



InET Consortium

Binational Migrant Education Initiative

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To better understand the scope of the Binational Migrant Education Initiative (BMEI), it is essential to know the definition of the binational migrant student on both sides of the border and review the historical backdrop and program components that describe the partnership between the United States (US) and Mexico (MX). The overall purpose is to design effective strategies to help eligible binational migrant students succeed academically in the US and MX.

How do we define a binational migrant student? The United States defines a binational student as “an eligible migrant student who moves between Mexico and the United States with his/her parents or as an emancipated youth at least once in the last 36 months”. On the other hand, Mexico’s definition of a binational migrant student is “any student who moves between Mexico and the United States”.

In 1976, educators in Mexico and the United States collaborated to address the needs of binational migrant students. The states of Michoacán and California initiated efforts to work together on issues related to the education of students who migrate between the U.S. and Mexico. As other States became involved, the BMEI was created to generate a cohesive effort. In 1990, a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was signed by the U.S. Department of Education and Mexico’s Secretariat of Education (*Secretaría de Educación Pública*) to strengthen the working relationship and enhance efforts to improve primary, secondary, and postsecondary education in both countries. An annex is signed every two years to encourage more State MEPs to participate in Binational activities and help support and strengthen those state Binational efforts that are currently established.

A key component of this support is to identify the unique needs of the binational migrant student. Data from a **Binational Comprehensive Needs Assessment** (CNA) conducted with eight key U.S. binational states indicated unique needs corresponding to four general areas:

- 1) **Student Mobility.** The number of international moves affects binational students’ access to services and success in school. Fear of immigration limits binational migrant students from accessing school and community services.

2) **Differences in the U.S. and Mexican School Systems** (i.e., curriculum/assessment differences). Binational students may not receive adequate educational assistance from school staff that may not be aware of the different requirements in Mexico and the U.S. The different graduation requirements and the varied curriculum and assessment processes may hinder the student's progress.

3) **Grade Placement and Secondary Credit Accrual**. In Mexico, binational students may be missing school because they lack proper paperwork (e.g., *Apostille*, report cards, transcripts, Transfer Document, etc.). In addition, school counselors and other personnel may not be fully trained to interpret Transfer Documents and Mexican school records. In some instances, binational students may not be properly placed in coursework/classes, and may fall behind academically or drop out of school.

4) **Other** (e.g., culture, health care). Binational students often experience social/cultural identity shock and lack of sense of belonging on both sides of the border which weakens their desire to stay in school. Binational students who travel between the two countries may be learning language at a slower rate than their non-binational counterparts. There is a lack of health services available for binational families.

There are promising practices and resources to support eligible binational migrant educators and parents. These include creating a **pool of resources** and **best practices** for credit accrual via the Internet to benefit binational migrant students; developing a **nationwide system** (in each country) for reviewing high school and *bachiller* transcripts, determining equivalence, and awarding credits (full and partial); designing a **guide** coded with U.S./Mexico courses for training high school counselors on how to interpret transcripts for issuing credit; exploring successful partnerships between the U.S. and Mexico and expanding them to other states (e.g., Hidalgo-Arizona, Utah-SEP; building a **network** between U.S. and Mexico educators regarding records, schedules, credits, special education issues, promotion and graduation requirements – PROBEM & MEP directories; designing **systems** to send books, assignments and other course requirements with departing binational students; utilizing **correspondence courses** and **distance learning**; providing **information/training** aimed at school administrators on the enrollment and continuity of instruction for binational students; and other activities.

Inherent in the definition of the word “binational” is the need to establish links between the US and MX that will lead to continued dialogue and discussion on how best to support the eligible binational migrant student. It is a dual responsibility that is addressed through consortia of states such as the Innovative Educational Technologies (InET) project that focuses on seeking solutions for the eligible binational migrant students.

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