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Every Family Engaged = Every Child Ahead

Building School Capacity through NCLB Parent Participation Requirements

by Aurelio M. Montemayor,
M.Ed.

Every public school must provide the best possible education for all children – including those who are economically challenged, minority and who speak a language other than English. According to IDRA's Quality Schools Action Framework, to have that capacity, each school needs to have curriculum quality and access, teaching quality, student engagement, and parent and community engagement (see framework on Page 4).

School Capacity Key Elements

Quality curriculum refers to excellent educational programs of study, materials and other learning resources, such as technology, and their accessibility to all students. It involves school practices, fair and unbiased assessment of students and taking responsibility for the academic success of all students.

Quality teaching means that teachers are prepared and placed in their field of study. Teaching is informed by continual professional development and teacher classroom practices to

deliver comprehensible instruction that prepares all students to stay in school, be on level and meet academic goals.

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.

Parent and community engagement means creating partnerships based on respect and a shared goal of academic success as well as integrating parents and community members into the decision-making processes of the school. A strong element to ensure that schools can do well by students, parent engagement is also a crucial requirement for schools receiving federal funds.

Federal Law

The federal *No Child Left Behind Act* acknowledges that parents can be the ideal partners and strongest advocates for schools in building their capacity to serve all children with excellent curriculum, instruction and guarantees that they will graduate well educated and prepared for higher education and other opportunities.

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While coming up for review, NCLB is still the law for all schools receiving Title I money. It has key pieces that speak to parent engagement and that, in fact, re-affirm the partnership of families with schools to have schools work for all children.

Since its inception in 1965 in its original form, this epochal federal support for public schools serving economically disadvantaged students has required parent participation and input. Each new iteration of the law has given depth and breadth to the parent element.

Parent Engagement Challenge

The expansion of requirements attempts to move the parent engagement of school districts and schools from token to real, from simulated to authentic, from minimum to adequate, and from the letter to the spirit.

The current law has five key elements that apply to all schools: *standards*, such as the comprehensive Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills; assessments, such as the Texas

The expansion of these requirements attempts to move the parent engagement of school districts and schools from token to real, from simulated to authentic, from minimum to adequate, and from the letter to the spirit.

Assessment of Knowledge and Skills in Texas; *report cards* for students, for schools and for school districts; *high-quality teachers* and *reading programs*; and *adequate yearly progress (AYP)* so that all students meet the reading and math standards by 2014.

The current NCLB iteration has five major leverage points for parents, as Anne T. Henderson has effectively identified (2002). Below is a list of these leverage points along with possible strategies.

Major Leverage Points and Creative Possibilities

School Parent Involvement Policy – Every Title I school must have an updated written policy, developed with and approved by parents.

Possibilities: The PTA can sponsor a half-day retreat for parents

to gather with faculty and staff and conduct a force-field analysis on what the ideal policy for parent engagement would be on the campus. Beyond a written document that would be linear, static and somewhat legalistic, the force-field structure would enable the group to brainstorm the ideal and write a brief narrative that would include all the ideas brought up. There would be two lists following the ideal: the current forces supporting and blocking the achievement of the ideal, and a prioritization of five major steps the school can take to increase the supporting forces and simultaneously decrease the blocking forces.

School-Parent Compact – Every Title I school must have a compact developed and approved by parents that spells out how the school and parents

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Framing Systems Change for Student Success

by María “Cuca” Robledo Montecel, Ph.D.

Editor’s note: The following are excerpts from a speech presented by Dr. Robledo Montecel, IDRA executive director, at a conference in Chapel Hill, North Carolina, entitled “High Poverty Schooling in America: Lessons in Second-Class Citizenship” in October. The event was held by the North Carolina Law Review; the University of North Carolina Center on Poverty, Work and Opportunity; the UNC Center for Civil Rights; and the UNC School of Education.

Landmark civil rights cases like *Brown vs. Board of Education* and *Mendez vs. Westminster* opened new paths toward integration and equity. More than 50 years later, the promise of educational opportunity for all remains largely unfulfilled. In fact, research suggests it may be slipping further out of reach. The nation is more and more at home with segregation. And segregation is not only on the rise, but our country seems to be more at home with a system of haves and have nots.

So education is absolutely at a crossroads in America. But how are we to achieve results? How do we guarantee that all of our children

succeed?

If the past is any prophet of the future, we cannot layer new accountability measures on old educational inequities and expect to get different results. It isn’t going to happen. Of course, there are exceptions. There are always highly successful high poverty schools that belie the trends. But results for all children are not about exceptions, they are about creating a regularity of success.

What are the most promising strategies to improving achievement in high poverty schools?

A Framework for Action

The Quality Schools Action Framework that IDRA has developed in our collaboration with schools and communities in Texas and other parts of the country offers a model for assessing school outcomes, identifying leverage points for improvement, and focusing and effecting change.

The model is based on three premises. The first is that if the problem is systemic – and it seems to me that it is – the solutions must address schools as systems.

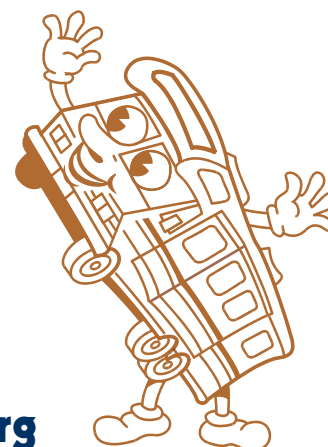
The second is that if we are up to student success, then we have to

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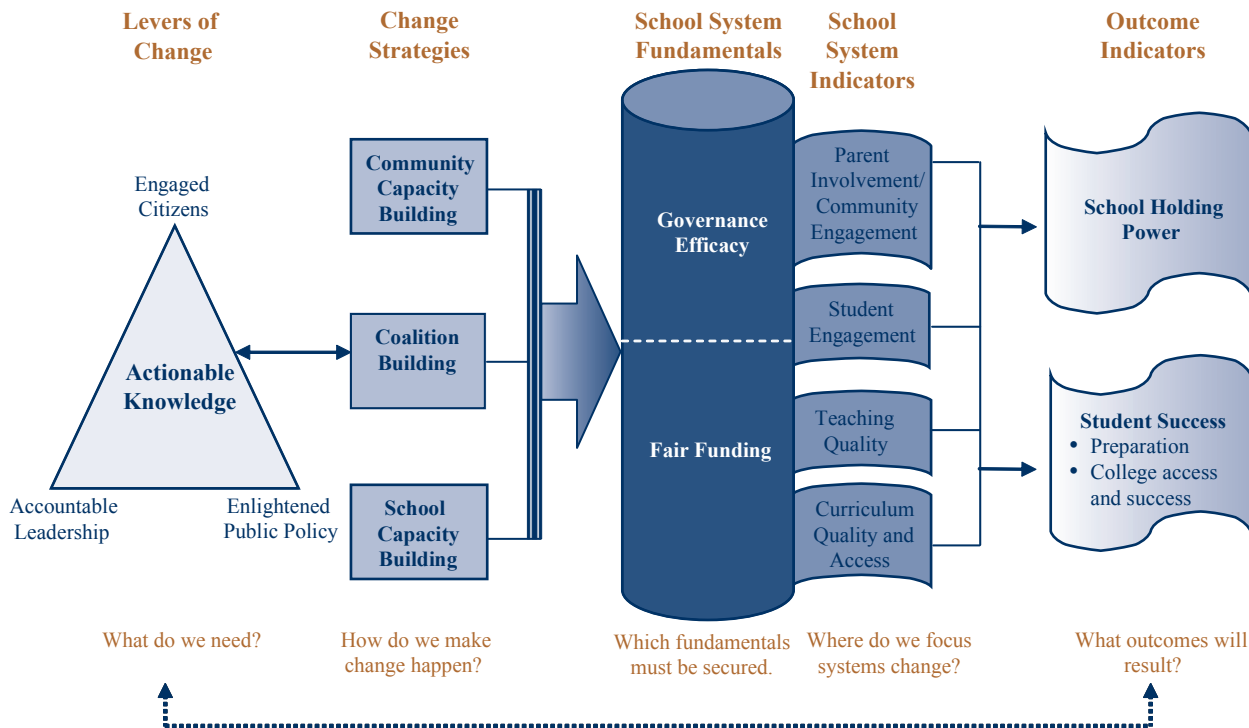
On IDRA’s Web Site

- ✦ Read related *IDRA Newsletter* articles from 1996 to the present
- ✦ Access statistics, definitions, etc.
- ✦ Learn about Internet resources
- ✦ Find extensive useful Internet links
- ✦ Use IDRA’s topical index to find what you are looking for



www.idra.org

Quality Schools Action Framework



Framing Systems – continued from Page 3

develop a vision, and that vision for children has to seek outcomes for every child, no matter where they come from, no matter the color of their skin, no matter the side of town they come from, no matter the language they speak.

And the third premise of this framework is that schools are not poor because children in them are poor or black or brown. Schools are poor because we have poor policies, poor practices and inadequate investments.

We might then ask three questions: What do we need? How do we effect change? and What fundamentals and features must be in place?

What Do We Need?

The first and most important thing that we need is to keep the public in public education. Americans support public schools. We heard

Senator Edwards speak today about a hunger to engage and to inspire. But there has always been a vocal minority that has fought the integration and the diversity that comes with public schools.

As public education was first conceived and began to take shape in our country, various groups raised questions. See if these questions still sound current: Why does everyone need to go to school? Why do they need an education? Wouldn't ex-slaves and their children be more comfortable in their own schools? Why spend money on immigrants; they can't even speak English? Well... OK... maybe spend a little bit of money, but only enough to keep them out of the streets. But surely, those children were not going to attend school with our children. And so it went.

After the *Brown* decision, in the Jim Crow south, White institutions dragged their feet, and private White academies became commonplace.

Separate but equal would, in this way, stay in place.

Today, private schools funded by public sources are a reality in some states. We seem to be moving from dual schools to dual systems, one public and one private – with our public money diverted to privatizing through vouchers, private charters, home schools, virtual schools and tax credits.

The *No Child Left Behind Act* requires unprecedented parent reporting and mandates parent involvement (tied to Title I funds) but implementation of the law has been overwhelmingly focused on testing. While school data are increasingly available to parents, databases are often designed to help them “shop” for schools, rather than, as citizens, to invest in their neighborhood public schools. And that is part of the problem.

The question of course becomes,

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Informing Change Bringing School Data Online

by Laurie Posner, MPA

In *Getting Excited About Data*, E.L. Holcomb talks about the need for broad stakeholder involvement in school reform – the value of bringing together “people, passion and proof” (Holcomb, 1998; Lachat, 2001). Holcomb’s work suggests that data should not be divorced from a passionate vision for all students’ achievement, an understanding of how to get there and a good assessment of what works. Today, with an increased focus on accountability measures, reporting requirements and new communication technologies, this possibility seems much closer at hand.

Under the *No Child Left Behind Act*, student achievement and learning opportunities must be annually reported and made widely available through public means (e.g., posted on the Internet, reported by media, and reported through public agencies). They must be presented in a format that is understandable and consistent. And, to the extent possible, they must be provided in a language parents can understand. But for many families, communities and educators themselves, data remain inaccessible, and reporting is missing the mark.

Data that do reach the general public are often presented only in English and as a discrete set of facts, making it difficult to consider questions about how one input or outcome might relate to another.

The Access Gap

Although testing has become a central focus of school accountability, education data often seem remote from the rush and clatter of day-to-day life. Key information that could help parents, community members and teachers analyze what is working and what is not in schools is too-often embedded in jargon-riddled reports.

A study by UCLA on the readability of California’s school accountability report card found that nearly two thirds of business and professional readers surveyed could not determine whether the school was fully staffed or whether teacher credentials were improving (Paretz, et al., nd). Eighty percent could not tell how many students were taking college preparatory courses. One parent noted, “I can understand the words and numbers but it’s not making any sense to me.”

Analyses and interpretation of education data are frequently found

in specialized online journals and academic reports, but these resources rarely reach parents and teachers. Data that do reach the general public are often presented only in English and as a discrete set of facts, making it difficult to consider questions about how one input or outcome might relate to another.

While disaggregated data provide the most flexibility to end-users, communities need both meaningful information and context. They also need ways to assess the quality of data and whether the data measure what is most important to community members.

In short, we need ways to construct actionable knowledge about education outcomes. Examples include knowledge about how school resources relate to instructional programs and how programs relate to learning opportunities for children of all backgrounds.

In *Data-Driven High School Reform*, Lachat writes, “Putting student learning at the center of school accountability requires the capacity to assess and use data to monitor student performance and to evaluate the extent to which new structures and approaches to curriculum, instruction and assessment result in higher levels of achievement” (2001).

In addition to the challenges of readability, context and a design

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that supports problem-solving and partnership, the presentation of data must address the need for capacity building. For online data to be actionable, people must be able to download it, interpret it, use it to call for change, set priorities and evaluate action. High schools need the information system capacity necessary for strategically using data to identify achievement gaps, address equity issues, determine the effectiveness of specific programs and courses of study, and target instructional improvement (Lachat, 2001).

Communities also need greater capacity to get online and navigate sites with large datasets, interactive search engines and, in some cases, graphics. Access to technology in low-income communities is a persistent barrier. Yet as these problems are resolved, the need for upgrades from dial-up to high-speed Internet connections comes more squarely into view.

People in urban areas are twice as likely to have home broadband access than their rural counterparts. For people with incomes below \$30,000, only one in 10 have high-speed Internet access, compared to six in 10 households with incomes above \$100,000 (Consumer Action, 2006).

Broadband access has grown tremendously over the last several years, but that growth is slowing. Today, the United States ranks 12th in the world in broadband penetration, having dropped two slots since 2003 (Horrigan, 2005).

The price of broadband service, and not necessarily the lack of a home computer, is the key barrier to broadband adoption by low-income households.

Heading in the Right Direction

While we are still missing the mark on local campus- and community-based

Tools for

School Capacity Building

In order to have student success and effective school holding power, administrators, teachers and other stakeholders must build school capacity. To truly build school capacity, there must be lasting systems change that depends on sustained action within and outside of those systems. IDRA has created a model, the Quality Schools Action Framework, that bridges the gap between the often-studied best practices of high performing schools, and the less-often studied contextual and moderating factors that may impede or accelerate school system change.

A Snapshot of What IDRA is Doing

Developing leaders – Through a series of Science Smart! institutes, IDRA is delivering professional development training to teachers to strengthen their leadership and efficacy in closing achievement gaps and increasing student achievement in science. Training includes classroom demonstrations, one-on-one meetings with the teachers, and online mentoring and coaching. See Pages 10-11.

Conducting research – IDRA is partnering with a group of middle school teachers, a principal, counselor and social worker to create a small professional learning community whose only mission is to ensure the academic success of its students. This emerging professional learning community meets regularly to work together, sharing and exchanging insights about their students, developing strategies for success, and sharing in their responsibility for students. IDRA is guiding them with the best research, the best thinking and the best practices available.

Informing policy – In November, Dr. María Robledo Montecel, IDRA's executive director, testified before the Texas State Board of Education concerning attrition and strategies for increasing school holding power in Texas public schools. IDRA has been releasing its study of attrition rates in Texas every year for more than 20 years (see the October issue of the *IDRA Newsletter*). You can hear an audio file of Dr. Robledo Montecel's testimony by going to the State Board of Education's web page on the Texas Education Agency web site: <http://www.tea.state.tx.us/sboe/audio/nov06.html>. Dr. Robledo Montecel's testimony is captured in link titled, "November 16: Committee of the Whole C."

Engaging communities – With technical assistance provided by IDRA's Parent Involvement Resource Center, a group of young people from ARISE, a faith-

Tools for Action continued on next page

Action

based grassroots organization led by women from the poorest neighborhoods in South Texas, support their parents and other adults to learn to use computers, go online and access information about their schools, the state education agency, colleges and universities, and other educational topics. Most of the adults have limited, if any, experiences with computers, and many have limited English proficiency. The young people formed a group, Youth Education Tekies, a makeshift computer center has been established, and the youth volunteer to become the tech connection for their families. They hold monthly meetings and provide continued assistance for adults on the use of computers.

What You Can Do

Get informed. The Center for Parent Leadership has published, *No Child Left Behind: What's in it for Parents*, as a guide for parents to understand the *No Child Left Behind Act* generally, and specifically Title I of that act. The guide talks about leverage points for parents to use in securing the assistance their child's school should receive under the law, and it also takes a closer look at what the act says about involving parents in schools. You can see this publication at the center's web site: <http://www.centerforparentleadership.org/NCLB%20Guide.pdf>.

The U.S. Department of Education has published a bilingual English and Spanish brochure called, *Ten Facts Every Parent Should Know About The No Child Left Behind Act: Diez Datos Que Cada Padre Debe Saber Sobre La Ley Que Ningun Nino Se Quede Atras*. This brochure provides parents with vital information regarding what the act can and cannot allow to happen to their children in public school. The publication can be viewed at: <http://www.royce.house.gov/UploadedFiles/tenfacts-nclb.pdf>.

Get results. Based on the teaching quality needs in your own neighborhood public schools, you can initiate and/or expand partnerships among educators, school administrators, parents and local community members that can jointly work toward better teaching quality. Communities and schools can monitor the plan for meeting NCLB teaching quality requirements this year; press for greater school finance equity; and build wider support for teaching and curricula that serve diverse learners, such as bilingual education and ESL programs.

The Public Education Network is coordinating a national campaign called Give Kids Good Schools (www.givekidsgoodschools.com). The corresponding web site is a source of vast information for all stakeholders who want to build school capacity on a local, state or national level.

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access, important strides are being made. A growing number of people are taking up the call to develop high quality, highly accessible web sites, portals and other online resources to support community-school partnerships in school reform. Diverse groups, from faith-based organizations, to housing and neighborhood associations, community-based computer technology centers, and parent organizations, have long focused on precisely this kind of capacity (López, 2003).

And several foundations have worked at the intersection of technology and community capacity building to provide better analysis and data access. Their insight and experience needs to inform the design and presentation of web-based education data and local capacity-building strategies in which parents, educators and community leaders inform the way.

At IDRA, we are expanding access to our research online, for example, with a searchable database (at <http://www.idra.org/Research/Attrition/>) that communities and schools in Texas can use to review dropout data by county over the last decade. This research is an integral part of our collaboration with parents, students, families and communities working to increase school holding power.

In the Youth Tekies project through IDRA's Parent Information Resource Center, IDRA is working closely with emerging student leaders, parent leaders, and community- and faith-based organizations in the Rio Grande Valley to support intergenerational access to technology and engagement in school reform.

Community participants in IDRA's *Brown and Mendez Blueprint Dialogues* in Texas and New Mexico can use <http://www.idra.org/mendezbrown/> and a project portal to develop and share ideas for fulfilling the promise of educational equity and excellence for children in

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today's public schools.

To support school capacity-building, IDRA's Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program has developed online evaluation and coordination portals that give schools more immediate access to student outcome data for decision-making.

To inform sustainable local change, the National Neighborhood Indicators Partnership offers several "lessons learned" for data intermediaries (adapted and summarized from Bailey, 2000 for this purpose):

- Have a presence in the community and be aware of local resources and needs;
- Incorporate training on the use of data that is directly tied to real life issues, skills and opportunities into leadership training;
- Produce data as a means to an end, not an end in itself – information should respond to a shared information need, supporting work around shared planning of problem solving;
- Focus on helping people ask the right questions; and

“Clear, consistent and credible data that point to where we are, to where we are headed and to whether we are getting there are essential to good public policy, accountable leadership and an engaged public.”

– Dr. María “Cuca” Robledo Montecel, IDRA executive director

- Use cutting-edge technology – simplicity does not mean substandard.

We can also draw important lessons from information access debates in the recent past. In the mid-1990s as the World Wide Web emerged and grew, many people saw vast potential of an information infrastructure to either invigorate democracy and open opportunity or to solidify a “two-tier society” in which some reap the benefits and others are further disenfranchised. The disability community brought critical leadership

to this public debate, both spearheading and joining a call for “universal access” or “universal design” in the national information infrastructure. Since the same design (whether architectural, in hardware or software) could not work for everyone, people recognized that “universal design” was not a precise litmus test for new technology but rather a set of principles for design that “recognizes, respects, values and attempts to accommodate the broadest possible range of human abilities, requirements and preferences” (Stephanidis, 2001).

Universal design principles call for design that makes information and resources:

- equitable to diverse users;
- flexible for different purposes;

- intuitive and simple; and
- perceptible.

Today, we need a similar call, for universal access to online school data.

To close the gap among people, passion and proof – and make sure we do not widen the chasm – we must consider how to make data more accessible and useful to educators, parents and families; how people can use information as an effective lever for analysis, assessment and change; and how data can become an integral part of ongoing accountability, inquiry

“Knowledge doesn’t just consist of a fact or two; it consists of a varying amount of information ‘connected’ together by experience, the context of the question being asked, judgment and other knowledge. Finally, knowledge has one other important characteristic: It’s got be actionable!”

– J. Narducci

and continuous improvement (Lachat, 2001).

Resources

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if we are to keep the public in public education, who is the public? The demographics in this country are changing in a way that the public has to engage and has to assure that we include diverse communities that surround neighborhood public schools. Much of our rhetoric is about doing *unto* high poverty schools and *unto* high poverty neighborhoods. The *public* in keeping the public in public education must include people of color and the poor and must acknowledge the power, the privileges and the prejudices that come with racism.

To keep the public in public education we need engaged citizens, we need accountable leadership, and we need enlightened public policy.

Let me give you one example. We have been working on an effort called Graduation Guaranteed/*Graduación Garantizada* that would give a minimum of high school education to all children. We call it “school holding power” rather than dropouts to emphasize the accountability of the school in keeping kids in school and graduating. Our school holding power portal includes dropout data that neighborhoods at the local level can use to know what is going on in their school and to call themselves into action around this, whether it be into action around policy, around investment or around the quality of their neighborhood public schools. Local communities in Texas together with schools can look at the rate at which their students disappear, the actual numbers of students, whether or not they pass minimum competency tests, the differences by ethnic group, the ACT/SAT rates, and the state of teaching quality.

So the public in public education can know not only about outcomes but also about what leads to those outcomes. The public becomes armed with actionable data that can lead to good results.

How do we effect change?

For the second question, we must build capacity and collaboration for the common good. We clearly need to collaborate across traditional sectors. Economic injustice and poverty kept African Americans and Latinos apart or competing for measly slices of the same pie. In the 1940s, Hispanic workers (some of whom had been brought to this country as part of the Bracero Program) and African American workers competed for many of the same low paying jobs. Tensions have escalated whenever African Americans have determined not to defend the rights of immigrant workers or when Latinos have decided not to support desegregation efforts because it might antagonize Whites.

Recently, wrapped in the fear of national security, our nation’s political leaders quickly returned to the march against the outsider, against the immigrant. Since September 11, 2001, we have seen the renewed push toward policy that would restrict the civil liberties of immigrants, a push to conflate immigration with terrorism.

Building common ground is a big task and an important one. IDRA’s framework calls at the local level to develop capacity in the community, in the school and with coalitions to work together on this very serious divide. The basis for this relationship cannot be a continued blaming of students because they are black or brown or poor, or of blaming of schools because they cannot meet accountability standards without the resources that are necessary.

What fundamentals must be in place to improve our public schools?

For the last question, we must invest in the changes that matter most. In Texas, with House Bill 1 that was passed last May, we estimate that the fiscal equity gap has grown by

30 percent. Texas’ top 50 wealthiest schools are 72 percent White. Texas’ poorest 50 schools are 94 percent Hispanic.

On the Action Framework then, while we look at the features that matter – and this is what research tells us matters – parent and community engagement, engagement of students, quality teaching and curriculum quality, it is essential that the foundations be in place as well: governance efficacy and funding equity.

True sustainable action that fundamentally changes the experiences of children in the classroom must address the root causes and the trends that first gave rise to inequity. These causes have taken root in schools and systems and not in children or families. But addressing root causes can be carried out in a very local, very real practical way in terms of policy, practices and investment at the community-school-neighborhood level.

The Quality Schools Action Framework speaks to the need and possibility of engaging citizens, leaders and policymakers around high quality data that call all of us as members of the community to act, to establish common ground, to strengthen education, and finally and most importantly and fundamentally, to align our values with our investments in the school system: fundamentals and features that we know are needed – from teaching quality, to engaged students, engaged parents and families, and a high quality, authentic curriculum so that students in every neighborhood and of every background can in fact have equal educational opportunities.

María “Cuca” Robledo Montecel, Ph.D., is the IDRA executive director. Comments and questions may be directed to her via e-mail at comment@idra.org.

Science Smart!

Secondary Student Mastery and Achievement Using Authentic Relevant Teaching

Being “scientifically literate” is required by national and state standards. It cannot be defined as simply “remembering the scientific process.” Scientific literacy involves much more. It means that students not only understand important science concepts but also *apply* what they know to real life applications.

Clearly, traditional practices simply are not enough teaching diverse student populations. Many school personnel are struggling to teach challenging science content. It is critical to use instructional practices that are effective with linguistically diverse and economically disadvantaged students. In an age of increasing expectations and mandatory accountability for diverse students, it is not enough for them to simply “do well” on state-mandated exams.

IDRA’s Science Smart! professional development provides teachers with scientifically-based strategies to teach initiative scientific concepts, critical-thinking skills, problem-solving abilities and processes. As teachers’ understanding of science and pedagogy increases, they become more able to engage young minds in the sciences. CPE credit is available.

IDRA’s Science Smart! professional development package is especially valuable because it ties in to the curricula that teachers are currently using. In addition, professional development is



valuable when teachers experience the excitement of hypothesis setting, experiment and discover scientific concepts.

IDRA Support

IDRA’s science training uses a variety of ways to work with school staff that can include workshop training, video conferences, demonstration lessons, pre-classroom-observations, project listserv, web casting, online discussions and reflections. IDRA provides the following support for face-to-face and online coaching and mentoring sessions:

- ❖ Implementing the scientific process proficiency in a standards-based curricula.
- ❖ Using cognitively guided instruction: Questioning techniques, teacher strategies and building the classroom environment.
- ❖ Conducted ongoing assessments of instructional efforts.
- ❖ Differentiating instruction in the science classroom.
- ❖ Developing literacy skills (writing, reading and building language in science).
- ❖ Implementing cognitively challenging standards-aligned strategies for student success in science.
- ❖ Supporting teachers through mentoring and coaching strategies.

Science Smart! Will Address Your Specific Needs

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

- ❖ “Helping Second Language Learners Excel in Science”
- ❖ “Teaching Science Using Multicultural Books”
- ❖ “Directing Instruction to Guide and Empower Student Scientific Process Thinking”
- ❖ “Instructional Strategies to Guide Students through the Academic Text of Science”
- ❖ “Differentiating Instruction for Diverse Learning in Science”

more

Benefits and Outcomes

- ❖ Strengthen the belief that all students can increase their achievement on state-mandated exams and that students’ understanding of science concepts and processes can be deepened to levels of increasing complexity.
- ❖ Align the conceptual strands of state standards by organizing according to student’s strengths, with special focus on English language learners.
- ❖ Value students’ experiences as a basis for strengthening their scientific competency.
- ❖ Explore scientific concepts and processes in new ways and support peer collegiality among science teachers who are experiencing success.
- ❖ Use critical-thinking skills to apply scientific concepts, problem-solving abilities and processes.
- ❖ Move from a traditional science instruction approach to a broader paradigm that makes it possible to affirm that all students really can learn science.

Sample Science Smart! Plan Tailored to District Needs

Session Description	Topic	Days Out of School	IDRA Follow-Up
Mentors and Coaches Face-to-Face Sessions (2 sessions)	Strategies for Effective Classroom Implementation of Cognitively Challenging Strategies and Teacher Support <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How to Conduct Mentoring and Coaching Sessions • Trainer of Trainers/Mentor Guide 		2 hours for follow-up
Online Preparation*	Initial Teacher Needs Assessment and Setting the Climate		2-3 hours
Observations	IDRA Classroom Observations		
Teachers Face-to-Face Session #1	Real-time Data Collection, Online Data Sets and Analysis Tools for Deepening Student Understanding of Science Standards; Benchmarking of and Relationship to Standards; Checking for Safety	1	2 hours for follow-up
Demonstrations	Mentoring and Coaching: Classroom Demonstrations		
Online Mentoring & Coaching*	This online component will support teachers in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creating a Community of Learners: Sharing and Reflecting on Practice through Online Discussions 		2-3 hours
Teachers Face-to-Face Sessions #2 and #3	Increasing Student Scientific Understanding and Achievement <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Science Proficiency and Relationship to Standards • Student Self-Assessments • Technology Tools: Dynamic and Static • Strategies for Various Classroom Settings 	2	4 hours for follow up
Demonstrations	Mentoring and Coaching: Classroom Demonstrations		2-3 hours
Online Mentoring & Coaching*	This online component will support teachers in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exploring Online Dynamic Learning Tools and Applets for Driving Student Exploration and Understanding • Creating a Lesson Plan for classroom integration • Online Discussions and Reflections: Building Peer Support 		
Teachers Face-to-Face Session #4	Empowering Students' Scientific Exploration and Thinking Using Technology Tools	1	2 hours for follow-up
Demonstrations	Mentoring and Coaching: Classroom Demonstrations		2-3 hours
Online Mentoring & Coaching*	This online component will support teachers in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Web Cast: Technical Assistance for Implementation • Online Discussions and Reflections • Resource Sharing 		
Evaluation	Program Evaluation and Documentation		

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

- ❖ “Creating a Hands-On, Problem-Solving Environment to Energize Student Learning Science”
- ❖ “Exploring True Science Nature through Mathematics”
- ❖ “Stimulate Student Thinking in Science through Technology”
- ❖ “Engaging Parents to Ensure Student Success in Science”

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

A version of this training package is also available for the elementary school level.

Every Family Engaged – continued from Page 2

will build a partnership to improve student achievement.

Possibilities: Similar to the above, a campus can invite representatives of the faculty and staff, parents, students and community. They can meet as subgroups and list the responsibilities the group will agree to and the expectations they have. A compact can be a summary of all the reports given by the representative groups. This can be an energizing and re-vitalizing Saturday event.

District-wide policy – Every school district must have a Title I parent engagement policy developed with and approved by parents.

Possibilities: Any parents and families at a campus or across campuses can review what exists, make recommendations and submit them to the Title I coordinator. A meeting to review and make recommendations can be held, all key ideas recorded and these submitted to the appropriate administrator. If language is an issue, bilingual personnel and/or parents can help with translation and clarification.

Report Cards – Every school and the district at large must report campus and district performance to families and the community.

Possibilities: Parents can gather at an evening meeting with school personnel to review the report cards, with information provided in comprehensible languages. A parent-school staff team can facilitate a dialogue to explore the assets and strengths of the school and of the community and also identify the critical needs in curriculum, scheduling, instructional quality and creative alternatives to accelerate student learning and achievement.

Public school choice and supplemental services – Families whose children are attending schools that are not making adequate progress

Every Family Engaged – continued on Page 13

Resources for Engaging Families

Community and Public Engagement in Education Opportunity and Challenge

by Rosana G. Rodríguez, Ph.D., and Abelardo Villarreal, Ph.D., Intercultural Development Research Association. http://www.idra.org/IDRA_Newsletters/November_-_December_2003_Self_Renewing_Schools_Public_Engagement/Community_and_Public_Engagement_in_Education_Opportunity_and_Challenge/

Developing and Sustaining Research-Based Programs of School, Family, and Community Partnerships

by J. Epstein (Baltimore, Md.: National Network of Partnership Schools, Johns Hopkins University, September 2005)
<http://www.csos.jhu.edu/p2000/pdf/Research%20Summary.pdf>

Diversity: School, Family and Community Connections

by M. Boethel (Austin, Texas: National Center for Family and Community Connections with Schools, Southwest Educational Development Laboratory, 2003)

Helping Practitioners Meet the Goals of No Child Left Behind

(Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Education, nd)

New Wave of Evidence: The Impact of School, Family and Community Connections on Student Achievement

by A.T. Henderson and K.L. Mapp (Austin, Texas: National Center for Family and Community Connections with Schools, Southwest Educational Development Laboratory, 2002)

No Child Left Behind: A Parents Guide

(Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Education, 2003) Also available in Spanish. <http://www.ed.gov/parents/academic/involve/nclbguide/parentsguide.html>

No Child Left Behind: What's in it for Parents

by A. Henderson (Arlington, Va.: Parent Leadership Associates, 2002)
<http://www.centerforparentleadership.org/NCLB%20Guide.pdf>

The Social Context of Parental Involvement: A Path to Enhanced Achievement

(Nashville, Tenn.: Family-School Partnership Lab, Vanderbilt University, March 2005) <http://www.vanderbilt.edu/Peabody/family-school///school%20reports/study%201%20general%20summary%20for%20schools.doc>

Ten Facts Every Parent Should Know About the No Child Left Behind Act

(Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Education, 2003) Also available in Spanish. <http://www.royce.house.gov/UploadedFiles/tenfacts-nclb.pdf>

Texans Testify on No Child Left Behind

Intercultural Development Research Association. http://www.idra.org/IDRA_Newsletters/January_2005/Texans_Testify_on_NCLB/

Every Family Engaged – continued from Page 12
can request a transfer to schools that are achieving AYP. Another option is to request supplemental services for their children.

Possibilities: Parents and educators can come together for their school to identify the resources that need to be brought to bear and the support needs in approaching the district, the state and the federal government to turn the campus around. They can decide what interim measures the school-parent-community collaborative must take to support children in their learning while keeping the joy in learning, the faith that all children can achieve, and while keeping all children in school and succeeding academically.

Opportunities Abound

Several pressures – such as the current onslaught against public education, the school obituaries written by proponents of transferring public monies to private schools, and the AYP being perceived by many school leaders as a pendant sword soon to fall – are strong reasons to see parents as particularly appropriate partners in the improvement of their schools. The children – the ultimate clients – can have no greater or persistent advocates for their education.

There are more details and aspects of the law that are important to know and be able to use as motivators or catalysts for improving schools, but the major leverage points listed above

are broad enough and strong enough to provide families and community members with a sound base for engagement. These levers are capacity building tools for parents to lift schools to high levels of academic success.



Resources

Henderson, A. *No Child Left Behind: What's in it for Parents* (Arlington, Va.: Parent Leadership Associates, 2002) <http://www.centerforparentleadership.org/NCLB%20Guide.pdf>.

Aurelio M. Montemayor, M.Ed., is IDRA's lead trainer and is the director of the Texas IDRA Parent Information and Resource Center. Comments and questions may be directed to him via e-mail at comment@idra.org.

Highlights of Recent IDRA Activities

In October, IDRA worked with **4,514** teachers, administrators, parents, and higher education personnel through **54** training and technical assistance activities and **131** program sites in **11** states plus Brazil. Topics included:

- ◆ Focusing on Language and Academic Instructional Renewal (FLAIR) Classroom Observations
- ◆ Science Smart! Lesson Demonstrations
- ◆ Reading Early for Academic Development (READ) Coaching and Mentoring

Participating agencies and school districts included:

- ◆ Texas Education Service Center, Region VII
- ◆ Laredo Independent School District (ISD), Texas
- ◆ Mesa Public Schools, Arizona

Activity Snapshot

There has been a shortage of qualified bilingual teachers in Texas for many years. The Transitions and Texas – Teacher Excellence for All Students (T-TEXAS) programs are alternative teacher certification programs designed to increase the number of fully-qualified and credentialed ESL/bilingual teachers working with English language learners in “high-need” schools. These IDRA projects support teacher preparation and certification through alternative teacher certification routes for bilingual and Spanish dominant career-changing professionals and recent college graduates – in fields other than education – who desire to enter teaching and have a specific interest in bilingual education. These programs are funded by the U.S. Department of 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.

Math Smart!

Process to Maximize Student Learning in Secondary Mathematics

In supporting equal access to challenging mathematical content, it is critical to implement instructional practices shown to be effective with linguistically diverse and economically disadvantaged students. Traditional secondary level practices simply are not enough in the instruction of heterogeneous populations with increasingly challenging needs.

To maximize mathematical proficiencies and impact student achievement, instructional and administrative staff must be prepared to address different needs in an age of increasing expectations and mandatory accountability for diverse students. It is no longer enough for students to simply “do well” on state-mandated exams. It is necessary to increase the understanding, complexities and applications of mathematical thinking and processes across all math courses in order to satisfy state and federal mandates and prepare our students for an ever competitive job market.

To address these issues IDRA’s Math Smart! presents a shift in mathematical thinking for instructors, that develops the five dimensions of mathematical proficiency using scientifically-based researched strategies. CPE credit is available.

IDRA Support

Math Smart! training uses a variety of ways to work with school staff who can include workshop training, video conferences, demonstration lessons, pre-classroom observations, project listserv, web casting, online discussions and reflections. The Intercultural Development Research Association provides the following support for face-to-face and online coaching and mentoring sessions:

Benefits and Outcomes

- ▶ **Strengthen the belief** that all students can increase their achievement on state-mandated exams and that students’ understanding of mathematics can be deepened to levels of increasing complexity.
- ▶ **Value students’ experiences** as a basis for strengthening their mathematics competency.
- ▶ Take advantage of a **safe environment to explore mathematical concepts** in new ways and to support peer collegiality among math teachers who are experiencing success.
- ▶ Move from a traditional math instruction approach to a broader paradigm that makes it possible to affirm that **all students really can learn mathematics.**



- ▶ Implementing the five dimensions of mathematical proficiency in a standards-based curriculum,
- ▶ Using cognitively guided instruction: Questioning techniques, teacher strategies, and building the classroom environment.
- ▶ Ongoing assessments of instructional efforts.
- ▶ Differentiating instruction in the mathematics classroom.
- ▶ Developing literacy skills (writing, reading, and building language in mathematics).
- ▶ Implementing cognitively challenging standards aligned with strategies for student success in math.
- ▶ Supporting teachers through mentoring and coaching strategies.

Math Smart! Will Address Your Specific Needs

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

- ▶ “Helping Second Language Learners Excel in Math”
- ▶ “Kicking the Door Open: Increasing Student Enrollment and Achievement in Higher Level Mathematics”
- ▶ “Directing Instruction to Guide and Empower Student Mathematical Thinking”
- ▶ “Creating a Hands-On, Problem-Solving Environment to Energize Student Learning in Mathematics”
- ▶ “Propelling Student Thinking in Math Using Technology”
- ▶ “Engaging Parents to Ensure Student Success in Math”

Sample Math Smart! Plan Tailored to District Needs

Session Description	Topic	Days Out of School	IDRA Follow-Up
Mentors and Coaches Face-to-Face Sessions (2 sessions)	Strategies for Effective Classroom Implementation of Cognitively Challenging Strategies and Teacher Support <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How to Conduct Mentoring and Coaching Sessions • Trainer of Trainers/Mentor Guide 		2 hours for follow-up
Online Preparation*	Initial Teacher Needs Assessment and Setting the Climate		2-3 hours
Observations	IDRA Classroom Observations		
Teachers Face-to-Face Session #1	Real-time Data Collection, Online Data Sets, and Analysis Tools for Deepening Student Understanding of Math Standards; Benchmarking of and Relationship to Standards	1	2 hours for follow-up
Demonstrations	Mentoring and Coaching: Classroom Demonstrations		2-3 hours
Online Mentoring & Coaching*	This online component will support teachers in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creating a Community of Learners: Sharing and Reflecting on Practice through Online Discussions 		
Teachers Face-to-Face Sessions #2 and #3	Increasing Student Mathematical Understanding and Achievement <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Five Dimensions of Mathematical Proficiency and Relationship to Standards • Student Self-Assessments • Technology Tools: Dynamic and Static • Strategies for Various Classroom Settings 	2	4 hours for follow-up
Demonstrations	Mentoring and Coaching: Classroom Demonstrations		2-3 hours
Online Mentoring & Coaching*	This online component will support teachers in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exploring Online Dynamic Learning Tools and Applets for Driving Student Exploration and Understanding • Creating a Lesson Plan for classroom integration • Online Discussions and Reflections: Building Peer Support 		
Teachers Face-to-Face Session #4	Empowering Students' Mathematical Exploration and Thinking Using Technology Tools	1	2 hours for follow-up
Demonstrations	Mentoring and Coaching: Classroom Demonstrations		
Online Mentoring & Coaching*	This online component will support teachers in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Web Cast: Technical Assistance for Implementation • Online Discussions and Reflections • Resource Sharing 		2-3 hours
Evaluation	Program Evaluation and Documentation		

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

An example of a model plan that IDRA would use with your district is in the box above.

A version of this training package is also available for the elementary school level.

Read more about Math Smart!

“Re-Invigorating Math Curricula,” by Kathryn Brown (*IDRA Newsletter*, April 2006).

“IDRA Math Institutes – Making Mathematics Accessible to All Students and Closing the Achievement Gap,” by Kathryn Brown (*IDRA Newsletter*, August 2005).

New!



Free!

IDRA has launched a new podcast series designed to be a tool for public school teachers and administrators as well as to provide insights into key issues in education in the United States.

Online Now



Episode 1: “Racial and Sexual Harassment – A School’s Legal Obligations,” – Dr. Bradley Scott, director of the IDRA South Central Collaborative for Equity, discusses types of racial and sexual harassment and what school leaders must be doing to prevent and deal with it.



Episode 3: “The Power of IDRA’s Parent Leadership Model” – Aurelio Montemayor, M.Ed., director of the IDRA Texas Parent Information and Resource Center, describes the four dimensions of the IDRA’s model for parent engagement and how it can unleash powerful transformations for school success.



Episode 2: “Using the New High School Allotment in Texas” – Dr. Albert Cortez, director of the IDRA Institute for Policy and Leadership, outlines ways the new high school allotment can strengthen your school’s holding power, the importance of measuring results and opportunities the new funds present.



Episode 4: “A Model for Successful Reading Instruction” – Dr. Juanita García, an IDRA education associate, and Hector Bojorquez, IDRA’s web specialist, discuss the FLAIR model and the impact they have witnessed at one sample school site.



www.idra.org/podcasts

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



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