IDRA Focus:
Teaching Quality

IDRA Newsletter

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- Engaging elementary English language learners in math
- Immigrant students' rights to attend public school

The "Fourth-Grade Slump" and Math Achievement

Addressing the Challenge with Student Engagement

by Kristin Grayson, M.Ed., and Veronica Betancourt, M.A.

We've all heard about the fourth-grade slump in reading. Jeanne Chall first defined the fourth-grade reading slump in 1983 as the time when students fall behind in reading. The premise is that the slump in reading occurs because of the change in academic language required to read grade-level content texts. Starting around the fourth grade, reading shifts from "learning to read" to "reading to learn" with the inclusion of a more extensive vocabulary, a heavier content load and a need for more background knowledge (Chall and Jacobs, 2003).

Gerald Coles states that this type of reading requires students to be familiar with less common words, employ wider reading and have a deeper comprehension of the content material (Coles, 2007).

Noted second language linguist and researcher Jim Cummins further makes reference to the fourth-grade slump and English language learners in many of his articles. He spoke about it just last year in a speech at the California Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages conference in San Diego (Meteor, 2007).

But there is a comparable slump that occurs in math achievement. Achievement gaps in math increase as the grade level goes up. The National Center for Educational Statistics as cited by Freeman and Crawford finds that 82 percent of Hispanic students nationwide are below proficient in math in the fourth grade (2008).

For the state of Texas, an analysis of Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills scores for 2006 (Texas AEIS data) shows a steady decrease for all three major subgroups for White, African American, and Hispanic students beginning at the fourth grade and continuing through the ninth grade.

For English language learners, the Biennial Report to Congress on the Implementation of the Title III State Formula Grant Program; School Years 2004-2006, indicates that only one state showed that English language learners had met annual yearly progress (AYP) in mathematics. The report also found that achievement in reading and math for English language learners decreased as the grade level of the students

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increased (Zehr, 2008).

A Pew Research Center Report states that across the board English language learners are less likely to achieve in reading and math. In fact, achievement gaps are in the double digits in mathematics in the five states with the largest English language learner populations (Fry, 2007). Clearly, the achievement gap and math achievement is a matter of grave concern.

The Language of Math

Just like reading is related to academic language, math is reflective of a specific academic language. Math has two types of language, words and symbols. And although math might be considered a universal language, it can be difficult for any student to understand. Math has new terms, such as *coefficient* and *tessellation,* and common words that are used in a specific mathematical way, such as *scale* and *change* (Freeman and Crawford, 2008). Math uses terms that may be used in other subject areas with different meanings, such as *table, slope* and *run*. Additionally, there are multiple math terms that mean the same thing, such as *slope, rate of change, rise/run and delta y over delta x.*

One approach to addressing the fall in math achievement scores, especially as related to the fourth-reading slump, is to consider student engagement during math instruction.

The academic language of math includes the ability to read, write and engage in substantive academic conversations (Freeman and Crawford, 2008).

E. Etsy states: "Like other languages, mathematics has its own vocabulary, grammar (principles that govern the correct use of a language), syntax (the part of grammar that concerns rules of word order), synonyms, negations, conventions, abbreviations and sentence structure… It is a specialized language with its own concepts and symbols that must be learned. Even if you can do some math, you might not be able to read math. Learning to read math takes work." (2007)

Student Engagement Affects Math Achievement

Math achievement is critical for all students. In fact, it is considered to be the strongest predictor for college success (Sciarra and Seirup, 2008). Thus, improving instruction and achievement in math for all students has been at the forefront of educational topics in recent years. The final report of the National Mathematics Advisory Panel has an array of recommendations for improving math achievement in U.S. schools, including strengthening teacher math preparation for elementary teachers (U.S. Department of Education, 2008). For instructional practices, the panel recommends a combination of "student centered" and "teacher directed" methods. Research also

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The Intercultural Development Research Association *(IDRA)* is a non-profit organization with a 501(c)(3) tax exempt status. The purpose of the organization is to disseminate information concerning equality of educational opportunity.

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Transformations

They're not just for functions!

by Kathryn A. Brown

Experiencing transformations in mathematics is as beautiful as listening to Beethoven's Für Elis as a performer strokes each key on the piano in your living room, and it is as intricate as listening to Eddie Van Halen's hammer-ons in *Eruption* while sitting in the front row at a concert. Transformation is a prevalent concept studied from pre-kindergarten when students describe locations and sizes of objects in relation to each other, to middle school when students reflect shapes across a line in a coordinate plane, to algebra and pre-calculus where students transform a myriad of parent functions, and to calculus where students take it up a notch to transform the derivatives of these functions.

It is easy to apply a change in parameters to a math function and then readily see the resulting graph using a graphing calculator or an online applet. What would happen to the graph showing my distance over time if I decided to drive faster to work that day? How does it compare to the graph from the day before?

We live and breathe transformations every day. The world around us is in a continuous state of transformation. It is absolutely awesome once we take a moment to notice this. The invention of new technologies is transforming how we communicate and shifting how we play, how we engage with others and how we even listen to music!

But, when we talk about changes in teaching instruction, the chord sounds loudly with a negative note. *Change* is called upon when schools do not perform. Teachers often are first to be required to *change* what they are doing in the classroom to meet adequate yearly progress, and many students are left with fading opportunities.

IDRA proposes a new way of looking at change and that is through *transformation*. The word *change* implies exchanging one set of instructional strategies for an entirely new set. We do not exchange one parent function for another or one shape for another in mathematics when the image is under a transformation. Instead, the function or pre-image is carried through a *process* that could entail a reflection, translation and rotation that results in the *new image*.

Webster's Dictionary defines *transformation* as an act, process or instance of transforming or being transformed. Through IDRA's Math Smart! professional development model, teachers are transforming their instruction and impacting student achievement in mathematics through a process that is supportive, grounded in research and strategies that value students and what they bring to the classroom.

For example, in light of Texas' state-mandated test, Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS), was at the time just over a month away, teachers and students at Socorro High School in El Paso and George Sanchez Charter School in Houston already are experiencing the benefits of transforming teacher practice and learning in their mathematics classrooms. How does this happen?

This article focuses on teacher experiences in transforming practice and key elements that have to be in place so this process can occur. It is the first of a series of articles that focus on transformations in teaching practice for secondary mathematics teachers and schools through IDRA's Math Smart! professional development model. Future articles will discuss the key players involved and their roles and ways that transformation in instruction impacts student learning and success.

Teachers' Experiences in Transforming Practice

Leticia Monsivais teaches geometry, pre-calculus, and Algebra 1 at Socorro High School in El Paso. In a recent interview, Ms. Monsivais gave insight into transformations in her practice that she has made and how

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this has impacted student learning (a video of this interview can be seen on IDRA's Newsletter Plus online). These transformations include going from teaching in rows to teaching in groups and including cooperative learning strategies. This is not periodically or just for hands-on activities but a strategy she incorporates consistently, daily. This setting has changed learning from being teacher-dependent for answers and guidance to facilitating student peer-exchange and problem solving.

Ms. Monsivais credits IDRA's professional development as a supporting *parameter* in this transformation through on-site assistance that includes coaching and mentoring, co-planning and co-development of activities, co-teaching and debriefing – all elements of IDRA's Math Smart! model.

One key component that she credits is the peer exchange of strategies and activities that have worked in her colleagues' classes. Another key element is having the freedom to take risks in the classroom.

She states: "I consider myself always a risk taker because I want to do the best for my students. When I see something interesting for the students I try it, and if it doesn't work, it doesn't work. At first, I didn't like the idea of groups because I tried cooperative learning when I first started teaching, it was a disaster."

Ms. Monsivais integrates cooperative learning management strategies that have made this successful in her classroom. Cooperative learning gives students the opportunity for the social interaction important for learning (Borko, 2000). Through discussion, interaction and shared experiences, students form meaning and conceptual connections.

Ms. Monsivais' students are doing just that through group interaction and through the use of interactive white boards that also have added a new dimension to her instruction. All math teachers at Socorro High School have interactive white boards and projectors as tools for engaging students and deepening understanding. Students are more apt to get up and use technology to justify their thinking. They have virtual tools that afford them the opportunity to illustrate their reasoning and explanations.

Giselle Easton is a second-year teacher at George Sanchez Charter School in Houston. She teaches eighth grade Algebra I, Algebra II, math models and pre-calculus. Transformation comes early for Ms. Easton as she has already seen growth in her practice from last year to this year. Ms. Easton's insights into transformation in her instruction include making mathematics relevant to her students' lives, structuring learning through mathematics learning stations, and structuring meaningful and engaging hands-on activities. (See a video of Ms. Easton's Algebra I class with English language learners in IDRA's Newsletter Plus online.)

She perfectly orchestrates engaging learning stations for her students where students work cooperatively at stations, including a station for solving equations, a station for writing equations for problem situations, a teacher-guided station at the white board where she is able to see student misconceptions on a more individual basis, and a Sudoku station for building logical thinking skills.

Students work eagerly during the 90-minute class where a timer that is displayed from her computer through the projector counts down the allotted time for each station. Students move seamlessly, and management is in place.

Ms. Easton, like Ms. Monsivais, is open to taking risks. Her reply e-mails to suggestions from her IDRA trainer often read, "Let's try it!" Their time in the classroom is a partnership that involves coaching, co-teaching, immediate debriefing and reflection. Once a strategy is implemented, debriefing is important, so reflection becomes part of the transformation process.

A component that she has come to demonstrate fluently is the ability to modify instruction and draw from a variety of engagement-based instructional strategies that support her English language learners and traditionally underserved students.

The impact is students experiencing mathematics and expressing their mathematical thinking without hesitancy. When asked what has supported her growth, Ms. Easton replies, "IDRA!" It was during the initial Math Smart! two-day institute that she was able to be a "learner outside of her classroom" (Putnam, 2000) and visualize the framework in creating meaningful learning experiences for students through relevant and engaging activities.

Ms. Easton has great vision for her students and already sees the next transformation that will take place for

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the next school year. Transformation does not come without challenges or obstacles. Access to technology for her math models class is limited, and the "learning noise" created by being in a portable disturbs other classes during activities that measure the height and vertical distance that you can jump as part of a data collection survey she has students fill out so the data may be used for upcoming activities.

Elements of Teacher Experience for Transformation

Although Ms. Monsivais and Ms. Easton are at two different campuses in two different cities and have varied years of experience, they share common experiences in transforming instruction. These elements are:

- Having a vision for future growth grounded in their desire for student success in mathematics and their true love of the discipline and teaching.
- Understanding that implementing tools does not merely enhance learning but transforms student learning. These tools include manipulatives, hands-on activities for exploring math concepts and technology.
- Creating learning situations that exhibit high expectations of learning rigorous content.
- Risk-taking that is supported by an administration, colleagues and themselves is integral to the process. Taking instructional risks followed by reflection becomes second-nature and ongoing.
- Attending professional development sessions that model situated learning.
- Building a trusting relationship with colleagues and coaches.
- Feeling valued as an educator and learner by colleagues, coaches and administrators.

Seeing the transformation of instruction as continuous and ongoing is critical for student success, proficiency and achievement in mathematics (Putnam, 2000). This is a multidimensional and dynamic process. It is imperative for our students to have real opportunities that go beyond passing state-mandated tests.

Resources

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supports other instructional methods under specified circumstances.

One approach to addressing the drop in math achievement scores, especially as related to the fourth-reading slump, is to consider student engagement during math instruction. In a 2008 study of U.S. high school students, investigators conducted a two-way analysis of covariance to test for the interaction of race and three levels of engagement and the effect on math achievement (Sciarra and Seirup, 2008). Key findings showed that the overall combination of three types of engagement (behavioral, emotional and cognitive) was significantly related to math achievement for all racial groups. Emotional engagement was a more significant predictor for Hispanic students than for other groups. Student engagement and math achievement are related.

What is student engagement? What does it look like in the mathematics classroom? How can elementary teachers, especially, help students engage in the language and the content of mathematics?

The Sciarra and Seirup study describes three types of school engagement. *Behavioral engagement* has to do with effort and appropriate conduct. *Emotional engagement* concerns students' feelings and a sense of belonging. *Cognitive engagement* relates to the student investment in learning, the belief in the importance of doing well in school and doing what it takes to go beyond the minimum requirements for completion of coursework (2008).

IDRA also has conducted an extensive review of the literature of student engagement and of English language learner engagement, in particular (Solís, 2008). IDRA has compiled a list of student engagement indicators that a teacher can use to observe students during class to help

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Tools for

Focusing on Teaching Quality

There has been a sizeable national discussion about teacher quality. The conversations point to the level of university preparation, state credentialing and other individual characteristics of teachers. While these are certainly important considerations, something is missing. The missing element in the dialogue is *teaching quality*. IDRA's Quality Schools Action Framework, which shows how we can strengthen public education for all students, identifies teaching quality as one of four areas where we need to focus systems change. This involves more than preparation of teachers, their placement in their fields of study, and continual professional development. It also involves the practices that teachers use in the classroom to deliver comprehensible instruction to ensure that all students are learning and graduating. So it's more than the teacher as a person. Specifically, teaching quality is characterized by strong content knowledge and effective pedagogy, quality decision-making in the classroom, self-efficacy, innovation, capacity to teach diverse students, and is grounded in community and institutional support.

A Snapshot of What IDRA is Doing

Developing leaders – IDRA's Math and Science Smart! (MASS) is a new project funded by the U.S. Department of Education that is a collaboration with five teacher preparation programs and 10 school districts. MASS is recruiting, preparing, placing and retaining a critical mass of highly qualified mid-career professionals and recent graduates as secondary math and science teachers with an English as a second language supplemental endorsement for students in 10 high-need Texas school districts.

Conducting research – IDRA works closely with school districts to provide timely, useful evaluations and research studies. Findings and recommendations are used to refine their programs, strengthen components and features that were proven to work for children and change those features that were ineffective. IDRA evaluators keep clients informed of the progress of the evaluation and make them an integral part of the process, from getting their input on surveys developed to conducting interviews with key stakeholders and reviewing findings in face-to-face meetings.

Informing policy – The IDRA South Central Collaborative for Equity recently supported the Oklahoma Annual Statewide Multicultural Education Conference. This conference serves an extremely important role in assisting many school districts to meet a state-mandated requirement for all teachers

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Action

to receive a certain number of professional development credits annually. The conference was set up in a way to enable teachers in rural and remote settings to receive professional development credits as well. Teaching quality is clearly elevated by the support the conference provides them to receive the best in culturally relevant pedagogy and educational practice.

Engaging communities – Mr. Aurelio M. Montemayor, M.Ed., an IDRA senior associate and lead trainer, who also directs the IDRA Texas Parent and Information Resource Center, has been elected to the National Parent Teacher Association board of directors. This board is comprised of parents, education professionals, community and business leaders, and other child advocates from across the country. This will continue to leverage opportunities for IDRA's work with families and communities.

What You Can Do

Get informed. *Rethinking High School: Supporting All Students to Be College-Ready in Math* is a new report, finding that access to high-level math classes and knowledgeable, effective teachers is crucial to preparing high school students for college and beyond. Researchers found that the schools profiled shared three things in common regarding their ability to provide effective math programs: offering high-level math courses and support for all students; providing intensive professional development for teachers to improve their subject knowledge and teaching skills; and using student progress and evaluations to help teachers tailor their lessons. To view the report, visit **http://www.wested.org/online_pubs/GF-08-01.pdf**.

Get involved. The book, *Funds of Knowledge: Theorizing Practices in Households and Classrooms,* encourages teachers to deepen their understanding of students' home lives and family histories. By engaging in home visits, teachers discover that their students' funds of knowledge are embedded in their language, cultural practices and life experiences. If teachers view their students' home lives in terms of strengths and resources rather than as deficits, the students' prior knowledge from their history and community contexts becomes the impetus for building a richer, more relevant and culturally responsive curriculum.

Get results. A new policy brief analyzes the factors behind the persistent inequitable distribution of effective teachers and recommends measures to prepare, recruit and retain more highly qualified teachers to improve academic outcomes in schools with mainly poor minority students. The brief, *Improving the Distribution of Teachers in Low-Performing High Schools*, was developed by the Alliance for Excellent Education and is online at **http://www.all4ed.org/files/TeachDist_PolicyBrief.pdf.**

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guide teacher decisions for strategy adjustment and implementation. These student indicators cluster around four areas of evidence showing:

- Students as part of a community;
- Student use of academic language, student concentration and focus;
- Student confidence in performance; and
- Students as active and participatory.

Strategies that teachers can use to help students, especially English language learners, engage in the learning around these cluster areas include:

- Making the classroom environment and learning context conducive for interaction;
- Ensuring that lesson preparation, delivery and plans integrate language and content with a variety of interaction modes (small group, pairs, large group) while addressing language proficiency levels;
- Building teacher-student relationships that promote trust and high expectations with a respect for student background, culture and native language;
- Using a sheltered instruction approach that makes content comprehensible while systematically and purposefully improving English language proficiency and skills; and
- Including active and interactive experiences that are structured, rigorous and accountable.

A Student Engagement Scenario

Following is an imaginary scenario to show application of observation for student engagement and teacher strategy adjustment.

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Fourth grade students are completing a handout with math word problems involving multiplication and

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division. The teacher observes that at least half of the class is not engaged. Those students happen to be the ones who usually score poorly on classroom assessments. Some are daydreaming, some are fiddling with things in their desk, while other students are playing with their pencils and erasers and talking and laughing with other students around them. Students who are engaged are writing on the handout, mouthing numbers and gesturing procedures that they are mentally doing – in other words they are immersed in the task.

The teacher wants all students, especially struggling math students, to be engaged. She decides to take another approach the next day. Instead of having students individually work on handouts, she arranges the desks in pairs. Her initial presentation of the lesson is begun by asking students a question about a real-life situation where one might use the concept under study. A question that addresses multiplication might be, "How could you determine the amount of food to cook if you add six relatives coming to eat along with the six people already present in your household?" Students talk among themselves, and then the teacher presents the concept under study by using PowerPoint screens and real-life objects along with the mathematic numerical representation (visuals for comprehensibility).

She asks students to brainstorm words that she has used in the presentation that they might use in other situations or in other subject areas, such as the words *times*, *table* and *order* (systematic building of word knowledge). She asks students if any of the words are like words in their home language, pointing out words such as *division* and *multiplication* (awareness of cognates for language transfer).

Then the students work in pairs. She structures the work so that for each word problem only one student will see, read aloud and explain how to solve the problem to the other. The student is to use vocabulary words (academic mathematical language) that are specified by the teacher and posted in the front of the class. The other student is to record the solving of the problem according to the exact description by the first student (encourage both language comprehension and production skills). Discussion ensues among the pairs about the solution to the problem. Then the roles are reversed (encourage interaction), and another problem is read, explained and solution written.

In the final phase of instruction, pairs work together with another pair to compare their work and agree on a final solution to the problem (pairs to small group). The class, as a large group, then receives the final feedback from the teacher.

During the entire class period, the teacher is monitoring for student engagement and making adjustments to the process to maximize the engagement. At the end of the class period, the teacher briefly reflects and mentally notes strategies used that helped students engage conceptually and linguistically in mathematics.

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Student engagement is one of the critical components of the IDRA Math Smart! professional development model. While there are other critical features to effective math instruction, the importance of student engagement in math achievement cannot be understated. Student engagement observation indicators can be the first step for a teacher to transform his or her approach to improving mathematics achievement starting at the elementary school level. This might be a paradigm shift for some teachers. The desired shift is to change the initial focus from, "What strategy should I use or try?" to "Are students engaged in learning with what I am already doing?"

If students are not engaged or if assessment shows that students have not mastered the mathematical concept and language, the teacher uses the indicators to guide his or her choice of the next instructional strategy to implement.

If students are engaged, as evidenced by the indicators for student engagement, then the instruction can proceed with the approach being used. If students are not engaged or if assessment shows that students have not mastered the mathematical concept and language, the teacher can use the indicators to guide his or her choice of the next instructional strategy to implement.

Research is clear that increased engagement correlates with increased achievement in mathematics. By focusing on student engagement, teachers can help students improve in mathematics achievement.

Resources

Anthony, A. "Output Strategies for English-Language Learners: Theory to Practice," *The*

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Effective Parent Outreach

Effective outreach to families can happen in Title I and other schools. But, the goals and the processes must be qualitative and come from a different point of view than what is commonly voiced by many school personnel.

The most powerful approach is labor intensive but ultimately reaches the most families. In this approach, direct connections are made with families in school, at home, and through phone conversations and home visits; connecting with families as they drop off and pick up their children; and extending conversations with them at any point that they come to school for any reason. Outreach workers look for parents who are interested in contacting other families and communicating with their peers. Parent leaders (those who will engage other parents) are nurtured through direct and persistent communication. These parent leaders are coached to, in turn, identify other parents like themselves and to nurture those emerging leaders. This process might seem slow and time consuming at first, but it is preferable to focusing on print and media campaigns, written messages sent home, and recorded messages sent by phone from the principal's office to all homes.

Title I parent involvement requires informing and engaging families about the academic achievement of their children. The spirit of the law can be met by setting up a family network through an effective process of direct communication, leader identification and coaching, and having meetings that are participatory and encourage dialogue. Then your school-community is enlivened, dynamic and supportive of schools that work for all children.

Listen to our PIRC podcast on this topic: Effective Parent Outreach (Classnotes podcast episode #38) at http://www.idra.org/Podcasts.
See Page 16 for details

"Create parent and family networks of mutual support for student achievement, training other parents to be advocates, resources and decision-makers, and surveying families and using data to create further organizations, support and leadership."

– Raising the Bar on Parent Engagement: Can Curriculum and Standards Meet It?, *IDRA Newsletter*, April 2007

"A parent does not need to know the content, the language of instruction or effective teaching pedagogy to judge whether children are learning and succeeding."

– This We Know:All of Our Children are Learning. A Brief Rumination on Parent's Qualifications for Judging the Quality of the Teaching Their Children are Receiving, *IDRA Newsletter*, April 2007

Framing the conversation with the spirit of Title I in NCLB necessitates words such as *value*, *belief*, *hope* and *vision*: 'Every child can graduate,' 'Every child is college material,' 'Every family wants their children to learn.'

– Telling the Truth: Framing It as We See It or Being Framed, *IDRA Newsletter,* August 2007

"Engagement assumes intelligence, creativity and dynamism. Engagement motivates and demonstrates motivation. Engagement is not the fascination or enjoyment by an audience of an interesting or stirring lecture. No matter how wonderful a dog-and-pony show may be, it pales in comparison to the sparks, sounds and movement of a group of humans, young or old, deliberating, interacting, presenting issues, debating, collaborating to solve problems, and just being the creative thinkers they are."

– Engagement Sounds, Sparks and Movements – Intersections of Interest for Students and Families. *IDRA Newsletter*, March 2007

"Though required for families whose children are in the elementary grades, parent-teacher conferences are highly recommended for all students. It is a key nexus to demonstrate the ideals of equal partners, the parents' capacity to understand and support what a child needs to succeed and be happy in school and to provide expert insight into each child."

– NCLB Parent Involvement Requirements, *IDRA Newsletter,* September 2007

"The Old Paradigm: Volunteers and free labor for an understaffed, under funded and overextended school; Participants in hobbies and enjoyable activities such as crocheting, decoupage and aerobics; and Course attendees for self-improvement, such as English as a second language, citizenship class and driver's license preparation…

The New Paradigm: The locus is the family and, therefore, requires personal outreach, home visits, multiple settings for meetings and seeking creative ways to inform families who, because of work and other circumstances, are not able to attend an evening meeting on campus.

As stated by López, et al.: 'A home-school relationship should be a *co-constructed* reciprocal activity in which both the agency and sense of efficacy of parents, and the involvement opportunities provided by schools and other institutions that work with children are important' (2005)."

– Getting 30 Warm Bodies to the Meeting? Parent Engagement is More than This!, *IDRA Newsletter,* November -December 2007

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Highlights of Recent IDRA Activities

In April, IDRA worked with **10,416** teachers, administrators, parents and higher education personnel through **77** training and technical assistance activities and **155** program sites in **14** states plus Brazil. Topics included:

- Building Quality Schools
- Preparing Teachers for Family Involvement of English Language Learners
- School Finance and Equity
- Science and Technology Integration for Grades K-5
- The Highly Qualified Bilingual Teacher

Activity Snapshot

Four high school campuses across Texas were experiencing the same problem. Low scores in science. IDRA provided assistance during the school year using its Science Smart! model that focuses on increasing access to science for all students through authentic, inquiry-based situational learning. Levels of implementation were based on each campus' need, and the model is designed cater to the specific equity issues that these campuses face, such as equitable resources, greater access to science opportunities for minorities and females, and the transformation of teaching practices to serve a growing population of English language learners. It also tied in to the curricula that teachers were using and interwove technology and assessment tools. By the end of the school year, 51 teachers were served impacting 6,700 students. Results showed improvement at all of the schools, including double-digit gains on standardized tests at a San Antonio school, a 25 percentage point gain in a west Texas school's exit-level science scores.

Participating agencies and school districts included:

- Atlanta Public Schools, Georgia
- Detroit Public Schools, Michigan
- Midland Independent School District (ISD), Texas
- San Marcos Consolidated ISD, Texas

Regularly, IDRA staff provides services to:

- public school teachers
- parents
- administrators
- other decision makers in public education

Services include:

- training and technical assistance
- evaluation
- serving as expert witnesses in policy settings and court cases
- publishing research and professional papers, books, videos and curricula

For information on IDRA services for your school district or other group, contact IDRA at 210-444-1710.

Why IDRA Prints the "School Opening Alert" Every Year

Many educators are not aware that the education of undocumented students is guaranteed by the *Plyler vs. Doe* decision or that certain procedures must be followed when registering immigrant children in school to avoid violating restrictions on obtaining personal information without obtaining prior parental consent.

In *Plyler vs. Doe*, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that children of undocumented workers have the same right to attend public primary and secondary schools as do U.S. citizens and permanent residents. Like other students, children of undocumented workers in fact are required under state law to attend school until they reach a mandated age. As a result of the *Plyler* ruling, public schools may not deny admission to a student on the basis of undocumented status, treat a student differently to determine residency, or require students or parents to disclose or document their immigration status.

The Supreme Court arrived at this decision because such practices:

- **Victimize innocent children** – Children of undocumented workers do not choose the conditions under which they enter the United States. They should not be punished for circumstances they do not control. Children have the right to learn and be useful members of society.

- **Hurt more than they claim to help** – Denying children access to education will not eliminate illegal immigration. Instead, it ensures the creation of an underclass. Without public education for children, illiteracy rates will increase, and opportunities for workforce and community participation will decrease. Research has proven that for every $1 spent on the education of children, at least $9 is returned.

- **Turn public school teachers and officials into INS agents** – Rather than teaching students, school officials could spend their time asking our 49.6 million school children about their citizenship status. States would be forced to spend millions of dollars to do the work of the INS.

- **Promote misinformation** – Incorrect assumptions and inappropriate figures have been used to blame immigrants and their children for economic problems.

- **Support racism and discrimination** – Historically, financially troubled times breed increased racism. Children of undocumented workers should not be the scapegoats.

At IDRA, we are working to create schools that work for all children, families and communities. Help us make this goal a reality for every child; we simply cannot afford the alternatives. Denying children of undocumented workers access to an education is unconstitutional and against the law.

Excerpted in part from: *Lessons Learned, Lessons Shared: Texas Immigrant Education Collaborative* (San Antonio, Texas: Intercultural Development Research Association, December 1998).

Immigrant Students' Rights to Attend Public Schools

The National Coalition of Advocates for Students (NCAS) launched its annual School Opening Alert campaign to reaffirm the legal rights of all children who reside in the United States to attend public schools, regardless of immigration status. These fliers provide information for immigrant parents about the rights of their children to attend local public schools this fall. Though NCAS has closed, IDRA continues to make this alert available. The copy of the alert below and on the following page may be reproduced and distributed as well.

School Opening Alert

In 1982, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in *Plyler vs. Doe* [457 U.S. 202 (1982)] that children of undocumented workers have the same right to attend public primary and secondary schools as do U.S. citizens and permanent residents. Like other students, children of undocumented workers are required under state laws to attend school until they reach a legally mandated age.

As a result of the *Plyler* ruling, public schools may not:

- deny admission to a student during initial enrollment or at any other time on the basis of undocumented status;
- treat a student differently to determine residency;
- engage in any practices to "chill" the right of access to school;
- require students or parents to disclose or document their immigration status;
- make inquiries of students or parents that may expose their undocumented status; or
- require social security numbers from all students, as this may expose undocumented status.

Students without social security numbers should be assigned a number generated by the school. Adults without social security numbers who are applying for a free lunch and/or breakfast program for a student need only state on the application that they do not have a social security number.

Recent changes in the F-1 (student) Visa Program do not change the *Plyler* rights of undocumented children. These changes apply only to students who apply for a student visa from outside the United States and are currently in the United States on an F-1 visa.

Also, the *Family Education Rights and Privacy Act* prohibits schools from providing any outside agency – including the Immigration and Naturalization Service – with any information from a child's school file that would expose the student's undocumented status without first getting permission from the student's parents. The only exception is if an agency gets a court order (subpoena) that parents can then challenge. Schools should note that even requesting such permission from parents might act to "chill" a student's *Plyler* rights.

Finally, school personnel – especially building principals and those involved with student intake activities – should be aware that they have no legal obligation to enforce U.S. immigration laws.

For more information or to report incidents of school exclusion or delay, call:

META	Nationwide	(617) 628-2226 (English/Spanish)
NY Immigration Hotline	Nationwide	(212) 419-3737 (English/Spanish)
MALDEF – Los Angeles	Southwest/ Southeast	(213) 629-2512 (English/Spanish)
MALDEF – Chicago	Illinois	(312) 427-0701 (English/Spanish)
MALDEF – San Antonio	Southwest	(210) 224-5476 (English/Spanish)
MALDEF – Washington D.C.	Nationwide	(202) 293-2828 (English/Spanish)

Please copy and distribute this flier.

Llamada Urgente al Comienzo del Curso Escolar

En 1982, El Tribunal Supremo de los Estados Unidos dictaminó en el caso *Plyler vs. Doe* [457 U.S. 202] que los niños de padres indocumentados tienen el mismo derecho de asistir a las escuelas públicas primarias y secundarias que tienen sus contrapartes de nacionalidad estadounidense. Al igual que los demás niños, los estudiantes indocumentados están obligados a asistir a la escuela hasta que llegan a la edad exigida por la ley.

A raíz de la decisión *Plyler*, las escuelas públicas no pueden:

- negarle la matrícula a un estudiante basándose en su situación legal y/o inmigratoria, ya sea a principios del curso o durante cualquier otro momento del año escolar;
- tratar a un estudiante en forma desigual para verificar su situación de residencia;
- efectuar prácticas cuyo resultado sea obstruir el derecho de acceso a los servicios escolares;
- requerir que un estudiante o sus padres revelen o documenten su situación inmigratoria;
- hacer interrogatorios a estudiantes o padres que pudieran revelar su situación de indocumentados;
- exigir que un estudiante obtenga un número de seguro social como requisito de admisión a la escuela.

La escuela debe de asignar un número de identificación a los estudiantes que no tienen tarjeta de seguro social. Los adultos sin números de seguro social quienes están solicitando que a un estudiante lo admitan a un programa de almuerzo y/o desayuno gratis, sólo tienen que indicar que no tienen seguro social en el formulario.

Los últimos cambios del Programa de Visado F-1 (de estudiantes) no cambiarán las obligaciones antedichas en cuanto a los niños indocumentados. Se aplican sólo a los estudiantes que solicitan del extranjero un visado de estudiantes y que están actualmente en los Estados Unidos en un Visado F-1.

Además, el Acta Familiar de Derechos y Privacidad Escolar (*Family Education Rights and Privacy Act*) le prohibe a las escuelas proveerle a cualquier agencia externa – incluyendo el Servicio de Inmigración y Naturalización (Immigration and Naturalization Service – INS) – cualquier información del archivo personal de un estudiante que pudiera revelar su estado legal sin haber obtenido permiso de los padres del estudiante. La única excepción es si una agencia obtiene una orden judicial – conocida como una citación o subpoena – que los padres pueden retar. Los oficiales escolares deben estar conscientes de que el mero hecho de pedirle tal permiso a los padres podría impedir los derechos *Plyler* de un estudiante.

Finalmente, el personal escolar – especialmente los directores y otros administradores o personal docente – deben saber que no están bajo ninguna obligación legal de poner en vigor las leyes de inmigración de los EEUU.

Para más información, o para denunciar incidentes de exclusión escolar o retraso en la admisión a clases, favor de llamar a:

META	Nacional	(617) 628-2226	(Inglés/Español)
NY Línea de Urgencian de Inmigración	Nacional	(212) 419-3737	(Inglés/Español)
MALDEF – Los Angeles	Sudoeste/ Sudeste	(213) 629-2512	(Inglés/Español)
MALDEF – Chicago	Illinois	(312) 427-0701	(Inglés/Español)
MALDEF – San Antonio	Suroeste	(210) 224-5476	(Inglés/Español)
MALDEF – Washington D.C.	Nacional	(202) 293-2828	(Inglés/Español)

Favor de copiar y distribuir esta hoja informativa.

PASS

Parent Action for School Success
Effective Parent Engagement

Taking the next step in meaningful school-home engagement for student success

Strong school, family and community engagement dramatically impacts student success. Schools belong to their communities. Clearly, positive interaction between parents, communities and their schools benefits all students and society as a whole.

But teachers, administrative staff and parents need to be prepared to create meaningful partnerships to address individual student needs, increasing expectations and mandatory accountability at all levels. Schools can create a culture of positive parent engagement and meaningful partnerships in the learning process. Parents can act upon their high expectations by pro-actively partnering with schools to create centers for learning at home. Communities have much to contribute in creating a web of support for our nation's most valuable resource into the future: our emerging youth leaders. Together, we can all support excellent public education for all children.

IDRA presents comprehensive, in-depth learning opportunities for parents, teachers, administrators and community-based organizations that value and build upon the strength and knowledge that each partner brings, while developing new and effective strategies for engagement that focus on student success. When applied effectively, these practices can create a strong web of support to help prepare students for successful transitions throughout education from preschool to college enrollment and into the world of work and civic engagement.

Benefits and Outcomes

- Creating a culture of meaningful engagement for student success
- Applying principles of parent leadership: parents as teachers, resources, trainers of other parents and advocates
- Strengthening the belief that parents are effective throughout all levels, from preschool through higher education
- Maximizing effective strategies for learning and supporting partnerships between teachers and parents
- Moving toward shared accountability and excellence in education for all children

IDRA Support

IDRA's parent and community engagement training and professional development opportunities combine best practices, state-of-the-art technology, hands-on and face-to-face training in effective parent and community engagement to help plan, create and sustain important connections between school, home and community.

IDRA parent training is highly interactive and conducted in two languages, Spanish and English, using a variety of ways to work with parents, community members and school staff, including workshops, video conferences, problem solving, hands-on planning and reflections. Participants are supported through all phases of effective engagement, from planning through implementation and assessments, coaching, training of trainers and leadership development.

PASS Will Address Your Specific Needs

Cross-cutting themes that are incorporated into each training session include:

- Helping Parents Understand the *No Child Left Behind Act* (NCLB)
- Teachers and Parents Working Together for Student Success
- Building School-Parent Partnerships that Work
- Parent efficacy for Helping Children Succeed in School
- Understanding Academic Standards
- Helping Improve Academic Achievement
- Strategies that Help Students Outside the Regular School Day

An example of a model plan that IDRA would use with your district is in the box at right.
Learn more about effective parent involvement

Sample PASS Plan Tailored to District Needs

Session Description	Topic	Days Out of School	IDRA Follow-Up
Administrators and Teachers	NCLB Requirements Creating a Culture of Engagement: Planning and Implementation Strategies – Assessing What is in Place and What is Needed to Engage as Partners for Student Success	1 day	2 hours
Parents	Parent Rights and Responsibilities Under NCLB; Creating Effective School-Home Partnerships; Setting Goals to Reach High Expectations	1/2 day	
Parents	Initial Parent Needs Survey School Report Cards Finding Online Resources; Using Technology for Information and Connections	1/2 day	2 hours
Parents, Teachers, and School Administrators	Building Effective Home School Partnerships for Student Success Creating Meaningful Two-way Home-school Communication to Support Academic Achievement Creating Centers of Learning at Home: Study Tips and Guides for Homework Completion	1/2 day	2 hours
Parents	Fulfilling High Expectations: Setting and Measuring Goals Toward Student Progress Improving Academic Achievement, Homework and Study Tips	1/2 day	
Parents	Planning for High School Graduation and College Success Review High School Graduation Requirements for College Access; Seeking Financial Aid; Identifying and Selecting a College; Looking for Resources; Planning a College Visitation; Communicating With Your High School Counselor Planning for Future Success: The World of Work and Civic Engagement	1 day	
Parents, Students and Teachers	Parents, Teachers and Students will be Brought together to Collectively Create a Vision of the Future and Explore Real-Life Jobs and Careers: Using Technology as a Resource	1 day	2 hours
Parents	Leadership and Advocacy for Excellence in Education Strengthening Leadership Skills to Advocate for your Students and Others; Connecting with Community-Based Organizations and Parents; Using the IDRA School Holding Power Portal for Online Information	1 day	
Impact Evaluation	Evaluating and Communicating Results with Stakeholders; Learnings in Review; Planning for Sustainability	1/2 day	

**All online participation is timed and documented through our portal system.*

For more information or to request assistance call 210-444-1710

Listen to these episodes of the Classnotes Podcast

- The Power of IDRA's Parent Leadership Model
- Valuing Families in Children's Education
- Engaging Parents in Education
- Latino Parent Engagement in High School Math
- Effective Parent Outreach

http://www.idra.org/Podcasts/

Free!

This award-winning podcast series for teachers and administrators explores issues facing U.S. education today and strategies to better serve every student.

Online Now

Episode 38: "Effective Parent Outreach" IDRA Classnotes Podcast – Aurelio Montemayor, M.Ed., director of the IDRA Texas Parent Information and Resource Center, describes a new model for building a network of parent leaders and how it can transform the school-parent connection.

Episode 37: "Gender Equity at 36" IDRA Classnotes Podcast – Bradley Scott, Ph.D., director of the IDRA South Central Collaborative for Equity, discusses where we are now in terms of the advancement of girls as well as gender equity challenges affecting boys today and what the school's responsibility is under the law.

Episode 36: "Transformational Teaching in Math" IDRA Classnotes Podcast – Kathryn Brown, an IDRA education associate and developer of IDRA's Math Smart! model, describes how teachers are building on what they know to transform their teaching to better guide and empower student mathematical thinking.

Episode 35: "Communities Using Data to Improve their Schools" IDRA Classnotes Podcast – Anna Alicia Romero and Hector Bojorquez describe components of IDRA's School Holding Power Portal, challenges families and others face in accessing useful data, and how communities are using data to improve their schools.

www.idra.org/podcasts

A podcast is an audio file that can de downloaded to your computer for listening immediately or at a later time. Podcasts may be listened to directly from your computer by downloading them onto a Mp3 player (like an iPod) for listening at a later date. The IDRA Classnotes podcasts are available at no charge through the IDRA web site and through the Apple iTunes Music Store. You can also subscribe to Classnotes through iTunes or other podcast directories to automatically receive each new podcast in the series when it is released. Classnotes is free of charge.

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