



Focus: Accountability and Civic Engagement

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Supporting Undocumented Youth through Community Engagement

by Sofia Bahena, Ed.D.

Immigration policy is an issue that touches the lives of many in the United States. The most recent estimate by the Pew Hispanic Center indicates that, as of March 2012, 775,000 children younger than 18 years old were living in the United States without proper authorization (Passel, et al., 2014).

Even if not undocumented themselves, many children are growing up with someone who is. It is estimated that one in 10 children is part of a mixed-status home, where at least one family member is not documented (Passel, 2006). These demographics have direct relevance to our nation's public schools, as children from families with at least one undocumented parent make up 6.9 percent of all K-12 students in the country (Passel & Cohn, 2014).

Research has begun to document the implications of legal status – of either the child or of his or her parents – on children's educational experiences, as well as their socio-emotional and physical health. While some research has found that undocumented students may be particularly vulnerable to higher levels of depression, stress and isolation (Gonzales & Chavez, 2012; Gonzales, et al., 2013), other research has found undocumented youth to be incredibly resilient (Gonzales, 2008; Perez, 2009; Perez, et al., 2009). And, importantly, schools, families and communities can play a significant role in development and educational experiences of undocu-

mented youth and those who are members of mixed-status families.

Public rhetoric has labeled undocumented immigrants of Mexican-origin, for example, with derogatory terms and as threats to the employment of U.S.-born citizens (Sullivan & Rehm, 2005). This stigmatization and guilt associated with being undocumented, compounded with fear of deportation, can lead to feelings of isolation and marginalization (Arbona, et al., 2010; Sullivan & Rehm, 2005).

Academically, undocumented youth face unique challenges once they approach high school. One undocumented student likened the realization that not having “papers” would hinder his future prospects as “waking up to a nightmare” (Gonzalez & Chavez, 2012). It is around the age of 16 that many youth living in the United States apply to their first jobs, apply for their driver's license and begin planning for college. As young adults, undocumented students also face challenges in paying for college, as they are ineligible for financial aid at either the federal or state level (Murillo, et al., 2010). For undocumented youth, life milestones become sources of distress rather than exciting passages to adulthood.

Despite these challenges, undocumented youth, and immigrant youth generally are resilient in the face of many challenges. For a decade now, (cont. on Page 2)

“In transforming schools, we must make connections from actionable knowledge to families, to the broader community and to schools through strategic actions that give new life, mobilize and are evidence that change and transformation for the better is possible.”

– Dr. María “Cuca” Robledo Montecel, IDRA President and CEO

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immigration scholars have examined what they term *immigrant optimism*, an academic advantage unique to children of immigrants that is prevalent in the immigration narrative (APA, 2012; Kao & Tienda, 1995). Being a child of immigrant parents has been correlated, for example, with higher grade point averages, fewer disciplinary issues, and more positive attitudes toward school (Hao & Woo, 2012; Portes & Rumbaut, 2001; Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 1995).

Nascent research on undocumented youth specifically has underscored the resilience of these youth in the face of daunting obstacles, primarily through their activism, community engagement and protective factors. In their study, Perez, et al., (2009) found that undocumented immigrant Latino youth who had a supportive network of family and friends and participated in school activities reported higher levels of academic success than students with similar risk factors but who did not have these personal and environmental resources. The authors conclude that a system of community resources can play an important role in mitigating some of the risk factors associated with being undocumented.

Because immigrant families may settle into widely different communities and thus have access to different sets of resources, it is important to have a systemic lens in understanding and supporting undocumented youth's educational experiences (APA, 2012). Immigration scholars Suárez-Orozco, et al., (2011) have proposed a socio-ecological framework to examine the various influences that may impact youth who are children of undocumented parents (or are undocumented themselves) across the developmental spectrum.

Though it is true that undocumented youth face innumerable challenges to accessing higher

levels of education and integrating into the U.S. economy, there is hope in the role that stakeholders at all levels can play in supporting these students. Educators, researchers, advocates and policymakers should consider a systemic approach that shifts the conversation from a solely deficit focus on undocumented, primarily Latino, youth to a holistic one that acknowledges the ways in which their community can positively influence their educational experiences.

School teachers, staff, and administrators can do several things to support their students. For example, schools can:

- Inform students and their families of their constitutional right to a public K-12 education regardless of documentation status (as ruled by the U.S. Supreme Court in *Plyler vs. Doe*). As educators, school administrators do not have to take on the responsibility of enforcing federal immigration policy. Instead they should devote their resources to educating the children at their schools.
- Help high school students identify college scholarships that do not have citizenship requirements. TheDream.US is a national scholarship fund specifically targeting recipients of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) executive order. In addition, there may be funds from local organizations and private colleges available that vary by area.
- Become informed about local and state policies that impact undocumented students' lives. Some state and local governments have enacted policies that are hostile toward undocumented immigrants (such as Arizona's policy that requires local police to ask about immigration status during routine stops), while others are more immigrant-friendly (like

Texas' policy that allows in-state tuition for immigrant students).

- Develop positive relationships with all students. When students feel they can trust their teachers or counselors, they may feel comfortable enough to share their documentation status and reach out for help when they need it. This provides an opportunity to provide support so they do not have to face the challenges alone.
- Connect students with local organizations. Undocumented students may find the socio-emotional support they need and gain access to resources by participating in organizations like Immigrant Youth Justice League, United We Dream, and countless local groups in communities and colleges.

As more and more undocumented youth come of age in the United States, it is imperative that we as a community provide these youth with the necessary support structures to achieve their academic potential and grow up to be thriving adults.

For more than 40 years, IDRA has advocated for systemic transformation to ensure all children receive the educational opportunities they deserve. This requires sustained, authentic collaboration between schools and communities and public policies that are inclusive, foster equity, hold stakeholders appropriately accountable, and acknowledge the interconnections between educational systems (Robledo Montecel & Goodman, 2010).

Resources

See resources online at www.idra.org/IDRA_NL_current.

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¿Y Ahora Qué? And Now What?

Community Groups in South Texas Work Together to Improve Education

by Josie D. Cortez, M.A.

It was a fall day in 2007 when IDRA staff walked into a church room in a Brownsville *colonia* to first meet the executive directors of about a dozen community-based organizations (CBOs) in the Rio Grande Valley of Texas. IDRA had just received funding from the Marguerite Casey Foundation to work with their grantees to strengthen their capacity in evaluating their work in communities that span two counties and several hundred square miles in deep south Texas. As we walked in with our projector and slides, we noticed there wasn't a screen or an uncovered wall that would work. As is our custom, we improvised and put long tables up against the walls, using them for our introductory slide presentation.

The Marguerite Casey Foundation program officer at the time, Peter Bloch García, had set up the meeting primarily as an introduction for us. I still have that first meeting's agenda with the warm-up activity titled, "What's one story of how your organization made a difference for someone?" As each person spoke, it became clear how extraordinary these individuals and their organizations are. And what also became clear was the extraordinary force these individuals and their organizations could be if they worked together. Their reach could expand exponentially, as could their impact. Our last agenda item for that first meeting was: "¿Y Ahora Qué? And now what?"

A Powerful Network of Community Organizations

Eight years later, there is an Equal Voice-Rio Grande Valley Network with 11 CBOs and seven working groups, all collaborating to give voice to an estimated 50,000 constituents in their low-income communities. Throughout it all, with funding from the Marguerite Casey Foundation and leveraged funding from the U.S. Department of Education and the Kresge Foundation, IDRA has provided strategic capacity strengthening support to the Equal Voice-RGV Network and

its individual organizations.

Our support has ranged from building technology infrastructure to strategic planning, from leadership development to creating policy advocacy tools. Our support has extended particularly to the Education Working Group, which is one of seven working groups of the Equal Voice-RGV Network (civic engagement, education, health, housing, immigration, jobs, and LGBT). These groups were initially formed in 2008 in response to the needs identified by the region's families through a series of town hall meetings that were attended by over 5,000 RGV residents.

Eight Marguerite Casey Foundation-funded CBOs and other leaders participate in the Education Working Group: ARISE, Desarrollo Humano, Mano a Mano/BCHC, LUPE, Proyecto Azteca, Proyecto Juan Diego, Vida Digna, and IDRA. This year, the group focused on back-to-school efforts and educating the community about the detrimental effects of House Bill 5 passed by the Texas State Legislature in 2013 that lowers the number of college prep credits in the graduation requirements and creates multiple curricular tracks, with technical and vocational education in place of college-prep education for a number of students. It is the Education Working Group's concern that the implementation of this tracking program will leave students unprepared for college and without the necessary credits for admission to college, particularly for the students in their communities – mostly South Texas *colonias* (unincorporated communities).

A Revealing Community Survey about Graduation Requirements

As part of this effort, the Education Working Group recently developed and administered a survey to parents in the region to find out what information has been provided to them, what they understand about the new graduation requirements, and whether they know the implications
(cont. on Page 4)

The Equal Voice-Rio Grande Valley Network is recognized as a smart and strong champion for colonia residents. It has become a game changer in the socio-political landscape of housing, health, civic engagement, jobs, immigration, and education.

(¿Y Ahora Qué? And Now What?, continued from Page 3)

of the decisions being made for their children's education. Over a two-month period, the Education Working Group collected more than 1,629 surveys across 24 school districts and 30 cities across the Rio Grande Valley. IDRA analyzed the survey data and developed a report with the survey's key findings, implications, and recommended next action steps for communities.

This was one of the first – if not the only – community survey on Texas' curriculum tracking policies during the first year of its implementation in schools. Over 1,000 survey respondents with children in public schools in the Rio Grande Valley consistently reported the same thing: Most parents have not received information on HB5 curriculum tracking requirements. They have been told little, if anything, about HB5's tracking procedures or its impact on their children's education.

The EV-RGV Network families have one other thing in common: close to 100 percent signed their names and provided contact information on the surveys to request information on the new HB5 graduation requirements.

Information dissemination is a start, but much more is needed. Families need to know the facts and they need to know the true implications of certain decisions involving the curriculum options that will be offered to students. This includes the fact that students should not be tracked into low-level courses nor into different diploma routes or graduation plans, and parents – by law – are supposed to be involved in those decisions impacting their children. Also, school districts can use the option that puts all students on a graduation plan that matches the former 4-by-4 (16 high quality core curriculum courses – four years each in English, math, science and social studies), the curriculum that prepared all students to enroll in college.

Recommended Next Steps

This community survey is just the latest example of what is possible when people come together to fight for the right of every child to have an equitable and excellent education.

I began this article with the memory of a first meeting in a church room in a Brownsville *colonia*. Peter Bloch García and others had a vision back then of what was possible if people would work together for a common purpose

so that people living in poverty would have an equal voice in deciding the quality of their lives. Eight years later, the Equal Voice-RGV Network is recognized as a smart and strong champion for Rio Grande Valley *colonia* residents. It has become a game changer in the socio-political landscape of housing, health, civic engagement, jobs, immigration, and education. And the transformation that is occurring in South Texas can be seen every day.

Look for more information on the community survey results and our work with the EV-RGV Network and the Education Working Group in the coming months.

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- Infographic: Equal Voice-RGV graduation requirements community survey findings
- Winning essays by Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program students
- Video: Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program – Dropout Prevention that Works
- Communities in Action website
- Flier: Immigrant Students' Rights to Attend Public Schools
- Video: IDRA Annual La Semana del Niño Parent Institute
- Our Lady of the Lake University Commencement Address by Dr. María "Cuca" Robledo Montecel

www.idra.org/IDRA_NL_current

Meet Sofía Bahena, Ed.D., IDRA Education Associate

This year, the IDRA Newsletter is highlighting our staff's varied and diverse talents and backgrounds. Dr. Sofía Bahena is a member of IDRA's Department of Civic Engagement. She is the daughter of Mexican immigrants who taught her the value of hard work and education from an early age, proud aunt to nine nieces and nephews, and native San Antonian. Although she had been away for several New England winters, her heart never left Texas. She is happy to be back and is enjoying falling in love with San Antonio all over again. When she is not in the office she enjoys spending time with her nephews and nieces (which by her 8-year old niece's account is "more fun than Netflix"), working out at a local gym, exploring downtown San Antonio, and salsa dancing to live music.



Over the last several months, Sofía has been part of a group of Latinos diligently working to establish the Harvard Latino Alumni Alliance (HLAA), the first of its kind to be officially recognized by Harvard University. As a first-generation college student and as a Latina in higher education, the mentorship and support from her community has played a critical role in her academic and professional journey. She hopes that the HLAA will facilitate a greater sense of community within the Harvard Latino community, help promote a more visible representation of Latinos at all levels of the university, and provide mentorship to young students across the country (particularly those who aspire to study in institutions of higher education where Latinos tend to be underrepresented). Sofía loves to travel new places and eat good food with good people. Her goal is to travel to at least five countries in the next seven years, including Peru, Greece and South Africa.



Parents from Across Texas Share Ideas and Strategies at Annual IDRA La Semana del Niño Parent Institute

by Felix Montes, Ph.D.

Parent accountability and civic engagement in education received a significant boost with the advent of the 1966 *Elementary and Secondary Education Act* (ESEA), passed as a part of President Lyndon B. Johnson's "War on Poverty." The act mandated that funds be authorized for professional development, instructional materials, resources to support educational programs, and parent involvement promotion. The act has been reauthorized to this day, and programs have spread throughout the country.

However, parent participation in many of those programs has been lackluster. As a researcher with more than 20 years of experience evaluating educational programs in schools and school districts in Texas, it's not unusual for me to hear this summary statement from school program staff, "We have an excellent parent involvement program; now all we need is the parents to come."

At the same time, for more than 20 years, hundreds of parents from all over Texas have been traveling to San Antonio for the Annual IDRA *La Semana del Niño* Parent Institute each April. A bus loaded with parents came from Dallas this year. Another group came from the Rio Grande Valley. Yet another came from San Marcos and surrounding communities.

Nearly 300 people participated in the institute this spring, most of them parents. And all of this with minimal advertisement, in fact, mostly by word of mouth. This begs the question: Why are parents so willing to attend this parent institute by the hundreds and yet are missing those "excellent local parent involvement programs?"

Part of the answer can be found in results of in-depth interviews from participants who attended the institute this year, summarized in this article. When asked about their expectations, one participant said: "I was very nervous when I was getting ready to come. However, upon seeing other people that, like me, spoke Spanish, I started to relax. I realized that they came to share

ideas about their own programs like me, and they were willing to learn new things from each other."

The Annual IDRA *La Semana del Niño* Parent Institute is designed to be a forum for parents to demonstrate their roles as decision-makers and as presenters, which are the two highest components of IDRA's family leadership model in education (Montemayor, 1997). The institute also is a platform to support active parent civic engagement. In many cases, parents themselves are the presenters focusing on prekindergarten to college topics, including early childhood education, literacy development, bilingual/ ESL education, dropout prevention, high school graduation requirements in Texas, college access, and family engagement. All presentations are participatory and bilingual (English-Spanish).

For example, students and educators from the Pharr-San Juan-Alamo school district shared their experiences with the district's programs to help all students graduate with biliteracy credentials. A parent from San Antonio who heard the presentation said: "I liked what I learned about the dual language program they have... We plan to reach some plan or agreement to talk to our district to explore the implementation or expansion of a dual language program here."

A parent from San Marcos added: "For me, it's very important for children to learn both languages (English and Spanish). I just heard what the ladies were saying about how the children are learning so much in those classrooms for each other and about both languages... I want that for my children too."

Another theme was parent participation through Comunitario PTA, IDRA's model for community engagement currently being implemented in several communities in South Texas in the Rio Grande Valley area, as a collaborative between ARISE, IDRA and the local school districts. One of the presenters explained: "One difference (cont. on Page 7)

"I am learning so much from everything that's going on around here. I never heard of some of these techniques. I learned so many things: different programs and techniques to take back home. My mind is like bubbling with new ideas!"

— Parent participant at the Annual IDRA *La Semana del Niño* Parent Institute, 2015

IDRA South Central Collaborative for Equity

For more information about the IDRA South Central Collaborative for Equity or to request technical assistance, contact us at 210-444-1710 or contact@idra.org.

Additional resources are available online at www.idra.org/South_Central_Collaborative_for_Equity
funded by the U.S. Department of Education



Six Teens Win 2015 National Essay Contest Awards

Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program Tutors Share Stories of the Program's Impact on Their Lives

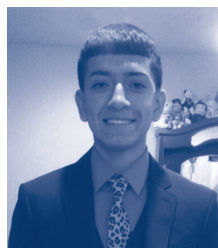
"I no longer want to be referred to as the student who is a troublemaker and doesn't seem to care about her education. I want to be looked at as a role model, responsible student, and community leader." – Agustina García

Six students received prizes in a national competition among participants in the Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program, a nationally-recognized cross-age tutoring program of the Intercultural Development Research Association. Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program tutors wrote about how the program helped them do better in school and how they had helped their tutees to do better.

There were competitions at both the middle school and high school levels in the United States. Winners from each competition are being awarded \$200 for first place, \$150 for second place and \$100 for third place.

First Place High School Winner

In his essay, **Nathaniel Duarte** wrote: "I don't



mean to brag, but my kids [tutees] are pretty great... I used to believe that I didn't have a purpose, but because of them, I'm starting to feel like I have a reason. Because if I don't go to their school one day,

they'll ask me the next day where was I and why didn't I go. That's how I know that I matter to them... One of my goals in life is for someone to walk up to me and say, 'Because of you, I didn't give up.' That is what I'm trying to accomplish in the Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program, so that maybe by motivating my kids now they will be able to say that to me in the future." (Odessa High School, Ector County ISD, Texas)

Second Place High School Winner

"When I first saw them [my tutees], I didn't just see some random strangers, but excited kids who were excited because they got to be taught by a high school tutor," **Jerelie Márquez** wrote in her essay. "They tell me about their future career plans... Every time they tell me what they



want to do, I just see a twinkle in their eyes and their motivation. I put myself in their position and wonder to myself what made my motivation fade over the years. From seeing them, all I

wanted was the motivation they have now. They eventually brought it back, and it made me strive to try harder at what I do, all while having fun and not forcing it upon myself miserably like I used to do. I love the irony of how we all get taught something new every day I walk through that door in the elementary building." (Odessa High School, Ector County ISD, Texas)

Third Place High School Winner

In her essay, **Mónica Pando** wrote: "The first semester when I walked into that fifth grade class and attempted to help my tutees with their



schoolwork, it was hard! I would explain things to them, but the next day they would forget what I taught them. Then I realized they had the same problem I had. They were receiving the

information, but instead of absorbing the information they would lose it. So I decided that night to research ways to help them grasp and keep the information... I did not think it would help, but surprisingly it did... Since I joined the Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program, I learned a new method of learning that helps me." (Odessa High School, Ector County ISD, Texas)

First Place Middle School Winner

"I feel needed when I walk into my class, and my tutees begin to jump up and down yelling my name, 'Ms. García!' wrote **Agustina García**.

"My confidence went up, I had more motivation, and the cool part was that my teachers and parents



began to notice this positive change also... I no longer want to be referred to as the student who is a troublemaker and doesn't seem to care about her education. I want to be looked at as a role model, respon-

sible student, and community leader... I would have never thought of becoming an educator and making a difference in the lives of others if it wasn't for the Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program. Because of this program, my life has meaning and prospective future." (Dr. Javier Saenz Middle School, La Joya ISD, Texas)

Second Place Middle School Winner

"The Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program made



me realize that to get a good education, you need good grades, so I stepped up my game and now I am passing every subject..." José Rodríguez wrote in his

essay. "I thought that I was never going to become a leader, but God has given me the opportunity to experience what it feels like!!! It is a wonderful experience!!! I feel like a special person because kids are following my good decisions." (Captain Manuel Rivera, Jr. PS/MS279, New York City)

Third Place Middle School Winner

"Being a tutor is not easy because first graders still need a lot of attention and patience. They move around a lot, cry and sometimes need a lot of help and assistance because they're impatient," (cont. on Page 7)

(Six Teens Win 2015 National Essay Contest Awards, continued from Page 6)

wrote **Johan Servones**. “Even though tutoring is a required part of the program, it has become something that I really love to do. It is interesting



when you can convey thoughts to others by using both verbal and non-verbal messages... I think being able to participate in the Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program has made me a better student... and also has taught me that the future comes from the actions and choices you

choose now.” (Captain Manuel Rivera, Jr. PS/MS279, New York City)

High School Honorable Mention

- Desiree Salazar – 9th Grade, South San Antonio High School, San Antonio

Middle School Honorable Mentions

- Esmeralda Concha – 7th Grade, Memorial Middle School, La Joya, Texas
- Ashley Franco – 8th Grade, New Open World Academy, Los Angeles

- Natalie García – 7th Grade, Ann Richards Middle School, La Joya, Texas
- Kimberly López – 7th Grade, César Chávez Middle School, La Joya, Texas
- Alex Peña – 6th Grade, Domingo Treviño Middle School, La Joya, Texas
- Teyundra Robinson – 8th Grade, George Manierre K-8 School, Chicago
- Tameya Stringer – 8th Grade, Carstens Elementary-Middle School, Detroit
- Jalil Tenner – 8th Grade, John Still K-8 School, Sacramento

Learn More Online

Website: Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program – Learn more about the program and how to bring it to your school

Video: Dropout Prevention that Works – Quick overview of how the Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program impacts students and schools. [01:30 min.]

Winning Essays: Full text of the six winning essays

www.idra.org/Coca-Cola_Valued_Youth_Program

The Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program, created by IDRA, is an internationally-recognized cross-age tutoring program. Since its inception in 1984, the program has kept more than 33,000 students in school, young people who were previously at risk of dropping out. According to the Valued Youth creed, all students are valuable, none is expendable. The lives of more than 646,000 children, families and educators have been positively impacted by the program.

(Parents from Across Texas Share Ideas and Strategies at Annual IDRA La Semana del Niño Parent Institute, continued from Page 5)

between our PTA and the regular PTA is that we focus on issues that are relevant to the people in the community. We visit families in their homes and provide them information but also collect information from the community about their needs and we try to respond to those needs, working with IDRA and with the local school districts.”

Another parent responded to the presentation, saying: “I really liked the Comunitario PTA session. With us, we do have regular meetings with our parents and get them involved, but a lot of the parents have elementary, middle and high school children. And you don’t see that level of parent involvement in those schools. Through a Comunitario PTA perhaps this can be improved. So we talked about how we can set one up to help parents get involved.”

After another session, parents explained: “We presented what we are doing as part of the AVANCE volunteering program in Harlandale ISD. We explained how AVANCE works with the school in collaboration with United Way.” This program involves the establishment of a parent room in the school, where parents can go any time both to offer their services and leadership and to get information and support with their own issues. According to one of the presenters:

“Parents do feel empowered. They feel that they can go and speak to the principal and the administration, and they have plenty of opportunities to do that. And they do speak up and say, ‘This is what I think should happen; this is what I see going on...’ [They talk about] things that need to be addressed.”

Another parent supported the need for this type of program in her district, saying: “I would say a center for parents is needed. We often want more parent involvement, but then we don’t have that space. I feel that if we had a building or location dedicated just to have parents come and do parent education or just do different things that would help a lot.”

Another set of sessions focused on early childhood education. One participant commented: “We need to assure that ECE (early childhood education) in the various centers should be of high quality. By that I mean that, for example, there has to be a parent engagement component, where parents are really involved in the education of their children from the beginning. Also we need to provide adequate and proper quality training for teachers of these children, along with livable wages to retain highly qualified teachers with the passion for working with those young children.”

These are just a few of comments participants shared in interviews throughout the institute. College access, unequal funding and unequal educational quality, and the importance of universal preschool were all prominent topics of conversations as well. This event was unique not only in the breadth of coverage, but also because those discussions were driven by parents in their languages and from their own perspectives, as decision-makers and presenters, demonstrating the highest quality of parent civic engagement.

As one parent succinctly expressed: “I am learning so much from everything that’s going on around here. I never heard of some of these techniques. I learned so many things: different programs and techniques to take back home. My mind is bubbling with new ideas!”

Video of the institute is available online at IDRA’s YouTube channel (budurl.com/IDRAYoutube).

Resources

Montemayor, A.M. “The Nurturing of Parent Leadership,” *IDRA Newsletter* (San Antonio, Texas: Intercultural Development Research Association, September 1997).

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2015 Martha A. Hernández Scholarship Winner Announced

Ms. Alexis Valdez has been selected as this year's Martha A. Hernández Scholarship recipient. During her life and in her work at IDRA, Ms. Hernández distinguished herself for exceptional professionalism, service and care of others. IDRA set up a scholarship in her name through the San Antonio Women's Hall of Fame. The San Antonio Women's Hall of Fame presented this scholarship award and others during a senior candlelight ceremony for graduating seniors at the Young Women's Leadership Academy of San Antonio ISD. In addition, IDRA presented each graduate with a commemorative copy of the commencement address presented by Dr. María "Cuca" Robledo Montecel at the Our Lady of the Lake University graduation in May 2015. The text of the address is available online at www.idra.org. Congratulations to Ms. Alexis Valdez and to all the graduates of YWLA and OLLU!



2015 Martha A. Hernández Scholarship recipient Ms. Alexis Valdez (center) with Ms. Hernández's sister, Elizabeth "Liza" Rodríguez (right), and IDRA's Sulema Carreón-Sánchez, Ph.D. (left).

*Assuring educational opportunity for every child
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