



# Defining Teaching Quality Beyond the Certificate

by Kristin Grayson, M.A.

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- ❖ Family leadership program ideas



A successful school reform effort cannot ignore the fact that improving teaching quality is of the utmost importance. Dr. María Robledo Montecel, president and CEO of the IDRA, describes IDRA's Quality School Framework by defining the critical components that must be addressed in any comprehensive school reform effort that will be sustained over time. This article will define teaching quality within this framework and will clarify this concept along with similar terms, such as *teacher quality*, that are used in federal and state legislation, teacher preparation and development, and current academic research. This will serve as a source of information to guide school leaders, administrators and teachers as they make critical decisions in areas such as hiring, curriculum and professional development.

## What is Teacher Quality?

There is great emphasis today, in part due to the *No Child Left Behind Act* (NCLB), on teacher quality in schools. NCLB has given impetus to states to improve teacher quality by

requiring schools to have a qualified teacher in every classroom. These requirements are one step in addressing inequities in schools that occur when a high percentage of teachers in a given school are teaching out of their areas of certification. For example, 1993-94 federal government data show that high minority schools had higher levels of teachers teaching out of the field in which they had certification, with percentages ranging from 27 percent of teachers in high minority schools teaching out of area as opposed to 13 percent in low minority schools (Ingersoll, 2000).

The term *quality teacher* is defined by NCLB and used for state implementation as a teacher who: (1) has, at a minimum, a bachelor's degree; (2) has full state certification or licensure; and (3) demonstrates subject area competence in all the subjects that he or she teaches. State governments, in addition to certification criteria, also are required by Title I to improve teacher quality through professional development and other initiatives.

Sadly, however, inequities in teacher quality continue to persist as they have over the past 23 years.

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When schools have greater numbers of teachers teaching out of the field in which they are qualified, there are large numbers of students underachieving and/or leaving school before graduation.

A 2007 study of 14,000 students in 197 elementary schools found that collective teacher quality is related to greater school effectiveness, equity outcomes, and student achievement in math and reading, in particular where student subgroups (English language learners, low-income, etc.) were clustered (Heck, 2007).

A specific Texas example that illustrates the possible attrition relationship is in the low minority Highland Park High School in Dallas where the percent of teachers teaching out of field is 11 percent and its attrition rate is only 6 percent. In contrast, at Edgewood Memorial High School in San Antonio, the out-of-field and attrition percentages are 22 percent and 40 percent, respectively. While there are other variables, schools that have teachers teaching within their areas of

## Teaching quality refers not only to the teachers' credentials, but also to the perspective teachers bring to the classroom, the instructional strategies that they use, and the surrounding organization of the school and community.

certification are correlated with higher student achievement.

Today, schools continue to lose high numbers of students when teachers do not meet the minimum criteria. Unfortunately, schools also are losing high numbers of students even when taught by “highly qualified” teachers. The rate at which Texas students leave high school before graduation is 33 percent, which is the same rate that it was more than 20 years ago when IDRA began its attrition studies.

Additionally, the gaps between attrition rates for White students and Hispanic students and between White students and African American students have grown. Since 1985-86, the attrition rate gap for Hispanic students has increased from 18 percent to 26 percent. For African American students the gap

has increased from 7 percent to 20 percent. (Johnson, 2007)

Clearly, the dreams of the *Brown vs. Board of Education* and the *Mendez vs. Westminster* court cases have not been fulfilled. There are still many children who are being left behind. It is apparent that IDRA's mission of “creating schools that work for all children” is far from being realized. Many students are leaving public schools unprepared to support themselves, their future families and the larger communities in which they live. There is work yet to be done.

IDRA's work emphasizes that *teacher quality* also must be accompanied by *teaching quality* within the context of a supportive organizational school and community structure as

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# Teaching Quality

**Dear reader,**

Making sure that a highly qualified teacher is at the head of every classroom in America is one of the unmet goals of the *No Child Left Behind Act*. With new commitment, fair funding and focused action, we can turn the corner and assure excellence through quality teaching for every child.

The education agenda of the new administration includes a focus on recruiting, preparing, retaining and rewarding teachers. As we move forward on this key priority, the term “teaching quality” itself must be pulled out of the educational jargon bin, dusted off and infused with new meaning.

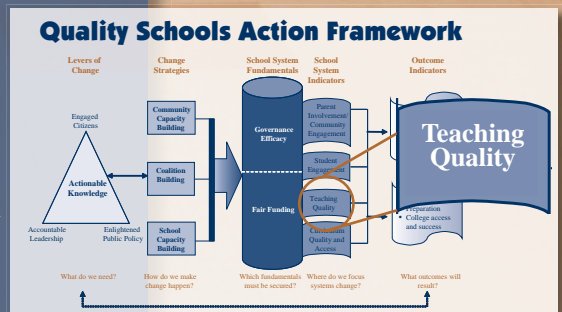


Teaching quality, of course, is about the men and women who dedicate their lives to educating our children. Teaching quality is also about providing the training, mentoring, coaching and professional development that nurtures teachers’ development and success. But teaching does not occur in a vacuum, and any effort to promote teaching quality must be coupled with excellence in governance, state and school policy, school leadership, and curriculum. Teaching quality also is centrally about the relationship among the teacher, family and student – a relationship and environment that must be vibrant for students of all backgrounds.

In this February issue of the *IDRA Newsletter*, beginning with “Defining Teaching Quality Beyond the Certificate,” we examine teaching quality through this wide lens, spanning research, policy and practice. We then focus in on how to strengthen the quality of teaching for those are among the most underserved students in our schools – English language learners. An article on Judge William Wayne Justice’s recent ruling that the State of Texas must dramatically improve its oversight and delivery of programs for English language learners offers both analysis of the case and a discussion of the state’s response thus far. “Ten Principles that Guide the Development of an Effective Educational Plan for English Language Learners at the Secondary Level,” the second part of a two-part series, provides guidance for developing an evidence-based secondary educational plan for English language learners. Finally, “Putting our ChIPS on the Table – Children in Public Schools” illustrates five innovative ways in which schools, families and communities can partner to strengthen teaching, learning and student outcomes.

In 2009, minority students, English language learners and students in poverty in America are still far more likely than their more affluent peers to attend classes taught by a teacher who is not certified, who is paid poorly, or who is working out of field. A restored commitment to teaching quality will be a big step forward in securing educational opportunities for all of our children.

*Maria Sobredo Montecal*





# Ten Principles that Guide the Development of an Effective Educational Plan for English Language Learners at the Secondary Level – Part II

by **Abelardo Villarreal, Ph.D.**

In the January issue of the *IDRA Newsletter*, IDRA presented context and principles that describe fundamental elements of an evidence-based secondary educational plan for English language learners. Following is a brief description of the last six principles.

## **Equity Principle 5**

**English language learners must learn in an environment characterized by acceptance, valuing, respect, support, safety and security.** Imparting a valuing perspective (Montemayor, 2007) begins at the school board level (policies) and filters throughout the entire learning environment (actions, practices and opportunities to learn) (Scottish Government, 2004). Its impact on student motivation and engagement cannot be ignored. A valuing perspective is not a choice left to an individual educator's inclination or preference.

Contextualizing content to reflect the cultural and linguistic diversity of the student population promotes a sense of belonging and connectedness and of being valued and respected. This results in greater student participation and engagement in the learning process. Seeing ELLs through a deficit

lens lowers the quality of services provided to students, and it delimits the opportunities that these students have to excel and perform academically.

Schools must ensure that ELLs experience social, psychological and cognitive support to succeed in school (García and Beltrán, 2003). Comprehensive counseling services (social, emotional and career services) must be accessible to ELLs by culturally proficient counselors. Efforts to engage ELLs in extracurricular activities should be embodied in a measurable goal at each secondary campus.

## **Equity Principle 6**

**English language learners must have access to quality curriculum and instruction that prepares them for college and the workplace.** A quality curriculum is characterized by the use of research-based, proven and unbiased assessment instruments, curriculum materials (Oakes and Saunders, 2002) and instructional strategies. Appropriate facilities must be available (Gándara, et al., 2003), including environmentally appropriate learning spaces, instructional hardware and software, instructional materials and equipment, and all other instructional supports to ensure that ELLs are held to high academic standards.

Instructional strategies must be adjusted and modified (sheltered

instruction) to ensure that all ELLs regardless of their level of English language proficiency participate and are fully engaged in instruction at all times. Instructional supports that integrate the use of technology must be accessible to ELLs in order to ensure that learning is maximized. ELLs must have access to challenging content, including AP courses (Gándara, et al., 2003) and dual language credit courses that prepare them to succeed in college, particularly in high demand areas, such as mathematics and science that have traditionally been inaccessible to ELLs.

ELLs should be fully integrated into regular classroom instruction for at least 75 percent of the time. Grouping ELLs for instruction outside of the regular classroom should be allowed only for instruction in the native language and should not total more than 25 percent of instructional time.

Any curriculum designed specifically for ELLs must meet the rigor and relevance of a quality curriculum. Curricular materials must demonstrate respect and value and integrate a society of cultural diversity. AP and dual college credit courses must reflect enrollment rates of ELLs that are consistent with the percentage of ELLs at the campus. Secondary schools must have content

*Ten Principles – continued on Page 5*

*Ten Principles – continued from Page 4*

reference materials in the various languages represented by ELLs. A comprehensive curriculum should provide for supplementary instruction for those students who need academic support beyond that provided in the classroom.

Other practices that have been tried with some success in increasing the number of students graduating from high school include: grade level and thematic learning communities, catch up courses, double blocked classes, aligning curriculum across grade levels, and mentoring and coaching of teachers. Experience has shown that these and other practices that offer hope can be hindered by such factors as: lack of focused and reliable funding, lack of a planned expansion and sustainability approach, lack of internal support, and associating practice with temporary and minimal results.

Quality teaching strategies, such as cooperative learning and sheltered instruction (CALLA, SIOP), and other relevant strategies (CREDE's

five principles: teachers and students working together, developing language and literacy skills across the curriculum, connecting lessons to student lives, engaging students with challenging lessons, and emphasizing dialogue over lectures) that demonstrate the social, psychological and cognitive engagement of ELLs throughout the class period must be used.

Instruction of ELLs must integrate the development of content with the development of English language skills. ELLs must have access to technology (Gándara, et al., 2003) both as a learning tool and a workplace skill. Benchmarking progress should be used periodically by classroom teachers to assess ELLs' progress in content mastery and, in case of poor progress design curriculum and instructional adjustments, implement and document effectiveness in increasing progress. Teachers of ELLs must meet periodically to assess success, adjust curriculum and make the necessary changes at the content department level.

## Equity Principle 7

**English language learners must have access to qualified staff who have the passion and conviction to make a difference in the lives of English language learners** (Clewell and Campbell, 2004; Robledo Montecel, 2007). It is not uncommon for schools with significant numbers of ELLs to be in low-performing schools with high poverty rates and high minority populations, with higher numbers of teachers teaching out of field, not fully certified and inexperienced. This coupled with a pervasive mindset of low expectations of students and an inadequate curriculum creates a dysfunctional environment conducive to ELLs' early emotional and cognitive disengagement. Furthermore, minimal professional development efforts have had a demonstrated history of impact in increasing teacher quality and effectiveness.

The question that puzzles most educators is: Why is it that a teacher who receives training on the most effective

*Ten Principles – continued on Page 6*

## IDRA's Framework for Effective Instruction of Secondary English Language Learners

See IDRA's research-based framework that provides guidance for design, implementation and evaluation of an effective ELL program. The framework includes seven key components: state leadership, oversight and compliance; governance; fair funding; parent and community engagement; student achievement and support; teaching and curriculum quality; and accountability. Each component is defined by research-based elements.

The framework was presented in late 2008 following Judge William Wayne Justice's ruling that the state of Texas failed to effectively educate secondary level English language learner students and to monitor school district compliance with EEOA and state policy related to secondary ELL students.

[http://www.idra.org/A\\_Framework\\_for\\_Effective\\_Instruction\\_of\\_Secondary\\_English\\_Language\\_Learners/](http://www.idra.org/A_Framework_for_Effective_Instruction_of_Secondary_English_Language_Learners/)



teaching strategies, who can articulate and demonstrate the most effective use of these strategies, can be still the most ineffective teacher? Is there an even stronger determinant of teacher effectiveness? What restricts the effectiveness of a teaching strategy?

Among other factors, research shows that stereotypes and myths that teachers have about a student's culture can impair expectations, student-teacher interactions and delivery of instruction, and eventually can have a devastating impact on student performance. These shape relationships with students and determine the quality of the student-teacher interaction. In reviewing the various administrator and teacher professional development programs, it is evident that awareness and training of how to address stereotypes and myths are omitted or are rarely addressed with depth and intensity.

ELLs must not be over-represented in classes with non-certified teachers or teachers teaching out of field (DeCohen, et al., 2005). All teachers of ELLs must receive continuous professional development services (Maxwell-Jolly, et al., 2006; Villarreal and González, 2008) and show competency in the following areas: first and second language acquisition theory, sheltered instruction strategies, working with parents as partners in the educational process, cooperative learning strategies, enriching social and academic vocabulary, engaging ELLs emotionally and cognitively in the content of instruction, and developing a sense of efficacy both in the teacher and in ELLs. All content area teachers with ELLs must receive, at a minimum, 12 hours of professional development services each year.

### **Equity Principle 8**

**Parents must be informed about and participate in the design,**

*Ten Principles – continued on Page 14*

## **Ten Principles for the Educational of Secondary English Language Learners – In Brief**

### **Equity Principle 1**

High comparable achievement and performance is evident among English language learners, and non-ELLs and a plan for achieving these outcomes is evident.

### **Equity Principle 2**

The school board must support and assign the education of English language learners a high priority.

### **Equity Principle 3**

Identification of secondary students for participation and exiting from the ELL program must be based on an assessment of language proficiency, students' level of understanding and use of academic language in core content areas (mathematics, science, social studies) and students' achievement in core content areas assessed in the English language.

### **Equity Principle 4**

High school graduation is an expectation for all students; there are no excuses for less.

### **Equity Principle 5**

English language learners must learn in an environment characterized by acceptance, valuing, respect, support, safety and security.

### **Equity Principle 6**

English language learners must have access to quality curriculum and instruction that prepares them for college and the workplace.

### **Equity Principle 7**

English language learners must have access to qualified staff with the passion and conviction to make a difference in the lives of English language learners

### **Equity Principle 8**

Parents must be informed and participate in the design, implementation and evaluation of the ELL program.

### **Equity Principle 9**

Appropriate monitoring and accountability measures (including state-mandated tests and other alternative assessment measurements) at all levels of the school hierarchy – including governance, administration and instruction – must be implemented periodically.

### **Equity Principle 10**

State and local education systems must be accountable for achievement outcomes and a quality educational program for English language learners.

*2009, Intercultural Development Research Association*

# Federal Judge Rules That Texas' Services for its LEP Students Are Inadequate

by Albert Cortez, Ph.D.

*Editor's Note: At press time, the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals granted the Texas Attorney General's request that Judge Justice's order be stayed until it the circuit court has an opportunity to review the case on appeal. The appeals court hearing was subsequently set for June of this year. Without legal pressure, there is no assurance that the state will fix the serious flaws in the services provided to Texas children who are in the process of learning English that were uncovered by the district court. The legislature may now choose to move forward to address the key issues raised or to ignore them until it is forced to act.*

In July of 2007, Judge William Wayne Justice heard a complaint from plaintiffs who questioned the adequacy of the Texas's compliance monitoring of state-mandated bilingual education and English as a second language (ESL) programs at the secondary school level. Judge Justice is the district federal judge who retained oversight of the court case that addressed the vestiges of past discrimination against Mexican Americans in Texas. In the case, the Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund (MALDEF) and Multicultural Education and Training

**In his concluding points, the judge noted that "defendants must soon rectify the monitoring failures and begin implementing a new language program for secondary students."**

Advocates (META) asserted that the new Texas Performance Based Monitoring Assessment System (PBMAS) fails to adequately monitor districts' compliance with state bilingual and ESL program requirements. More specifically the plaintiffs charged that the PBMAS fails to incorporate mechanisms to ensure that school districts are not under-identifying students as limited-English-proficient and that it aggregates LEP student data across three to 11 grade levels in a manner that masks LEP student under-performance at the secondary level.

Judge Justice ruled in July of 2007 that the existing state compliance monitoring system does comply with state and federal requirements. However, a year later on July 24, 2008, he issued a revised court order granting the plaintiff's motion to require the Texas Education Agency (TEA) to "monitor, enforce and supervise programs for limited-English-proficient students in Texas so as

to ensure that those students receive appropriate educational programs and equal educational opportunities."

In this ruling, the district federal court found that the state of Texas failed to establish a monitoring system that addressed the needs of students of limited English proficiency by: (1) failing to establish oversight procedures that would help identify districts who may have been substantially under-reporting numbers of LEP student enrolled; (2) aggregating student achievement data in a way that masked secondary level schools' under-performance; and (3) was operating a program that 'failed' secondary level LEP students in Texas and was ineffective in closing the gap in achievement between LEP and non-LEP students.

This is the latest in a series of rulings issued by Judge Justice in *U.S vs. Texas* and is specifically related to the 1981 ruling in which the court held that the state had "violated the equal protection clause and Section 1703(f) of the *Equal Educational Opportunities Act* by failing to take appropriate action to address the language barriers of LEP students and by failing to remove the disabling vestiges of past de jure discrimination against Mexican American students" (Texas [LU-LAC], 506 F. Supp. At 428-34).

*Federal Judge Rules – continued on Page 8*

Later in 1981, the state of Texas adopted and implemented Senate Bill 477, which required school systems to establish bilingual or ESL programs for students identified as LEP. This included on-site monitoring requirements and the implementation of bilingual programs at the elementary level and ESL programs at the secondary level.

In 2003, the Texas legislature modified its procedures for monitoring school district compliance with state mandates, opting to transition into an electronic-based, data-driven monitoring system that abandoned on-site monitoring in favor of “performance based oversight procedures” that relied almost exclusively on the state comprehensive district and school level databases. As part of that effort, the state adopted the PBMAS to monitor the performance of districts’ special population programs. Three major data-related flaws identified by the Intercultural Development Research Association (IDRA) in the new PBMAS included:

- lack of a review process of districts where identification of LEP students tended to fall well below the levels of districts with similar numbers of language-minority students;
- lack of procedures for reviewing cases where parent requests that students be exempted from bilingual or ESL participation notably exceeded statewide averages; and
- aggregating elementary- and secondary-level ELL performance data in a way that masked underachievement of LEP students in middle and high school.

### Data Aggregation Hides Under-Performing Secondary Schools

In this third area, IDRA analyses revealed major flaws in the PBMAS

procedures used to trigger corrective action in programs serving LEP populations. This monitoring process involved “averaging” LEP student performance in individual subject areas (reading, math, etc.) across all grades tested in that subject.

This meant that LEP student scores in reading/language arts and math (which are assessed in grades 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 and 11) are all added together, from which the percent of all LEP students who meet state passing standards is then computed.

An obvious problem with the process is that programs for LEP students differ radically at the elementary and secondary levels in Texas. And the cross-level averaging process tends to co-mingle that data. More importantly, as plaintiffs argued, the PBMAS’s cross-grade level calculations tend to mask secondary level LEP under-achievement by lumping together

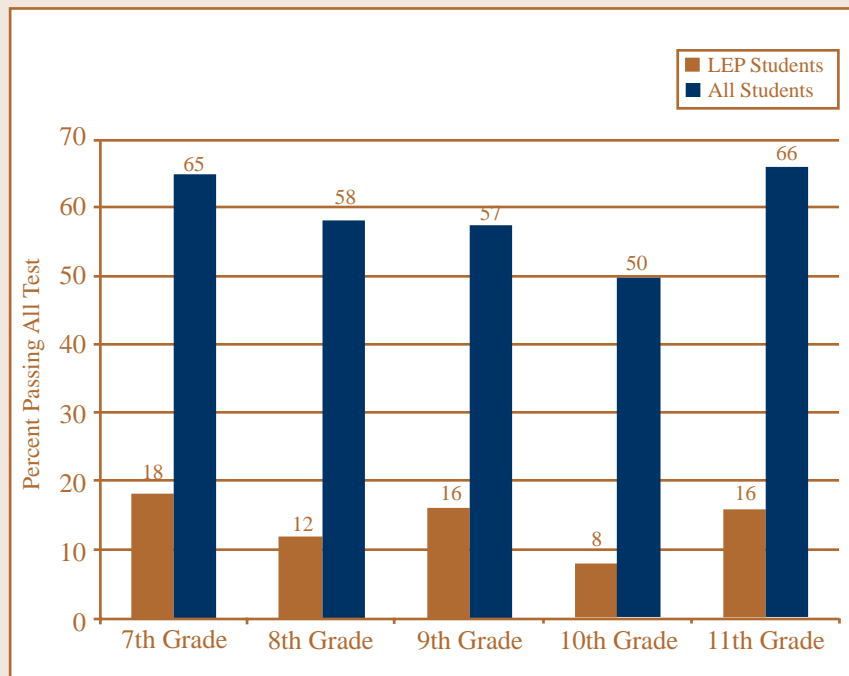
the lower performing secondary level ESL performance data with the higher elementary level bilingual education performance measures.

To demonstrate this masking effect, IDRA disaggregated the elementary and secondary level data and uncovered a total of 250 underachieving secondary-level schools that were imbedded in school districts found to be performing at acceptable levels when rated under the aggregated PBMAS approach. Judge Justice agreed that the state’s cross-school level aggregation of LEP data resulted in masking secondary level program under-performance.

### Procedures Overlook Under-Identification and High Rates of Parent Denials

Federal Judge Rules – continued on Page 9

## Comparison of LEP vs. All Students Performance Percent Passing All TAKS Test 2006



Source: LULAC-GI Forum vs. State of Texas, Final Judgment, July 24, 2008.



# Student Voices

**“[When we’re] not challenged by teachers and the curriculum... we enter college unprepared... Some may ask themselves why they should even be there.”**

*– High school students, Oklahoma City presenting at IDRA’s Fulfilling the Promise of Mendez and Brown Community Blueprints Dialogue Meeting*

**“Teaching is a matter of heart. The more you have, the less likely you are to fail.”**

*– Tutor in Chicago, IDRA Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program*

**“The best thing I did last month was [to share] my knowledge with someone who needs it and will respect me.”**

*– Tutor in Atlanta, IDRA Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program*

**“This past month the best thing about tutoring was [to show] the kids... there is a place in the world for them to shine.”**

*– Tutor in Atlanta, IDRA Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program*

*Federal Judge Rules – continued from Page 8*

The court also ruled that existing TEA oversight procedures overlooked LEP under-identification. Since the PBMAS relies primarily on Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills results and dropout data, the absence of students who were unidentified due to flaws in school district identification procedures would be overlooked in such a system. Likewise, the numbers of parent denials were not included in the data considered in PBMAS, making cases where school district denial levels notably exceeded state trends invisible to that system.

## **Program’s Inability to Close the Achievement Gap**

In addition to his rulings related to monitoring and oversight, another facet of the judge’s major findings focused on the state ESL program’s inability to close the achievement gap among LEP and non-LEP students. Using the state’s own TAKS data, the judge noted that large, persistent and significant gaps in achievement between LEP and non-LEP students proved that the PBMAS was flawed and “not equality based.”

In presenting that finding, the court clarified that LEP program performance expectations should be designed to reduce the gap in achievement between LEP and non-LEP students and not merely on whether LEP students had performed at some arbitrarily-decided level designated in the PBMAS. The court then went on to cite the LEP and non-LEP performance levels by grade level and subject area, noting the extent of gap in each. Of particular concern to the court were the large achievement gaps between LEP and non-LEP students who were enrolled in grades seven through 12. The court concluded: “Secondary LEP students in bilingual education fail terribly under every metric. [They] drop out at a rate at least twice that of the all-students category... are retained at rates consistently double that of their peers... [and] perform worse than their peers by a margin of 40 percent or more on the TAKS all-tests category.”

The judge concluded that the “totality of the data establishes causation,” noting: “The court holds that sufficient evidence of student failure can establish that educational agen-

cies have not met their obligation to overcome language barriers. The failure of secondary LEP students under every metric clearly and convincingly demonstrates student failure, and accordingly, the failure of the ESL program in Texas.”

Responding to state arguments that other mechanisms compensated for gaps in the PBMAS, the judge concluded that other monitoring mechanisms, including the *No Child Left Behind Act* and the Texas school accountability system, do not sufficiently compensate for the flaws of the PBMAS as it relates to LEP students.

In his concluding points, the judge stated: “Defendants must soon rectify the monitoring failures and begin implementing a new language program for secondary students.” Reflecting intent to be non-prescriptive, however, the court noted that “as a non-binding option, the secondary program could consist of a variation of the current ESL program with substantially enhanced remediation.”

Based on his review of all relevant evidence, the court required the

*Federal Judge Rules – continued on Page 10*

state of Texas to modify its monitoring system to:

- assess possible under-identification in specific school districts;
- ensure that monitoring teams overseeing local district operations, include personnel who are certified in bilingual or ESL programs; and
- disaggregate elementary and secondary LEP data for PBMAS purposes.

Additionally the court ordered the state to revise the existing secondary LEP program to reduce the achievement gap differential between LEP and non-LEP pupils. To expedite compliance, the court ordered that the state develop a plan to address the issues raised no later than January 31, 2009.

### The Texas Response

Rather than acknowledging the documented shortcomings of its monitoring and secondary program operations, the state of Texas, through the Attorney General's Office, chose to challenge the court's findings and signaled its intent to appeal the ruling in August of 2008. The state subsequently filed a request to the court asking it to reconsider its latest ruling and to stay its order that the agency

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develop a plan for addressing the court decision by January 31. In its brief, the state argued that complying with the requirements would require legislative action and appropriation of additional revenue – both actions not under the purview of the state education agency.

Plaintiff attorneys submitted briefs opposing the request for a modified order and the related staying of the standing court order. The federal district court reviewed the briefs and rejected the state of Texas' request, finding that the agency and the commissioner did in fact have authority to

implement at least some of the changes required. The court also proposed that if implementation of the plan that is developed by the state requires additional resources or legislative authority, those issues can be dealt with at that time.

As of this writing, the state of Texas has submitted its appeal to the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals for the Western District. It is unknown at this time how long the court may take to respond to a request for a stay of Judge Justice's order and a review of his judgment in the case.

In the interim, state legislators have indicated that an examination and possible reform of existing policies might be considered in the upcoming session, with two senate leaders currently involved in drafting language that addresses the court's concerns related to program monitoring and secondary-level LEP program quality. Whether the state of Texas initiates some reforms or is forced to take more decisive action will be more evident in the next few months as the Texas legislature reconvenes and the court of appeals issues its own ruling on the case.

Albert Cortez, is director of IDRA Policy. Comments and questions may be directed to him via e-mail at [comment@idra.org](mailto:comment@idra.org).

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# Putting our ChIPS on the Table for Children in Public Schools

by Aurelio M. Montemayor, M.Ed.



In this new change environment, we might look to successful examples from the past and support new programs that combine key elements of success. Our PIRC experiences suggest some projects that would be useful in accelerating educational transformation through community connections and family leadership. We imagined five new efforts, some of which are based on former programs. The names and acronyms below are invented for illustration purposes.

- VISTA-ChIPS – Teachers who are also a family and community connection;
- PIE-ChIPS – Outreach workers who connect community and school;
- CTC-ChIPS – Technology centers bridging parents, students, community and schools; and
- BIT-ChIPS – Technology provided for use in homes in support of student academic success.

Following is a description of each idea.

## **Volunteers in Service to America's Children in Public Schools (VISTA-ChIPS)**

This would involve teachers for family and student leadership in education who are campus-based classroom teachers but also community-organization connected. This new role would combine excellence in teaching with effectiveness in family communication and engagement. Part of their workday would be spent in community centers and with families.

## **Parents-in-Education for Children in Public Schools (PIE-ChIPS)**

Outreach workers who are tech-savvy *promotoras* (community outreach workers) would have a dual school campus and community organizational base. Their primary tasks would be to: (1) conduct home-visits; (2) identify and nurture emerging parent leaders; and (3) identify and mobilize neighborhood and school feeder-pattern community assets in support of the academic achievement of all students.

## **Community Technology Centers for Children in Public Schools (CTC-ChIPS)**

These community technology centers would partner with community-based organizations, public schools and businesses that support excellent neighborhood public schools for all children. They would partner with existing public school computer labs and also provide new community center labs to facilitate and increase computer and Internet use by families that have limited access. PIE-ChIPS outreach workers listed above would staff the centers.

## **Barrios in Technology / Children in Public Schools (BIT-ChIPS)**

This would be a parent leadership project providing technology and Internet access in homes where these are not present. Management of this project would be in the new and improved community technology centers, and key functions would be to: (1) assess computer presence in Title I-school feeding-pattern neighborhoods; (2) document and record family leadership in education and support of student academic success in the home; and (3) provide computers, technical support and fast Internet access in homes where families qualify through reciprocal family leadership in education and student academic support activities.

These recommendations also address some gaps in past work with Title I schools and programs and are practical ways to support teacher-family connections, effective school outreach to families, reducing the technology gap and integrating school-community efforts and connecting all in support of student success. For each recommendation there is research and experience to indicate the potential for impact on the academic achievement of all children, most especially those who are poor, minority, of color, speak a language other than English or are underserved for any other reason. So, we have anteed up our chips and are now holding a strong hand.

*Defining Teaching Quality – continued from Page 2*  
exemplified in the Quality Schools Action Framework.

### What is Teaching Quality?

For IDRA, teaching quality refers not only to the teachers' credentials, but also to the perspective teachers bring to the classroom, the instructional strategies that they use, and the surrounding organization of the school and community. This multi-layered approach is supported by research, including the previously discussed study by Heck (2007).

Another study by Okoye, Momoh, Aigbomian and Okecha (2008) shows that the combined variables of teacher quality and instructional strategies are correlated with student achievement. Torff (2005) purports that lack of pedagogical skill and knowledge is a bigger threat to teacher quality than are certification issues.

Berliner (2005) describes teacher quality as a teacher who shows evidence of certain qualities of teaching in

### **IDRA acknowledges that professional development is not a “one size fits all” solution but has to be teacher, student, school and district specific.**

the lives of students. These qualities include more than assessing knowledge on a certification test. Teacher qualities also must include: “the logical acts of teaching (defining, demonstrating, modeling, explaining, correcting, etc.); the psychological acts of teaching (caring, motivating, encouraging, rewarding, punishing, planning, evaluating, etc.); and the moral acts of teaching (showing honesty, courage, tolerance, compassion, respect, fairness, etc.)” IDRA's construct of teaching quality encompasses this current research.

IDRA's framework for teaching quality guides IDRA professional development and its mentoring and coaching work. At its core is an underlying set of beliefs and values



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that include:

- All students bring assets to the learning environment that must be used as their educational foundation;
- All teachers also bring assets to the learning environment that must be used as a base to enhance professional growth and skills;

- Professional development and/or mentoring and coaching is best done by building a community of learners where all stakeholders collaborate, create and initiate changes; and
- The guiding vision of student engagement encompasses the classroom, the school, the family and the community.

### **What is IDRA Doing to Improve Teacher Quality and Teaching Quality?**

IDRA works tirelessly on many initiatives to support students not only through schools but also with families, communities, higher education, and educational research and policies that

impact students.

**Contextual Analysis** – When working directly with schools and teachers, IDRA begins with a contextual analysis in order to understand the organizational and sociological influences that affect the teachers' and schools' strengths and opportunities for change and growth. Without an understanding of the context, a plan for growth cannot be implemented.

**Community of Learners** – The context is also essential to building a community of learners (Villarreal and Scott, 2008). IDRA works to foster this community through online communication and planning, showcasing teachers and schools in workshops and online, valuing their input and opinions, and listening to what they and their students say they need.

The contextual analysis also includes student feedback about their linguistic and background experiences, their learning preferences, and their level of self-efficacy for learning specific subject material. All students are recognized as bringing assets to the learning environment, and students learn best when empowered to be partners in the learning process. Students are part of the community of learners.

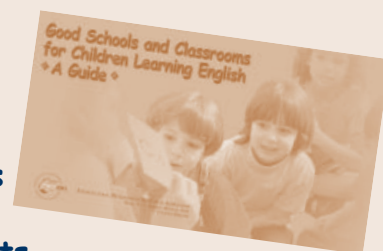
**In-Class Assistance** – Within IDRA professional development programs, a model of coaching and mentoring is used to provide in-class assistance as an essential step following workshops. This coaching and mentoring process is individualized to supplement the teacher's strengths by modeling and demonstrating strategies and content that can enhance the teacher's instruction. Steps of this process might evolve from an in-class lesson demonstration by the consultant or a specific strategy demonstration that is followed by a teacher demonstration with supportive coaching. All of the in-class assistance

*Teaching Quality – continued on Page 13*

# Good Schools and Classrooms for Children Learning English

❖ A Guide ❖

Thirty years of research have proven that, when implemented well, bilingual education is the best way to learn English. New research by IDRA has identified the 25 common characteristics of successful schools that contribute to high academic performance of students learning English. This guide is a rubric, designed for people in schools and communities to evaluate five dimensions that are necessary for success:



- ❖ school indicators
- ❖ student outcomes
- ❖ leadership
- ❖ support
- ❖ programmatic and instructional practices

(ISBN 1-878550-69-1; 2002; 64 pages; paperback; \$15)

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*Teaching Quality* – continued from Page 12

is followed by a collaborative reflection over accomplishments, lessons learned and goal setting. IDRA acknowledges that professional development is not a “one size fits all” solution but has to be specific to the teacher, student, school and district.

**Student Engagement in the Larger Context** – Quality teaching cannot happen in isolation. Engaging the student in the classroom and classroom instruction cannot happen unless there is engagement in the larger context. It only happens when all the surrounding pieces of the larger system are in place. The structure of the school, the school leadership and

the community also are essential to quality teaching. These components will be addressed in future issues of the *IDRA Newsletter*.

The non-negotiable in the IDRA vision of teaching quality is that schools must work for all students. All students must be prepared to meet necessary academic goals so that none drop out, none are left behind, and the dream of an equitable education for all can be achieved.

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**implementation and evaluation of the ELL program.** Parents must be re-assured in a language they understand that educational excellence (Jeynes, 2004) has not been compromised, intense monitoring of ELL student progress will be implemented, and instruction will be adjusted to ensure that their children are held to high academic standards. Meaningful engagement of parents in the educational process of ELLs as equal partners in the design and implementation of school-based solutions must be required (González, 2005). Involving parents of ELLs in the site-based committee provides opportunities for input into the school's decision-making process.

### **Equity Principle 9**

**Appropriate monitoring and accountability measures (including state-mandated tests and other alternative assessment measurements) at all levels of the school hierarchy – including governance, administration and instruction – must be implemented periodically.** Monitoring program outcomes and implementation integrity to ensure a high level of success in educating ELLs should be the shared responsibility of the state education agency, the school district and its individual campuses. The responsibility of the state education agency is tied to its role in accrediting school districts and campuses that meet a high standard of quality of all educational services provided to children. Standards for monitoring ELLs' success are based on ELLs' achievement outcomes, program implementation integrity, and school district and campus accountability to community and parents.

Because Texas has a diversity of students from different backgrounds, it is essential that school districts and campuses be assessed on their success with different student

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groups, in this case with ELLs. Implementation integrity is directly related to school success of ELLs at a campus. It is perhaps the best way of explaining their achieved level of academic success. Thus, monitoring the ELL program's implementation integrity in a consistent and periodic manner assures the court, the state education agency, school district, community and parents about the level of progress. But it also informs school administrators and teachers of the support and program adjustments needed to increase the level of success.

Monitoring program outcomes and program implementation integrity must be planned and systematically carried out. It is multi-dimensional and should occur around three major activities: (1) adherence of program design to quality program standards; (2) adherence of the implementation effort to educational program; and (3) achievement of ELLs' academic outcomes. A successful mentoring system must have state oversight responsibilities and reside with school districts and campuses.

### **Equity Principle 10**

**State and local education systems must be accountable**

**for achievement outcomes and a quality educational program for English language learners.** State and local educational agencies must be accountable to students, educators, parents and other stakeholders for academic success of ELLs. Also, they must be accountable for the preparation of all students, particularly ELLs, to experience the success necessary to graduate and be ready for college. Specific measures must include: (1) ELL achievement that is comparable to non-ELL achievement; (2) disproportionality of retention and dropout rates between ELLs and non-ELLs; (3) comparable graduation rates; and (4) comparable application, admission and retention rates in college.

### **Conclusion**

The challenge of closing the academic gap that exists between ELLs and non-ELLs requires passion, commitment, knowledge and a sense of efficacy among all school personnel. It requires a transformation from seeing this challenge through a deficit lens to a valuing one that recognizes ELLs as students capable, willing and ready to learn. In other words, schools should view the possibilities and the opportunities to build and strengthen assets brought forth by ELLs and their parents and community.

These 10 principles focus on the classroom as central to the success of ELLs, while acknowledging the important role that the school as a whole, its culture and belief system have on the level of success obtained. ELLs' involvement in extracurricular activities is key to creating in ELLs a feeling of belonging and connectedness. Judge Justice challenges and compels us to now take urgent, immediate action on an issue that has lingered as an unfulfilled promise since the passage of SB 477, the *Texas Bilingual Education Act* adopted in 1986.

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## Highlights of Recent IDRA Activities

In November and December, IDRA worked with **10,925** teachers, administrators, parents and higher education personnel through **82** training and technical assistance activities and **155** program sites in **12** states plus Brazil. Topics included:

- ◆ Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program
- ◆ The Goals of Equity and Building Quality Schools
- ◆ Parent Leadership in Education
- ◆ Diversity Training for Administrative and Board Leadership

Participating agencies and school districts included:

- ◆ Kansas City, Missouri School District
- ◆ Ector County Independent School District (ISD), Texas
- ◆ Harris County Department of Education, Texas
- ◆ Parents for Public Schools
- ◆ Detroit Public Schools, Michigan

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

### Activity Snapshot

The Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program has made an extraordinary difference in the lives of more than 26,000 students by keeping 98 percent of them in school. The lives of more than 456,000 children, families and educators have been positively impacted by the program in the United States, Puerto Rico, the United Kingdom and Brazil. In the Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program, created by IDRA, secondary students who are considered to be at risk of dropping out are placed as tutors of elementary school students, enabling the older students to make a difference in the younger students' lives. With a growing sense of responsibility and pride, the tutors stay and do better in school. The program supports them with positive recognition, instruction and support.

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

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**Episode 46: “Broadening the Conversation with Parents about Mathematics”** IDRA Classnotes Podcast – Jack Dieckmann, M.A., a former senior math education specialist at IDRA and current doctoral student at Stanford University, discusses how teachers can converse with parents as peers even though they may have no knowledge of math instruction.



**Episode 44: “Beyond the Worksheet in the Science Classroom”** IDRA Classnotes Podcast – Veronica Betancourt, M.A., an IDRA education associate and developer of IDRA’s Science Smart! model, describes the purposes of using worksheets in the classrooms and engaging alternatives to their overuse.



**Episode 45: “What Students Need their School Counselors to Hear”** IDRA Classnotes Podcast – Josie Danini Cortez, M.A., an IDRA senior education associate, highlights findings from IDRA research about what students need from their school counselors to help them get into and pay for college.



**Episode 43: “Families and Teachers Communicating”** IDRA Classnotes Podcast – After recently serving as a high school principal for five years, Dr. Rogelio López del Bosque shares how he created a culture of engagement among teachers and parents that welcomed and even expected dialog for student success.

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