

Cultivating Tomorrow's *Leaders*



California Mini-Corps

Changing California's
education landscape

Sowing the seeds of Success

California Mini-Corps nurtures migrant students to a better future

by Michelle Carl

The life of a migrant farmworker follows the seasons. Spring to summer to fall to winter, and the cycle repeats again.

For California's 136,000 migrant children, traveling with your family and connecting with the land can be a beautiful experience. But it also has its challenges — being the “new kid,” a transient lifestyle, issues with poverty and struggles with academics. Children may not see any future besides one in the fields.

“Mini-Corps can be a lifeline to break that migrant cycle and explore other possibilities for a different lifestyle,” says Juana Zamora, Assistant Superintendent for California Mini-Corps. “It gives you hope and a roadmap along the way.”

California Mini-Corps is a unique program that not only serves the needs of migrant children, but also nurtures college students with a migrant background on the path to a teaching credential. With the common experience to unite them, both students and tutors are encouraged to attend college and pursue careers in education. It is the only program of its kind in the U.S.

California Mini-Corps' beginnings go back to 1967, when a group of 14 college students took a teacher training course at California State University, Chico. They started a summer program for migrant students, which expanded to a year-round program in 1974. Today, Mini-Corps has more than 450 tutors trained at 22 college sites around the state. The program, which is run out of the Butte County Office of Education, serves more than 6,000 children each semester in 32 counties and is federally funded under Title I, Part C — The Education of Migratory Children, through a contract with the California Department of Education.

For a child who doesn't speak the language, a bilingual tutor is a link in that new environment, Zamora says. Tutors can identify with the student's life, because they have lived it, too. Tutors provide support to pupils in the classroom, but also meet with them at lunch, after school or at home.

“When you have a tutor there to connect with you on a human level and then academically as well, that's very powerful,” she says. “All of a sudden, you're not alone.”

Although the main goal is academic support for migrant students in grades K-12, Zamora says the byproduct of the tutor/student relationship is role modeling. Students look up to their tutors, who come from their same background and have gone on to attend college.

Mini-Corps serves those college students as well by providing them with a paid internship and helping them achieve their collegiate goals. Tutors are able to earn college credits and gain real-life experience in teaching — far sooner than students in a traditional credentialing program would.

Many tutors are the first in their family to attend college and may have difficulty navigating the system. California Mini-Corps coordinators at each campus guide them along the way, whether they're taking credentialing exams or just need advice from someone who's “been there.” The program also requires students to be taking 12 units and maintain a minimum GPA — guidelines that help them stay on the path to a college degree.

“Mini-Corps can be a lifeline to break that migrant cycle and explore other possibilities.”

**Juana Zamora, Assistant Superintendent,
California Mini-Corps**

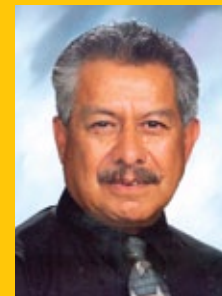
“Coordinators are the key to the success of our program,” Zamora says. “The coordinator role is what sets us apart from other college-based tutoring programs.”

Since its inception, California Mini-Corps has helped produce thousands of highly trained professionals in education who serve as strong, bilingual role models for migrant children and the community. But they couldn't have reached that goal without someone to inspire them and help them grow.

“There are cycles of mentorship integrated at all levels in the fabric of our organization, from the coordinators, to tutors and from tutors to migrant students,” Zamora says. “I think Mini-Corps is a strong community of bilingual, bicultural educators that have experiential knowledge of the migrant lifestyle. We manage somehow to break the migrant cycle and share that know-how with migrant youth, to provide support systems through the program, so they also can do the same and have choices in life.”

Why is Mini-Corps important?

“For the longest time, my dad would bring me back into the field during the summers of college and say, ‘I want you to work out here because I want you to remember what you don't want to come back to.’ You know, that back-breaking work that my parents did for all their life. So California Mini-Corps gives students that feedback and it allows students to talk about why they are there, at the university level.”



Roberto Salinas, Superintendent (retired)

“Mini-Corps provides students with a lot of opportunities in the teaching world and shows them what it is really like. This is what principals do, this is what teachers at high schools do, this is what teachers at elementary schools do. So it's very targeted for a career, whereas a lot of the other programs aren't. They just say, ‘Well, go see what you want to do for your career’ and they go take career tests. Mini-Corps provides first generation college students with the ins and outs of how it works and gives them hands-on experience on how to be a college student, migrant or not. They finished high school and they might have had a 4.0 in high school, but they have no idea what they are getting into. They have no idea how the system works. So Mini-Corps gives them the information needed to be successful in college life.”



**Dr. Rosa Flores Carlson,
President of Porterville College**

“The Mini-Corps program has provided school districts with outstanding teacher candidates. Many of the Mini-Corps participants have valuable experiences that positively impact our students. These experiences include cultural awareness, language, similar socio-economic status and leadership training they obtained through the Mini-Corps program. These highly motivated Mini-Corps students and teacher candidates also make outstanding role models for our students. In summary, Mini-Corps provides an excellent program that prepares migrant students to become outstanding teachers, role models and highly productive citizens.”



Dr. David A. Gomez, CALSA Executive Director

Breaking the Language Barrier

Stefania received help she needed to succeed in school

by Edgar Sanchez

Sixteen-year-old Stefania Lopez is building her future on a foundation of words — first in Spanish and English, and then eventually in French, and perhaps Portuguese.

The daughter of agricultural workers was born in California, but lived in Mexico for nearly a decade, separated from the rest of the family due to her mother's immigration status. Stefania is back now and excelling at school with the help of California Mini-Corps, a federally funded program that provides her with tutorial support at Dixon High School, where she is a junior.

"I haven't yet defined the profession I want to go into," but it will involve multilingualism, Stefania says from her family's Dixon home. "I want to study other languages either on my own or in college."

"I have no doubt whatsoever that Stefania can achieve her dreams. She has all the tools to succeed."

Ruben Gonzalez, Stefania Lopez's Mini-Corps tutor

Stefania is currently focused on mastering English. She credits Ruben Gonzalez, her Mini-Corps tutor during the 2012-2013 academic year, with greatly assisting her toward that end.

"Stefania is extremely studious," says Gonzalez, a native of Greenfield, Monterey County, whose father was a one-time farm

laborer. Gonzalez, 23, was in Stefania's classes at Dixon High twice a week. Reinforcing her teacher's lectures, he tutored Stefania and other students during lunch and after school.

Like the thousands of other migrant students in California, Stefania's parents are farmworkers. Her father, Manuel Lopez, drives a tractor for a local farm-labor contractor. Her mother, Alicia Lopez, works in a nursery.

Manuel Lopez admires Stefania's dedication. "I've seen my daughter surrounded by open books at 2 a.m., doing her homework," he says.

Born in 1997, Stefania spent her infancy in Dixon. In 2000, when she was 3, her family traveled to Jalisco, Mexico for the funeral of Stefania's maternal grandfather. Her father, who had gained permanent U.S. residency before the trip, soon returned to Dixon. Alicia Perez, however, had made the emergency trip as an undocumented U.S. immigrant.

To comply with U.S. immigration laws, she remained in Mexico 10 1/2 years, along with Stefania and her California-born sister Cecilia, now 14. Manuel Lopez visited Jalisco yearly.

After gaining U.S. citizenship, he successfully petitioned for the return of his family, including its newest member, a son named Fernando, who was born in Jalisco and is now 7.

When the family was reunited in Dixon in 2011, Stefania spoke about 100 words of English, ranging from "money" to "elephant," which she had learned in an English class in Mexican primary school.

But today with her multilingual skills, Stefania could become a United Nations translator, a certified court interpreter or a linguistic assistant for a future U.S. president. Drawn to all those careers, she must decide which is best.

"I have no doubt whatsoever that Stefania can achieve her dreams," Gonzalez says. "She has all the tools to succeed."



PHOTO BY ANNE STOKES

Stefania Lopez, 16, was born in California, but spent 10 years in Mexico. When she returned in 2011, she relied on her California Mini-Corps tutor to help her continue her studies.

Migrant children in California

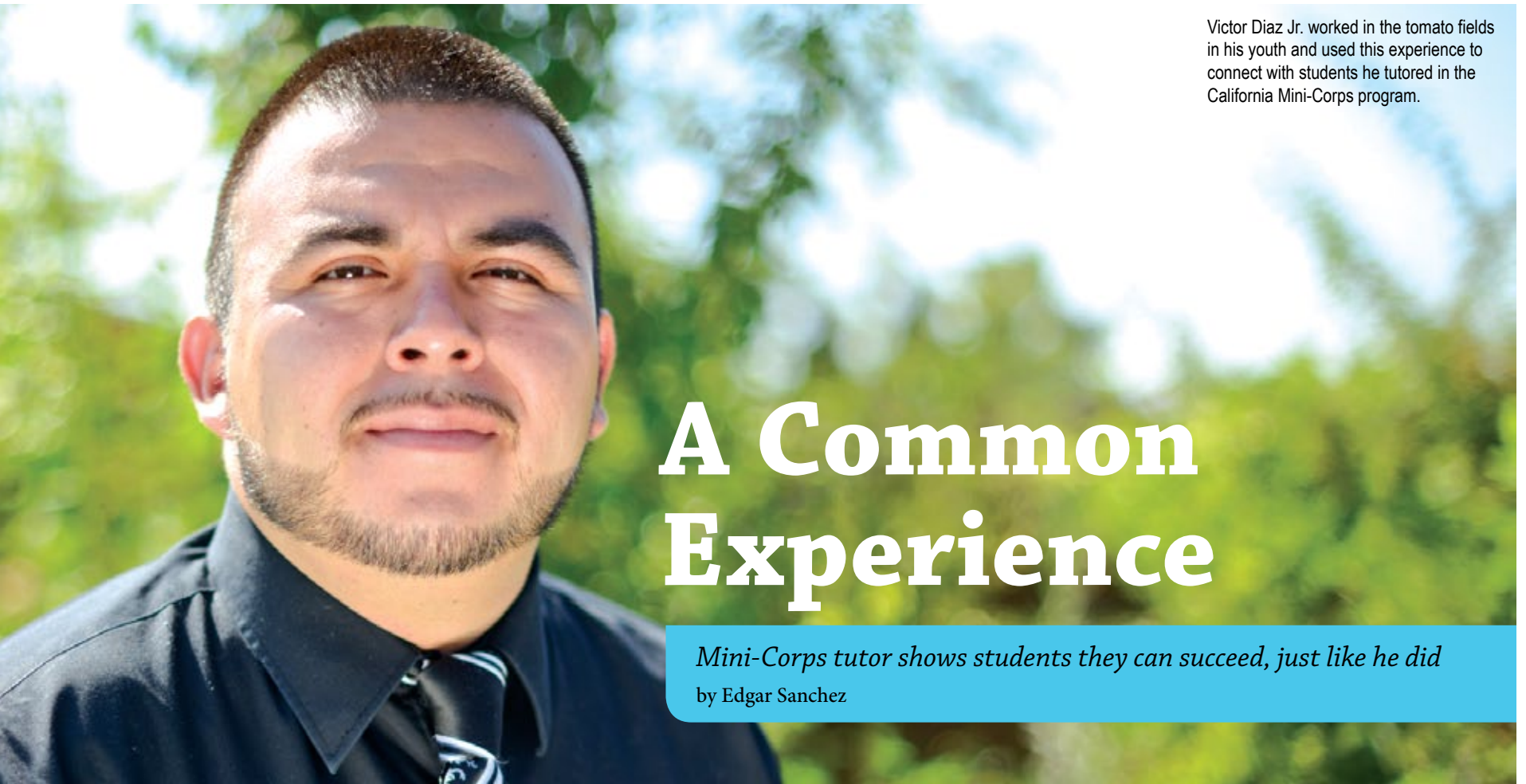
In 2011-2012, the state had about 136,400 migrant children ages 3 to 21, according to the most recent statistics from the California Department of Education. That number makes California the state with the most migrant children in the nation.

California Mini-Corps assists these students by providing individual or small group tutoring to help them meet the state academic standards and graduate from high school. They also serve as role models and provide mentoring and community services.

While most students migrate within the state (and some out of state), migration to Mexico has impacted the program. The number of migrant children in California has actually decreased significantly over the past decade, dropping by 56 percent since 2003-2004.

"We've seen a steady decline," says Ernesto Ruiz, Assistant Superintendent of the California Mini-Corps. "One reason is that fewer migrant families are moving back and forth between California and Mexico. More restrictive regulations for qualifying for (federally funded) migrant programs has also contributed to this decline." **ES**

**Sources: California Migrant Student Information Network/WestEd.*



Victor Diaz Jr. worked in the tomato fields in his youth and used this experience to connect with students he tutored in the California Mini-Corps program.

A Common Experience

Mini-Corps tutor shows students they can succeed, just like he did
by Edgar Sanchez

Victor Diaz Jr. connected with his students the moment he became a tutor for the California Mini-Corps. It happened in June 2010, when Diaz walked into a classroom at San Joaquin Elementary School and greeted 22 fourth graders.

He had much in common with them. The boys and girls in summer school were the children of farm laborers, most of whom, like Diaz's parents, had been itinerant at one time or another. And there was something else: Diaz was an alumnus of San Joaquin Elementary.

Diaz's path to becoming a California Mini-Corps tutor started in Fresno County, where he's spent his whole life.

He was born in Selma, near the county's heart, to parents who migrated back and forth as undocumented immigrants between their native Mexico and California. His parents — Victor Diaz Sr. and Adela Diaz Morales — gained legal status through the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 after they settled in Tranquility.

One day, at age 16, Victor Jr. found himself toiling beside his father, hoeing weeds from rows of tomato plants on a

worked weekends and three summers in the fields to help support his family.

Victor joined Mini-Corps days after graduating from Tranquility High School, following in the footsteps of his older sister, Maria Grabiela Diaz, 27, who was a longtime Mini-Corps tutor.

To become a tutor, Diaz Jr. had to pass English and math exams. He then attended a three-day training institute at California State University, Sacramento.

And on that June day three years ago, his first day as a Mini-Corps tutor, Diaz told his students he was about to enter CSU Fresno, and that if he could go to college, they could, too.

Since then, Diaz has been a Mini-Corps tutor at various locations, including Kerman High School in Kerman, where he has lived the past three years with his parents and a brother.

"I'm very grateful to the Mini-Corps because it has given me an opportunity not only to help the children, but the experience to become a teacher," says Diaz, a liberal studies major pursuing a single subject credential in math.

After obtaining his B.A. in 2014, he will seek a teaching credential in CSU Fresno's graduate school. His ultimate dream is to return to San Joaquin Elementary as a teacher.

"When I told them I had been a student at that school, and that I had worked in the fields, I felt a great connection with them."

Victor Diaz, Jr., California Mini-Corps tutor

"I remember I was a little nervous because I didn't know how the students would react when they saw me," Diaz, 21, recalls. "But when I told them I had been a student at that school, and that I had worked in the fields, I felt a great connection with them."

sweltering ranch. His dad had brought Victor along so the teenager could experience farm labor.

"I feel that my father took me there so I could see how difficult farm work was. It was his way of telling me to keep going to school," says Diaz Jr., who later

What it takes to be a tutor

California Mini-Corps tutors get many rewards, beginning with the pride of helping migrant children excel academically.

Tutors are required to be bilingual/biliterate and have experience or knowledge of the migrant farmworker community. The tutors are college undergraduates committed to careers as educators and are paid for their services. Most freshmen and sophomores are paid \$8.75 an hour by the Mini-Corps, while juniors and seniors are paid \$10 to \$11.26 an hour. Tutoring an average of 15 hours weekly, the tutors work up to 165 days per school year. To be tutors, potential candidates must carry at least 12 college units per semester.

Tutors must participate in six hours of professional development per month, in return for two or three college credits per semester. These classes cover, among other subjects, lesson design and classroom management. They must also project "a positive image" in dress, behavior, attitude, language, punctuality and professional ethics. **ES**

Looking to the Future

Coordinators with California Mini-Corps inspire success

by Mike Blount

College can be an intimidating experience for anyone. But for the son or daughter of migrant worker parents — many of whom are the first in their family to enroll — coordinators with the California Mini-Corps can serve as a support system, giving them everything they need to thrive in the college environment.

As the Program Coordinator at CSU Bakersfield, Alma Kumar says coordinators are an integral part of the California Mini-Corps. They are responsible for recruiting former migrant students who are interested in the educational field and want to make a positive impact in the academic progress of current migrant students. Coordinators provide professional staff development to the Mini-Corps tutors in the areas of English Language Arts, Math, English Language Development and the Common Core standards.

Kumar adds that coordinators are especially important because Coordinators provide career and professional guidance to the Mini-Corps tutors.

“Coordinators make it possible for our tutors to receive hands on classroom experience,” Alma says. “This experience allows them to network with teachers, principals and other educational agencies. As a result of

their experience in Mini-Corps, the majority of Mini-Corps tutors become motivated to obtain their degree, teaching credential and become professionals.”

Kumar says coordinators form close relationships with their tutors and give them opportunities to discuss some of the challenges they are facing. Coordinators provide them with advice and feedback to motivate and encourage them. Coordinators share their own experiences and serve as role models for their tutors, showing them that they can come from a migrant student background and graduate college, Kumar says.

“The kind of support coordinators give our tutors is multi-faceted,” she says. “They are providing them with opportunities to collaborate and network with peers, school administrators, and other professionals in the educational field. They are providing them the support and skills necessary to become future bilingual, bicultural professionals.”

Kumar says that to become a coordinator, you have to be a credentialed teacher, have 3-5 years of classroom teaching experience and have experience working with migrant students.



PHOTO BY JUAN TOBIAS JR.

California Mini-Corps Coordinator Alma Kumar meets with a student at CSU Bakersfield. Kumar says the coordinator plays an important part in helping students achieve their goal of getting a teaching credential.

Q&A With Veronica Aguila

Veronica Aguila has served as the associate director for California Mini-Corps for two years. As a child of migrant worker parents, Aguila recognized the need to help other children who shared her background realize their true potential. Today, she remains dedicated to the mission of California Mini-Corps.



How do you apply for the program?

You can apply by filling out an application online or picking one up at one of our 24 program sites located on 22 campuses that are affiliated with us across the state. You need to have experience with migrant workers, come from that background or be knowledgeable about migrant workers.

How is California Mini-Corps expanding to accommodate the growing student population?

We're seeing a growing English-learning population, but a decreasing migrant worker population. So we're seeking additional funding sources to try and expand the program to serve the growing English-learning population.

Why is a program like California Mini-Corps important?

It's important because of the uniqueness of the program — taking former migrant children and allowing them to see their potential. For a person from that background, your parents maybe didn't finish the first grade or have any education at all. For these parents to see their children, who look like them and speak like them, become someone important in the community is just amazing.

What are some other elements of the program?

One of my favorite elements of the program is the outdoor educational camp, which teaches participants leadership skills and an appreciation for the environment. At the camp, there are things like high-element ropes, which teach you to face your fears. If you can overcome something you're afraid of, then you realize other obstacles are also easy to overcome. **MB**

The cycle of Success

Former California Mini-Corps tutor inspires others

by Mike Blount

As the daughter of migrant worker parents, Hortencia Munoz remembers the uncertainty and fear she felt right before her first year of college at Fresno State. She was the first in her family to attend college and wasn't sure what she wanted to do with her life. But Munoz soon got over all of her fears by becoming a tutor with the California Mini-Corps program at her campus.

Munoz says tutoring migrant children completely changed her life. She realized her calling and began pursuing a degree in education.

Today, she is a first grade teacher at Greenberg Elementary School. But she also welcomes Mini-Corps tutors into her classroom, so they can get the same experiences that led to her becoming a teacher.

By telling her students and tutors about her experiences, she comforted and guided them through some of the same hurdles she had gone through when she was younger.

"I saw a lot of myself in them and I wanted to provide support and model everything that I can as a role model, so they can look at me and say, 'Oh, I can do this!'" Munoz says. "And as they grow older, they have that confidence that will guide them into successful careers, and they will in turn become role models to others."

Munoz says this cycle is what helps foster an environment of learning that encourages participants to give back and strive to live up to their potential.

"One of the major obstacles for children in migrant worker families is that they have no support at home," she says. "It's not because

their parents don't want to support them.

It's because they don't know how to support them, so having that support system through California Mini-Corps has such an impact on their success. It makes them push to better themselves."

Munoz says that the most important function of the program to her is the confidence it gives children from a migrant family.

"I think seeing someone who is successful and has the same background as them has such a positive effect on their self-esteem," Munoz says. "That confidence is so important and I love seeing them blossom at the end of the year. Many of them choose to go into education because they want to have that positive impact on someone, and I love having Mini-Corps because it makes that possible."

"I think seeing someone who is successful and has the same background as them has such a positive effect on their self-esteem."

Hortencia Munoz, first grade teacher at Greenberg Elementary School



PHOTO BY JACQUES GROSS

Culturally centered learning

Working individually with each student, tutors with California Mini-Corps aim to increase their confidence, improve their learning skills and help them adapt to new situations. Research has shown the greatest driver of student achievement is having a qualified, committed teacher. California Mini-Corps produces trained tutors who can be that link to success. Tutors also rotate or move between classrooms to assist teachers during instruction, making sure no student falls behind. If a student needs additional help after class, tutors are available to meet during lunch hours and after school to go over classroom lectures. **MB**

Hortencia Munoz says getting involved in the California Mini-Corps program changed her life.

By the Numbers

Measuring the impact of California Mini-Corps

More than 6,000

migrant students are assisted with school-based tutoring during the summer component of California Mini-Corps program.

The program operates 24 programs out of **22 campuses** across California.



More than 900 migrant students are provided with educational puppetry presentations, and more than 1,000 migrant students take part in a weeklong outdoor education program as part of the summer component.

California
Mini-Corps serves
**more than
6,000**
migrant students each
semester.

The California Mini-Corps program has contributed in producing **more than 3,500 professionals** for California including teachers, principals, counselors, superintendents and professors.

The California Mini-Corps program recruits and employs **more than 450** college students annually to serve as tutors/mentors to thousands of migrant students during the regular school year and summer session.

California Mini-Corps received state and federal recognition as an exemplary educational program and in three separate resolutions, was honored by individual legislators and the California Latino Legislative Caucus for its exemplary service record.

In 2013, K-12 teachers completed more than **3,300** surveys measuring the perceived impact that Mini-Corps tutoring had on migrant students' overall academic progress. Teachers responded that for **84%** of their students, the Mini-Corps tutoring had "some or a lot" of impact in English language arts and **71%** said it had an impact on mathematics.

Get Involved

For 45 years, the California Mini-Corps program has positively impacted California's educational landscape, providing instructional services to help migrant students succeed academically. Additionally, the program has served as a pipeline for college students with a migrant background to become biliterate teachers serving in public schools throughout California.

Become Part of the Mini-Corps Family

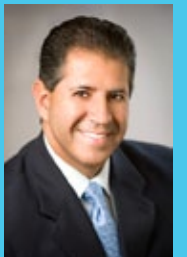
- Are you a Mini-Corps alum who would like to stay connected?
- Would you like to be part of Mini-Corps' 50th Anniversary Celebration?
- Are you interested in partnerships and supporting the California Mini-Corps mission?
- Do you want more information?

If so, visit www.bcoe.org/divisions/california_mini-corps/mc_alumni/ for more information or contact Juana Zamora, Assistant Superintendent, at 916-446-4603 or jzamora@bcoe.org.



"Mini-Corps allows teacher candidates to perfect their craft in an environment that is not detrimental to student achievement. They are in the classroom 15 to 20 hours a week for four years, every day for 180 days, compared to a student teacher that has a two-week observation period in the classroom for a couple hours and then a two-week solo period. So when they step into a regular classroom as a teacher, students don't have a [inexperienced] first year teacher."

Jose Manzo, Superintendent at Oak Grove Unified School District



California Mini-Corps College Sites

Allan Hancock

800 S. College Dr.
Building W, Office 14
Santa Maria, CA 93454
805-922-6966

Cabrillo

6500 Soquel Dr.
Room 801C
Aptos, CA 95003
831-477-3560

College of the Desert

43-500 Monterey Ave.
Palm Desert, CA 92260
760-862-1316

College of the Sequoias

915 S. Mooney Blvd.
Sequoias Building
Room 109
Visalia, CA 93277
559-730-3958

CSU Bakersfield

9001 Stockdale
Highway 3025
Bakersfield, CA 93311
661-654-2429

CSU Channel Islands

One University Drive
Room 1711
Camarillo, CA 93012
805-437-8823

CSU Chico

400 W. 1st St.
Tehama 101
Chico, CA 95929
530-898-6826

CSU Fresno

5005 N. Maple Ave.
Fresno, CA 93740
559-278-0360

CSU Long Beach

1250 Bellflower Blvd.
LA1 Room 205
Long Beach, CA 90840
562-985-1621

CSU Sonoma

1801 E. Cotati Ave.
Salazar Hall 2030
Rohnert Park, CA 94928
707-664-3473

CSU Monterey Bay

100 Campus Center
Beach Hall
Seaside, CA 93955
831-582-3048

CSU Sacramento

6000 J St.
Alpine Hall 129
Sacramento, CA 95819
916-278-6729

CSU San Marcos

333 S. Twin Oaks
Valley Road
Room UH 464
San Marcos, CA 92069
760-750-4313

CSU Stanislaus

One University Circle
Turlock, CA 95382
209-667-3529

Delta College

5151 Pacific Ave.
Budd Building 316
Stockton, CA 95207
209-954-5279

Hartnell College

156 Homestead Ave.
CAB 365
Salinas, CA 93901
831-755-6927

Merced College

3600 M St.
Tri-College 3
Merced, CA 95348

Mendocino College

1000 Hensley Creek
Road, Suite 6500
Ukiah, CA 95482
707-468-3040

Porterville College

100 E. College Avenue
Porterville, CA 93257
559-791-2300

San Jose State

One Washington Square
Sweeney Hall 106
San Jose, CA 95192
408-924-3631

SDSU – Imperial Valley

720 Heber Ave.
Calexico, CA 92231
760-768-5671

Yuba College

2088 N. Beale Road
EOP & S Dept., Room 114
Marysville, CA 95901
530-749-7978