



LAES has developed a series of immigrant issue instructional modules entitled "Tierra de Oportunidad" for orientation to our complex society.

---

## INSTRUCTIONAL AREA: *Developing Life Long Learning*

### Tierra de Oportunidad - Module 7

#### Teenagers' Access to Higher Education

##### Overview

The current emphasis on teenagers graduating from high school is valuable but *not enough* to assure that the children of immigrants carry out their parents' dream of a better life for future generations. Even though higher education is costly in terms of time and money, it is perhaps the most important investment a teenager can make to increase his or her future earning power.

The paperwork required to file a student financial aid application is a formidable challenge to immigrant parents. Adult education instructors whose students include parents with teenage children should, as a matter of course, encourage such parents to consider college for their children and help them get the help they need to fill out the necessary forms in time for the upcoming school year.

Immigrant students who are permanent legal residents of the United States are eligible for the same kinds of financial assistance that is available to students born in the United States. Even if a student does not have legal resident status, there is likely to be an option that will work for them. A very important reason for parents to seek citizenship is to regularize the status of their children. Because of the way that the Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) was structured, it is particularly likely that the children of farm workers who became legalized as SAWs (special agricultural workers) did not receive amnesty.

Even young people who have dropped out of school or who have gone straight from high school into the labor market should consider post-secondary education i.e., vocational training, community college, 4-year college, or university as a way to increase their earning power and move into a satisfying career. In today's information society, it is common for people to change their minds about what they want to pursue as a career, while they are in high school, in college, or even after they have begun to work. Parents should not necessarily expect their teenage children to know exactly what they want to get from college. The experience will be valuable in any case.

##### Basic Skills Development

This curriculum module serves to build several generic skills. It will be useful for the instructor to emphasize to the class how the module and the class activities contribute to these skills.

<i>Arithmetic skills:</i>	use quantitative reasoning skills to estimate the costs and value of higher education
<i>Problem Solving Skills:</i>	resolve educational access problems

<i>Interpersonal Skills:</i>	work cooperatively with others in solving problems of access to higher education
<i>Seeing in the Mind's Eye:</i>	review options for continued learning and interprets the economic value of education

## Teaching Points

1. **Finishing high school or getting a GED is not sufficient help in the current job market.** Teenagers' career success rests on thinking carefully about what kinds of careers interest them, talking different possibilities over with parents, teachers, and friends, and getting at least some post-secondary schooling.
2. **Higher education is financially feasible for most students.** Many parents, and their teenage children, feel that it is not worthwhile for young people to go to college. The University of California, the California State University, the community college systems and many adult education programs, all qualify students for financial aid. Financial assistance includes a package of grants, money that does not have to be repaid, and loans. Going to college may, for a student from a low-income family, mean working part-time while attending college. The financial aid package may include access to work-study jobs reserved for college students to help them complete their studies.
3. **Students who like school should be encouraged to attend college and given the help they need to make this possible.** One of the most important roles of high school counselors is to help graduating students choose a college that will be good for them and help the student get the financial assistance needed to attend that college. Parents should insist on getting help for their children from the high school counselors, local community-based organizations, or from a local college to do what is necessary in filling out the complicated paperwork that makes up part of a student's financial aid application.
4. **Immigrant students who are permanent legal residents of the United States are eligible for the same kinds of financial assistance that is made available to students born in the United States.** A combination of grants, loans, and work-study is available to all students. Students who are particularly outstanding academically or in sports can have most of their education paid for by scholarships.
5. **Students who do not have legal immigration status face problems but should not give up the idea of going to college.** Unfortunately students who are not permanent legal residents of the United States are not eligible for federal financial aid and may not even qualify to receive low tuition rates as California residents. This is an important reason for an immigrant who is a legal permanent resident but whose child may not have qualified for legalization to seek citizenship and, then, to legalize his or her child's immigration status. Even if a student does not qualify for federal financial assistance, he or she can apply to any of the nineteen California State University campuses and be charged California resident rates for tuition.

## Suggested Learning Activities

1. Ask parents to discuss their aspirations for their children in class. Do they want the same thing for all their children or different things? Why do their aspirations for different children differ? What kind of education will be needed for these children to fulfill their parents' expectations?
2. Invite a representative from an immigrant advocacy organization or an immigration lawyer to talk with the class about the process of moving from legal permanent resident status to citizenship and the benefits in terms of legalizing the status of minor children.
3. Ask parents to invite their teenage children to class one evening to discuss their experiences in high school and their feelings about going to college or other alternatives, such as getting married, working. What do the teenagers think of the high school counselors in their school? What colleges have the teenagers heard of?
4. Organize a group of volunteers to help any parents in filling out financial aid forms.

5. Invite a bilingual representative from a local Community College, State University, or University of California campus to class to talk to parents about the differences between different colleges and what student life is like at their college. Prepare parents to ask questions about concerns they may have about their child going to college.
6. Set up a community forum and invite local educational leaders, e.g. Superintendent of Schools, Community College representatives, California State University representatives and legislators, e.g. local Assembly person, local State Senator, City Council members, to debate the pros and cons of allowing California immigrant students who do not have legal documents to
  - pay resident tuition rates
  - receive federally-funded student grants
  - receive federally-funded student loans.

## Resources List

1. Federal Student Aid Information Center  
1-800-4-FED-AID  
the center will:
  - assist in completing the federal student financial aid application
  - tell you whether a school participates in the federal aid programs
  - explain federal student aid eligibility requirements
  - explain the process of determining financial aid
  - send federal student aid publication to you

### Internet Resources

<http://www.nelliemae.org/>

2. Dreams of Flying, California Department of Education, ISBN 0-8011-0818-7  
Videocassette and teacher's guide on career exploration. Available in English and in Spanish. \$30.00 each.
3. *The issue of the eligibility of teenagers who grew up in California but who did not receive legal status is one that is currently being litigated extensively. Parents whose children do not have legal status can seek advice from one of the following legal resources that are working extensively on the issue.*
  - Elizabeth Guillen  
MALDEF  
(213) 489-4556
  - Peter Roos  
META  
(415) 398-1977
  - Robert Rubin  
San Francisco Lawyer's Committee for Urban Affairs  
(415) 543-9444
4. Choices: Families and Schools, Contemporary Books  
Unit 4, I Might Quit School  
Unit 12, I Love Being a Doctor

---

*Authors: Ed Kissam and Holda Dorsey*

*A project of the California Department of Education, Youth, Adult and Alternative Educational Services Division, funded by contract #4213 of the Federal P.L. 100-297, Section 353 with California State University Institute and Hacienda LaPuente USD. However, the content does not*

*necessarily reflect the position of that unit or of the U.S. Office of Education. 1997*