Graduation and Outcomes for Success for Out-of-School Youth (GOSOSY)

OSY CONSORTIUM • SUCCESS STORIES

GRADUATION | HIGH SCHOOL EQUIVALENCY | CAREER READINESS
The Out-of-School Youth (OSY) consortium, funded by the Office of Migrant Education, exists to offer a nationwide platform for collaboration among the states to better serve the nation's migratory OSY. The current iteration of the consortium has 18 member states and 12 partner states.

Migrant Education Program requirements mandate that youth up to age 22 be served, including those not enrolled in school. OSY continue to be one of the fastest growing subgroups within the MEP as well as the one least served.

GOSOSY exists because policies are urgently needed to extend opportunities to out-of-school migrant youth who wish to continue their education as well as to develop service delivery models for states to assist them in meeting the instructional and support services needs for those OSY who are here-to-work.
GOAL SETTING WITH OSY: MY LIFE BOOKS

SYNTIA
"After coming from the GOSOSY 2018 Dissemination Event conference, my head was full of ideas to use with my migrant students! Syntia was all for doing a My Life book of her own life, goals, and dreams just using pictures. As we did this project we also focused on learning the English language, spelling, vocabulary, and word pronunciation to write her life story. Not only did Syntia learn a lot from this, but she gained confidence, focused on what she wants to accomplish in life, and thought a lot about where she is from and where she is headed. After a few months of drafts and working to get the final version, she got her book done and printed and was very proud to show it off."
-Adriana, OSY Advocate

KANSAS
GOSOSY CONSORTIUM LEAD STATE

MARIÁ
"Maria is a Spanish-speaking OSY full of dreams and goals to accomplish. Working full time to support family in El Salvador, she graduated from high school in May 2019. Her COE expired a couple of months before she graduated but that did not stop her! With communication and the bond we built while working together, we kept in contact and made it happen. She made it a priority to get her diploma and she did it. I was so happy to celebrate with her on her big day!"
-Adriana, OSY Advocate

Kansas OSY Alexandra and Nayomi work on their own My Life books.
Kansas migrant students had the opportunity to experience science, technology, reading, engineering/technology, the arts, and math on a personal level through a Mobile STREAM Lab that traveled across the state the summer of 2018. Over six different weeks in seven different locations, the STREAM Lab was set up at schools to offer full-day, targeted instruction to all ages in an integrated program. Students experienced planning, building, coding, programming, art projects, and other educational activities designed to help them grow in appreciation for and comfort with the different aspects of technology.

“The difference with this program is the technology. It's not just pencil and paper...there are full, hands-on opportunities in everything we do. And it’s super fun!” said Paulin, advocate.

Lisa, director of STEM for Greenbush, explained that there were a wide variety of activities for the students, including computer science and robots. Building with KEVA blocks and story-telling using Ozobots were also student favorites.

She added, “The students had the option as well to take the parts of the laptop, radio, etc. and create an art piece. The pieces were very creative.”

Both Lisa and Paulin agreed that other Migrant Education Programs can adapt some of the projects even without access to a full STREAM Lab. Using old appliance and computer parts is an easy way to offer a hands-on, creative experience learning how things look and work from the inside out.

The Mobile STREAM Lab is especially meaningful for migrant students when it opens their eyes to career possibilities beyond what they already know. “Although their work in agriculture is extremely important, there are other options out there too,” Paulin said, “This shows them that they can be good at those things as well.” Lisa added, “I really enjoy listening to the students as we work through the activities. They are developing problem-solving skills and thinking their way through different tasks.”
"The name Luisa appeared on a list by my computer for weeks. This list showed the inactive students that I’m unable to locate. The migrant life is filled with uncertainties and obstacles, and many times students are gone and moved away before I’m able to reach them. Nevertheless I play detective in hopes that I can locate them and provide the services to get them back on their feet. I met with one of Luisa’s previous teachers who helped me finally locate her. Luisa was a homeless single mother in Kansas. She didn’t have a job or a high school diploma, and my initial meetings with her consisted of relationship building and planning the process. I took her to job fairs and provided her with helpful resources. I worked with my team diligently to find her a stable living place. Once she was in good health and steady, we were able to focus on academics and enroll at a learning center. In addition, she piloted programs with me including career exploring and a plan of study for the out-of-school youth. It’s interesting how she never expressed doubt or frustration throughout the whole process in spite of struggles in her personal life as well. As advocates, we tend to be cheerleaders sometimes and it can make all the difference. Luisa graduated and received her high school diploma and I was there remembering when she was just a name on a long list of students. I know she will use lessons from our time together to grow into a productive member of society and that is a wonderful thought. Luisa lives in with her son and her boyfriend and is thinking about going to college soon. She wants to be a software engineer.”

-Paulin, OSY Advocate
Domingo (8th grade) and Alex (9th grade) are migrant students originally from Guatemala. They had the opportunity to visit the University of Kansas at a Global Expo Fair, where they learned about possible careers for students interested in different cultures and languages (these boys are now tri-lingual, first language being an indigenous Guatemalan language). The boys also had a meeting with a CAMP coordinator, who shared her own story of growing up as a migrant and achieving a college degree. Neither student had ever visited a college campus nor had anyone told them they could go to college.

"Sebastian is a 14-year-old newcomer from Guatemala who had never been to the dentist before. He was enrolled in the MEP, identified to have dental needs, and staff were able to help get him to a local dentist. The dentist cleaned his teeth, extracted a tooth, and also gave him several fillings he needed (over several appointments). After taking care of his oral health, Sebastian was far more comfortable and able to focus on his academic goals."

-Melanie, OSY Advocate
"Isabel (pictured above at far right) is a high school sophomore. She was one of the students who attended the Leadership Day at Pittsburg State University hosted by the MEP. Isabel expressed how much the Leadership Day impacted her and her view of college. She said before coming to PSU she had been too scared to think about college or anything after high school. She told me that when she visited the college, she could see herself walking on campus to classes. Isabel said she was given a lot of information to believe college is a possibility and it has made her rethink her future. She enjoyed the speakers who shared their college stories and felt she could relate to the people speaking about being first-generation students. By the end of our conversation she said she will be working extra hard on her grades because she wants to go to PSU and she wants to become a PE teacher. I think without our program, kids such as Isabel would not always believe a college education is attainable."

-Nidia, OSY Advocate
Juan arrived from Guatemala at 16 to live with his father. He arrived with no English language skills. It was never Juan’s intention to go to school—only to work and send money back to his family, but with the help of a family friend, Juan enrolled as a 9th grader. He missed the latter part of the school year because he moved to work in chicken houses and that is when the MEP enrolled him as an OSY. With the help of the MEP, Juan completed some credit recovery work and re-enrolled for the next school year as a 10th grader. Juan’s plan was to drop out of school at age 18, but MEP staff encouraged him to stick with it. He worked to improve his English so as to be permitted to take classes at the vocational school. During the 2015-16 school year, the MEP advocate worked with the counselors at the high school and, after many phone calls to Guatemala to clarify classes already taken, Juan was promoted to a senior from a junior mid-year. In order to fulfill graduation requirements in one semester, Juan had to tackle a formidable schedule: English III, English IV, Biology, and Algebra II all at the same time. During this time, Juan was living and working part-time on a dairy farm with a group of farmhands. His father moved in and out and was not present for the most part. Juan supported himself and had very little access to transportation. Juan often expressed his discomfort at attending a school with very little diversity. Despite all this, he stayed after school for tutoring three days a week and even worked with MEP staff during his spring break to catch up on assignments. With the support of ESL staff and MEP staff, Juan was able to fulfill his graduation requirements and was very excited and nervous to walk the line on May 20, 2016.

Juan continues working at the dairy and would like to eventually work as an automotive technician. He is currently exploring avenues that would help him to attain a postsecondary certificate in this area.

Julio, a 20-year-old migrant out-of-school youth, moved to the United States with his parents when he was about 2 years old. He was enrolled in school, but during his first year of high school he began missing school and had to repeat 9th grade three times. He was discouraged, and he did not have the support necessary to see the value of attending high school and the possibilities for his future. After dropping out of school, Julio worked at whatever job he could land. He worked for a packing warehouse and labored in the fields along with his dad and brothers. Doing farm work from the break of dawn until a late quitting time made him realize that he wanted something better for himself.

In MEP staff member Daniel’s first conversation with Julio, they talked about goals. Daniel explained that some of Julio’s goals required a minimum of a high school education and helped Julio enroll in the Central Washington University High School Equivalency Program (HEP). Julio was able to earn his high school equivalency certificate in only two months. This was no easy feat for Julio. He had a vehicle with multiple mechanical problems and possessed no legal driver’s license. But Julio was determined and did not let any of those problems deter him from his objective. For Julio, getting his high school equivalency certificate is only the beginning. He plans to get a driver’s license, attend his local community college, and eventually earn a bachelor degree.
JOSE - NORTH CAROLINA

"My very first OSY after starting my new position at Bladen MEP was Jose. He was 18 years old and had just arrived to reunite with his mother. Knowing very little English he was pleased to learn he could take his High School Equivalency Test in Spanish. The months of tutoring paid off. He passed his entrance exams to start his online course work through Wake Tech Community College. He enjoyed little victories by passing science, math, and finally his social studies exam. Jose graduated with his high school diploma in December 2018. He is now working for a welding company and he hopes to go to school someday for nursing."

- C. Hope Derry, OSY Facilitator/Recruiter

KARLA - COLORADO

Karla found out that she was pregnant with twins during her junior year in high school in Hudson, Colorado. Karla had to leave school when she and her boyfriend moved to Fort Morgan, where he found work in a dairy. Karla accepted a visit from Maria (Secondary Initiatives Coordinator) and Francisca (Recruiter) to discuss her options to complete high school. It was difficult for her at that time as she had lost one of her babies at birth and the second baby was constantly sick. Karla knew that she wanted to complete her high school education though she lived far from town and they had only one car.

Karla connected with Dolores, Migrant Education Graduation Advocate, and she took her GED pre-test at READY (Resources for the Development and Education for Youth). Karla knew that being a teen parent was a huge responsibility and it was a motivator for her to improve herself and continue her education. She was able to complete her GED quickly and gain employment at a bank as a cashier.

Her persistence and dedication is paying off as she was recently promoted to become a personal banker.

LUIS - NORTH CAROLINA

"Luis, from Guatemala, is definitely the coolest kid in town. Luis enrolled in our MEP last summer with the desire to go to school. At almost 18 years old, but with only a 4th-grade education, he set his goal high to receive his high school diploma. After a full year of tutoring, Luis recently passed his math and science entrance exams to begin his online HEP program. I will never forget the day he turned in his Pythagorean Theorem math homework with a super big smile on his face so thrilled he could complete all questions assigned. Luis' response after his first week of online class was, 'Bien, todo, está perfecto.' Luis is working hard to take his first social studies exam soon."

- C. Hope Derry, OSY Facilitator/Recruiter
"No one can imagine how hard it is until you live it. In addition to the new language, you face a different environment, different situations and different people. It is impossible to explain in words. It requires much effort and dedication to adapt to a new life. The migrant program’s support and guidance encouraged me to not fail but take advantage.”

Luis - Kentucky

The decision to come to the United States and leave Venezuela was not an easy one. But in Luis’ words, “My country’s situation is not good these days. If you are not from a well-off family your life’s goals and ambitions are limited. The United States is known as the ‘The Country of Opportunities’. I knew it was not going to be easy to come to a new world. It takes a lot of courage. But I knew that I wanted a better future for myself and my mom.” Luis and his mother, Luz, came to Lexington, KY, in August of 2015 from Venezuela. The Fayette County Migrant Program enrolled Luis as an OSY as Luis obtained work cutting and loading tobacco alongside his mother. The work was hard but provided for them. In January 2016, the family moved from Fayette County to Madison County and he was qualified on continuation of eligibility. The GO SSO SY OSY Student Profile was completed and discussed with Luis. The profile targeted his interest in earning a diploma by May of 2016. Luis enrolled as a high school senior and his counselor, migrant advocate, and others discussed the graduation plan for Luis. To graduate in five short months he needed to take five credit recovery classes in addition to his regular classes. It was a monumental task but Luis was up for the challenge. Fortunately, Luis had his transcript from Venezuela that was helpful in satisfying graduation requirements. Migrant staff met with Luis from January through May to help reduce barriers and set bench-

marks as the graduation date approached.

Luis stated, “The migrant program provided me with school supplies, an iPad and more. No one can imagine how hard it is until you live it. In addition to the new language, you face a different environment, different situations and different people. It is impossible to explain in words. It requires much effort and dedication to adapt to a new life. The migrant program’s support and guidance encouraged me to not fail but take advantage.”

During Luis’ spring semester in high school he maintained a 3.5 GPA, completed his credit recovery classes, and attended a workshop presented by Kentucky Higher Education Assistance Authority. Luis met with the Latino Recruitment Specialist at Eastern Kentucky University to learn more about applying to college. Luis learned that he would not qualify for financial aid at this time so he was discouraged when he spoke with migrant staff. Luis told us, “I did not realize that graduating from high school and applying to college could be so hard. My biggest dream is to become an electrical engineer.” Migrant staff and others continued to support and encourage Luis. He applied and was accepted into Bluegrass Community and Technical College in Lexington. Luis also applied for two migrant scholarships. His first ACT composite score was 21. Luis’ discouragement faded away and was replaced with college dreams and goals. On May 21, 2016, Luis graduated with distinction. “With God’s help, my mother’s support and my dedication I will become an electrical engineer. This is the land of opportunity. The life you dream of is possible. The fight depends on you”.
Tucker dropped out of school the second semester of his senior year and was working cows. Thanks to an alert and compassionate school counselor, Tucker was offered books and assignments to facilitate his ability to earn a diploma.

The Nebraska Migrant Education Program staff became involved when Tucker had a qualifying move and was signed up for the MEP. However, once his COE had been approved and staff member Rhonda attempted to contact him, she was told that Tucker had moved. He had left his books behind. Rhonda obtained the schoolbooks and began to search for Tucker. She reached out to the County Extension agent, who gave her the name of a farmer who hired temporary workers. Tucker did not work for him, but that farmer referred her to another farmer, and so the story went until someone told Rhonda that she could leave the books at the veterinarian’s office because he knew Tucker. Throughout this time, Rhonda had been calling and texting Tucker. The next time Rhonda called, he had the books. She set up a visit, but when she went out to the farm, he had already moved again.

A personal friend of Rhonda’s helped her find where Tucker lived. After that, Tucker’s mother joined Rhonda in her efforts to encourage him to finish his final high school semester work. Rhonda checked in with him three times a month with the same questions, “How’s work going?” “How is school going?” As time progressed and work took priority in Tucker’s life, it became apparent that it would be very difficult for Tucker to finish by the deadline for graduation.

Rhonda and the principal of the high school met to re-evaluate Tucker’s plan and the principal graciously moved the deadline to his 22nd birthday. The school also approved granting some credit for the work he was doing with his employer. The principal ordered a high school diploma for Tucker, and told Rhonda to let him know that it was there waiting for him when he finished his work. Rhonda told him and added, “I know you can do it before you turn 22.” Tucker was amazed and asked if the diploma was signed. Rhonda said, “Yes, all you have to do is get the work done.” Little by little over the summer and fall, Tucker did the work on his own, with the support of his mother. Rhonda continued calling every 10 days or so. Just a few months later, the principal reported that all of Tucker’s required work was completed, and that he had earned his high school diploma that had been waiting for him the whole time.
“You gotta want it!” Ricardo of Hastings, Nebraska, had finally decided that he did, indeed, want his HSED, so he went after it and completed it within a few months.

Ricardo’s family was in the MEP when he started his last year of high school. But he left after only a few weeks because he needed to work to support the new family he was starting. As a result, his MEP status changed to an Out-of-School Youth (OSY). His plan was to save part of his earnings so he could work and go to school at the same time. Finally, he had some money saved up, but family responsibilities caused his education to be put on hold again. The first time Ricardo started to study for his GED was actually in 2013; he began with math, which was the most difficult subject for him. He admits he got discouraged and quit his studies. Also, his job required him to work out-of-town a lot. Although Ricardo still wanted to go back to school, it did not seem possible because of other demands on his time and energy. Ricardo’s mother always encouraged him to return to his GED studies. Then, in late May 2014, his aunt and her family moved to Hastings and she also became a great source of motivation. She had dropped out also, but at an earlier point in high school than Ricardo. She had completed her GED and told him, “I did it, so you can do it, too!”

Ricardo’s aunt is now employed by a local company that is helping her with courses at the local community college.

Seeing his aunt’s successes, Ricardo finally decided he had to get started again on his GED studies through the MEP. He attended the October 2015 Orientation for the GED preparation classes offered by Central Community College (CCC) as part of its Adult Basic Education (ABE) Program. The local non-profit organization, Hastings Literacy Program, partners with CCC to provide, among other classes, GED preparation.

Ricardo took the initial Tests of Adult Basic Education (TABE) and his scores were high enough that he could soon begin taking the GED practice tests in language arts, social studies, and science, while spending more time studying mathematics. After finishing a full day’s work with a local employer, Ricardo would attend the evening GED classes twice a week. By the end of October, he had passed the GED Language Arts and Social Studies Tests. Although Ricardo worked until 5:30 p.m., he made it to his 6:00 testing appointments at CCC in Grand Island, Nebraska, which is about 25 miles away. He admits he was “nervous every single time,” about taking the tests and whether he had passed them. On the exams, there were some questions that were more difficult to answer than others. Ricardo didn’t want to lose time on those questions, so he skipped them to continue with easier ones, then returned to the harder ones. Ricardo advises, “try your hardest and don’t let a few hard questions or wrong answers stop you or discourage you.”

In addition to the instruction and encouragement Ricardo received, another great benefit of studying with the Hastings Literacy Program is that the test fees were all paid by a scholarship from a Hastings Community Foundation grant.

Ricardo is looking forward to participating in the GED graduation ceremony which will be hosted by Central Community College.

Words of advice from this happy and proud new recipient of high school credentials? “Always stay focused! Maybe you’ll stumble along the way, but at the end of the day, you get up and keep trying. Don’t give up and a good thing will come out of your work. You have to look at your future.”

With that attitude, Ricardo is sure to be successful as he continues with his education at the college level and in life in general.
GUILLERMO AND ALEJANDRINO - ILLINOIS

Guillermo and Alejandrino, ages 21 and 19 respectively, came from Oaxaca, Mexico, to work in the fields and orchards of southern Illinois. They both wanted to take advantage of all of the learning opportunities available while in the area. These two young men had almost perfect attendance at the evening ESL classes provided by the Illinois Migrant Council's Technology Learning Center (TLC) and Shawnee Community College. They lived in a small labor camp located about one mile from the TLC and walked to and from camp in the evenings to class. Often, they arrived early to have extra time to work on the computers or, if the rain kept them from work, they would come to the TLC during the day as well. In addition to their success at ESL, Guillermo and Alejandrino also completed computer literacy classes. They are now able to use common technology terminology and equipment; computer and productivity software to organize and create information; and computer and communication software to access and transmit information. When these young men began their study of computer literacy, they needed considerable assistance. As they progressed and gained proficiency, they began to work far more independently. Guillermo and Alejandrino’s hard work and dedication helped them achieve their goals and take the first important steps to becoming life-long learners.

JHOAN - PENNSYLVANIA

"Jhoan has had heart problems all of his life that have led to other issues including paralysis of his right hand. His mother, Cecilia, said he spent a lot of time in hospitals or at home sick so he did not attend school on a regular basis. Attaining a job and pursuing his education seemed overwhelming to both of them. However, in 2017 we were able to get him enrolled in Job Corp where he could study for his GED, learn English, and get a certification. After that he planned to take computer courses. Jhoan had a few challenges on his journey including continued health problems, low scores, peer pressure to quit, and lack of focus at times. But with his mother’s encouragement and the efforts of the MEP staff, Jhoan obtained his diploma and certification as an office assistant in March.

It was a challenging road to success! But in spite of doubts, advocacy issues, and the medical runaround we both accomplished our goal. I am very proud of Jhoan and feel he now has a whole future of opening doors to succeed in whatever he sets his mind to do. I hope he goes on to college. He needs more English and I recommended he continue taking courses. His mother is so proud and Jhoan’s sister just graduated from high school. She hopes both continue on to higher education as well."

- Wendy, OSY Recruiter
"I feel fortunate to have this job and to be able to help young adults improve their lives. Some of my successes with OSY include Karina, who I am tutoring for the GED test and who already passed the language arts portion of the test. When she passed that first portion, she said, 'Thank you for helping me. Now I have hope and I know that a better future waits for me.' Another OSY is Enyer. He has been in the United States for just a few months. I am helping him with ESL. I also registered him and his mother at Mother Veronica’s Resource Center for more ESL classes. He told me, 'Your program is very helpful. The only thing I know here is how to go to the corner store and wait for the ride that takes me to work. With your help I am finding out that there is more than just hard work here and that I can become someone in this country.' Another OSY named Lucianni expressed her gratitude toward the Migrant Education Program and told me that she felt she had no purpose here in Reading and that she was going back to Florida until she was recruited to this program. Now she feels that she can accomplish a lot here. These are just three out of many beautiful stories with my OSY. I love working with them and helping them find ways to reach their dreams."

- Amarilis, OSY Advocate

Eisenhower Middle/High School, which serves around 550 pupils, sits amid dairy farms on rolling forested hills in rural Warren County, Pennsylvania. There are many migrant out-of-school youth working on the farms in this area. In early 2012, 16-year-old Rocky arrived in the area to work with his parents skinning deer and cattle to prepare hides for export. The idea of Rocky attending school was concerning to the family since he had attended school in Guatemala only through the 4th grade and did not know any English. In spite of the family’s reservations, Pennsylvania MEP staff started preparing Rocky for school with weekly lessons on school vocabulary and English-Spanish study books. SOSOSY (now GOOSOSY) English-Spanish packets and CDs for him to practice at home between lessons were provided, as well as a laptop for English skills with Rosetta Stone. After working with MEP staff for three months, Rocky's family enrolled
him in school. Rocky was Eisenhower’s first migrant student so MEP staff started by meeting with school staff and keeping in contact with the principal to help prepare for his enrollment. The principal, guidance counselor, ESL teacher, Spanish teacher, student, parent, Homeless Coordinator, and MEP staff all attended the initial enrollment meeting which determined Rocky’s placement in 9th grade, which classes he would begin, and how much ESL he would receive. Rocky’s first day of school was May 14, 2012.

School staff kept in constant contact with MEP staff who built in-home lessons based upon content the teachers were covering in class. MEP staff assisted Rocky in obtaining his vaccinations through the PA Department of Health so he could continue in school. As time went on, Rocky made many friends and started singing in the choir. Finally, in 2015, Rocky was ready to graduate, but it was discovered he lacked credits and would have to repeat 12th grade. Rocky was discouraged and considered dropping out so that he could work to help support his family. Fortunately, he was able to find a part-time job after school and continued 12th grade for the 2015-2016 school year. On June 9, 2016, Rocky received his diploma from Eisenhower. He is the first in his family to obtain his diploma and Eisenhower’s first migrant student and graduate. Rocky came from a 4th grade education background at age 16 and was able to graduate high school at 21 years old. He has made his family, Eisenhower Middle/High School, and staff from the Pennsylvania Migrant Education Program very proud.

OSY CONSORTIUM MEMBER STATES 2012-2019

ALABAMA
ARIZONA
ARKANSAS
COLORADO
FLORIDA
GEORGIA
IDAHO
ILLINOIS
IOWA
KANSAS
KENTUCKY
LOUISIANA
MASSACHUSETTS
MISSISSIPPI
NEBRASKA
NEW HAMPSHIRE
NEW JERSEY
NEW YORK
NORTH CAROLINA
PENNSYLVANIA
SOUTH CAROLINA
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