

Emporia, Kansas

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USD 253, Emporia, has an enrollment of approximately 4,700 students in grades K-12. Attendance centers include a 9-12 high school, a 7-8 middle school, a 5th grade center, a 6th grade center, and six PreK-4 elementary schools, all of which are Title I Schoolwide. Each elementary site includes an “at-risk” four-year-old preschool. In addition, Emporia sponsors a Migrant Even Start preschool.

The district continues to experience demographic changes. The ethnicity of the school-age population (2003-2004) is as follows: White = 52%, Hispanic = 38%, Black = 3%, Asian = 3%, and Multiethnic = 3%. The Hispanic population has increased approximately 4% per year during the past eight years, while the White population has experienced a corresponding decline. Other ethnic populations have remained stable.

The migrant population within the school district is experiencing declining numbers. This is due, in part, to the fact that many of the migrant families choose to stay in the community and eventually fail to qualify as migrant. To illustrate this, in May of 2004, 52 former migrant students graduated from Emporia High School. Some of the families continue to work at Tyson (formerly IBP) while others establish businesses such as restaurants or small retail stores. The very act of opening a business disqualifies them from the migrant program.

Currently 319 migrant students are enrolled in PreK-12. Emporia High School has 62 migrant students; Emporia Middle School has 42 migrant students; Lowther North and South have 47 students; and elementary schools have 168 migrant students. The only spoken language, other than English, is Spanish. To serve the needs of these students, the district employs 36 bilingual aides and 12 bilingual instructors.

In addition, a Spanish-speaking liaison is employed by the district. The Migrant Community Resource Coordinator position is that of a liaison and provider of information. The Coordinator reaches out to families of the migrant community in order for them to be effective parents and students, and become active participants of the Emporia community. The position facilitates communication between Tyson Fresh Meats’ employees, the Emporia School District and the community. Information regarding community services and resources and educational events generated by the school district or the community are updated and translated for the migrant community. The Coordinator is also a contact for parents and students and serves as an advocate for the migrant community.

Other educational opportunities are offered to serve the migrant population. Adult Education provides ESL classes for adults. All public schools employ ESL instructors. Riverside Elementary, which has the largest migrant population, has a dual language section in each of the grades K-3. A grant, Dos Puentes, created a newcomer class for new students in grades 5-6 and provided additional ESL services for students in K-4. Another grant, Project Advance, creates opportunities to earn a GED in the native language. These educational opportunities clearly illustrate the value that Emporia places on education for all.