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PROFESSIONAL LEARNING NETWORK PROFILES

Identifying Students Closer to Their Qualifying Move Date by Utilizing an Interactive Enrollee Form

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A Note on the Partnership Between the California Department of Education and WestEd

WestEd provides technical assistance and support to the California Department of Education (CDE) to cultivate the highest quality identification and recruitment (I&R) practices across the state for the Migrant Education Program (MEP). In California, each MEP subgrantee takes local responsibility for its I&R efforts. The partnership between the CDE and WestEd is committed to continuous improvement, including (1) approaching identification and recruitment through an investigative mindset wherein we value curiosity and innovation as well as research; (2) making context-specific improvements to identification and recruitment; and (3) using both qualitative and quantitative data to see whether our improvement efforts are working—and making adjustments if they are not.

The partnership is driven by a commitment to fostering equity and building systems that support and sustain diverse learners in many different contexts. We work toward the goal that each student receives the support and opportunity to succeed in school and beyond; is able to choose from a wide variety of postsecondary options; and comes through the experience of schooling feeling valued, validated, and like a fundamental, contributing member of the school community.

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PLN PROFILES



This profile describes work accomplished by the Merced County Office of Education Migrant Education Program, a Migrant Education Program (MEP) subgrantee in California. The Merced County MEP, known as Region 3, took part in a professional learning network (PLN) in which participants used a continuous improvement process to make progress on an identified area of focus. Region 3 focused on improving and standardizing a new enrollee form, allowing recruiters to apply consistent and robust strategies in their approach to the identification process.

Merced County Office of Education Migrant Education Program (Region 3)

Counties served:

- Madera
- Merced
- Stanislaus

Districts served: 51 districts serving migratory students

2020–21 student count: 6,500

Major agricultural products: almonds, cilantro, corn, cotton, grapes, lettuce, melons, nectarines, onions, peaches, pistachios, strawberries, sweet potatoes, tomatoes

Recruitment: The vast majority of recruitment is school-based, with a few recruiters conducting recruitment efforts out in the community.



The goal of the Migrant Education Program is to ensure that all migrant students reach challenging academic standards and graduate with a high school diploma (or complete a [High School Equivalency Diploma]) that prepares them for responsible citizenship, further learning, and productive employment.¹

Of course, to achieve this goal, we must identify and recruit the students who are eligible to receive MEP services. And the sooner we identify students, the sooner we can recruit those who are eligible for the MEP—and the sooner they will receive services that support them to meet academic standards and graduate from high school. However, identifying and recruiting students can be challenging and time-consuming, given that the population is migratory. MEPs and recruiters employ various strategies to recruit students efficiently and effectively. Even so, sometimes it can take many months, or even years, to identify and recruit students after they move.

The time between the qualifying arrival date (QAD) and the recruitment date is a missed opportunity for providing migratory students with the services they are due. For example, if a student made a

¹ Office of Migrant Education. n.d. *Migrant Education Program*. <https://results.ed.gov/>

qualifying move in February 2020 but is not identified and recruited until February 2021, that student misses out on 12 months of services (and the region misses out on funding for that child during those 12 months). Reducing the time between a qualifying move and the recruitment date was the focus of the Region 3 team's work.

Establishing the Focus of the Work: More Timely Recruitment

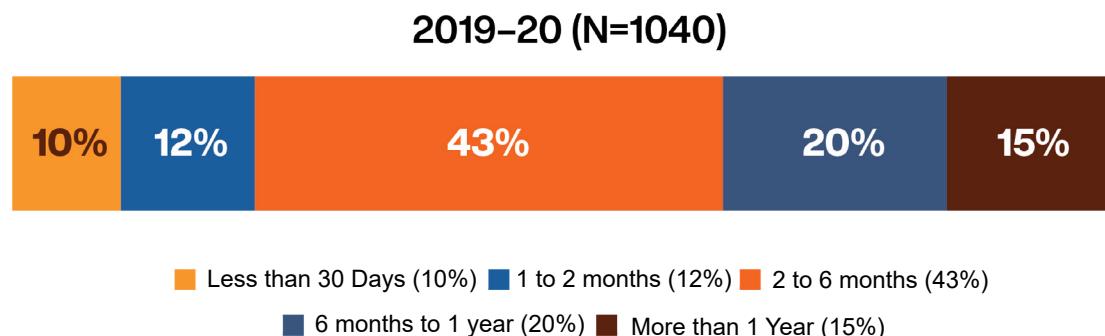
The Region 3 improvement team began their improvement project in fall 2020. The Region 3 team began by analyzing local recruitment data for the previous program year (2019–20).

The team used a data-analysis protocol focused on four questions:

- What parts of this data catch your attention? Just the facts.
- What does the data tell us? What does the data NOT tell us?
- What strengths are there to celebrate?
- What are the problems of practice suggested by the data?

From this analysis, the team learned that 34 percent of newly qualified and newly requalified (that is, requalified after eligibility had expired) migratory students in their region were identified “6 months to 1 year” or “365 days or more” from their move date, while 25 percent were identified “less than 30 days” and “1 to 2 months” from their move dates, respectively (see figure 1 below). The improvement team was concerned with the data at both ends of the continuum but understood the benefits of focusing more specifically on one or the other. Accordingly, the team decided they would focus on increasing the percentage of students who are recruited within two months of their move dates so students would receive services sooner.

Figure 1. Amount of Time Between Residency Date and Recruitment Date for Newly Qualified Students and Requalified Students Whose Prior QAD Was More than Three Years Before the Most Recent QAD



Based on the analysis, the team established the following aim statement:

Currently we have about 36 percent² of the families identified within 90 days of the QAD. We would like to have approximately 60 percent identified within 90 days of the QAD.

After establishing this aim statement, the Region 3 team began analyzing the root causes of instances when it took more than 90 days between the student move and identification. From this analysis, the team determined that recruiters varied in their understanding of how to use the student enrollee form, which is a key part of Region 3's recruitment process. This variation impacted recruiters' ability to apply consistent and robust strategies in their approach to the identification process. The student enrollee form is an online spreadsheet that the region uses to prioritize which families to contact from the thousands of children who are newly enrolled in the 30 districts from which the Region 3 MEP received new enrollee lists. Each month, every recruiter is assigned a new enrollee source document that corresponds to the district that the recruiter works in. The recruiter then creates a new enrollee form from a template created by the region.

² The data packet that WestEd provided to the Region 3 team did not break down moves after 90 days; the Region 3 team conducted their own data analysis to determine the 36 percent figure cited in the aim statement. Figure 1 shows the data that WestEd provided (which is why the 90-day percentage is not reflected in the figure).

Using a Continuous Improvement Approach to Inform the Subgrantee Professional Learning Network

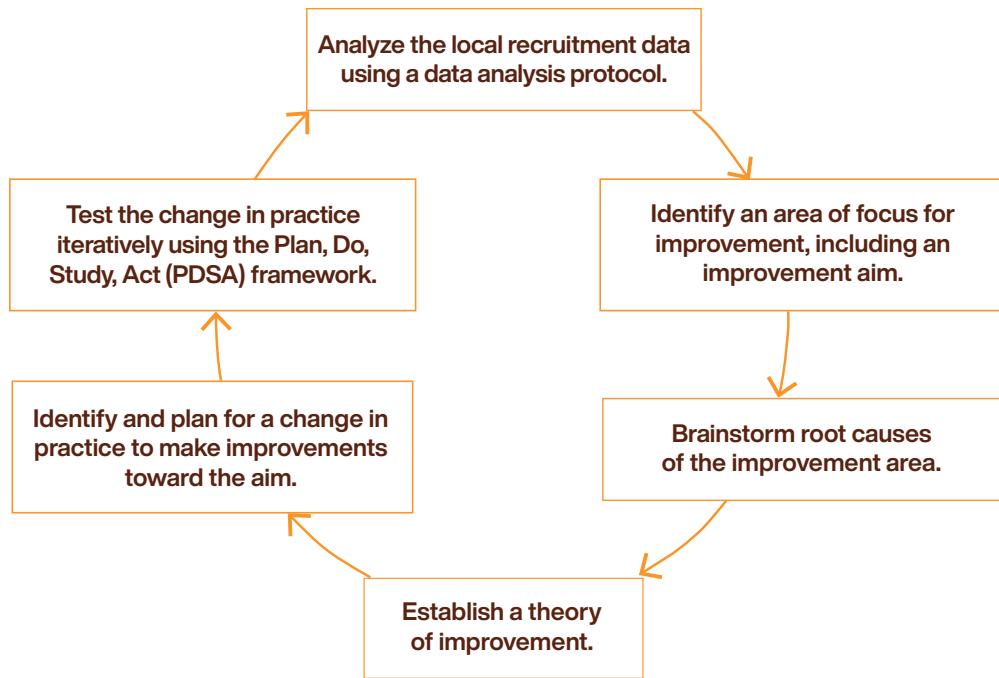
The PLN is the result of a partnership between the CDE and its service provider, WestEd, a nonpartisan, nonprofit research, development, and service organization.

The CDE and WestEd launched the PLN in 2019. Each year, a cohort of teams from five subgrantees comes together several times to collaboratively engage in continuous improvement. The continuous improvement approach used in the PLN is grounded in improvement science, primarily using the methodology described in *Learning to Improve: How America's Schools Can Get Better at Getting Better*.³

The PLN sessions were framed around the steps in the continuous improvement process depicted in figure 2. During each session, subgrantee teams learned about the principles and tools of this continuous improvement approach, then had an opportunity to apply them to their own areas of focus. Each participating subgrantee began by identifying an area of focus related to identification and recruitment, based on their local data and context. The subgrantees then engaged in a disciplined continuous improvement process related to their areas of focus. Following each session, subgrantee teams met with a WestEd coach to make progress on their areas of focus.

³ Bryk, Anthony S., Louis M. Gomez, Alicia Grunow, and Paul G. LeMahieu, *Learning to Improve: How America's Schools Can Get Better at Getting Better* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press, 2015). <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED568744>

Figure 2. The Continuous Improvement Process Occurs in an Iterative Cycle



Identifying and Implementing Changes in Practice

The Region 3 team's own analysis of the enrollee form, coupled with feedback from recruiters, provided them with the insight necessary to identify two changes in practice that would allow standardization of the use of the enrollee form. First, they made several changes to the form, and second, they moved the form into a secure online collaborative workspace, giving recruiters' supervisors access to real-time data to monitor progress. To support recruiters to implement practices based on these changes (that is, using the revised form and using data on monitoring their own process), Region 3 supervisors conducted trainings and began regularly meeting with their staff.

Changing the New Enrollee Form

Emphasizing Contact Prioritization

One of the changes they made to the new enrollee form involved creating specific prioritization elements. The improvement team recognized that the process for contacting students each month could be overwhelming due to the large number of students on the enrollee form. Realizing that they needed a reliable yet simple way to organize the list of students that recruiters were tasked with contacting, the improvement team used conditional formatting within the shared spreadsheet to create the following three prioritization rules: (1) Are the district and school entry dates the same?; (2) Is the student formerly migratory?; and (3) Is the student Hispanic?

For the first rule, if the student's "district entry date" and "school entry date" are the same, this signals a newly arrived student, so the recruiter checks the "Same Dates" box. Once this box is checked, it increases the priority of the student. Additional checks in the prioritization rules further increase the students' prioritization to be contacted by the recruiter. Figure 3 below shows the form with no prioritization boxes checked followed by one box checked, two boxes checked, and, finally, three boxes checked—each indicating a change in prioritization, with the top priority being denoted with a yellow highlight. Note that several columns are hidden to show the pertinent columns more clearly. For a full view of the form, see the "Tools" segment of this profile.

Figure 3. Prioritization for Contact Increases as the Prioritization Boxes Are Checked

Priority	DstEnterDt	Enter Date	Dates are Same?	Prior Migrant?	Hispanic?
Priority 4	02/22/21	02/22/21	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Priority 3	02/22/21	02/22/21	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Priority 2	02/22/21	02/22/21	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Priority 1	02/22/21	02/22/21	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Showing Minimum Required Contacts per Day

Another specific change they made to the enrollee form was adding a formula to the form that showed a breakdown by workday of the number of families that recruiters needed to contact to process their new enrollee list each month. The “pending” field indicates the number of students who have not yet been contacted.

The Region 3 team also linked the number of workdays in each month to the number of pending students, so recruiters had an immediate calculation of the minimum number of students they should contact each day to process the entire new enrollee list in a month. Figure 4 below shows the “pending field” as well as the number of contacts the recruiter must make per day to process the list within the month. In this case, the recruiter has 78 potential recruitments and must make contact with, at minimum, approximately five families per day to process the list before the end of the month. Importantly, making contact with a family may take several attempts if the family is not available during the first attempt(s).

Figure 4. The Number of Minimum Required Contacts per Day Is Determined by the Total Number of Pending Contacts

Total number of students	78
Working days in the month	16
Minimum contacts per day	5
Pending	78

By enhancing and standardizing the enrollee form, the Region 3 team was attempting to calibrate their approach to identification and to pace the number of contacts required so that recruiters would not become overwhelmed. By applying the “pending” field and the prioritization criteria as conditional formatting, the improvement team was able to adapt the new enrollee form into an interactive form that supported identification and recruitment in real time.

Providing Training and Ongoing Support on the New Enrollee Form

To implement the newly revised form, the Region 3 team implemented training on using the form. They also asked recruiters for feedback on the utility of the form. To ensure that recruiters used the form with consistency and that the process was understood, Region 3 supervisors met with recruiters one on one each month to provide any needed support. Oftentimes, these one-on-one meetings occur at the beginning of the month when the supervisor and recruiter can review data from the previous month.

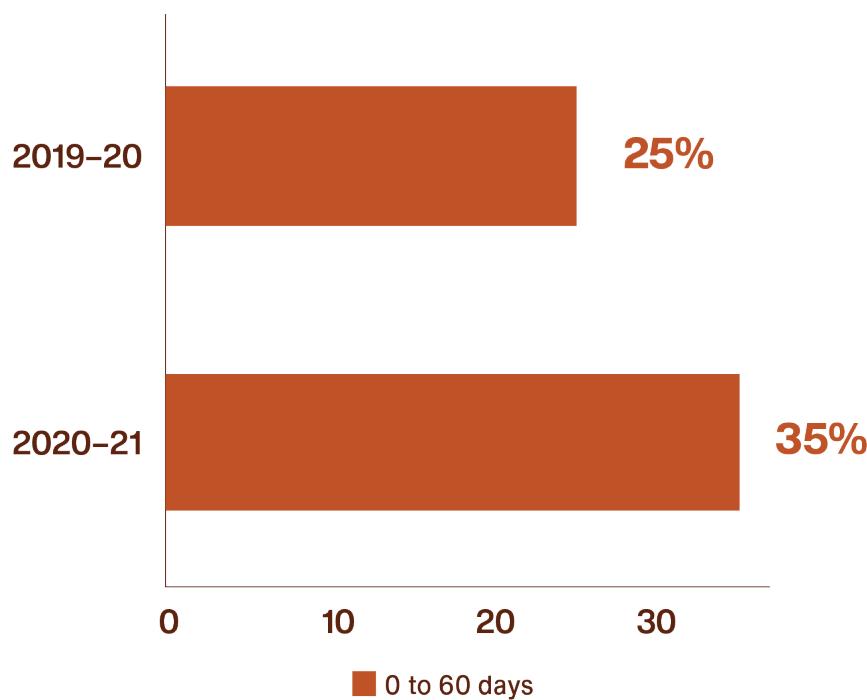
Outcomes from the Change

Once the recruiters were calibrated on their approach and began employing the new enrollee form with consistency, Region 3 began to see dramatic results. The form itself, with its built-in rules, has eliminated guesswork from the process of working to contact new enrollees. The Region 3 team indicated that the new enrollee form, along with the guidelines for how and when they contact students, has increased their collective understanding of how to accomplish their monthly goals. In general, the updated form has allowed for more robust data collection and data-driven conversations between recruiters and their supervisors, both of which have bolstered recruiter support and accountability and provided the Region 3 team with a clearer pathway to timely student identification.

The improvement team's efforts also resulted in an increase of students identified within 60 days of the QAD, thereby identifying more students at an earlier point in time. Specifically, the improvement team noted that prior to implementing the new enrollee form, the average time between QAD and signature date decreased.

Figure 5 below shows the increase in the percentage of students being recruited in the first 60 days in 2019–20 (before the enrollee form was updated) compared to 2020–21 (after the enrollee form was updated). In the year before the changes, approximately 25 percent of newly qualified and newly requalified students were recruited within 60 days of the QAD. That figure increased by 10 percentage points in the year following the change.

Figure 5. The Percentage of Newly Qualified and Newly Requalified Students Recruited Within 60 Days of the QAD Increased by 10 Percentage Points Between the 2019–20 and 2020–21 Program Years



As an additional bright spot, the overall number of newly qualified and newly requalified students recruited by Region 3 during the 2020–21 school year increased by more than 300 students, and their overall recruitment (including requalified students within the eligibility period) increased by approximately 550 students. While these changes may or may not be directly attributed to work in the PLN, they are a testament to Region 3's targeted and data-driven focus on identification and recruitment.

Next Steps

While the Region 3 team saw marked improvement in the percentage of students qualified within 60 days of the QAD, they did not see the type of changes they wanted at the upper end of the recruitment timeline (that is, students with 12 months or more in between the QAD and signature date). Accordingly, they plan to work on decreasing that percentage in year two of the PLN. In year two, the Region 3 team will continue to focus on ensuring recruiters have the skills and support they need to be successful. Additionally, the team would like to take a two-pronged approach to identifying students by (1) expanding their reach into community-based recruiting to identify more preschool-aged children and more out-of-school youth and (2) reexamining the nuanced ways that interview questions are worded to confirm that the interview language they are using provides the greatest opportunity of identifying students for the MEP.

Tools

The template for all columns of the new enrollee form is shown in figure 6 below. On the actual form, all elements appear on a single row. The form shown in figure 6 is displayed in a series of rows for visual clarity.

Figure 6. New Enrollee Form

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	
Priority	School	Last Name	First Name	GR	Birthdate	Parent/guardian	Residence Address	Residence City	Home Phone	
Priority 4	Vista	Fernandez	Vicente	6	05/11/2009	Carmen	255 Pico	San Marcos	555-555-3232	
K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	
DstEnterDt	Enter Date	Dates are Same?	Prior Migrant?	Hispanic?	Contact Attempt 1	Contact Attempt 2	Contact Attempt 3	Contact Attempt 4	Contact Attempt 5	
02/22/21	02/22/21	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	01/05/2022	02/09/2022				
U	V	W	X	Y	Z	AA	AB	AC		AD
Needs Evening Contact	Qualified	COE completed	Already Qualified	No Qual. Work	No New Move	Family Moved	Not Interested	Comments (COE # if applicable)		Completed
<input type="checkbox"/>			<input type="checkbox"/>							