. This study was limited to a small sample of students and teacher participants. While each participant interviewed shared their personal experiences,

the experience were similar in context. In this study, limitations were noted in sample size, setting, and personal biases.

Sample Size

Twelve student participants and six teacher participants made up this study's sample. Thus, I was unable to generalize to the larger population of migrant student college graduates and teachers of migrant students. The information gathered was confined to those who met the criteria for the study. Through this purposeful sampling, I was able to carefully select the participants I needed so I could learn from their meaningful experiences (Creswell, 2013).

Setting / Location

All interviews took place either in person or over the phone. Because interviews were held during the summer months, most of the teachers were accessible only via the phone. Half of the student participants were no longer local residents, so I needed to call them as well. Those who were interviewed in person were permitted to choose the location of the interview, which typically consisted of a small restaurant.

All but one of the student participants graduated from the same high school, which greatly restricted their experiences to one local area. While each migrant student traveled to varying schools as part of their migratory involvements, their high school was the same. Each spoke about their positive experiences at this high school and the in-house migrant center that they utilized for support. Additionally, five of the six teachers taught at the same local high school either currently or in the past. Not limiting access to other applicable participants from an array of geographic locations could have aided in providing additional input with "outside familiarities" addressing the research focus.

Personal Biases

As a former migrant student, I faced the challenge of mitigating my preconceived notions from all parts of the study. To ensure the credibility of the research, I made it a point to not allow my own opinions, ideas, and experiences to influence the study in any way.

Implications of the Results for Practice, Policy, and Theory

In this section, I discuss the implications of the results for practice, policy, and theory. The results are related to Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory and multicultural education, the conceptual frameworks from which the research is derived.

Practice

Teaching migrant students who experience detrimental learning gaps resulting from their untimely travels can be a challenging task. The disparity in practice is that most teachers do not understand their dilemmas and incorrectly characterize them as inept and unteachable. The teachers interviewed asserted that such students require specialized attention. Two strategic methodologies for changing the course of current practice are building positive student–teacher relationships, which is the moral fiber of multicultural education, and discrediting misconceptions about what migrant students are able to do. Relative to Maslow's principles (as cited in McLeod, 2017), understanding that positive and meaningful student–teacher relationships cannot be accomplished without first meeting basic needs is essential.

Implementing the practice recommendations of genuinely considering migrant student needs as a result of their lifestyle, teaching strategically and systematically to bridge learning and fill gaps and providing constant and significant praise will support in increasing the academic performance of migrant students. Focusing on these recommendations, as provided by both teacher and student participants in this study, can profoundly shape the state of migrant

education. Providing training for teachers to better understand the plight of the migrant farmworker family could aid in prompting teachers of migrant students to approach them tactfully. The end result could benefit academic improvement.

Policy

The findings create opportunities for policy makers to establish training protocols for teachers working with migrant students. In 2014, the migrant population in the United States was 13% (Migration Policy Institute, 2014); thus, the need to make these trainings a component of teacher preparation courses is prudent. When all teachers have adequate training to best support and handle any migrant students who are enrolled into their classrooms, they will be better prepared to initiate learning without causing unnecessary friction or discord that could cause the student to withdraw and regress.

A major issue identified with educating migrant students is the delay in learning when they arrive on a new campus. Aligning learning standards from state to state or even district to district could prove effective in alleviating the added time required to access and analyze learning gaps, proficiency levels and mastery of skills. Policies to support the streamlining of transferring such information, whether digitally or on a standardized form, could work to accelerate the transition and save valuable instructional time.

Funding for added resources, such as those provided to and utilized by this study's students, are costly. Policies to enhance funding to best support the needs of migrant students can complement the recommended approaches. Olwig and Valentin (2015) reported that insufficient resources can cause migrant students to be misplaced in classrooms that emasculate their potential. Lack of funding creates an evident absence of equity for this unique population. Banks (2010), through his definition of multicultural education, explained that educational equality will

continue to be a barrier for minority students until a focus is placed its importance. Funding policies for migrant education through training, added personnel and resources illustrate the reverence to the “no child left behind” ideology and the commitment to ensuring equal educational opportunities.

Theory

Maslow’s hierarchy of needs theory coupled with multicultural education served as frameworks for this study. The hierarchy of needs theory is a five-level pyramid in which higher needs come into focus only once basic needs are met (Maslow, 1954). Understanding that migrant students are typically economically disadvantaged, teachers must establish systems to ensure that their most basic needs are met. Issue with hunger, sleep deprivation, and good health are all critical to learning preparedness. Simultaneously, district leaders and state and federal legislators must also do their part to fund initiative. Once these needs are met, their teachers can work to create strong positive relationships. Murray and Malmgren (2005) concluded that low-income students who establish strong relationships with their teachers yield higher academic achievement and have more positive social-emotional adjustments that their peers who do not. In my interviews, migrant students and their teachers all identified encouraging and sincere relationships as fundamental to their success.

Relative to multicultural education, there is a clear paradigm shift in theory that will mandate a mindset that is all-inclusive and strives to create a culture where students are empowered based on their self-worth in learning spaces where everyone is treated with respect and promise. Multicultural education not only improves student productivity but simultaneously helps to overcome prejudices and build interpersonal communication while creating an awareness of culture and preventing social conflicts (Ameny-Dixon, 2013). Equity is deprived

when students are treated as “temporary” and overlooked because the assumption of the teachers is that they will leave before any progress can be achieved or measured. Migrant students have a better chance of seeing themselves as potential college graduates when teachers recognize their differences as strengths and quality instruction is provided to all. Migrant students carry their linguistic and cultural richness with them wherever they go. When their teachers fail to recognize their strengths and use them to their advantage, students struggle to adapt (Rodriguez-Valls & Torres, 2014).

Recommendations for Further Research

The current research on migrant education and the approaches required to best approach migrant students is limited. Although migrant students’ success stories have been documented, they are heavily outnumbered by those of migrant students who fall through the cracks, drop-out of school, and cycle through poverty. The research that advises what migrant teachers can and should do is important, but little research has identified teachers what teachers can do to best guide and educate their migrant students. This study was one attempt to fill that gap.

Further research looking into the perspective of school administrators and their mindset on what they perceive as equitable and appropriate for educating migrant students could garner alternate recommendations on how to best attack the issues negatively affecting student success. Most school administrators have experienced the role of the teacher and could provide insight on both instructional needs and policy implementation. Examining former migrant students who did not enjoy success as students and were unable to break away from the migrant lifestyle could also prove to offer insight that looks closer at the pressures and adverse effects of current practices.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to identify approaches that best support the learning of migrant students. Based on semistructured interviews with migrant students and their former teachers, a key finding consisted of common expectations for meeting student needs and bridging their learning gaps. Understanding the predicament of the migrant lifestyle and making deliberate efforts to provide inviting and well-intended learning environments was crucial. The participants described the need for equity and the value of taking advantage of resources that can supplement the learning.

In this chapter, I provided details and a framework of the findings relative to the research question. As a result of the research, I was able to identify themes that emerged from the data. In interviewing two groups of participants, students and teachers, I discovered common themes in their perspectives of how to best support migrant students for optimal academic outcomes. Each group provided sanctions for improving backing of migrant education and safeguarding the interests of the unique student population.

This research serves as an overview of what migrant students expect in school as they travel from state to state with their farmworker families in search of work. Additionally, it provided best practices and insights from teachers who have experienced success in teaching migrant students. Awareness of the complexity of the migrant way of life and the universal ambitions of the migrant student must be understood by all stakeholders in the education field. The findings from this study contribute to the current yet limited research on the topic and can be used to help guide future research. The hope of the researcher is that results from this study can help support changes in practice, policy, and theory with the goal of enhancing the educational

experiences of migrant students so that all students are provided the same level of quality and opportunity.

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Appendix A: Student Interview Questions

1. Tell me about what life was like and your experiences as a migrant student? What does it mean to be a migrant?
2. How many schools have you attended? In what states?
3. Which school was/is your favorite? Why?
4. Do you have a favorite teacher or teachers? What made them special? If none, why not?
5. What are your best memories of lessons or learning in school?
6. What is/was your favorite subject in school? Why?
7. How do you feel when you do well on an assignment or assessment?
8. What are your career goals? Why is this what you want to do?
9. What do you think is most important to help you reach your goal?
10. What do you see as the most important thing that schools can do to help migrant students?

Appendix B: Teacher of Migrant Students Interview Questions

Number of Years Teaching Migrant Students				
0-3	4-9	10-16	17-24	25+

Grade Levels Taught (circle all that apply)			
K-2	3-5	6-8	9-12

Degree Level	Area of Certification

1. Do you believe that different approaches to learning should be used with migrant students? What approaches do you feel work best?
2. Do you think that migrant students lack motivation and enthusiasm for learning?
3. Is English proficiency necessary for academic achievement of migrant students?

4. What do you think about the notion that migrant students will consistently be outperformed academically by their non-migrant peers?

5. Should expectations for migrant students should be lowered in order for them to see themselves as competent?

6. Do you agree that migrant students with limited English should be grouped together in order to expedite their learning?

--

7. Is the use of migrant support staff to work directly with migrant students essential to making the difference in their learning?

--

8. Do you feel that most migrant students do not succeed due to lack of support from parents?

--

9. Has it been your experience that parents of migrant students do not do enough to encourage their children to strive for academic success?

--

10. How have you exceeded the expectations when providing services to migrant students?

11. How do you know how migrant students are performing in relation to the other students in your classroom?

12. If your migrant students are not making the gains of their non-migrant classmates, what are you doing to address their progress?

--

13. What do you see as the biggest challenges for today's migrant students?

--

14. What do you feel are best practices for teachers working with migrant students?

--

15. What is the main factor that separates migrant students who succeed from migrant students who do not?

Appendix C: Migrant Student Recruitment Flyer

VOLUNTEERS WANTED FOR A RESEARCH STUDY

STUDY TITLE:

WHAT ARE THE BEST APPROACHES TO WORKING WITH MIGRANT STUDENTS?

Are you over the age of 18 and a former migrant student? Did you enjoy a successful K–12 education and are now having the same success in college? I am conducting a research study about the best approaches for teachers to use when working with migrant students and I am looking for your input! If you would like to participate in a professional and confidential interview in order to gain insight on your academic experiences please contact me. Interview will take approximately 60 minutes and there are no risks in participating in this research.

While there is no compensation for participating, your input will help to support migrant education as we work together to assist educators by providing them with critical tools to enhance the performance of their migrant students.

This research is conducted under the direction of Dr. Edward Kim, Faculty Chair, Doctoral Studies Program, College of Education

(IRB number: #1300399-1)

Please take one and contact me at your convenience. Thank in advance

Contact information redacted								
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Appendix D: Teacher Recruitment Letter

January, 2019

Dear Sir or Madam,

As a doctoral candidate at Concordia University, I plan to begin research focused on the most effective approaches to working with migrant students. Through semistructured interviews with former local migrant students who have illustrated academic success and are currently college students and/or graduates, teachers who they specify as instrumental to their success will be noted. Interviews with these select teachers identified by their former students would be essential to the study. Your permission to interview them would be greatly appreciated.

The proposed interviews with each teacher would last for no more than 60 minutes and would be arranged at a time convenient to the teacher's schedule, preferably before or after school. Their participation is entirely voluntary and there are no known or anticipated risks to participate. All information received will be kept confidential and will only be used for the research at hand.

Once the data has been analyzed and prepared for submission, I would be happy to provide you with an electronic copy of the findings. If you agree to provide permission, kindly sign below acknowledging your consent to interview any of your teachers specified from the student interviews. Please contact me at your convenience and I will be happy to stop by your campus to answer any questions and/or to collect this signed page.

Thanks in advance for your interest and assistance with this research.

Sincerely,

Pete Cade
[contact information redacted]

Approved by:

Signature

School Name / Title

Date

Appendix E: Statement of Original Work

The Concordia University Doctorate of Education Program is a collaborative community of scholar-practitioners, who seek to transform society by pursuing ethically-informed, rigorously-researched, inquiry based projects that benefit professional, institutional, and local educational contexts. Each member of the community affirms throughout their program of study, adherence to the principles and standards outlined in the Concordia University Academic Integrity Policy. This policy states the following:

Statement of academic integrity

As a member of the Concordia University community, I will neither engage in fraudulent or unauthorized behaviors in the presentation and completion of my work, nor will I provide unauthorized assistance to others.

Explanations:

What does “fraudulent” mean?

“Fraudulent” work is any material submitted for evaluation that is falsely or improperly presented as one’s own. This includes, but is not limited to texts, graphics and other multi-media files appropriated from any source, including another individual, that are intentionally presented as all or part of a candidate’s final work without full and complete documentation.

What is “unauthorized” assistance?

“Unauthorized assistance” refers to any support candidates solicit in the completion of their work, that has not been either explicitly specified as appropriate by the instructor, or any assistance that is understood in the class context as inappropriate. This can include, but is not limited to:

- Use of unauthorized notes or another’s work during an online test
- Use of unauthorized notes or personal assistance in an online exam setting
- Inappropriate collaboration in preparation and/or completion of a project
- Unauthorized solicitation of professional resources for the completion of the work.

Statement of Original Work (Continued)

I attest that:

1. I have read, understood, and complied with all aspects of the Concordia University–Portland Academic Integrity Policy during the development and writing of this dissertation.
2. Where information and/or materials from outside sources has been used in the production of this dissertation, all information and/or materials from outside sources has been properly referenced and all permissions required for use of the information and/or materials have been obtained, in accordance with research standards outlined in the *Publication Manual of The American Psychological Association*.



Digital Signature

Pete Cade

Name (Typed)

November 11, 2019

Date