



## INNOVATIVE PRACTICES

# COLORADO

Our programming bridges school and home knowledge, validating students' backgrounds while providing supplemental academic, career, and social-emotional support to engage or re-engage them in their educational journeys. Recognizing that many secondary students face challenges beyond those of traditional learners—such as interrupted schooling, mobility across districts or states, and language barriers—we support credit accrual, graduation planning, career exploration, and English language development. We coordinate closely with district staff, ID&R teams, and community partners, prioritizing trust, consistency, and stability, especially for out-of-school youth (OSY) in the delivery of targeted educational services.



We offer flexible scheduling, including evenings, weekends, and hybrid or virtual options, along with short-term, goal-focused services. Our program provides social-emotional support and advocacy, particularly for students navigating transitions, immigration, or first-generation challenges.

Through creative programming, we meet the unique needs of students and families while offering first-time experiences—such as exposure to community resources and higher education institutions—that help students envision themselves as part of academic spaces.

### PAULINA CISNEROS, YOUTH ADVOCATE

“My own experiences have deeply shaped how I work with migratory students. I understand their struggles because I was once new to the school system myself, and I remember how overwhelming and confusing that transition can be. Because of this, I approach students and families with empathy, patience, and genuine understanding. I don't see them as just participants in a program—I see reflections of my own journey in their experiences.

This personal connection allows me to build trust, advocate effectively for their needs, and provide support in ways that feel meaningful and culturally responsive. That is truly why I love my job; I know firsthand the impact that being seen, heard, and supported can have on a student's confidence and success.

Working with migratory students has reinforced the importance of strong relationship-building, not only with students but also with parents. I've learned that success is not one-size-fits-all—progress looks different for every student. Understanding their culture, language, and background is essential to advocating for them effectively. I approach my work with both empathy and high expectations, ensuring students are not only supported academically but also empowered to pursue their long-term goals.”

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*Colorado has four regional programs that focus on a holistic, student-first, needs-based approach that meets students where they are and reflects their lived experiences.*



**COLORADO**  
Department of Education

Colorado prioritizes educational (re)engagement, regional staff training, and utilizing research-based strategies to mitigate learning barriers for migratory OSY and identified secondary students. iSOSY partnership has increased academic services and outcomes for designated cohorts including additional online EL courses, improved SAT scores, and career exploration engagement options that include HEP BUENO hybrid options, various higher education partnerships, independent and supported access to the iSOSY Student Portal.



## MENTORING

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Colorado embeds college peer mentoring of high school students into its credit-bearing summer academic programs and plans to add near peer mentorship to its virtual summer English acquisition and high school readiness courses for secondary and OSY students in 2026. Colorado notices that near-peer mentoring with CAMP students supports positive educational outcomes, such as high school completion or postsecondary goal attainment for both the participating mentors and mentees.

Through continued partnerships with networks like the College Assistance Migrant Program, college students from comparable backgrounds can serve as peer mentors, helping participants feel seen, build community, and envision their own success. The program would focus on academic achievement and graduation pathways while strengthening self-advocacy skills, navigating school systems, and accessing essential resources through consistent encouragement and ongoing goal monitoring.

Mentors will receive training in effective communication, confidentiality, and maintaining appropriate boundaries. They will also participate in culturally responsive training that emphasizes the educational needs of highly mobile students from migratory and seasonal farm working backgrounds. Additional training will include restorative justice, Mental Health 101, and mandated reporting. For states interested in establishing a similar mentoring program, we recommend starting with a pilot group of high-need students and designing programs with the flexibility to accommodate students' mobility and work schedules.



LEAs implement Colorado's OSY and secondary services including virtual, in-person, and multiple night mentoring program opportunities, such as The Summer STEAM Academy, the Summer Migrant Youth Leadership Institute (SMYLI), and online iSOSY-based EL summer courses. The functionality, flexibility, security, and cost effectiveness of virtual courses is currently being emphasized in CO. CAMP and other college students are ideal mentors for MEP students due to their relevant experience, knowledge, and commitment to education. They serve as role models, tutors, advisors, translators, language, writing, and discussion group leaders for enrolled secondary and OSY students.

The SEA provides training on the legal responsibilities' adults (i.e., college students) have when working with minor secondary/OSY students including mandatory reporting, personally identifiable information, social media, and communication restrictions, strategies for tutoring and supporting student achievement, adolescent development, and goal setting for education pathways and career.

The recommendation is to prepare a final assessment to document that college students are informed about the best relevant practices, procedures, and regulations when working with minor students and what it means to be in a position of trust and authority for all participating students. Training and assessment should model professionalism and academic standards for students and college staff.

### DAISY FUENTES PROGRAM MANAGER

"In 2018, I had the opportunity to serve as a college mentor for the Summer Migrant Youth Leadership Institute (SMYLI), working with high school MEP students. My experience with SMYLI, combined with my background as a former participant in both CAMP and MEP, helped me realize that supporting the MEP in any capacity would be my lifelong passion after completing my undergraduate studies. Since then, I have contributed to program development, particularly in rural areas, supporting and empowering secondary school students and out-of-school youth by providing access to resources, fostering self-agency, and building on their home knowledge. Many of these students—predominantly newcomers and emergent bilinguals, initially faced challenges such as chronic absenteeism and a lack of community and belonging, which hindered their academic engagement. Through program development, we have seen positive changes among our students.

Serving as a Title I, Part C educational professional, I have been able to foster conversations about the college-going process and students' academic needs, supporting them throughout their academic endeavors while honoring and celebrating their migratory and agricultural identities."





## CHALLENGES

# COLORADO

2026 is the third year of Colorado's iSOSY-based virtual summer secondary EL courses.

- Year 1 included eight students and was taught by one SEA and two LEA advocates. The students reacted positively.
- Year 2 expanded to 25 students and a licensed bilingual EL teacher was contracted for the month-long online course.
- Year 3 aspires to repeat the existing course of 25 students and add another course of 25 students targeting middle school students.

While there have been challenges, the support of regional directors, advocates, and MEP families have been able to surmount them with stakeholder communication, iSOSY resources, and access to technology.



The program has encountered several challenges, including limited funding for staffing and mentor compensation.

Transportation and access to technology can also be barriers, particularly in rural or agricultural regions.

To address these issues, we have implemented a hybrid model that combines in-person services with virtual support, allowing students to remain connected even when they relocate within the state.

Additionally, maintaining student motivation has been a challenge at times.

### LAUREN RADIN, MEP PRINCIPAL CONSULTANT

“Build it and they will come is my experience with educational programming for migratory OSY and adolescents. Personally, in my 30 years as a teacher, the only difference I’ve ever noticed between highly mobile agricultural students and other students is interrupted education opportunities.

Providing students with academic programs designed specifically for their relevant engagement is what works with this cohort. It is not the transmission of specific knowledge through the course, but the student’s realization that they are fully capable of the academic work and that they have agency over their trajectories. Socio-emotional learning at MEP programs is approached as leadership development that emphasizes the student’s locus of control, usually presented as analogous to sports teams in three central roles: Critic, Coach, or Player. As the student learns to evaluate, plan, and act according to their own situation, they complete the MEP program and frequently return to traditional school or an alternative pathway that leads them to the success they envision for themselves.

Migratory students are practical in nature, due to necessity, and if the program you’re providing does not show them the intended success, it has little chance of motivational relevance. They must see success with their own eyes, and this is most efficiently and effectively communicated by the college mentors who share their highly mobile migratory background. If you’re doing it, so can I. And they DO.”

