



Supporting Migrant and Undocumented Learners in Career Technical Education

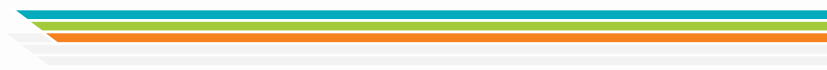
Career Technical Education (CTE) policies and programs have increasingly focused on supporting the needs of historically marginalized learners and closing access and performance gaps among learner groups. Perkins V, the latest iteration of federal CTE legislation known as the [Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act](#), is part of this trend. The law defines nine learner groups as special populations and includes a number of provisions that address expanding access to and supporting success in CTE programs for these learners. This brief will describe strategies for two learner groups that, while not named as special populations in the legislation, may benefit from strategies to close gaps: migrant and undocumented learners.

SPECIAL POPULATIONS IN PERKINS V

LEARNER GROUPS DEFINED AS SPECIAL POPULATIONS IN PERKINS V:

- Out-of-workforce individuals
- English learners
- Individuals experiencing homelessness
- Individuals with disabilities
- Single parents, including single pregnant women
- Youth who are in/have aged out of the foster care system
- Individuals preparing for careers that are non-traditional for their gender
- Youth with a parent who is a member of the armed forces and is on active duty
- Individuals from economically disadvantaged families, ex. low-income youth and adults

*CTE educators are developing strategies to support learner groups who, while not special populations under the law, may need additional supports, including **migrant and undocumented, LGBTQ+, justice-involved and Tribal learners.***



DEFINING MIGRANT AND UNDOCUMENTED LEARNERS

Perkins V does not define either of these learner groups or treat them as special populations, outside of reporting on the CTE enrollment and performance of learners with migrant status who are on the secondary level.

The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), defines “migratory child” as a child or youth who made a qualifying move in the preceding 36 months to serve as a migratory agricultural worker or migratory fisher or to go with, or to join, a parent who is a migratory agricultural worker or migratory fisher. Local education agencies are notified by the state about a learner’s eligibility under this designation.

ESEA also defines “immigrant children and youth” as individuals who are aged 3 through 21, were not born in the United States, and have not been attending school in the United States for more than three academic years.

The term “undocumented” is not defined in education legislation. However, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security defines the unauthorized immigrant population as “all foreign-born non-citizens who are not legal residents.”

Despite not being formal special populations in the law, state and local CTE leaders are taking action to help these learners achieve education and career success. These populations can struggle with family separation, economic insecurity and language barriers. The percentage of youth not enrolled in school and without a high school diploma or equivalent is substantially higher for recent immigrants than for longer-residing immigrants and native-born learners.¹



STRATEGIES FOR MIGRANT AND UNDOCUMENTED LEARNERS

Despite migrant and undocumented learners not being formal special populations in Perkins, states and local CTE leaders can support these learners by leveraging a number of potential strategies shared in this brief as well as strategies described in the related brief on supporting English learners. Potential state (🏛️) and local (📍) approaches include:

Cross-agency coordination and partnerships 🏛️ 📍

On the state and local levels, migrant service agencies, immigrant rights organizations, and other multilingual staff can help newly arrived and enrolled migrant learners adapt to their environments and help CTE educators better understand their needs.

Federal funding sources 🏛️

In addition to Perkins, state leaders can leverage federal funding streams such as the Language Instruction for English Learner and Immigrant Students Act (ESEA Title III), the Migrant Education Program (ESEA Title IC), and the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Title II).

Logistical support 📍

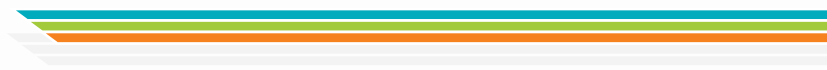
On the local level, counselors and advisers can help migrant and undocumented learners navigate around a lack of requisite forms and proof of identification. For instance, it may work better for these learners to receive earnings from work-based learning as stipends rather than salaries.

Welcoming environment 📍

Fear of deportation is common among immigrant families, which could be a roadblock preventing caregivers from connecting with their communities and engaging with schools. Local CTE programs can make immigrant families and undocumented learners feel safe by hosting informational events in venues where individuals will not fear being asked about their immigration status. CTE educators and counselors can also provide immigrant families with easy-to-understand information in their primary language about their rights and legal services and about the opportunities and benefits of CTE.²

Coordinating supports across special populations 📍

Many learners qualify under multiple special population designations. Approximately 10 percent of all migrant children end up as foster youth after being separated from their families.³ In addition, recent immigrant children are more likely to live in low-income households and with parents or guardians with limited English proficiency.⁴ On the local level, CTE leaders can help connect these learners with foster care agencies, mental health resources, interpreters, translated information, English language supports and financial assistance.



REFLECTION QUESTIONS

The strategies described in the previous section are not mutually exclusive, and not all will be appropriate based on the needs of your migrant and undocumented learner populations. Before enacting new strategies, assess the current state of migrant and undocumented learners in your CTE programs and dig into root causes of barriers and challenges:

- What do current migrant and undocumented learners or alumni tell you about their needs, challenges and successes?
- How do you engage with migrant and undocumented learners and their caregivers to make them feel secure and to share the benefits and opportunities of CTE?
- How do you communicate with migrant and undocumented learners and, if applicable, their caregivers?
- What comprehensive counseling do you provide to migrant and undocumented learners and their caregivers? How can you help them navigate legal roadblocks?
- What does your data show about the CTE participation and concentration of migrant and undocumented learners?
- What support services are available for migrant and undocumented learners and caregivers? How are they made aware of these services?
- What does your data show about the performance of migrant and undocumented learners?
- Which agencies or community organizations could you connect with to support migrant and undocumented learners?

For additional resources, visit [Advance CTE's Perkins V Section](#), the [Maximizing Access and Success for Special Populations in Career Technical Education series page](#) in the [Learning that Works Resource Center](#) and [ACTE's Perkins Implementation page](#).

CASE STUDY



Migrant learners are a population of focus in Oregon's Beaverton School District, a large and diverse district consisting of learners who speak more than 101 languages. Prior to and during the coronavirus pandemic, the district provided a [CTE summer school program](#) for migrant and English learners in middle school. Learners practiced their language and math skills while completing a hands-on CTE engineering project such as coding or creating structures out of balsa wood and subjecting them to seismic testing at the Portland State University (PSU) Engineering Lab. In addition, PSU supported the program by offering campus tours and engaging professors to give feedback on learner projects.

High school CTE learners and alumni from the Beaverton Academy of Science and Engineering, many of them multi-lingual themselves, served as interns. To recognize their contributions, high school interns earned work experience elective credit, and alumni in college received a small stipend. While the program is no longer operating, Beaverton School District continues to support migrant, English and multi-lingual learners with a dedicated [Multilingual Department](#) that collaborates with other departments, offers professional development and provides service learning opportunities.

RESOURCES TO SUPPORT MIGRANT AND UNDOCUMENTED LEARNERS

- **Beyond DACA: A Directory of Resources for Undocumented Students & Individuals** (Higher Ed Immigration Portal)
- **Here to Stay Toolkit** (United We Dream)
- **Mental Health Connector** (Immigrants Rising)
- **Newcomer Tool Kit** (U.S. Department of Education Office of English Language Acquisition)
- **Overview of Undocumented Students** (Immigrants Rising)
- **Resource Guide for Undocumented Students** (The Best Schools, 2024)
- **Resource Hub for Undocumented and Immigrant Families** (Center for Migration Studies)
- **Top 10 Ways to Support Undocumented Students** (Immigrants Rising)

¹ Sugarman, J. (2023, October). Recent immigrant children: A profile of new arrivals to U.S. schools. Migration Policy Institute, National Center on Immigrant Integration Policy. https://www.migrationpolicy.org/sites/default/files/publications/mpi-recent-immigrant-children-2023_final.pdf

² Informed Immigrant. (n.d.). For educators: Supporting undocumented students & their families. [https://www.informedimmigrant.com/guides/educators/#:-:text=Schools%20and%20districts%20can%20also,resources%20\(more%20info%20in%20next](https://www.informedimmigrant.com/guides/educators/#:-:text=Schools%20and%20districts%20can%20also,resources%20(more%20info%20in%20next)

³ Atkin, E. (2018, June 20). The uncertain fate of migrant children sent to foster care. The New Republic. <https://newrepublic.com/article/149161/uncertain-fate-migrant-children-sent-foster-care>

⁴ Informed Immigrant. (n.d.). For educators: Supporting undocumented students & their families. [https://www.informedimmigrant.com/guides/educators/#:-:text=Schools%20and%20districts%20can%20also,resources%20\(more%20info%20in%20next](https://www.informedimmigrant.com/guides/educators/#:-:text=Schools%20and%20districts%20can%20also,resources%20(more%20info%20in%20next)

