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- ✦ **Engagement-based sheltered instruction**



# You Can't Win if You Don't Get to Play

## Effectively Engaging All English Language Learners

**by Adela Solís, Ph.D., and Kristin Grayson, M.Ed.**

Two English language learner youths talk about their school experience. One says: "Classes would be more interesting if teachers were excited, had us do interesting things and relate subjects to what's happening around us. I hate it when all we do is silly worksheets" (Walqui, 2000).

Another student says: "It was really bad... I was almost the only one... and there were no translators. So I was just sitting there, and they were speaking English to me and I didn't understand anything" (Peitzman and Gadda, 1994).

From these statements, one thing is clear. These students are not engaged in learning. There are many reasons students are disengaged. For these English language learners, it appears that the irrelevancy of classwork and lack of access to comprehensible instruction cause them to disengage.

As maturing adolescents it is likely they recognize the implications for not being in the game of learning. The academic learning process, in a way, is no different than participating

in sports. To succeed, it is necessary to suit up and show up for the game and, more importantly, to be able to play. Just like the players in that all important ball game, English language learners cannot win if they do not get to play.

English language learners need to be cognitively engaged in the learning process. Regardless of their background or English language proficiency, they should have meaningful opportunities to succeed in school.

These authors, as IDRA professional development specialists, have been working for some time on a new professional development project that focuses on the engagement of English language learners in secondary English as a second language and content classes. The purpose of this initiative is to bring the literature on student engagement to bear on serving these students.

Guided by the literature and first-hand experiences working with teachers and students in sheltered instruction classrooms, IDRA has conceptualized a professional development model to refine and extend teachers' sheltered instruction expertise so they can strategically plan and deliver sheltered

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instruction for engagement. This model, Engagement-Based Sheltered Instruction (EBSI), and its related research-base are the topics of this article.

## Literature Review

The literature on student engagement offers insights to help define engagement and elaborates on the nature and extent of the problem, its implications and solutions. From this literature, we know that engagement is a prerequisite of learning. That is, without engagement there is no learning. Further, there is a distinction between superficial, or procedural, engagement and substantive, or cognitive, engagement. It is only through the latter that learning actually occurs (McLaughlin, et al., 2005).

The condition for learning has two dimensions: internal factors, or things residing within the student, and external factors, typically recognized as the contexts in which learning occurs (Hall and Bissell, 2006).

Motivation and discipline often

**There is a distinction between superficial, or procedural, engagement and substantive, or cognitive, engagement. It is only through the latter that learning actually occurs.**

are cited as internal factors that influence engagement (Voke, 2002), as are students' socio-emotional readiness and level of skills, such as academic skills and English skills (Walqui, 2000). These sources on student engagement reveal specific characteristics of student behavior that serve as *evidence of student engagement* and are part of the Engagement-Based Sheltered Instruction model.

Certainly, for English language learners, limited English proficiency and academic skills play a large part in their disengagement. Cummins (2001) contributes significantly to the understanding of engagement and the English language learner. He asserts that a connection exists between cognitive engagement and student identity. His premises are expressed like this: "Cognitive engagement is a prerequisite of academic success. For

students dominant in a language other than English, cognitive engagement occurs in the language they understand. Negative teacher attitudes toward the student and his native language affects his identity (feelings about self) and inhibits engagement. The teacher then must affirm the student's identity. In doing so, the student then creates conditions for maximum identity investment in the learning process. There is a reciprocal relationship between cognitive engagement and identity investment: the more students learn, the more their academic self concept grows and the more academically engaged they become" (Cummins, 2001).

Besides (student) internal factors, cognitive engagement also is dependent on external factors. A good portion of the literature indicates that the school in general and the teacher specifically

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

The *IDRA Newsletter* (ISSN 1069-5672, © 2007) serves as a vehicle for communication with educators, school board members, decision-makers, parents, and the general public concerning the educational needs of all children in Texas and across the United States.

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Portions of the contents of this newsletter were developed under a grant from the U.S. Department of Education. However, those contents do not necessarily represent the policy of the Department of Education, and endorsement by the federal government should not be assumed.

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# Valuing Youth

## Reflections from a Professional Learning Community

**by Aurelio M. Montemayor,  
M.Ed., and Josie Danini Cortez,  
M.A.**

Almost 30 years ago, as Dr. José A. Cárdenas, IDRA's founder and director emeritus, addressed a migrant education management training workshop in San Diego, California, on how to make power work for children. His statement is as timely today as it was then: "I have found that the most effective parents and professionals... are effective not because of what they do but because of the philosophical understandings they bring to the task. It is not so much a matter of strategy as it is a matter of approach... I have seen in such individuals, regardless of their economic or educational achievement, an intelligence and a dignity that pervades all that they do in the name of children, and it is neither transitory nor occasional" (1995).

Dr. Cárdenas went on to say that there are three elements to making power work for children: purposefulness, perspective and leadership. Individuals must be clear and united in their purpose as advocates for children. Their purpose must be aligned with their perspective of what needs to change. Finally, their leadership must be: "dedicated to the development, nurturance and maintenance of the group's strength: sharing information,

visibility and rewards generously and diligently...[They] must operate from a secure level of self-knowledge and knowledge of each other that will enable them to deal with the unfamiliar, ambiguous and rapidly changing situations with success" (1995).

This purposefulness, perspective and leadership permeates IDRA's work this past year with administrators, teachers and staff at a middle school in south Texas. IDRA launched the pilot test of its Professional Learning Community and Mentoring Model (PLCM) to create a successful school experience for children. Five content area teachers, one counselor and one social worker at the school formed the

professional learning community and mentoring group. They, in turn, became mentors for 16 migrant students, most of whom were also Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program tutors.

IDRA's Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program, when implemented as designed, reduces the dropout rate for students deemed at risk of dropping out and concurrently lowers absenteeism and disciplinary referrals, improves student self-concept and attitudes toward school, and increases academic achievement.

The Professional Learning Community and Mentoring Model was designed and researched as a

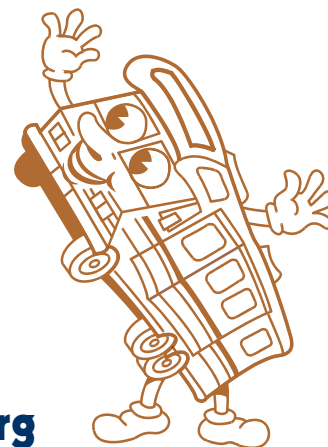
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#### On IDRA's Web Site

- ✧ Read related *IDRA Newsletter* articles from 1996 to the present
- ✧ Access statistics, definitions, etc.
- ✧ Learn about Internet resources
- ✧ See how IDRA can help you
- ✧ Use IDRA's topical index to find what you are looking for

**[www.idra.org](http://www.idra.org)**



planned variation of the Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program and centers on the program's valuing concepts and effective mentoring characteristics. With this planned variation, participating teachers are expected to develop greater competencies in instruction, self-knowledge and teamwork.

IDRA provided extensive research-based resources to the participants throughout the year in order to develop a collective grounding for the implementation of this learning community. One of those resources included the *SEDL Outcomes of Professional Learning Communities for Students and Staff* reports (Hord, 1997).

These reports have indicated that professional learning communities have improved outcomes for staff and for students. For staff, those improvements include:

- Reduction of teacher isolation,
- Increased commitment to and increased vigor to strengthen the mission and goals of the school,
- Shared responsibility for the total development of students and collective responsibility for students' success,
- Powerful learning that defines and creates new knowledge and beliefs about good teaching, learning and classroom practice,
- Increased understanding of the content that teachers teach and the roles that they play in all students' achievement,
- Teachers more likely to be well-informed, professionally renewed and inspired to inspire students,
- More satisfaction, higher morale and lower rates of absenteeism,
- Making teaching adaptations more quickly for students,
- Commitment to making significant and lasting changes, and
- Higher likelihood of undertaking fundamental, systemic change.

For students, the results

include:

- Decreased dropout rate and fewer classes "cut,"
- Lower rates of absenteeism,
- Increased learning that is distributed more equitably in smaller high schools,
- Larger academic gains in math, science, history and reading than in traditional schools, and
- Smaller achievement gaps between students from different backgrounds.

### Model Key Components

The key components of the model are as follows.

- **Students assigned to participating teachers** – Student tutors are scheduled in linked courses to the same content area teachers.
- **Team planning** – Teachers in team planning focus on tutors' success; during team planning, teachers, counselor and social worker (PLCM team) have collective discussions and bring in-depth understanding of students' problems and "check for understanding."
- **Mentoring** – Each teacher mentors, counsels and advocates for two to three tutors. Teachers and mentees meet weekly.
- **Professional Development** – Four retreats guided by IDRA also serve as teacher renewal.
- **Guided Reflection and Case Studies** – Teachers reflect on their mentees' issues and success.
- **Administrator support** – The middle school principal supports the learning community variation by allowing PLCM teachers to have the same planning period and allowing program tutors to be assigned to the PLCM teachers.
- **Teacher Compensation** – PLCM teachers are paid a stipend for participation in professional development retreats.
- **Content Area Focus** – PLCM teachers focus on any teaching

issues, such as competencies in English as a second language and sheltered instruction as well as connecting heuristics (natural knowledge) to content area.

### Findings and Reflections

The participants mapped out assisting and restraining forces in the establishment of a learning community. The *assisting* forces included community leaders and role models, extracurricular activities, teachers nurturing respect and politeness, communication and the Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program. The *restraining* forces included limited or negative expectations, student peer pressure, adult prejudice, and a stereotyping of English language learners and migrant families.

Case studies and guided reflection became an integral part of learning community process. Each focused conversation would key-in on four questions:

- How do you measure your students' progress?
- How is their English language development and fluency?
- How is their behavior and attendance in your class?
- How well are they learning the concepts in your class?

### Sharing of Content Knowledge and Peer Support

The Professional Learning Community and Mentoring Model allows for a sharing of content knowledge and peer support for students needing help in particular subjects. Following are comments from participants.

- "I think a prime example is... the math scores were kind of low... And so, we realized that it was an issue, and we said okay, we need to fix this... Okay, you're going to do math here... you're going to do math there... and everybody said okay. We're going to do it. And we're

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# Engagement Sounds, Sparks and Movements

## Intersections of Interest for Students and Families

by Aurelio M. Montemayor,  
M.Ed.

Parents present inter-disciplinary projects, students teach parents to use the Internet, families and teachers engage in dialogue, and parents and students testify at hearings. As they come together at these intersections, parents, students and teachers demonstrate how they engage assertively with verve and creativity. Here are a few examples.

### Parents Co-present

A small predominantly-Latino high school that has the tradition of campuswide, interdisciplinary projects involves families in developing and co-presenting projects with students each semester. The principal describes: "Schoolwide portfolio assessments and projects involving teachers, students and parents complement project-integrated instruction... In one recent semester, parents contributed 1,195 hours of volunteer work to the school. Parents give volunteer hours by attending meetings, events, celebrations, schoolwide projects and trainings" (López del Bosque, 2006).

### Students Teach Parents Technology

A community organization that is supporting parent leadership in

**Whether students and parents are in a classroom, a meeting or a public hearing, they must be active participants. The context must presume them to be intelligent agents, capable of contributing important and essential ideas.**

education brings together students and parents in a locally-developed computer center to explore the Internet for information on schools and other education-related topics: "The Youth Education Tekies have had many successes. They hold monthly meetings and provide continued assistance for adults on the use of computers. Students do classwork while young siblings play math games online. The community center has a cluster of donated computers and has upgraded from dial-up to a high-speed broadband connection. The center is an added barrio technology resource. The city public library is five miles away and has a constant waiting list for computer use, so this center is a good alternative. Following are more successes the Tekies have achieved:

- They co-planned and helped carry out a welcome for the newly-

appointed Latina president of the largest public university in the area. In preparation for this event, the students and parents studied the structure and offerings of the university online.

- Students who have been the language bridge for families who speak a language other than English are now also the connection to technology.
- Several of the Youth Education Tekies are officially on the PIRC [Texas IDRA Parent Information and Resource Center] advisory board.
- Most recently, the Youth Education Tekies participated in a conversation about dropout prevention. And a co-founder and representative of the group addressed a major conference, Graduation Guaranteed/*Graduación Garantizada*—Statewide Summit on School Holding Power, sponsored by IDRA and League of United Latin American Citizens. Alejandra "Maggie" Teran, a 10th grader, presented the views of the group on what schools need to do to increase their holding power. She received her first standing ovation." (Montemayor, 2006)

### Parents and Teachers in Dialogue

Non-English speaking parents and students participate in roundtable

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# Engagement-Based Sheltered Instruction

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

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

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

Topics that are addressed during the series include:

- ❖ Understanding Student English Language Proficiency Levels
- ❖ Understanding the Language Demands of the Content Areas, Texts and Tests
- ❖ Choosing Strategies that Address Student Language Levels
- ❖ Developing Student Academic Language in Content Areas

## Benefits

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

## Outcomes

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



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

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

## IDRA Support

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

## IDRA Will Address Your Specific Needs

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

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

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

## Sample Engagement-Based Sheltered Instruction Plan Tailored to District Needs

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

can influence students' willingness and ability to stay focused in the learning process. The number of suggestions in the literature on what teachers can do to engage students is extensive. This literature seems to be an important part of the pedagogical content knowledge base, or the knowledge of how to teach specific content areas. (University of Northern Iowa, 1999; Walqui, 2000)

The Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol model (Echevarria, et al., 2004; Center for Applied Linguistics, 2004), the most recent of several sheltered instruction approaches, provides a framework for effectively instructing English language learners that promotes engagement. The authors stress the importance of lesson delivery for engagement and describe three aspects of engagement: allocated time, engaged time and academic learning time as aspects of efficient and rigorous instruction (Echevarria, et al., 2004).

ESL literacy research (Kinsella, 2000 and 2006) similarly stresses rigorous student engagement. The author incorporates into her language and literacy training approach strategies for *structured learning engagement*.

The general and English language learner-specific sources cited above reveal contextual factors and teacher behaviors that are predictive of English language learner engagement that are pedagogical dimensions of English language learner instruction addressed in the EBSI model.

## **EBSI – Highlights of the Research-Base Model**

IDRA's Engagement-Based Sheltered Instruction model focuses on student engagement within sheltered instruction. The model was developed based on the literature that stresses its importance and on first-hand experiences that reveal the absence of substantive cognitive engagement

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# **Tools for**

## **Student Engagement Central to Success**

Studies have shown that greater student engagement increases academic achievement and encourages students' positive self-concept, to the point of reducing dropout rates (Brookhart and Durkin, 2003; Finn and Voelkl, 1993). 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. "Students who are engaged in learning are actively seeking meaningful information that makes sense in their lives – often because they see an immediate connection to real-life experiences" (Learning Point Associates, 2005). Whether engagement is used in the context of students being captivated during lessons by powerful learning opportunities or in the larger arena of activism, engagement is a vital part of academic success for students.

## **A Snapshot of What IDRA is Doing**

**Developing leaders** – IDRA has begun its Youth Education Tekies project in a second community (San Antonio) at two community-based organizations. In this project, 30 high school students are working with their parents and other community members wanting to learn to use technology and/or needing support for personal use (job applications, college access information, etc.). These "Tekies" have continued to meet, help adults at community-based technology centers, and also have access to computers and the Internet in neighborhoods where there are very few computers available outside of schools. This project is funded by the IDRA Texas Parent Information and Resource Center and JP Morgan Chase.

**Conducting research** – IDRA has developed a professional development model to help teachers engage English language learners. Through this training, teachers learn, reflect on use and adapt instructional strategies so that English language learners are engaged in the instructional process. See Pages 6 and 7 for more information.

**Informing policy** – IDRA's South Central Collaborative for Equity works to inform district policy to create classrooms that are safe and comfortable for all students. The center is the equity assistance center serving federal region VI (Arkansas, Louisiana, New Mexico, Oklahoma and Texas). It is working with several school districts to get them back into compliance with federal mandates around equity for all children regardless of race, gender or national origin.

*Tools for Action continued on next page*



# Action

**Engaging communities** – Recently, IDRA convened two Blueprint Dialogue roundtables in New Mexico and Arkansas that were highly successful in extending community and school leader interaction to urban and rural communities through a cross-sector and multiracial approach that focused on Latino and African American youth, preschool through graduation. Supported by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, the dialogues were action-focused and challenged leaders to plan specific strategies that would improve educational opportunities for all students, especially minority students. See <http://www.idra.org/mendezbrown> for more information.

## What You Can Do

**Get informed.** The High School Survey of Student Engagement can help you find out how engaged in learning students are in your school. This survey offers teachers and administrators actionable information on school characteristics that shape the student experience. HSSSE was completed by nearly 300,000 students from high schools across 29 states in 2004, 2005 and 2006. Find out how you can use the survey in your own school: <http://ceep.indiana.edu/hssse/>.

**Find out more.** The National Survey of Student Engagement has developed an inventory for student engagement that is a self-guided framework for conducting a comprehensive, systemic and institutionwide analysis. Get more information on *Assessing Conditions to Enhance Educational Effectiveness: The Inventory for Student Engagement and Success* at [http://bl-surv-george.ads.iu.edu/NSSE\\_INSTITUTE/?view=deep/book\\_flyer\\_2](http://bl-surv-george.ads.iu.edu/NSSE_INSTITUTE/?view=deep/book_flyer_2).

**Get results.** Use the tool, *Promoting Student Leadership on Campus: A Guide for Creating a Culture of Engagement*, to build a vision of engagement and student leadership on your campus. You can find the IDRA publication at [http://www.idra.org/option,com\\_virtuemart/Itemid,301/](http://www.idra.org/option,com_virtuemart/Itemid,301/). It is available for free download online.

Also, student engagement is strengthened when students' families are engaged with their schools. You can work with your school to create involvement strategies that are meaningful to families. See "Improving Educational Impact through Community and Family Engagement," by R.G. Rodríguez and A. Villarreal for suggestions, [http://www.idra.org/page,shop.product\\_details/flypage,shop.flypage/product\\_id,47/category\\_id,1/manufacture\\_id,0/option,com\\_virtuemart/Itemid,301/](http://www.idra.org/page,shop.product_details/flypage,shop.flypage/product_id,47/category_id,1/manufacture_id,0/option,com_virtuemart/Itemid,301/).

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in the instruction of English language learners. It is designed to more rigorously and strategically bring about desired learning. Following are some key components of the model.

## Tools for Observing Engagement

Observing for evidence of *student engagement* is a unique feature of the model. Observable student behaviors can be noted as evidence of student engagement. These have been organized into the following evidence categories: sense of community; use of language; concentration and focus; confidence in performance; and active involvement and independence. These behaviors are included in a set of indicators and are one part of the Student Engagement Observation Tool.

Observing for teachers making engagement happen is a second part of this observation tool. The sound pedagogy predictive of English language learner engagement was organized into dimensions containing specific indicators that can be observed as evidence of engagement-based instruction:

1. Classroom environment and learning context conducive to interaction;
2. Lesson preparation and delivery plans;
3. Teacher-student relationships that promote trust and high expectations;
4. Comprehensible content and language teaching (i.e., sheltered instruction);
5. Active-interactive experiences; and
6. Structured engagement tasks (or specific techniques for focused participation).

## Training and In-Class Support

This dynamic professional development focuses first on assessment of the current status of ESL teaching and levels of student engagement.

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Training and support are then offered to extend teachers' knowledge of second language acquisition principles and sheltered instruction and to develop insight and expertise in structuring content teaching for maximum student engagement.

Technology and assessment tools for engagement-based sheltered instruction are interwoven into the training and assistance that are part of this model. Areas of training and support include:

- Serving English Language Learners and Current Levels of Engagement;
- English Language Learner Needs and English Language Proficiency Levels;
- Understanding the Language Demands of the Content Area Classroom, Texts and Tests;
- Understanding Cognitive Engagement;
- Strategies for Comprehensible Content and Language;
- Planning, Teaching and Observing for Maximum Cognitive Engagement of English Language Learners; and
- Technology as a Tool for Student Engagement.

The Engagement-Based Sheltered Instruction model is helping teachers feel empowered to make a difference for English language learners, build trusting relationships with English language learners and, very importantly, present content in a comprehensible way to all students to be sure they are engaged. These are teachers who understand and act on the notion that *you can't win if you don't play*.

The IDRA EBSI professional development model is designed to accommodate each district's or school's unique needs with a combination of training sessions and individualized in-class assistance.

Contact IDRA at 210-444-1710 or [contact@idra.org](mailto:contact@idra.org) to learn more about how EBSI can help your teachers and

English language learners achieve academic success (see also Pages 6 and 7).

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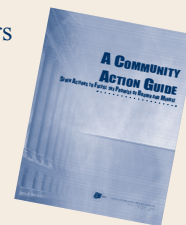
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## A Community Action Guide – Seven Actions to Fulfill the Promise of Brown and Mendez

By Dr. Rosana G. Rodríguez, Dr. Bradley Scott and Dr. Abelardo Villarreal

This booklet details seven critical actions community members can take to help fulfill the promise of *Brown vs. Board of Education* and *Mendez vs. Westminster* in the education of African American and Latino students. This booklet also includes a step-by-step tool for developing a blueprint for action in a local community. It presents an action planning process that navigates local participants through vision building, focused planning, local environmental scanning and constructing the actual blueprint for local action.



**\$12.50 or free online at [www.idra.org](http://www.idra.org)**

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Fax 210-444-1714; e-mail: [contact@idra.org](mailto:contact@idra.org). Shipping and handling is 10 percent of the total price of the order. Orders must be prepaid. Purchase orders for orders totaling more than \$30 are accepted.

dialogues with teachers and other educators, and then parent-student teams report in English and Spanish to the group at large on the dialogues: “Instead of ‘training’ parents on parenting skills, educators assume the role of conversational partners who listen to parents and their children as they respond to focused questions about themselves, their children and their concerns regarding schooling. These conversations, or circles of engagement, with parents have great potential for promoting parental support for learning and strengthening the home-school connection.” (McCollum, 2003)

## **Parents and Students Present Testimony**

Parents and students co-present at conferences and meetings on education issues: “The Texas hearing included four panels: student, parent, community and business. The largest panel at the hearing was the student panel, comprising college students and those from regular, charter, magnet and alternative high schools in different parts of the state. The recurring sentiment from students concerning NCLB [*No Child Left Behind Act*] was that they knew very little about it. Representatives on the parent panel expressed concern that they must deal with the stress standardized testing places on their children. Although NCLB mentions parents 240 times, panelists overwhelmingly felt that the federal government and school districts need to show, through action, that they respect and value parent involvement and contributions.” (IDRA, 2005)

Each of these examples is an activity that has brought students and parents together in meaningful, participatory activities requiring high level thinking skills. Each context draws on the assets of each participant and

enables each participant to contribute in a meaningful and thoughtful way.

We have seen that there are several critical conditions for meaningful parent and student engagement:

1. Situations where parents, students and educators each offer their strengths, experiences and dreams to the conversation or activity.
2. Each individual is assumed to be intelligent, competent and with an important set of values and experiences.
3. Tasks involve open-ended questions and tasks that require creativity and higher-order thinking to accomplish.
4. Activities and tasks are comprehensible and doable regardless of the literacy skills, educational background, language proficiency and economic class of the participants.
5. Facilitation of communication and small group task accomplishment is the norm rather than presentation through the transmission of information by an expert or the presentation by an interesting and/or entertaining speaker.
6. Outreach and invitation is centered on personal communication and the establishment and nurturing of relationships between school personnel and families.

Whether students and parents are in a classroom, a meeting or a public hearing, they must be active participants. The context must presume them to be intelligent agents, capable of contributing important and essential ideas.

The current direction of IDRA’s student engagement and parent leadership in education work runs counter to the idea that the teacher/leader’s role is to present ideas to passive and probably unknowing recipients. The commonly held view that most poor and minority parents must be lectured to or that they are something broken that needs to be

fixed, is permeated by the “banking” approach to education. This approach says the learner is a blank slate, and I, the educator/expert, must write information on it.

Students do need to learn but will learn most when their assets are acknowledged, drawn from and built on. Parents are not perfect, but they will flower most when their intelligence, experiences and work is validated and connected to.

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

## **Resources**

- IDRA. “Texans Testify on NCLB,” *IDRA Newsletter* (San Antonio, Texas: Intercultural Development Research Association, January 2005).
- López del Bosque, R. “Principal Shares Successes in Parent Involvement,” *IDRA Newsletter* (San Antonio, Texas: Intercultural Development Research Association, August 2006).
- McCollum, P. “Circles of Engagement a Different Take on Parent Involvement,” *IDRA Newsletter* (San Antonio, Texas: Intercultural Development Research Association, November-December 2003).
- Montemayor, A.M. “E-ruption! Bridging Language and Technology Educational Leadership,” *IDRA Newsletter* (San Antonio, Texas: Intercultural Development Research Association, March 2006).

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**14th Annual IDRA**

## ***La Semana del Niño***

# **Early Childhood Educators Institute™**

**April 24-26, 2007 • San Antonio, Texas • Airport Hilton**

### **Designed for**

- ❖ Early Childhood Educators
- ❖ Administrators
- ❖ Parents
- ❖ Parent Educators and Liaisons

The Annual IDRA *La Semana del Niño* Early Childhood Educators Institute offers a valuable series of information-packed professional development sessions that are customized to value and respond appropriately to the linguistic and cultural assets of a diverse student population.

### **Participants Will...**

- ❖ Examine the importance of early literacy for English language learners.
- ❖ Develop appropriate and culturally-relevant pedagogy.
- ❖ Explore research-based effective practices in early childhood education.

### **Centers of Learning**

- ❖ Visit sites with unique bilingual early childhood programs!
- ❖ Discover how they are sustaining success!
- ❖ Learn about best practices in action!

### **Building Quality Early Childhood Education**

This three-day institute will focus on pedagogy, curriculum and strategies. Scheduled sessions include building quality early childhood instruction, shared and guided reading, vocabulary development, fluency, comprehension, writing, math and science. Sessions are presented by early childhood educators, consultants and IDRA staff. These sessions will enable you to learn best practices and to receive tools that you can immediately use in your classroom. CPE credit is available. Topics to be addressed include:

- ❖ state requirements and policies
- ❖ practical, quality instruction
- ❖ effective school and home partnerships

Learn to create environments that encourage children to explore, experiment, question, wonder, create and play as they acquire literacy, numeracy and skills for school success. Educators and parents will have opportunity to see features of quality early childhood settings. Valuable tools for setting up centers of learning will be shared.

### **Keynoters**

#### **Dr. Rosalinda B. Barrera**



Rosalinda B. Barrera is dean of the College of Education at Texas State University-San Marcos. Previously, she was a faculty member and administrator at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign where she served as associate provost with responsibilities in diversity and educational access. There she also led

the Center for Democracy in a Multiracial Society (CDMS), a research, policy and outreach unit focused on promoting multidisciplinary and multicultural initiatives across the campus and community. A former classroom teacher and public school administrator, Barrera has a doctorate in curriculum and instruction, taught at New Mexico State University and has published two books and numerous professional articles addressing the language and literacy education of linguistically and culturally diverse learners.

#### **Dr. Elena Izquierdo**

Dr. Elena Izquierdo, associate professor, University of Texas at El Paso, is a linguist by training with a doctorate in linguistics and bilingual education from Georgetown University and is an educator in practice. Her research and professional specializations focus on second language acquisition theory and practice, biliteracy development, issues in the education of English language learners and school reform. In addition, she was the principal of a nationally-recognized two-way dual language elementary school in Washington, D.C., and became director for language minority affairs where she led the district into federal compliance in services to language-minority communities. She is an author and trainer for teachers and administrators.



**Institute Sponsors** – Supporting IDRA projects include the IDRA South Central Collaborative for Equity and the Texas IDRA PIRC (the parent information resource center).

**Registration and hotel information is available online at [www.idra.org](http://www.idra.org) or by calling IDRA at 210-444-1710.**



## Pre-Conference Institute

**Monday, April 23, 2007**

This special pre-conference institute is a trainer of trainers session for early childhood trainers, lead early childhood teachers and program directors. The session will be built on IDRA's unique training of trainers model, *WOW (Workshop on Workshops)*. The model uses research about adult learners and defines the trainer's role based on those assumptions. It includes principles of training, a process for planning a workshop including assessment needs, setting objectives, designing activities and structuring the workshop as a whole, and workshop evaluation. This pre-conference institute is designed to give you an extensive eight-hour training session in the skills to train others to build the foundation for preschool literacy.

Registration details are online at [www.idra.org](http://www.idra.org). Eight hours of CEU credit is available.

## Video Conference

**Wednesday, April 25, 2007**

### Partners for School Accountability

#### *Colaborando para la Responsabilidad Escolar*

This two-hour video conference is for parents and parent educators across Texas. Participants will share insights and experiences in this interactive session, conducted in English and Spanish, focusing on accountability under the *No Child Left Behind Act*.

To register your video conference site or to find a participating location near you, contact Lena Guerra at IDRA 210.444.1710.

## Parent Leadership Institute

**Thursday, April 26, 2007**

This interactive, bilingual institute will provide a forum for parents, parent liaisons and educators to discuss the important leadership role for parents in children's school success. This institute provides wonderful networking opportunities for families.

# Highlights of Recent IDRA Activities

In January, IDRA worked with **5,117** teachers, administrators, parents, and higher education personnel through **45** training and technical assistance activities and **121** program sites in **13** states plus Brazil. Topics included:

- ◆ Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program
- ◆ Effectively Engaging All English Language Learners
- ◆ Five Essential Components of Scientific-Based Reading
- ◆ *Brown and Mendez* Blueprint Dialogues for Action
- ◆ Legislative Briefing on the Texas Dropout Crisis

Participating agencies and school districts included:

- ◆ Brownsville Independent School District (ISD), Texas
- ◆ East Baton Rouge Parish, Louisiana
- ◆ Santa Monica-Malibu Unified School District, California

## Activity Snapshot

The Intercultural Development Research Association has been working with several schools to redesign and re-energize their reading programs to be more responsive to the characteristics of their diverse learners. In this three-year IDRA reading program, known as FLAIR (Focusing on Language and Academic Instructional Renewal), IDRA provides technical assistance that includes classroom demonstrations and observations of effective teaching strategies, coaching for success, nurturing of innovations, and guidance for finding funding options. FLAIR capitalizes on each school's strengths to increase reading scores, weave reading throughout the curriculum and recapture students' love of reading. The participants have become reinvigorated by this new instructional method that is based on three principles: active involvement, validating students and guidance.

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.*

doing it! Ms. L. is helping me teach math.”

- “It’s not whether you taught three years or 33 years, because you can teach one year 33 times.”
- “It is not about me succeeding; it is about all of us succeeding.”
- “The most important aspect of this program is that it focuses on the students... on what they are doing, how they are doing it; it deals with both academic and home issues.”
- “You actually have time for reflection. You have discussions about the end of the day, and not only about the individuals but also as an educator, what am I doing to help these kids.”

## Student Feedback

Participating teachers are affirmed by their students’ success and their students’ feedback:

- “I had the kids write an essay about what they like and don’t like to do in science. It was going to be fun reading them, but I never expected to see several essays saying that they like the way I teach, the way I explain things, and that if they don’t understand it, I go back and make sure they understand.”
- “You feel that you are touching their lives; you are making a difference. And that is what teaching is, you want to make a difference.”

## Checking for Understanding

Participating teachers now take the time to “check for understanding” with their students and help build their students’ confidence:

- “Another student... He’s one of our special students... I knew he had a question but he didn’t ask me...I told him, ‘Why didn’t you ask me how to do it?’ I have a sign in my room ... ‘If you never ask a question, you will never know the answer.’ So I told him, ‘Look, read

## The most important aspect of this program is that it focuses on the students... on what they are doing, how they are doing it; it deals with both academic and home issues.

that sign’... Yesterday he came up to ask me a question, and I’m like, ‘Oh, awesome.’ I guess he feels confident to come and ask me... And I felt really good; it’s just like one of those awesome moments.”

## Seeing Student Gifts

Teachers have learned to see the gifts and talents their students bring with them and to tap those for academic success:

- “How can we look at them [students] in such a way that we start helping them see the array of their gifts and talents and how those connect very specifically to decisions I make in the classroom? Because we all know that no matter how we plan it, things will change or something will just not work with some kids and will work with others.”

IDRA is expanding its Professional Learning Community and Mentoring Model this year with all of the middle school content area teachers participating. Initial findings are even more promising with teachers, staff and administrators realizing their individual and collective power to make schools work for children.

## Resources

- Cárdenas, J.A. *Multicultural Education: A Generation of Advocacy* (Needham Heights, Mass.: Simon and Schuster Custom Publishing, 1995).
- Center on English Learning and Achievement. “Teachers Share Their Views About Effective Professional Development,” *English Update* (Albany, N.Y.: CELA, Winter 2002) <http://cela.albany.edu/newslet/winter02/win02.pdf>.

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Pearce, K.L., and K. Gusso, L. Schroeder, R. Speirs, J. Zwaskha. “The Impact of a Teacher Learning Community on School Climate,” *Journal of School Improvement* (2002).

Roffman, J.G., and J.E. Rhodes, J.B. Grossman. *An Overview of School-Based Mentoring* (2002).

Russo, A. “School-Based Coaching: A revolution in professional development – or just the latest fad?” *Harvard Education Letter* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Graduate School of Education, July/August 2004).

Sweeny, B. *Defining the Distinctions Between Mentoring & Coaching* (Wheaton, Il.: Best Practices Resources, 2001).

Thompson, S.C., and L. Gregg, J.M. Niska. “Professional Learning Communities, Leadership, and Student Learning,” *Research in Middle Level Education Online* (Springfield, Mo.: Missouri State University, 2004). <http://www.nmsa.org/Publications/RMLEOnline/tabid/101/Default.aspx>.

Tinto, Vincent. “Learning Better Together: The Impact of Learning Communities on Student Success,” *Promoting Student Success in College* (nd) <http://www.mcli.dist.maricopa.edu/fsd/c2006/docs/learningbettertogether.pdf>.

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Aurelio M. Montemayor, M.Ed, is an IDRA senior education associate and director of the Texas IDRA Parent Information and Resource Center. Josie D. Cortez, M.A., is an IDRA senior education associate. Comments and questions may be directed to them via e-mail at [comment@idra.org](mailto:comment@idra.org).

# Community Engagement Toolkit

## Hacia Adelante ~ Pathways to College ~ A Guide for Latino Families

Informs parents and students on how to plan together for college. This guide provides basic information on college and a planning workbook that includes steps for choosing high school courses, selecting a college or university, financial planning, and an action calendar. (ISBN: 1-878550-72-1; 46 Pages, 2002) \$7 or free online at [www.idra.org](http://www.idra.org).

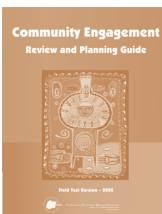


## Hacia Adelante ~ Pathways to College ~ Una Guía para Familias Latinas

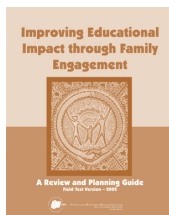
Spanish-language version of the above publication. Informs parents and students on how to plan together for college. This guide includes steps for choosing high school courses, selecting a college or university, financial planning, and an action calendar. (ISBN: 1-878550-72-3; 46 Pages; 2002) \$7 or free online at [www.idra.org](http://www.idra.org).

## Community Engagement Review and Planning Guide – Field Test Version

This guide is designed to help schools and universities in planning and strengthening community engagement. The guide includes a school-community engagement rubric covering eight categories along with analysis and planning worksheets in each of the categories for monitoring progress. (No ISBN; 15 Pages, 2002) \$6 or free online at [www.idra.org](http://www.idra.org). Also available in Spanish (*El Compromiso de la Comunidad Guía de Revisión y Planificación – Versión para Someter a Prueba*).

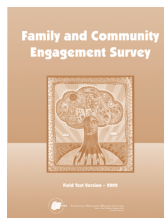


## Improving Educational Impact Through Family Engagement – A Review and Planning Guide



This tool helps to foster meaningful and lasting educational impact through mechanisms for engagement with parents and families. It provides helpful ideas to address the most significant barriers to parent involvement that have been reported in the literature in K-12 programs. The guide gives ideas for each barrier to achieve a greater vision of engagement and offers planning guides to see how your school is addressing each barrier and what can be done for the future. It can be used with school personnel in conjunction with parents. (No ISBN; 15 Pages, 2002) \$6 or free online at [www.idra.org](http://www.idra.org). Also available in Spanish (*Mejoramiento del Impacto Educativo a Través del Compromiso Familiar – Guía de Revisión y Planificación – Versión de Someter a Prueba*).

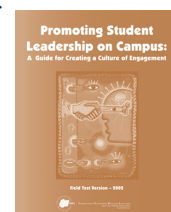
## Family and Community Engagement Survey



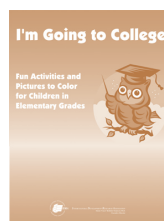
This survey can be used by teachers, administrators and parents to assess a school's effectiveness in partnering with families and communities. It is a useful tool for planning strategies that are clustered around four domains: (a) student achievement; (b) access and equity; (c) organizational support; and (d) quality of interaction. The questions and ideas used in the guide are gleaned from the literature on effective partnering with communities and families. (No ISBN; 12 Pages, 2002) \$5 or free online at [www.idra.org](http://www.idra.org). Also available in Spanish (*Encuesta de Participación de la Familia y la Comunidad – Versión de Prueba de Campo*).

## Promoting Student Leadership on Campus: A Guide for Creating a Culture of Engagement

This is a helpful guide for creating a culture of engagement that includes student voices in the educational change process. Students can help keep the focus clear in planning for academic success. This booklet offers ways to involve students in decision making and supporting meaningful student leadership. It also provides a way to measure success and plan activities that recognize and value students for their contributions by analyzing what is working, what is holding us back and what can be improved. (No ISBN; 15 Pages, 2002) \$6 or free online at [www.idra.org](http://www.idra.org).



## I'm Going to College – Fun Activities and Pictures to Color for Children in Elementary Grades



This is a fun activity book for early elementary children. It is designed to foster interest in going to college. The booklet for children and parents includes puzzles, word games, connect-the-dots, mazes, word scrambles and coloring pages aimed at ages four to 10. (No ISBN; 17 Pages, 2002) \$7 or free online at [www.idra.org](http://www.idra.org). Also available in Spanish (*Voy al Colegio – Actividades y hojas de colorear para niños de grados primarias*).

## In Our Voices

This two-part video and discussion guide focuses on the topics of access, leadership, and community engagement. This beautiful video uses word and song as a vehicle for hearing student voices regarding higher education access. It is designed for use with students, administrators or faculty in small group discussions or in classroom settings. Available from IDRA (No ISBN; 45 minute video/40 Pages; 2002; VHS; \$35).



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– Dr. Adela Solis discusses common misconceptions about educating migrant students and strategies educators need to use to serve them successfully.



#### **Episode 6: "The Need for Cross-Race, Cross-Sector Dialogues"**

– Dr. Rosana Rodríguez and Frances Guzmán join Dr. Bradley Scott, director of the IDRA South Central Collaborative for Equity, to discuss

how this cross-sector and multiracial dialogue approach is creating lasting partnerships between African American and Latino communities, using education as common ground for collaboration.



#### **Episode 5: "School Holding Power for Every Child"**

– Dr. María "Cuca" Robledo Montecel, IDRA's executive director, discusses the essence of the problem of weak school holding power and what can be done to guarantee graduation for every student.



#### **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.



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