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*Focus:*  
*School Holding Power*

## More than 3 Million Students Have Been Lost from Texas High Schools Since 1986

by Roy L. Johnson, M.S.

For the first time in the 25-year history of reporting trends in dropout and attrition rates in Texas public schools, IDRA’s latest study shows that less than 30 percent of students were lost from public enrollment prior to graduation with a high school diploma. IDRA found that 29 percent of the freshman class of 2006-07 left school prior to graduating in the 2009-10 school year. The current statewide attrition rate in Texas is four percentage points lower than the initial rate of 33 percent found in IDRA’s landmark 1985-86 study.

This 2009-10 attrition study is the 25th study conducted by IDRA and the latest in a series of reports that began in the 1985-86 school year. Since 1986, IDRA has conducted an annual attrition study to track the number and percent of students in Texas who are lost from public school enrollment prior to graduation from high school. IDRA gained the distinction of conducting the first comprehensive study of school dropouts in Texas when it released its initial study in October 1986, which led to the creation of the state law that requires the state education agency to include dropout data in its accountability system. IDRA has continued its attrition analyses using the same theoretical and mathematical framework to monitor the status of school dropouts in the state of Texas.

This latest finding suggests that the ability of Texas public high schools to keep students in school until they graduate has improved somewhat for

students overall in recent years, but results remain mixed. Key findings include the following.

- The overall attrition rate was less than 30 percent for the first time in 25 years.
- About three of every 10 students from the freshman class of 2006-07 left school prior to graduating with a high school diploma – meaning, Texas public schools are failing to graduate three out of every 10 students.
- The gaps between the attrition rates of White students and Hispanic students and Black students are dramatically higher than 25 years ago.
- For the class of 2009-10, Black students and Hispanic students are about two times more likely to leave school without graduating with a diploma than White students.
- Since 1986, Texas schools have lost a cumulative total of more than 3 million students.

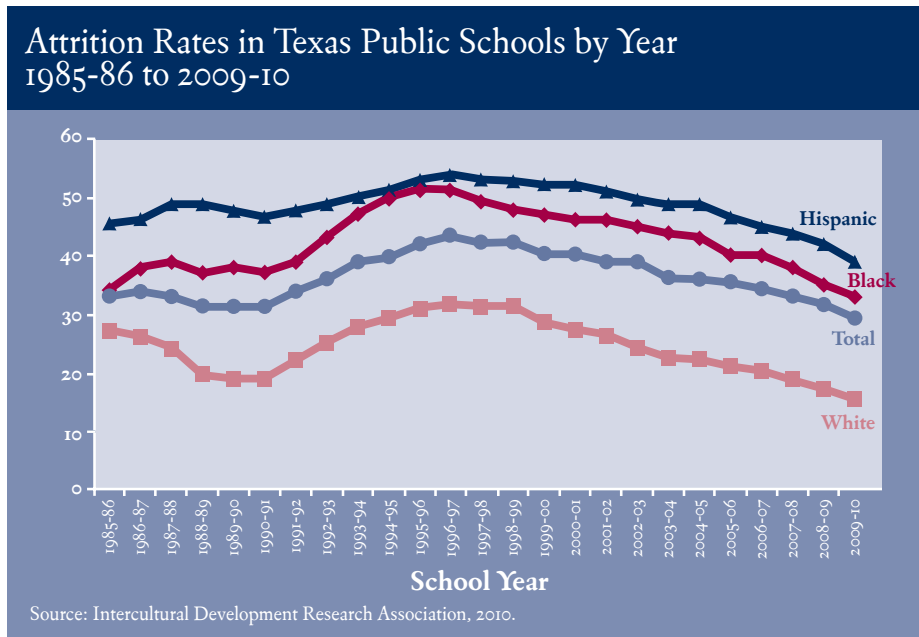
A supplemental analysis indicates that, based on one statistical scenario of Texas attrition rate history, the state will not reach an attrition rate of zero until 2040. At this pace, the state will lose an additional 1.9 million to 3.5 million students. (Montes, 2010)

The full study is available on IDRA’s web site at [www.idra.org](http://www.idra.org) that includes methodology, (cont. on Page 2)

*“Investment in change clearly must go beyond discrete dropout prevention programs. It must reflect our full commitment to quality public schools in all neighborhoods for children of all backgrounds.”*

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

(More than 3 Million Students Have Been Lost, continued from Page 1)



### Attrition Rates in Texas Public Schools by Year 1985-86 to 2009-10

Year	Black	White	Hispanic	Total
1985-86	34	27	45	33
1986-87	38	26	46	34
1987-88	39	24	49	33
1988-89	37	20	48	31
1989-90	38	19	48	31
1990-91	37	19	47	31
1991-92	39	22	48	34
1992-93	43	25	49	36
1993-94	47	28	50	39
1994-95	50	30	51	40
1995-96	51	31	53	42
1996-97	51	32	54	43
1997-98	49	31	53	42
1998-99	48	31	53	42
1999-00	47	28	52	40
2000-01	46	27	52	40
2001-02	46	26	51	39
2002-03	45	24	50	38
2003-04	44	22	49	36
2004-05	43	22	48	36
2005-06	40	21	47	35
2006-07	40	20	45	34
2007-08	38	18	44	33
2008-09	35	17	42	31
2009-10	33	15	39	29

Source: Intercultural Development Research Association, 2010.

historical statewide attrition rates and numbers of students lost to attrition categorized by race-ethnicity and by gender, a county-level data map, a county-level data attrition rate table, trend data by county, and historical county-level numbers of students lost to attrition.

A school with a high dropout rate must make a concerted effort to reconfigure part or most of its structure and practices to ensure that it meets these three goals: (1) strengthen relationships among students, school staff and families; (2) improve teaching and learning in every classroom every day; and (3) if necessary, reallocate budget, staff and time to achieve goals one and two that lead to increased student achievement and graduation rates.

IDRA's Quality School Action Framework guides

communities and schools in identifying weak areas and strengthening public schools' capacities to improve their holding power. IDRA's new book, *Courage to Connect: A Quality Schools Action Framework™* shows how communities and schools can work together to be successful with all of their students. The book's web page (<http://www.idra.org/couragetocconnect>) provides a table of contents, excerpt, related podcasts and other resources.

IDRA also has developed a set of principles for policymakers and school leaders. IDRA's online OurSchool data portal helps community and school partners examine their school data and plan joint action to improve school holding power. The portal can be accessed free at <http://www.idra.org/OurSchool>.

In addition, IDRA has developed a one-page Quality School Holding Power Checklist with a set of criteria for assessing and selecting effective dropout prevention strategies and for making sure that your school is a quality school. The criteria (cont. on Page 4)

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## A Policy Shift – From Preventing Dropouts to Graduation for All

by Albert Cortez, Ph.D.

Over the last few decades, the United States has slipped from having the most educated population in the world to 12th among industrialized nations in the levels of education achieved by its citizens, a statistic recently cited by the President as being unacceptable (2010). It is no accident that as the country's educational levels have slipped, so too has our competitive standing – losing more and more jobs to other countries all over the world.

When this nation first emerged, its agrarian economy had limited needs for an educated populace – with higher learning limited to a few political and economic elite. In today's globally competitive economy, future work opportunities will be grounded in our ability to prepare college graduates.

Over the last four decades, Texas has been a focal point for several education reform efforts that have ranged from ensuring funding equity for all students to advocating that all children – be they low-income, English language learners, or children of undocumented workers – have access to quality educational programs. In the early struggles, the ideal was fueled by a desire for simple justice and fairness for our most vulnerable citizens.

But a rapidly changing global context has created a new sense of urgency for our state to “up the ante.” We now must move from a modest goal of reducing dropout rates and dramatically shift our focus to ensuring that all students graduate from high school and that they do so prepared for college or high skill careers.

The Lumina Foundation for Education (2010) and others have noted that most jobs of the future that will be taken on by today's school children will require some level of college, and in many instances will require a college degree. College will be new minimum. Past strategies that targeted incremental reduction in dropout rates are outdated and inadequate.

A new report produced by the Education Center on Education and the Workforce that examines job

projections and education requirements through 2018 (Carnevale, Smith & Strohl, 2010) states that there is a growing mismatch between the jobs that will be created in the next decade and the education and training being provided to our future adult workers. The researchers also estimate that, based on current projections, the post-secondary education and training systems will fall short by 3 million or more post-secondary degrees needed to support access to the middle class.

According to Center on Education and the Workforce projections, by 2018, 60 percent of new or replacement jobs created in the United States will require at least some college education (Lumina Foundation for Education, 2010).

Unfortunately, some states that have struggled with meeting the improvement targets outlined in the *No Child Left Behind Act* have spent more time manipulating data in order to look like they were making progress toward meeting higher standards and little time implementing the education reforms needed to actually improve local school academic performance.

Texas is the poster child for such feats of misdirection. The state recently abandoned a 10-year effort requiring all high school students to take a college prep core curriculum of four years each of language arts, math, science and social studies. Instead, the state has created ways to more easily track students out of college bound programs and into either a minimum graduation plan that involves fewer high school credits or a second class career-technology graduation plan that gives no assurance students will be prepared for college (Cortez, 2010).

Such diversions will not enable this nation to reach its ambitious educational leadership goal. What is needed is the expectation that all students, in all schools and in all states will graduate and be prepared to enroll in and to succeed in college.

The reality of a growing, diverse student population means that schools will need to  
*(cont. on Page 4)*

*What is needed is the expectation that all students, in all schools and in all states will graduate and be prepared to enroll in and to succeed college.*

### IDRA Texas PIRC

For more information about the Texas IDRA Parent Information and Resource Center or to request technical assistance, contact us at 210-444-1710 or [contact@idra.org](mailto:contact@idra.org).

Additional resources are available online at [www.idra.org/Texas\\_IDRA\\_PIRC.htm](http://www.idra.org/Texas_IDRA_PIRC.htm)

*funded by the U.S. Department of Education to serve the state of Texas*

(A Policy Shift, continued from Page 3)

do better than they have in the past. The sub-standard success levels that have characterized schools with high minority and low-income populations, including unacceptable rates of high school graduates, will not work if future workforce preparation needs are to be met.

### What Needs to be Done – Starting Now

Rather than graduation for some, we must strive to achieve graduation for all. Achieving this major improvement in student outcomes will require sizeable shifts in a number of key areas, including changing expectations so that every student in every community will be expected to graduate from high school and be prepared for college – with no exceptions.

The graduation-for-all goals also will require major re-tooling of an education system that was designed to produce just enough graduates to get by. These systemic changes will have to include refining state education funding schemes that are currently designed to provide minimal funding for most and funding advantages for a few. These must be replaced with equitable funding systems designed to level the playing field so that all students have an even chance to succeed (Cortez, 2009).

Systemic changes also must include fashioning teacher preparation and teacher support programs to better prepare and support teachers who are serving an increasingly diverse student population. Instructional materials and curricula will need to be updated and must include creative new uses of technology that can expand access to continuously updated content.

New policies will be needed to bring parent engagement into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Schools and communities are critical to creating new alternatives for coordinating school and family efforts to help students throughout all levels of the education system. IDRA's Quality Schools Action Framework outlines areas that will require additional focus and reform. *Courage to Connect – A Quality Schools Action Framework* provides an in-depth look at how schools, parents and communities can take on the types of changes that are needed (Robledo Montecel & Goodman, 2010).

Over a decade ago, then state demographer Steve Murdoch warned Texans that the state would on average be less educated and have lower levels of family income if we did not address projected levels of under-education found among our emerging

## IDRA Attrition Study & Resources Online



**2010 Study:**  
Texas Public School  
Attrition Study, 2009-10

**Supplemental Analysis:**  
Sluggish Attrition Rate  
Descent Means 1.9  
Million to 3.5 Million  
More Texas Students  
May be Lost



**Tool:**  
Quality School  
Holding Power  
Checklist

**Look Up Your County:**  
See attrition rates and numbers  
over the last 10 years

Ideas for taking action

populations. Ten years ago, the window to initiate preventive actions was closing. Today, it is more than half-shut, with the present leadership reflecting an amazing ability to disregard or often downplay the existing crisis. Allowing this trend to continue will cost us and future generations dearly.

### Resources

- Carnevale, A.P., & N. Smith, J. Strohl. *Help Wanted: Projections of Jobs and Education Requirements Through 2018* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University, June 2010).
- Cortez, A. *The Status of School Finance Equity in Texas – A 2009 Update* (San Antonio, Texas: Intercultural Development Research Association, 2009).
- Cortez, J.D. "Texas Accountability – A Fast Track for Some; A Dead End for Others," *IDRA Newsletter* (San Antonio, Texas: Intercultural Development Research Association, February 2010).
- Lumina Foundation for Education. *A Stronger Nation through Higher Education* (Indianapolis, Ind.: Lumina Foundation for Education, September 2010).
- Obama, B. Prepared text of speech at University of Texas at Austin, posted by American-Statesman (August 9, 2010).
- Robledo Montecel, M., & Goodman, C.L. (eds). *Courage to Connect – A Quality Schools Action Framework* (San Antonio, Texas: Intercultural Development Research Association, 2010).
- U.S. Census Bureau. Education and Income, studies by the U.S. Census Bureau, web site

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(More than 3 Million Students Have Been Lost, continued from Page 2)

are based on a review of research, IDRA's Quality Schools Action Framework and IDRA's 25 years of experience with its highly-successful dropout prevention program, the Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program.



Since 1986, Texas high schools have lost 3 million students. This is the equivalent of losing Houston and Austin over the course of two and half decades. And, at our current pace, we could be looking at losing as many as 3.5 million more students – or the entire populations of San Antonio, Dallas, El Paso and Lubbock over the next three decades. But dropouts do not disappear or evaporate into thin air. They struggle with their lives, trying to earn a living without a high school diploma. This lack of school holding power affects every one of us.

### Resources

- Cárdenas, J.A., M. Robledo Montecel, & J. Supik. *Texas Dropout Survey Project* (San Antonio, Texas: Intercultural Development Research Association, 1986).
- Montes, F. *Sluggish Attrition Rate Descent Means 1.9 Million to 3.5 Million More Texas Students May be Lost* (San Antonio, Texas: Intercultural Development Research Association, 2010).

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## K-12 and Higher Education Partnerships for English Language Learners in Science A Look at Stellar II

By Rosana G. Rodríguez, Ph.D., and Abelardo Villarreal, Ph.D.

Ensuring equity and excellence for English language learner (ELL) students in science requires a collaborative approach with strong educational leadership, professional development that supports both content knowledge and effective pedagogy, and meaningful parent engagement. Such an effort is underway in the San Marcos Consolidated Independent School District in Texas. In partnership with Texas State University and the district, through a sub-award from the Texas Education Agency, IDRA is implementing its Science Smart! model of professional development in Stellar II, an initiative with a shared commitment to increase ELL achievement in science.

### Supports for Working Together

Leadership and a commitment to equity and success must begin at the top in order to set the tone for high achievement and equitable treatment for all students. San Marcos CISD is deeply committed to high achievement in science for ELLs and all students. They take pro-active steps to promote this vision of equity and leadership with their principals, coordinators and teachers.

Collaboration is reinforced through monthly planning meetings among the partners that set a tone for shared accountability, ongoing assessment and continuous improvement. The partnership was established by the Texas State University School of Education. A logic model for the community of learners approach was designed by IDRA at the outset, building on past efforts and success of Stellar I. Within the model, each partner has a critical role to play in supporting student success.

### Community of Learners Approach

The shared vision for ELL success in science is embodied through a community of learners approach and a multi-disciplinary focus. This focus informs and sustains reform, enhances professional development practices, and seeks effective solutions to education challenges faced by ELLs in mastering science competencies.

The Stellar II community of learners includes commitment from leadership in the Colleges of Science and Engineering at Texas State University to help improve content knowledge for teachers in science. College faculty host Science Saturdays for ELL students and their parents to deepen knowledge in science content areas and to help promote a college-going culture and interest in STEM (science, technology, engineering, math) areas.

IDRA provides ongoing professional development in effective pedagogy for ELLs, coaching and mentoring for teachers, and support for instructional coaches, adhering to state requirements and in preparation for state assessments. The university and IDRA are further supporting leadership development for principals, reinforcing access and equity in education.

### Culturally Responsive and Meaningful Parent Engagement

For Stellar II, a dual approach is being executed to support parent engagement. The first aims at working with parents and parent coordinators through a train-the-trainer approach that reinforces parent leadership and involvement. Parents work with other parents as first teachers of their children, as resources to schools, as decision-makers, and as teachers of other parents (Montemayor, 2007; Lopez del Bosque, 2010). The second approach builds the capacity of principals and teachers to create a campus plan for meaningful parent engagement.

IDRA's seven-part *Community Engagement Series for Educators* provides resources for planning effective engagement with parents and evaluating progress for continuous improvement based upon IDRA's Six Goals of Educational Equity and School Reform (Scott, 2002) and principals of engagement (Rodríguez, García & Villarreal, 2010b).

The school district is further reinforcing the idea of strong home-school partnerships with a bilingual  
*(cont. on Page 6)*

*Through this partnership, a sustainable network of support from K-12 through college is being created that holds promise for student gains and lasting impact.*

(K-12 and Higher Education Partnerships, continued from Page 5)

guide for parents, also designed by IDRA, that outlines science requirements for each grade and ways parents can encourage science learning at home (Rodríguez & Villarreal, 2010a).

IDRA provides parent leadership training and additional support through its federally-funded Texas Parent Information and Resource Center. In addition, the school district's director of development and community partnerships is seeking support from local community-based organizations and other groups to become district advocates and partners. The district has assigned a group of community liaisons, who personalize support and outreach to parents and ensure designated resources for parents within each school.

### Using Technology to Enhance Support for Teachers and Evaluation

Science content and pedagogy for ELLs is enhanced through the integration of technology for teacher support. IDRA provides video conferences that expose teachers to new approaches in using technology for science instruction and links teachers to other resources for professional development. Capitalizing on the school district's existing infrastructure and IT resources, IDRA is working with the district to link elementary and middle school campuses for accessing separate professional development sessions for teachers. These sessions simultaneously bring in teachers from remote sites to a common bridge so that they can participate, ask questions and interact with trainers. The sessions are archived for self-evaluation and continuous quality improvement and are setting the stage for future webinars that will allow for greater individual interaction and breakout groups as technology and science components are integrated into ongoing professional development and the curriculum. Technology also is used for the collection of pre- and post-data and other assessments from teachers in the area of self-efficacy in science through coordinated efforts between IDRA and the university.

### Asset-based Professional Development

IDRA's professional development approach in Science Smart! consists of three interrelated and simultaneous components: (1) workshops, (2) on-site culturally relevant mentoring and coaching, and

(3) online learning, coaching and mentoring. The approach is based on the following premises.

- All students can learn when they are fully engaged, immersed in learning, challenged and supported.
- Instruction is most effective when students explore, investigate, discover and see the value and application of science content to real life and connectivity to a brighter future.
- Teachers learn more through a community of learners methodology.
- Students have an innate, natural sense of curiosity that parallels the scientific process. Through inquiry-based learning and technology integration, learning is magnified.
- Transformation in teaching practice requires ongoing reflection and refinement focusing on individual learning opportunities.
- Teachers deepen and share their own content knowledge when connected to professionals in the content field.

Change that is sustainable in both practice and policy, a renewed and sharpened focus on equity, and gains in teacher proficiency in science are being evidenced through the shared vision and collaboration for student success among the partners. While aimed at ELLs, this collaborative approach benefits all students. Through this partnership, a sustainable network of support from K-12 through college is being created that holds promise for student gains and lasting impact.

To learn more about Science Smart! contact IDRA (210-444-1710) or see [http://www.idra.org/Services/Science\\_Smart!\\_Secondary\\_Training/](http://www.idra.org/Services/Science_Smart!_Secondary_Training/).

### Resources

- Intercultural Development Research Association. Six Goals of Educational Equity and School Reform, South Central Collaborative for Equity online equity guide (San Antonio, Texas: Intercultural Development Research Association, 2009).
- López del Bosque, R. "Family Leadership in Education – Putting Principles into Action," *IDRA Newsletter* (San Antonio, Texas: Intercultural Development Research Association, April 2010).
- Montemayor, A. "IDRA's Family Leadership Principles," *IDRA Newsletter* (San Antonio, Texas: Intercultural Development Research Association, September 2007).
- Rodríguez, R.G. "What Parent and Community Engagement Means for Quality Schools," *IDRA Newsletter* (San Antonio, Texas: Intercultural Development Research Association, April 2009).
- Rodríguez, R.G., & A. Villarreal. *Helping Your Child Discover*

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- OurSchool data portal
- *Courage to Connect – A Quality Schools Action Framework* book web site with the framework, detailed table of contents, book excerpt, podcasts and more
- Classnotes podcasts on dropout prevention
- Information on IDRA's seven-part *Community Engagement Series for Educators*
- Information on *Helping Your Child Discover Science* (English/Spanish)
- Information on IDRA's Science Smart! professional development model

Visit [www.idra.org](http://www.idra.org) for more information.

*Science* (San Antonio, Texas: Intercultural Development Research Association, 2010).

Rodríguez, R.G., & J.C. García, A. Villarreal. *Community Engagement Series for Educators* (San Antonio, Texas: Intercultural Development Research Association, 2010).

Scott, B. "Who's Responsible, Who's to Blame?" *IDRA Newsletter* (San Antonio, Texas: Intercultural Development Research Association, May 2002).

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# Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program Winning Essay

*Editor's Note: IDRA sponsored a national essay competition among participants in the Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program, a nationally-recognized cross-age tutoring program of IDRA. Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program tutors wrote about how the program had helped them do better in school and how they had helped their tutees to do better. Six students received prizes. Below are two of the winning essays. Others are posted on the IDRA website ([www.idra.org](http://www.idra.org)).*



## High School First Place

**Kwame'  
Weatherall**

*Ninth grade, Lee High  
School, Houston ISD*

### The Best Decision of My Life

Have you ever experienced a childhood without a father figure around? As you get older, you get into more trouble. You begin running from the law and from home, getting into gangs, carrying unnecessary weapons, and acting poorly in school. Until one change makes you a better person inside and out.

When my mother and I took one step and moved to Houston and I discovered the Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program, things began to change for me. Since then, I gave up possession of unnecessary weapons, and I finally started listening to my parents. For the first time ever, I am proud to show people my grades and tell people what I worked hard for.

Ever since I joined this program, my attitude has changed toward helping people who are in need or struggling. What I love about the program is that it kept me on my toes as a role model, because how can someone be a second grader's role model and still out on the streets doing drugs or violence?

I take pride in working with my tutees very seriously because I don't want them to goof off in school like I did as a child. When I see a smile from my tutees, it gives me the sign that I am a great person as a role model and as a growing man. Sometimes I wonder what would have happened if I didn't make this best decision of my life.



## Middle School Second Place

**Phylicia  
Molette**

*Eighth Grade, Kennedy  
Middle School, Atlanta Public Schools*

When I look into the big, bold, bright and beautiful eyes of my tutee, I think of all the opportunities I gained from being a tutor. Experiences I shared with my tutee helped me to look at the world from all angles. I no longer only look at the world from my perspective but also strive to look at it from everyone's perspective. Since I became a tutor, I understand younger children better, appreciate teachers more, and have become a wiser, mature, confident student and role model.

Understanding younger children plays a huge role when you are a tutor. Having the ability to know your tutee's personality can really benefit you. When I first started tutoring, I didn't get some of the techniques my tutee used to comprehend lessons. As months grew older, I realized that children have different ways of understanding things, and it all depends on your learning style. Another issue I came upon when I first started tutoring is the attention span of many students in the class. I learned that if you want to have an everlasting, powerful effect on a student's lesson, you must allow some fun to be involved to get the student captivated while still learning. Traveling to Bethune Elementary to tutor has helped me to be both sympathetic and caring to the needs of younger children!

Teaching students in hectic classrooms that are sometimes similar to mine taught me to appreciate teachers more. In the past, I didn't really cherish my teachers as much as I needed to. Now, I

acknowledge teachers' feelings and encourage children in my tutee's class to not talk so much and to listen more attentively. In the future, I plan to continue to respect teachers and become a role model for my tutee, so someday he can inspire someone else just as he inspired me! The Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program has widened my eyes and made me see the significance of all teachers.

Maturing and becoming wiser and confident is destined to come once you become a tutor for the Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program. Once I stepped in the classroom filled with commotion and raucous little kids being hyper and active, I knew I had to get rid of childish habits I owned. I had learned that I was tutoring young children, which meant I wasn't a child anymore. I was so much more. I was a young adult! The Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program has taught me so many values, I can't name them all. But one value I really appreciate is me finally maturing!

I can truly say I've learned a lot from tutoring so far that made me the person I longed to be, an inspiring one. The next step for me is to climb all the way up the ladder of success then climb back down to spread my word of advice to the other kids my age wanting to get to the top but who are not sure of themselves like I myself have also felt before!

Our attitudes control our lives. Attitudes are a secret power working 24 hours a day, for good or bad. It is of paramount importance that we know how to harness and control this great force.

*For more information on the Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program contact IDRA at 210-444-1710 or [contact@idra.org](mailto:contact@idra.org) or visit [www.idra.org/Coca-Cola\\_Valued\\_Youth\\_Program.html](http://www.idra.org/Coca-Cola_Valued_Youth_Program.html).*



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*Focus: School Holding Power*

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*“The promise of quality education is America’s promise not to the privileged few but to all our children. The success in keeping our word is America’s success.”*

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

Intercultural Development Research Association

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- “High School Youth Tekies on College Access,” featuring Aurelio M. Montemayor, M.Ed.
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