

EDUCATIONAL IMPACT

HARVEST OF JUSTICE 2022: CHILD LABOR IN AGRICULTURE



Photo Credit: FLOC

Farm worker youth experience many educational challenges, especially if they are migrant workers. Many of the children who migrate with their families for farm work will change schools two to three times each year. They often start school in one state and then move to another state when the season ends. It can be very difficult for their records to transfer and many migrant students will repeat a grade due to educational losses as they switch schools. Not all schools are geared towards accommodating migrant students and their varied educational needs. Also, many migrant students find it challenging to make friends or join extracurricular activities when they are not enrolled in one school for a full year. All of these barriers lead to migrant students having one of the highest dropout rates in the United States.

Even if students aren't migrating for farm work, the nature of farm work places farm worker youth at a disadvantage over their fellow students. A farm worker who is 12 or older can work unlimited hours outside of school, which means most young farm workers are coming to school exhausted due to long shifts after or before school and on the weekends. Many children of farm workers do not have access to culturally-appropriate early education, so they start school behind many of their peers in terms of reading ability. As they get older, the continuous academic disruptions and strain of working often results in student farm workers feeling like they must decide between working to earn money or continuing their education.

Language barriers also present a challenge for farm worker youth who are predominantly people of color. According to a recent Association of Farmworker Opportunity Programs survey, 77% of the farm worker youth surveyed identified Spanish as their dominant language. Sadly, some studies of farm worker youth also found incidents of bullying and harassment to be common in school. Farm worker youth deserve to go to school and not have to worry about being harassed by school officials or students because they represent a minority population. This is just one of the many reasons why all schools should develop and implement anti-racist policies.

We also must strengthen existing educational programs for migrant children nationwide so their educational needs are met regardless of what schools they attend.

Reflection Questions:

- What do you think prevents so many migrant students from graduating?
- What resources could schools offer to help migrant students?
- How can you help migrant families with their educational needs in your community?

Prayer:

For farm worker children who seek to complete their education while their families are forced to move from place to place. And for farm worker families who long for a good education for their children so they have plentiful opportunities, we pray to the Lord. Lord, hear our prayer.

Act!

Show your support for the Migrant Education Program by ensuring your state or local community has ample funding for this program and migrant youth have the quality educational resources they deserve from preschool all the way to college.

Learn more

Citations and links to additional resources at bit.ly/hoj2022

About Us

National Farm Worker Ministry educates and mobilizes people of faith and conscience to support farm worker led campaigns to improve farm workers' working and living conditions.

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