IDRA Newsletter

Inside this Issue:

Teaching for Cognitive Engagement
Materializing the Promise of Sheltered Instruction

by Adela Solís Ph.D.

To create schools that work for all children, we need teachers to teach for engagement. Two things are clear from the education literature about this matter: student engagement is a prerequisite of student learning, and for learning to be truly meaningful students have to be *cognitively engaged.*

A challenge for professional developers charged with training teachers for student success, then, is to help teachers align their instruction with principles and practices for cognitive engagement. They first need to clearly understand the meaning of relevant terminology. Second, and most importantly, they need evidence of whether or not their teaching causes students to be cognitively engaged so they can adjust their instruction accordingly.

This article elaborates on the definition of cognitive engagement (see article in March 2007 issue of the *IDRA Newsletter*) and describes a new approach for helping teachers of English language learners to more accurately and strategically assess how well they are teaching for student engagement.

Definition of Cognitive Engagement

One definition of student engagement distinguishes between *procedural engagement* and *substantial engagement* (McLaughlin, et al., 2005). A procedurally engaged student is one who follows traditional rules of behavior. He or she is quiet, looking at the teacher, has the book turned to the correct page and may even help the teacher collect the homework. A substantially engaged student is one who not only attends to the built-in procedures of instruction but also interacts with the content of the lesson in a deep and thoughtful manner.

The ways in which these two types of students are involved look different and lead to different academic results. Research points out, not surprisingly, that it is through substantial engagement that students are able to "get it" and "make the mark" on the test. Several recent works expand on this and other definitions of student engagement (see Guthrie, 2000; McLaughlin, et al., 2005; Voke, 2002).

The literature on second language learning further expounds on what cognitive engagement means within

the context of instruction for English language learners. Cummins (2001), specifically, has explained what it takes to cognitively engage English language learners. For these students, a clear link has to be made to their home language and culture, and there must be a genuine socio-emotional connection, or relationship, between the student and teacher.

Equally important for cognitive engagement of English language learners is the teacher's delivery of instruction and how this teaching embraces the learner's need to learn language and content at the same time.

For the English language learner, this means teaching has to address cognitively challenging content *and* academic language development (Center for Applied Linguistics, 2004). It also means that the delivery of instruction must be accurate and strategic so that *students are cognitively and linguistically engaged* (Cummins, 2001; Walqui, 2000).

The Sheltered Instruction

Meeting the challenge of creating schools that work for English language learners means ensuring that teachers are creating classroom environments where students are substantially and cognitively engaged.

Observation Protocol (SIOP) model (Center for Applied Linguistics, 2004) addresses the importance of lesson delivery stressing three aspects of student engagement – allocated time, engaged time and academic learning time – and the urgency for English language learners to be recipients of instruction that is efficient and on target.

Teaching for Engagement: What It May Look Like

The academic failure of many English language learners and the belief that teaching really matters have been the forces behind IDRA professional development efforts to prepare teachers of English language learners, especially secondary content teachers, in cutting-edge instructional

practices. IDRA is convinced that meeting the challenge of creating schools that work for English language learners means ensuring that teachers are creating classroom environments where students are substantially and cognitively engaged.

For teachers who are similarly convinced, it is then important to answer those questions they often raise: What does it look like when students are engaged? What does it mean instructionally speaking if they do not exhibit evidence of engagement?

A way to respond to this need is to follow trends in the educational standards movement and create a standards based view of student engagement.

Student engagement in the

In This Issue...

Seeking Opportunities to Build Student Leadership
Students Considered At-Risk of Dropping Out Demonstrate their Leadership Skills

by Linda Cantú Ph.D., and Juanita C. García, Ph.D.

The Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program is an internationally-recognized dropout prevention program developed by the Intercultural Development Research Association. The program works by identifying middle and high school students who are in at-risk situations and enlists them as tutors of elementary school children who are also struggling in school.

A middle school in south Texas took the program one step further and has involved its Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program tutors as representatives in their school's student council.

Jerry de la Garza, a teacher at a middle school in South Texas and educator for 23 years, works today as a teacher of migrant students. He also is a student council sponsor and is the school's teacher coordinator for the Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program. The program at his campus is unique because it solely serves a migrant population. The community that surrounds the school consists primarily of low-income families.

The goal of the student council is to provide leadership development opportunities and to prepare and empower student leaders. In building a student council, school leaders generally select students who are academically successful, have good disciplinary records, are seen as good citizens and have excellent attendance.

Students identified as "at risk" normally are not seen as leaders or selected as student council representatives. But, like IDRA, teacher Jerry de la Garza believes that all students can be leaders. He gives his students opportunities, opens doors for them and never stops them from doing things they are interested in because they are identified as at risk.

In the Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program, tutors work with their tutees during one class period each day, four days a week. Given this role of personal and academic responsibility, the tutors practice self-discipline and develop self-esteem, and schools shift to the

Creating Leadership Opportunities for Students
Classnotes Podcast Episode 30

Featuring Jerry de la Garza

In building a student council and other leadership groups, school leaders generally select students with the best grades and attendance. It is seen as a reward. But middle school teacher of migrant students Jerry de la Garza believes that all students can be leaders. As his school's teacher coordinator for the Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program, Jerry discusses how giving leadership opportunities to students who are considered at risk of dropping out leads to great transformations. Jerry is interviewed by Juanita García, Ph.D., an IDRA education associate.

There are several ways to access the Classnotes podcast, including listening from IDRA's web site or subscribing through iTunes or another online podcast directory.

You can also subscribe to IDRA's free e-mail alert that notifies them when a new episode is available (about twice a month).

Visit http://www.idra.org/Podcasts to listen!

philosophy and practices of valuing students considered at-risk of dropping out. Hence, Mr. de la Garza gave his Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program students the opportunity to become student council members. Students in his program also are involved in athletics, mariachi, choir, dance and band.

Mr. de la Garza explains: "Being involved in the Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program and student council leads students into success. This is why the Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program students are given the opportunity to be in student council and to go on field trips and conventions. They become successful leaders who represent the campus. Being in student council has helped the Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program students because it impacts and changes their lives and they become successful leaders."

A research study on the benefits of students participating in extracurricular activities shows that students develop more positive attitudes toward school, better academic achievement and higher self-concept. The findings also demonstrate that, while participating in extracurricular activities, students increase their

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Articles on the IDRA Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program

Podcasts about school holding power

Resources and tools for you about student leadership

IDRA Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program – Philosophy

1. All students can learn. This means all students: of all races and ethnicities, of all languages, of all backgrounds, of all income levels. All students can learn.

2. The school values all students. There are no "throw-aways." There are no students who are not important. All students are valuable.

3. All students can actively contribute to their own education and to the education of others. Students are not passive vessels into which we pour information. Not only are they active learners but they also can become teachers of others.

4. All students, parents and teachers have the right to participate fully in creating and maintaining excellent schools. We are all partners in this. We all participate.

5. Excellence in schools contributes to individual and collective economic growth, stability and advancement. Our sense, our philosophy is that we are all "at risk" as long as students are "at risk." Different sectors in this country are realizing that. It is not only what happens to an individual when he or she drops out of school, it is what happens to us.

6. Commitment to educational excellence is created by including students, parents and teachers in setting goals, making decisions, monitoring progress and evaluating outcomes. Excellence requires involving all of the players in deciding where we are going and how we are getting there and in monitoring how we are doing.

7. Students, parents and teachers must be provided extensive, consistent support in ways that allow students to learn, teachers to teach and parents to be involved. Each of these groups needs each other and must support each other.

For more information on the Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program, contact IDRA by phone at 210-444-1710, by e-mail at contact@idra.org or visit our web site at www.idra.org.

overall school involvement, which leads to development of more positive attitudes toward school and toward learning. Furthermore, data analyses show that underachievers benefit more from their participation and lower the probability of students dropping out (Peixoto, 2004).

In the Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program, results show that tutors stay in school, perform academically, im-prove school attendance and advance to higher education. Additionally, as part of the Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program, students participate in field trips to colleges and universities and are involved in leadership activities that connect them to other tutors around the United States. The teacher coordinator selected for the program is key to developing a positive atmosphere

IDRA Family Leadership in Education – Principles

Principle 1: Families can be their children's strongest advocates.

Principle 2: Families of different race, ethnicity, language and class are equally valuable.

Principle 3: Families care about their children's education and are to be treated with respect, dignity and value.

Principle 4: Within families, many individuals play a role in the children's education.

Principle 5: Family leadership is most powerful at improving education for all children when collective efforts create solutions for the common good.

Principle 6: Families, schools, and communities, when drawn together, become a strong, sustainable voice to protect the rights of all children.

For More Information

Texas IDRA Parent Information and Resource Center
http://www.idra.org/Texas_IDRA_PIRC.htm/

IDRA's Family Leadership Principles
http://www.idra.org/IDRA_Newsletter/September_2007_Accountable_Leadership/IDRAs_Family_Leadership_Principles/

Sample "Deficit" Assumptions and "Valuing" Assumptions
http://www.idra.org/Texas_IDRA_PIRC.htm/About/Valuing_Assumptions/

IDRA's Four Dimensions of Parent Leadership
http://www.idra.org/Texas_IDRA_PIRC.htm/IDRA_Parent_Leadership_Model/

Valuing Families in Children's Education – Classnotes Podcast
http://www.idra.org/Podcasts/

classroom can be seen in the use of critical features, or indicators, of student engagement. These can be extracted from current and past research on effective teaching and second language learning (Brewser and Fager, 2000; Echevarria et al., 2004; North Central Regional Educational Laboratory, 2004; Robledo Montecel, et al., 2002).

The intent is to use these indicators to assess as accurately as possible the type and level of student engagement in the classroom. Following are some possible indicators of engagement derived from the literature.

What Engaged Students Say, Do and Look Like

First, there are student behaviors (among mainstream and English language learners), as captured by observers and reported by others, that are evidence of student engagement. Below are some examples.

- Students are included and treated fairly.
- Students show that they know when they are successful in tasks.
- Students can make real authentic choices and regulate own learning.
- Students seem secure and safe in the classroom.
- Students are actively discovering, constructing and creating.
- Students are listening, observing, noticing and being mindful.
- Students are immersed in tasks.
- Students keep busy and active. They are not clock-watching.
- Students say they understand task expectations.
- Students are saying, doing, writing and responding openly.
- Students look satisfied and fulfilled after responding.
- Students sit, walk tall, speak up, look self-assured.

Tools for

Student Engagement Critical to Success

The research literature shows that if you do not engage a student in school, the likelihood that he or she will drop out is very, very high. Engaged students succeed academically. Thus, student engagement is one of the four critical school system indicators for success that are identified in IDRA's Quality Schools Action Framework, meaning it is a crucial element on which to focus. At the systems change level, student engagement refers to a school environment and activities that value students and incorporate them in learning and co-curricular school activities resulting in academic achievement.

A Snapshot of What IDRA is Doing

Developing leaders – Through IDRA's Math Smart! professional development high school teachers are transforming their practice, which is impacting student learning. This transformation has moved learning from being teacher-dependent for answers and guidance to student-centered with peer-exchange and problem solving. IDRA consultants facilitate this transformation through on-site assistance that includes coaching and mentoring, co-planning and co-development of activities, co-teaching and debriefing, an element of IDRA's Math Smart! One key component is the peer-exchange of strategies and activities that have worked in colleagues' classes. Another key element is having the freedom to take risks in the classroom.

Conducting research – IDRA's Student Engagement Observation Tool includes a unique feature for recognizing evidence of student engagement. Observable student behaviors can be noted as evidence of student engagement. These have been organized into the following evidence categories: sense of community; use of language; concentration and focus; confidence in performance; and active involvement and independence. These behaviors are included in a set of indicators and are one part of the Student Engagement Observation Tool. Observing for teachers making engagement happen is a second part of the tool. IDRA has organized the sound pedagogy predictive of English language learner engagement into dimensions containing specific indicators that can be observed as evidence of engagement-based instruction.

Informing policy – Members of the Little Rock community came together during a Brown and Mendez Community Blueprint Dialogue event held by IDRA. Afterwards, IDRA published, *A Community Speaks – A Report on Little Rock's Coalition-Building for Education: Blueprint Dialogues for Action*, that describes the Little Rock community's plan for improving

Action

educational opportunities for all children, particularly minority children. One of the school districts has used this publication to help in creating and informing a special task force to help reduce its student achievement gap. The publication and related resources are available free online at **http://www.idra. org/mendezbrown/promise.html**.

Engaging communities – Students participating in IDRA's Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program in an Arizona school district recently participated in a leadership day event. Students discussed their hopes and dreams for the future. Students reported that they learned that by being leaders in their school and role models for the children they tutor, they will be able to accomplish their dreams for the future. That evening, students and their families gathered for IDRA's Pathways to College presentation that informed parents and students on how to plan together for college.

What You Can Do

Get informed. The Annie E. Casey Foundation's Kids Count online database now features child well-being measures for the 50 largest U.S. cities. This informative tool contains more than 100 indicators of child well-being. This unique system allows users to access state-specific inventories of data from local sources, such as health departments, human services agencies, and schools. For county and other community-level data, visit the Community-Level Information on Kids (CLIKS) database at **http://www.kidscount. org/cgi-bin/cliks.cgi**.

Get involved. What Kids Can Do, a national non-profit group, promotes perceptions of young people as valued resources and advocates for learning that engages students as knowledge creators and not simply test takers. What Kids Can Do has an excellent resource "Tips on Helping Us Learn: from Binders to Homework" where middle school students provide tips to teachers for helping them grow into confident learners. To view this resource and many others, visit **http://www.whatkidscando.org/specialcollections/ voices_middle_grades/voices_helping.html**.

Get results. Texas Guaranteed Student Loan Corporation has set up a free public service, Adventures in Education, that offers college planning advice, financial aid information and career guidance. Adventures in Education provides information for students and parents to help them make decisions for the future. Visit **http://www.aie.org/index.cfm.**

What Teachers Teaching for Engagement Do

Second, there are teacher behaviors, or strategies, that predict student engagement. Here are some examples.

- Teachers express high expectations.
- Teachers create personal human relationships between teachers and students.
- Teachers use a variety of space, student and room arrangements.
- Teachers link to prior knowledge and experience.
- Teachers plan and address allocated time, engaged time and academic learning.
- Teachers review frequently.
- Teachers do continual assessment and feedback.
- Teachers focus language on meaning, form and use.
- Teachers seek evidence of participation and flow.
- Teachers ensure all students are always doing something.
- Teachers articulate rules for participation.
- Teachers use list of evidence checks.
- Teachers include lots of language practice.
- Teachers use a variety of interaction modes.
- Teachers structure tasks in rigorous, active and accountable ways.

What are the implications for professional development of this derived picture of student engagement? IDRA has employed these findings to create a draft set of indicators of student engagement and observation tools with which to measure the degree to which students are cognitively engaged, as a preliminary step, and then guide teachers to scale up their teaching using research-based strategies to ensure cognitive engagement. Use of the observation tools in selected

school districts and classrooms of English language learners in the past year indicate this is a promising and much needed resource to integrate into professional development.

Success Stories with Indicators of Student Engagement

The effort to create change through this conceptualization of student engagement should be especially targeted toward new and experienced sheltered instruction teachers. It is these professionals who in many schools are charged with helping struggling English language learners. Such has been the effort of IDRA in the past year. Teachers who have participated in this effort (through training and in classroom assistance) have been oriented to and have used the indicators of student engagement within the context of sheltered instruction training.

Some of these teachers have provided feedback that demonstrates the following.

- A better understanding of how cognitively demanding content can be especially so for students with limited English skills;
- A realization that despite the complexity and difficulty of academic content, students need to be meaningfully engaged in it;
- A new commitment to the idea that teachers must do what it takes to ensure that children are cognitively engaged; and
- A strong desire for sustained support from their schools to help them meet the challenge of teaching English language learner adolescents who often have been disengaged and ill prepared.

Models of sheltered instruction specifically target the teaching of content through language sensitive pedagogy which, at the same time, is sufficiently challenging and relevant. The framework for teaching for student engagement proposed here is a way to materialize the promise of sheltered instruction and fulfill the yearnings of these valuable professionals serving English language learners.

Resources

Brewser, C., and J. Fager. *Increasing Student Engagement and Motivation: From Time-on-Task* (Portland, Oregon: Northwest Regional Laboratory, October, 2000).

Center for Applied Linguistics. *Using the SIOP Model: Professional Development Manual for Sheltered Instruction* (Washington, D.C.: Center for Applied Linguistics, 2004)

Cummins, J. Understanding Academic Language Learning: Making It Happen in the Classroom (Chapter 5), *Negotiating Identities: Education for Empowerment in a Diverse Society,* second edition (Los Angeles: California Association for Bilingual Education, 2001).

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Making Content Comprehensible for English Learners: The SIOP Model, second edition (Boston: Pearson, Allyn and Bacon, 2004).

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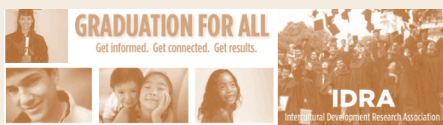
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Voke, H. *Student Engagement: Motivating Students to Learn,* Infobrief No. 28 (Alexandria, Va.: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, February, 2002).

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Highlights of Recent IDRA Activities

In January IDRA worked with **5,530** teachers, administrators, parents, and higher education personnel through **40** training and technical assistance activities and **71** program sites in **12** states plus Brazil. Topics included:

✦ Helping Parents Make a Difference in Their Child's Academic Success
✦ Math Smart! for Beginning Algebra Teachers
✦ Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol Implementation in the Science Classroom

Participating agencies and school districts included:
✧ Austin Independent School District, Texas
✧ Roosevelt School District, Arizona
✧ Education Service Center Region 10, Texas

Activity Snapshot

The IDRA Texas Parent Information and Resource Center (PIRC) is a comprehensive, multicultural and multilingual parent leadership support program for strengthening partnerships between parents and schools for student success. The project is funded by the U.S. Department of Education and targets critical areas of need in parent involvement throughout the state of Texas. Families with children in schools designated as low-performing and Title I are supported through the activities of this project. The IDRA model of valuing parents as leaders supports an emerging cadre of parents committed to strengthening the educational pipeline from pre-kindergarten through higher education.

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.

Engagement-Based Sheltered Instruction

Are your English language learners meeting state standards and passing required tests? IDRA's new research-based sheltered instruction model can assist you in improving the academic success of your English language learners.

The model focuses on student engagement. Engagement in the learning process is essential for academic success. Because of English language learners' different English proficiency levels, teachers often struggle to find ways to have them actively participate in their learning. IDRA helps teachers learn, reflect on use, and adopt instructional strategies so that English language learners are engaged in the instructional process.

This dynamic professional development series focuses on extending the teacher's knowledge of ESL strategies and sheltered instruction to ensure that the English language learner is engaged in learning the academic content. Technology to engage students is an interwoven feature of the training.

Topics that are addressed during the series include:
❖ Understanding Student English Language Proficiency Levels
❖ Understanding the Language Demands of the Content Areas, Texts and Tests
❖ Choosing Strategies that Address Student Language Levels
❖ Developing Student Academic Language in Content Areas

❖ Planning, Teaching and Observing for Maximum Cognitive Engagement of English Language Learners
❖ Technology as a Tool for Student Engagement

To make success for all students a reality, 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 positive 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.

IDRA Support

IDRA supports all phases of effective sheltered instruction, from planning through implementation with the goal of sustainability for student success through training of mentors and coaches. IDRA professional development support combines state-of-the art technology, hands-on and face-to-face training that helps teachers and districts apply research-based strategies. The training uses a variety of ways to work with school staff, including workshops, video conferences, classroom demonstrations, on-site observations and problem solving, online discussions, and reflections. Participants are supported with research-based information and best practices. CPE credit is available.

IDRA Will Address Your Specific Needs

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

❖ Cooperative Learning for Student Engagement
❖ Building Academic Vocabulary
❖ Building Content Literacy
❖ Integrating Technology
❖ Creative Use of Graphic Organizers
❖ Promoting High-Order Thinking Skills

An example of a model plan that IDRA could use with your district is in the box on the next page.

Benefits
❖ Teachers who feel empowered to make a difference for English language learners,
❖ Teachers who can build trusting relationships with English language learners,
❖ Teachers who maximize learning time for all students in the classroom,
❖ Teachers who can present content in a comprehensible way to all students, and
❖ Teachers who can spontaneously reflect and act.

Outcomes
❖ Strengthening the understanding that all students bring strengths and assets to the learning process,
❖ Creating a culture of meaningful engagement for student success,
❖ Applying principles of language learning to instructional strategies,
❖ Maximizing instructional strategies based on a student's level of English language proficiency, and
❖ Fostering student, parent and teacher partnerships for academic success.

Sample Engagement-Based Sheltered Instruction Plan Tailored to District Needs

Session Description	Topic	Days	Follow-Up
Online Preparation*	Initial Needs Assessment and Setting the Climate		2-3 hours
Observations	IDRA classroom observations		1-2 days
Teachers Face-to-Face Session #1	Cooperative Learning for Student Engagement and Language Acquisition	1 day	2-3 hours
Demonstrations	Classroom Demonstrations	1	1-2 days
Teachers Face-to-Face Session #2	Assessing English Language Learners, Monitoring and Implementing Engagement-Based Sheltered Instruction		1 day
Coaching Session	Individual lesson observation and coaching session	1	1 day
Teachers Face-to-Face Session #3	Strategies for Sheltering Instruction for Increasing Comprehensibility		2-3 hours
Lesson Planning	Observing and planning with teachers		1-2 days
Online Mentoring and Coaching	Throughout the professional development model the learning team will communicate and engage in discussion of topics and issues. Resources will be linked and constantly updated for team use.		Continuous
Teachers Face-to Face Session #4	Strategies for Language Acquisition and Language Teaching: Techniques for Content Area Teachers	1	2-3 hours
Optional Session #5	How to Conduct Mentoring and Coaching Session – "Training of Trainers" (Days of in-class assistance dependent on total number of teachers participating)	1	1 5-9 full days plus online support and monitoring
Impact Evaluation			

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

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for students, helping students become successful and positive leaders, opening doors for them and helping other teachers to see their potential. Of students who participate in the program, 98 percent stay in school and progress to the next grade.

Mr. de la Garza would like for students considered at risk to be given the opportunity to blossom because they have the same potential that other students do. "Do not close the door to these students," he says.

In essence, the Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program teacher coordinator is an advocate and mentor for the tutors. Jerry de la Garza personifies this role. Because of his leadership and vision, the Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program tutors in this South Texas school have an expanded vision of life and see themselves as successful and positive leaders.

Resources

Peixoto, F. "What Kinds of Benefits Students Have From Participating in Extracurricular Activities?" Paper presented at the Proceedings Third International Biennial SELF Research Conference (Berlin, Germany, July 3-7, 2004).

To hear more, listen to the Classnotes Podcast interview of Mr. de la Garza online at www.idra.org (see box on Page 3).

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Creating schools that work for all children,
through research • materials development • training • technical assistance • evaluation • information dissemination