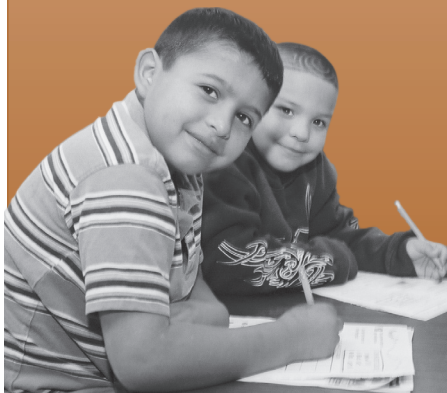




**Inside this Issue:**

- ✦ **Serving immigrant children**
- ✦ **How parent engagement means more than meetings**
- ✦ **New online tool for school-community teams**

**IDRA is Moving!**



## **Uncompromising Expectations for Graduating All Students**

### **IDRA Principles Regarding Graduation and Accountability**

**by Albert Cortez, Ph.D.**

The U.S. Congress is currently in the midst of deliberations about re-authorization of the latest version of the federal government's major education legislation, currently known as the *No Child Left Behind Act*. In addition to recommending funding for individual states for programs, such as Title I, the legislation usually incorporates changes or additions to existing federal policies that impact public education at the state, district and even the local school levels.

Current debates surrounding NCLB policies regarding state accountability for student achievement are one example of the tremendous affect that national policy can have on local educational efforts.

An important new issue that is emerging involves adding new provisions related to high school graduation. This is a departure from prior efforts that tended to be limited to reporting of high school dropout rates, which were in turn used to assess state progress and trigger accountability-related consequences.

The expansion of federal oversight

areas to include consideration of high school graduation rates is considered an important positive expansion of existing federal reporting and accountability requirements.

As important as the determination of the number and type of students who drop out are measures to inform and target intervention priorities. All stakeholders, including policymakers, educators, parents and community leaders, can benefit from access to information about the number and characteristics of students who graduate from high school.

While in an earlier era completion of high school was not a critical prerequisite to a good quality of life in this country, current workplace demands and a competitive world economy make high school graduation the new minimum requirement for accessing the American dream.

The current policy debates center on how much graduation-related information should be collected, how it should be verified and how it might be best used to motivate states, districts and schools to make graduation of all students a greater and more urgent priority.

*IDRA Principles – continued on Page 2*

In the past, getting accurate and verifiable estimates of the number of students who graduate from high school has encountered a whole array of resistance. This has included reporting of dropout rates that were considered by most to be inaccurate, unreliable and sometimes even misleading.

Thus, we can expect the federal efforts to generate valid reporting of state, school district and local school graduation rates to encounter extensive resistance that will emerge in varying forms.

For example, some will argue that it is unrealistic and unreasonable to expect schools to graduate *all students* who enter high school. Barring very exceptional circumstances, however, who gets to decide which students should be excluded from graduation?

Though mouthing the belief that *all students* can learn, the state of Texas contradicted its stance by setting a target that no more than 5 percent of its students would drop out of high school, implying that a 95 percent graduation rate was an acceptable maximum. This

## These principles are based on the concept that all – not 95 percent or 90 percent – but *all students* should graduate from high school.

raises the question of which children are to be excluded from the state’s graduation target.

At the federal level some plans call for an even more diluted 90 percent graduation target. And even this is opposed by some as being an unreasonable expectation.

Another critical example involves how states and school districts will be required to validate transfer student re-enrollment, a critical piece of information needed to calculate a local high school graduation rate for an entering freshmen class. Some favor a mere “assurance” from school officials that a student has indicated *intent* to transfer – without actual verification of the student’s re-enrollment in another high school.

Some current proposals require more stringent procedures, yet even those often stop short of written and certified evidence of re-enrollment. Such laxity of transfer verification

requirements has been a major factor in making the existing Texas system of dropout calculation (which reports less than a 2.6 percent state dropout rate) non-credible among state policymakers, community groups and many educators.

As the federal policy around graduation counting and reporting and use in accountability procedures evolves, IDRA offers a set of key principles (see Page 10), gleaned from past lessons learned, to assess these new efforts. These principles are based on the concept that all – not 95 percent or 90 percent – but *all students* should graduate from high school and that all steps necessary should be taken to assure a credible and verifiable determination of movement toward that objective.

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

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# Educating America's Immigrant Children Policies, Challenges and Answers

by Josie Danini Cortez, M.A.

## The Challenge

This country's challenge is not, as some believe, that we have too many immigrant children in our schools. Our challenge is that many of our schools do not know how to best educate immigrant children.

In the United States today, there are more than 5.1 million children under the age of six whose parents are undocumented. One in five children is enrolled in K-12 schools, and it is expected that they will represent 25 percent of the K-12 student population four years from now. Most school-age children of immigrants are highly concentrated in six states (California, Florida, Illinois, New Jersey, New York and Texas). In 2000, almost half (47 percent) of California's school-age children were children of immigrants (Fix and Capps, 2005).

Over the last 10 years, four cities – Atlanta, Charlotte, Las Vegas and Omaha – have had more immigrant children enroll in their schools than any other city. These and other schools find themselves with administrators and teachers unable to serve the 7 million Spanish-speaking and 1.5 million Asian-language-speaking children and families.

These immigrant families are no different than most of this country's

**Children of undocumented immigrants have a right to a free public education and cannot be discriminated against for the color of their skin or the language they speak.**

immigrants throughout our history. They are mostly poor, have few English language skills and are unfamiliar with our school system.

And like immigrants before them, our recent immigrants are often subjected to discrimination and injustice. Whether it has been the internment of Japanese Americans during World War II or Irish children laboring in New York sweatshops, immigrant families often have had to overcome significant barriers.

In today's schools, most English language learners find themselves in large urban schools, linguistically and culturally isolated, with principals and teachers lacking the skills and experience to help them achieve. This lack of preparation and support is most evident in schools with high concentrations of English language learners. Most are failing their students academically.

And like immigrants before them, our recent immigrants bring

immeasurable contributions to this country. When schools embrace and nurture the language and culture of immigrant children, the country reaps the benefits of diversity. Sixty percent of U.S. top science students and 65 percent of the top mathematics students are the children of immigrants. Stuart Anderson in *The Multiplier Effect* (2004) found that half of the 2004 U.S. Math Olympiad top scorers, one third of the U.S. Physics Team, and one quarter of the Intel Science Talent Search finalists were all children of immigrants.

How do school administrators and teachers, most of whom were children of immigrants themselves, do what is right and what is needed for immigrant children?

## The Answer

Part of the answer lies in states and schools following this country's federal laws. Children of undocumented immigrants have a right to a free public education and cannot be discriminated against for the color of their skin or the language they speak.

Twenty-five years ago, in *Plyler vs. Doe* (457 U.S. 202, 1982), the U.S. Supreme Court ruled 5-4 that "aliens" are recognized as persons and guaranteed due process by the Fifth and Fourteenth Amendments: "He... is entitled to the equal protection

*Immigrant Children* – continued on Page 4

of the laws that a State may choose to establish.”

In *Lau vs. Nichols*, the courts ruled that providing the same all-English educational programs to children who were not fluent in English was unlawful. As a result, public schools must provide an education to all children, including undocumented immigrant children. Dr. José A. Cárdenas (IDRA founder and director emeritus) and IDRA played a critical role in this and other court decisions, providing expert testimony and key resources.

Reflecting on this work, Dr. Cárdenas wrote: “I consider my participation in the undocumented immigrant children litigation as one of the most satisfying educational experiences of my life. It exemplifies the altruistic nature of IDRA and its staff. I was asked frequently what hidden strategy underlined our participation in the suits, and how such participation related to some master plan. There was no hidden strategy; there was no master plan. The undocumented children were being abused by the educational system of Texas, and as advocates for children we came to their aid.” (1995)

The court decisions led state education agencies and schools to change the way they served undocumented children. Schools had to identify English language learners and evaluate a student’s language skills and academic achievement in both languages, providing them with an education that would enable them to achieve academic success.

While this is the law of the land, some states have passed policies that make it difficult, if not impossible, to follow *Plyler vs. Doe*. Six years ago, Arizona passed the nation’s strictest English-only instruction policy. Proposition 203 imposed restrictions on the use of immigrant children’s first language in the classroom. One out of five children could not speak their home language in classrooms, nor were they

**“The undocumented children were being abused by the educational system of Texas, and as advocates for children we came to their aid.”**

**– Dr. José A Cárdenas, IDRA founder and director emeritus, on why IDRA was involved in *Lau vs. Nichols* (1995).**

provided comprehensible instruction. Arizona children had to sink or swim, and most sunk.

A study by Jeff McSwan at Arizona State University found that 89 percent of immigrant children who scored non-proficient in 2003 were still not proficient in English a year later. Here is state policy that results in an 89 percent failure rate. As McSwan points out, state policies that restrict “teachers’ use of immigrant children’s first language as an instructional resource are rooted in politics and ideology” (2006).

Solving a school’s failure rate must begin with a clear understanding of the law and with policies that are crafted in the best interest of all children. The proof this effort works will ultimately lie in change—a change in state policies, a change in classrooms with better prepared and supported teachers, a change in immigrant children’s life chances.

This is a particularly polarizing, divisive time in U.S. history. Amazingly, despite the fact that this country was founded by immigrants, despite the fact that “we are all immigrants... Some of us just got here sooner” (2006), despite all that we know, we find ourselves defending rights that were long ago fought for and established.

Immigrant children have rights, and if we are not vigilant, those rights will be denied, and we will all pay the price for the loss.

We are paying for it now, with unskilled workers, with poverty

increasing while a few get richer, with words and acts that dehumanize people.

Perhaps Bishop Thomas Wenski said it best: “When we consider a human being as a problem, we depersonalize him, we offend his human dignity. When we allow any class of human beings to be categorized as a problem, then we give ourselves permission to look for solutions. And as the history of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century has proven, sometimes we look for final solutions.” (2006-07)

If we begin with the youngest and the most vulnerable, our immigrant children, and give them the education they need to succeed, then this country stands a chance. For our power has always come from our diversity and the innovation, pride and strength that it brings.

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# Getting 30 Warm Bodies to the Meeting? Parent Engagement is More than This!

by **Aurelio M. Montemayor, Ed.D.**

As a presenter was preparing his presentation on meaningful parent engagement to meet Title I requirements, he overheard several parent liaisons talking about their work: "I've got to get food and door prizes, otherwise they won't come!" "We sent bilingual notices with the children, and only 10 showed up." "If I get the kids to perform, the parents show up, but if we have a meeting afterwards... the children running up to the families are a great distraction." "I feel I really succeed in parent involvement if I get 30 warm bodies in the room for the meeting."

Not only are these opinions passé, the intentions reflected in them do not help parent involvement staff meet the requirements of the law.

For purposes of illustration below, two major points of view are divided into the old and the new paradigm of parent engagement.

## The Old Paradigm

Certain traditions and regularities have become part of school parent involvement. These are not necessarily negative or damaging, but they do cluster together under certain unifying views. Parent participation can be organized around several concepts:

- Volunteers and free labor for an understaffed, under funded and overextended school;
- Participants in hobbies and enjoyable activities such as crocheting, decoupage and aerobics; and
- Course attendees for self-improvement, such as English as a second language, citizenship class

*Parent Engagement – continued on Page 6*

## Sample Title I Tasks from Texas

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

**School-Parent Compact** – Every Title I school must have a compact developed and approved by parents that spells out how the school and parents will build a partnership to improve student achievement.

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

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

**Public school choice and supplemental services** – Families whose children are attending schools that are not making adequate progress can request a transfer to schools that are achieving AYP. Another option is to request supplemental services for their children.

**State Review of Parent Involvement Compliance** – If there is major non-compliance with the NCLB requirements, parents can request that the state education agency visit and review the status of the district. Even though this is an extreme measure and requires more time and effort from the community, it can serve as a wake-up call for the school and district to have true and meaningful parent engagement.

Source: Texas Education Agency. *An Administrator's Abbreviated Checklist NCLB—Parental Involvement* (Austin, Texas: Texas Education Agency, 2006).

and driver's license preparation.

We have several generations of professionals who are parent involvement specialists. Their positions are mostly funded through the federal *No Child Left Behind Act*. Many come from having been parent volunteers who were rewarded by the school by hiring them as parent liaisons.

The traditions mentioned above are part of the weekly tasks and activities of many family liaisons. They set-up craft groups that knit, collage or otherwise create objects for raising funds or simply for personal enjoyment. Fundraising for the school, inherited from older parent organizations, continues to prevail.

In all these activities, family participation has reflected community interests, priorities, accessibility and affordable time. Many of the very successful family involvement personnel in this mainstream are dynamic, go-getting and charismatic. These family involvement leaders create a strong following and dependence from poor and minority families. Sometimes these same popular leaders are patronizing and condescending toward families, especially families that are poor, minority or speak a language other than English.

These points of view have little room for perceiving the parent as co-creator of an excellent education for all children. Even loving statements about parents, from these traditions, cast them as naïve, child-like and in need of guidance and correction.

## **The New Paradigm**

Parent engagement as proposed and carried out by IDRA (and that coincides quite well with the spirit of Section 1118 of the Title I regulations) is in a different realm than the traditions listed above. Effective parent engagement to meet the letter of the law presumes a very different view of

# **Tools for**

## **Enlightened Public Policy**

Enlightened public policy provides both the appropriate standards and the resources schools need to serve all children. As such, IDRA's Quality Schools Action Framework outlined by Dr. María "Cuca" Robledo Montecel positions enlightened public policy as one of three levers of change, along with engaged citizens and accountable leadership, to strengthen school holding power and secure student success. For effectiveness, policymaking must reflect sound, accurate information about schooling, and it must reflect the voice and will of parents, community members and educators as leaders in opening paths for all students' futures.

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

**Developing leaders** – The IDRA South Central Collaborative for Equity collaborated with the Office for Civil Rights, Dallas office and the Texas Education Agency to host a regional training conference on the Unlawful Harassment of Students in Educational Programs. IDRA SCCE and the OCR disseminated a technical assistance package on the law. While almost 300 educators attended from approximately 78 districts, the state department established selected statewide feeds via technology through its educational service centers of selected sessions around the state to enable those who could not attend the conference to benefit from the important presentations that impact policy under Titles IX, VI and Section 504.

**Conducting research** – IDRA's Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program has a 23-year track record of success that has been supported by rigorous research and evaluation. Designed and implemented by IDRA, the Coca Cola Valued Youth Program is a dropout prevention program in which secondary school students who are considered at risk of dropping out of school are placed as tutors of elementary school students. Quantitative and qualitative measures are used throughout the school year. This last school year (2006-07), the program worked with 2,104 U.S. students (526 tutors and 1,578 tutees) and 4,200 students in Brazil (1,050 tutors and 3,150 tutees). Research shows that the program has maintained a less than 2 percent dropout rate.

**Informing policy** – The American Civil Liberties Union contracted with IDRA to conduct a thorough review of the education records for all plaintiffs, analyze teaching credentials of the Hutto instructional staff, read 28 additional documents submitted by ACLU and observe the classrooms of the T. Don Hutto Family Detention Center this past summer. A final activity was to submit a written report on the findings. Specifically, the observations served

*Tools for Action continued on next page*

# Action

to review current educational practices, materials, resources and interactions among teachers and students and to ascertain whether the educational program at Hutto was in compliance with Texas education standards and requirements for the instruction of immigrant English language learners. While there was an attempt by the Hutto facility and staff to follow standards for the required instruction of English language learners, as well as to comply with the minimum Texas curriculum standards, the formal observations, review of the documents and discussion with the principal, led to the conclusion that the instructional program at Hutto was not meeting the needs of its students. Prior settlement agreements on the education of immigrant children were not being followed. The report outlined three different options for addressing the deficiencies found in the instructional program and specified more than 28 recommendations. The case was settled before going to trial. Many of the specific recommendations were included as part of the settlement agreement.

**Engaging communities** – IDRA presented a parent institute at the Texas Association for Bilingual Education conference that was held in San Antonio in October. The bilingual institute revolved around three themes: bilingual education, parent leadership and plans for advocacy. This institute engaged parents to list and prioritize the strongest defenses for bilingual education programs, define leadership for bilingual education and to develop a plan of action that advocates for limited-English-proficient students. Parents learned that their voices and actions will make a difference in advocating for their children’s bilingual education programs.

## What You Can Do

**Get informed.** The Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund (MALDEF) has created a pamphlet entitled, “Know Your K-12 Education Rights: The Federal Education Rights of Students and Their Families.” This valuable resource informs students and their parents of their federal rights in U.S. public schools. A few important issues in this pamphlet include: the rights of immigrant students to equal access to K-12 public school programs, the right to be free from unlawful discrimination, and English language learners’ right to receive an appropriate education. For more information, visit [http://www.maldef.org/pdf/MALDEF\\_FederalEducationRightsPamphlet.pdf](http://www.maldef.org/pdf/MALDEF_FederalEducationRightsPamphlet.pdf).

**Get results.** Visit IDRA’s School Holding Power Portal (<http://www.idra.org/portal>) to: (1) assess your high school’s dropout rates; (2) find out how well schools are holding on to students and preparing them for college; and (3) partner and take action to strengthen schools. See Page 11 for more information.

*Parent Engagement – continued from Page 6*

parents and their role in education.

This difference is dramatically highlighted in the key parent pieces in the statute: (1) School Parent Involvement Policy; (2) Parent-School Compact; (3) District-wide and Campus Policy; (4) Report Cards; (5) Public School Choice and Supplemental Educational Services; and (6) State Review of Parent Involvement Compliance.

Each of the above requirements attests to the change in direction for parent involvement. None of these can be complied with by increasing the traditional parent volunteer and fundraising activities. Evening classes for parents, though beneficial, will not meet the requirements unless the topic is the requirements themselves.

All of the Title I mandates are focused directly on the *academic success of children*. They rightly recognize that parents are vitally interested in that topic. Below are examples.

- Developing and approving *policy* requires dialogue and critical thinking. A meeting for this purpose must have parents present and participating.
- *School-family compact* requires parents coming together to determine their responsibilities and agreements with the school to ensure the academic success of their children, while also listing what is expected of the school.
- *Report cards* present critical information to parents and engage them in the status of their children in school.
- *Public school choice and supplementary educational services* empower parents to make informed decisions about their children’s effective instruction.
- Inviting the state educational agency to ensure parent involvement *compliance* is a dramatic opportunity for parents

*Parent Engagement – continued on Page 8*

to request that the state monitor the school district and their children's schools.

## New Paradigm Requirements

Each of these examples necessitates school personnel – and very specifically parent liaisons – to communicate directly and effectively with families. The locus is the family and, therefore, requires personal outreach, home visits, multiple settings for meetings and seeking creative ways to inform families who, because of work and other circumstances, are not able to attend an evening meeting on campus.

As stated by López, et al.: “A home-school relationship should be a *co-constructed* reciprocal activity in which both the agency and sense of efficacy of parents, and the involvement opportunities provided by schools and other institutions that work with children are important” (2005).

In a Latino neighborhood, it might be that the key parent volunteers are the center of a *comadre* network, with each one acknowledged and validated for the number of other families they communicate directly with about school matters and events. These secondary contacts are in turn encouraged and supported in developing their own networks of parents for the same purposes.

## From “Some” to “All”

Each NCLB parent involvement policy point requires a parent engagement approach that recognizes intelligence, critical thinking, informed decision-making and assertiveness in demanding the highest quality of education for children. And though this policy is aimed at economically disadvantaged parents,

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

Here are key points from a research synthesis authored by Anne T. Henderson and Karen L. Mapp, published by Southwest Educational Development Laboratory.

## Key Findings about Impact

**Many forms of family and community involvement influence student achievement at all ages.**

- Programs and interventions that engage families in supporting their children's learning at home are linked to improved student achievement. *Epstein, Simon and Salinas (1997); Jordan, Snow and Porche (2000); Starkey and Klein (2000)*
- The more families support their children's learning and educational progress, both in quantity and over time, the more their children tend to do well in school and continue their education. *Miedel and Reynolds (1999); Sanders and Herting (2000); Marcon (1999)*
- Families of all cultural backgrounds, education and income levels can and often do have a positive influence on their children's learning. *Ho Sui-Chu and Willms (1996); Shaver and Walls (1998); Clark (1993)*
- Family and community involvement that is linked to student learning has a greater effect on achievement than more general forms of involvement. *Invernizzi, Rosemary, Richards and Richards (1997); Dryfoos (2000); Clark (2002)*

## Key Findings about Making Connections

**When programs and initiatives focus on building respectful and trusting relationships among school staff, families and community members, they are more effective in creating and sustaining connections that support student achievement.**

- Programs that successfully connect with families and community invite involvement, are welcoming, and address specific parent and community needs. *Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1997); Sanders and Harvey (2000); Peña (2000)*
- Parent involvement programs that are effective in engaging diverse families recognize cultural and class differences, address needs and build on strengths. *Scribner, Young and Pedroza (1999); Chrispeels and Rivero (2000); López (2001)*
- Effective connections embrace a philosophy of partnership where power is shared – the responsibility for children's educational development is a collaborative enterprise among parents, school staff and community members. *Wang, Oates and Weishew (1997); Smrekar, et al. (2001); Moore (1998)*
- Organized initiatives to build parent and community leadership aimed at improving low-performing schools are growing and leading to promising results in low-income urban areas and the rural South. *Mediratta, Fruchter and Lewis (2002); Jacobs and Hirota (2002); Wilson and Corbett (2000)*

*A New Wave of Evidence* is available free online at as full-text PDF at <http://www.sedl.org/cgi-bin/pdfxit.cgi?url=http://www.sedl.org/connections/resources/evidence.pdf>



Parent Engagement – continued on Page 8

these assumptions are already made about middle-class, professional and formally educated parents. These assumptions, applied to *all* parents, are the paradigm shift.

## Resources

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Montemayor, A.M. "IDRA's Family Leadership Principles," *IDRA Newsletter* (San Antonio, Texas: Intercultural Development Research Association, September 2007).

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**Each NCLB parent involvement policy point requires a parent engagement approach that recognizes intelligence, critical thinking, informed decision-making and assertiveness in demanding the highest quality of education for children.**

Requirements," *IDRA Newsletter* (San Antonio, Texas: Intercultural Development Research Association, January 2007).

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## Highlights of Recent IDRA Activities

In September, IDRA worked with **5,219** teachers, administrators, parents, and higher education personnel through **43** training and technical assistance activities and **71** program sites in **11** states plus Brazil. Topics included:

- ◆ Coaching and Mentoring Training for New and Beginning Teachers
- ◆ Math Smart! and Science Smart!: Equity, Access, and Possibilities for All Students
- ◆ Solutions to the Texas Dropout Crisis: A Focus on Student Engagement

Participating agencies and school districts included:

- ◆ Detroit Public Schools, Detroit
- ◆ Kansas City, Missouri School District, Missouri
- ◆ Fort Worth Independent School District, Texas

### Activity Snapshot

IDRA worked 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 their students. Each of the teachers mentored and advocated for three students who needed an educator in their lives who believes in them and their capacity for learning and success. This emerging professional community met regularly to work together, sharing and exchanging insights about their students, developing strategies for success, and sharing in their responsibility for students. IDRA helped to guide them throughout the year with the best research, the best thinking and the best practices available. The result was a transformation of adults who see youth as valuable and capable and youth who know that someone cares about them and is committed to their success. And the students started with lower scores and reached higher scores in reading than the comparison group.

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.

## IDRA Principles

# Uncompromising Expectations for Graduating All Students

Every year, we are losing more than 1.2 million young people from U.S. schools prior to their graduation. One student is lost from public school enrollment every two minutes. The dropout crisis persists at tremendous cost to individual students, families, communities and the nation.

We must move from a low and archaic expectation that only some of our country's students can successfully graduate from high school to a guarantee that all of our students will graduate. It is time to change course. We call upon the country to take immediate action to address this issue, based on the following principles.

**Principle 1:** All students enrolled in U.S. schools should be expected, and must be supported, to graduate from high school with a regular high school diploma in four years.

**Principle 2:** At the federal level, we must create credible system to accurately account for the educational status of every pupil who enters the ninth grade in any secondary school, including formal and verifiable student re-enrollments and transfers.

**Principle 3:** Using student-level longitudinal data, the United States should implement a transparent and simple methodology to count and report on high school graduates.

**Principle 4:** The creation of high school graduation rate data should not replace calculation and reporting of high school dropout rates that inform and guide prevention and recovery efforts.

**Principle 5:** Alternative education settings must be subject to the same graduation standards as all other schools.

**Principle 6:** In addition to using four-year graduation rates, states, school districts and schools should report annual and longitudinal dropout rates; number and percent of students who graduate in five or six years; number of in-grade retentions; number of students receiving GEDs; and students meeting all graduation requirements but not receiving a regular high school diploma because of failure to pass a state-level high-stakes exam.

**Principle 7:** High school graduation and dropout data should be reported at the federal, state, district and school levels and should be disaggregated by race, ethnicity, socio-economic and English language learner status.

**Principle 8:** Exemptions from graduation and dropout counting must be strictly limited and must conform to IDEA provisions.

**Principle 9:** Reporting should be readily available and easily

accessible to the public. Reporting must directly inform communities and parents about status of graduation and dropout rates and progress being made to address it.

**Principle 10:** State and local progress requirements should be proportional to the graduation rate gap to be closed. One universal improvement rate for all schools is unacceptable.

**Principle 11:** State efforts to address high school graduation rates should recognize systemic issues that affect student graduation, including teaching quality, curriculum quality and access, student engagement, and parent and community engagement.

**Principle 12:** Ongoing evaluation of progress must be an integral part of any effort at the federal, state and local levels to address graduation goals.

**Principle 13:** In ensuring that all students graduate, schools should incorporate pedagogical changes that enable them to better adapt to the needs and strengths of their students.

**Principle 14:** No single criterion (e.g., high-stakes testing) should be used to make high school graduation decisions for any individual student.

**Principle 15:** The federal level and states must acknowledge shared accountability for the graduation of all students by investing the personnel and equitable fiscal resources needed to help schools meet federally-established graduation targets.

**Principle 16:** All efforts to increase graduation rates must be based on valuing families, educators, communities and students; no response should promote a "deficit model" or blame.

**Principle 17:** It is vital to recognize that this issue affects students of all races and ethnicities (for example, the largest numbers of dropouts in many states are White students).

**Principle 18:** Since low graduation rates disproportionately impact racial and ethnic minority students, accelerated efforts to address the issue in these communities is essential.

Source: Intercultural Development Research Association.

# New Online Tool Gives Actionable Data for School-Community Teams to Improve Texas Schools

## IDRA Launches Web Portal to Support Efforts to Strengthen School Holding Power

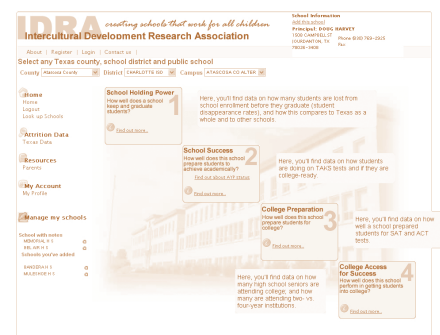
San Antonio (October 30, 2007) –A new online portal helps community and school partners examine their school data and plan joint action to improve school holding power. With Texas schools losing one-third of their students, schools and communities in Texas and around the country are looking to new ways to understand the obstacles to school success and to work together to address them. Gathering quality information is a first step.

To meet this need, IDRA has developed a prototype school holding power portal that places accurate, high quality information in the hands of people at the leading edge of systems change. Through the portal, educators and community members can find out how well their high school campus is preparing and graduating students, what factors may be weakening school holding power, and what they can do

to address them.

Pilot tested with school and community leaders, parents and students, IDRA's School Holding Power Portal (link: <http://www.idra.org/portal>) is a web-based tool that helps schools and communities get key data to: (1) assess dropout rates; (2) find out how well schools are holding on to students and preparing them for college; and (3) partner and take action to strengthen schools. Organized around IDRA's Quality Schools Action Framework (see [www.idra.org](http://www.idra.org)), the portal provides:

- Key data to help you determine whether high dropout rates and weak school holding power are a problem for your school.
- Links to attrition rates for every county in Texas, based on IDRA's annual attrition research and the disappearance rates for every



campus.

- Easy-to-use tables and comparison graphs on student outcomes and the core features (e.g., teaching quality, curriculum quality and access) that make up strong schools.
- E-mail feature you can use to share data with others and attach charts or graphs, keep track of your own notes, or call a community-school meeting to work on a specific issue.

“Community oversight is a critical missing ingredient in effective and accountable dropout prevention efforts at the local level,” said Dr. Robledo Montecel. “We also know that schools and communities working together have the capacity to craft and carry out effective solutions that will make a difference for students.”

“Change begins with school, community and legislative action,” she added. “Working in partnership, parents, educators, students, policymakers, businesspeople can create schools that hold onto all students until graduation and prepare them to succeed.”

### IDRA is moving!

**Please note our new address:**  
**5815 Callaghan Road, Suite 101**  
**San Antonio, Texas 78228**

**Our phone, e-mails and web site addresses will remain the same:**  
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**Episode 24: “Coaching and Mentoring New Teachers”** IDRA Classnotes Podcast – Dr. Linda Cantu and Dr. Adela Solís, developers of IDRA’s coaching and mentoring model, discuss how coaching and mentoring programs can give new teachers the peer support and trusted advice they need to succeed from day one.



**Episode 22: “Science is a Key to Life”** IDRA Classnotes Podcast – Veronica Betancourt, M.A., an IDRA education associate and developer of IDRA’s Science Smart! model, discusses how minor tweaks in teaching practices can open giant doors for students, particularly for girls, minority students and English language learners.



**Episode 23: “The Watch on Racism Cannot Stop”** IDRA Classnotes Podcast – Dr. Shirley Nash Weber, former chair of the Department of Africana Studies and Professor of Africana Studies at San Diego State University, presents a keynote on the challenge African American women face in balancing gender and equity.



**Episode 21: “Engaging Parents in Education”** IDRA Classnotes Podcast – Aurelio Montemayor, M.Ed., director of the IDRA Texas Parent Information and Resource Center, describes how a new guide from the U.S. Department of Education can provide ideas and specific strategies for engaging parents in schools.

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

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