INTERCULTURAL DEVELOPMENT RESEARCH ASSOCIATION

IDRA Newsletter

IDRA Focus:
Self-Renewing Schools… Reading and Literacy

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The New State of Illiteracy in San Antonio and in the Nation

by Felix Montes, Ph.D., and Roy L. Johnson, M.S.

President Bush has submitted his proposed budget to Congress with significant cuts to many social and educational programs in an effort to decrease the mounting budget deficit. One area that would be virtually eliminated is funding for adult literacy.

This raises two important questions: (1) How are we doing in this area nationwide? and (2) How severe is illiteracy in Texas and its largest cities, including San Antonio, Houston and Dallas? This article provides some answers to those questions.

IDRA has researched the issue of adult illiteracy for many years. Its first study, entitled *The Status of Illiteracy in San Antonio* (Cárdenas, et al., 1983), was based on 1980 census data. The landmark study found that about one-fourth of the adult population in San Antonio was illiterate.

In 1994, IDRA produced *The State of Literacy in San Antonio in the 1990s* (Montecel, et al., 1994). Based on 1990 census data, the study found great disparity in the illiteracy rates across economic, geographic, and racial and ethnic groups in San Antonio.

In both studies, IDRA used census data to estimate indexes of illiteracy at the census tract, council district and city levels. The essential idea is that an adult with limited exposure to formal education (up to eighth grade) can be considered functionally illiterate. This definition produces very conservative illiteracy estimates.

For example, IDRA estimated that in the 1990s about 9.4 percent of the U.S. adult population was illiterate. At about the same time, the National Center for Education Statistics reported that between 21 percent and 23 percent of the U.S. adult population was illiterate (1993). NCES had conducted the National Adult Literacy Survey to specifically study literacy. It used a sampling methodology to estimate illiteracy rates in the United States and selected states.

IDRA uses census data because it is immediately accessible and provides information on a longitudinal basis, which allows for long-term studies.

Education attainment is one of the items collected by the U.S. Census

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Bureau on a consistent basis. The last census occurred in 2000. After concluding the most recent 10-year census, the U.S. Census Bureau started conducting national sampling using its American Community Survey to provide an updated picture of communities around the country every year (U.S. Census Bureau, 2004).

Initially, the Census Bureau selected 36 counties to test this methodology. In addition, other areas were selected for sampling. Using this wealth of information, we are reporting, in this article, conservative illiteracy numbers at the national, state, county and city levels, with an emphasis on Texas and San Antonio.

Reporting is limited to those areas included in the census annual survey, which can be examined on the Census Bureau web site (http://www.census.gov/acs/www/Products/Profiles/Chg/2003/ACS/index.htm). Following this methodology, the reader can produce a similar analysis for his or her own community.

The national rate of illiteracy has been slowly improving in the last four years, from 6.09 percent in 2000 to 5.56 percent in 2003. However, there are still more than 10 million people who are illiterate in the country.

National Outlook

The national rate of illiteracy has been slowly improving in the last four years, from 6.09 percent in 2000 to 5.56 percent in 2003 (see box on Page 12). However, there are still more than 10 million people who are illiterate in the country.

Notably, the census sampling procedure did not include people in special situations and conditions, such as detention, homelessness and undocumented status, where there is often a higher concentration of people with low educational attainment.

These 10 million people are likely lost in this information-rich society, not being able to make sense of all the literary and numerical information around us. The high illiteracy rates have a considerable cost to the country and to all of us. For example, in 1994, IDRA reported that the national cost of illiteracy ranged from $25 billion to $30 billion per year in lost productivity, errors and accidents (Montecel, et al., 1994).

State of Texas Outlook

Illiteracy rates vary considerably from one state to another, from less than 3 percent in Wyoming and Utah to more than 10 percent in Texas and California over the four-year period of 2000 to 2003 (see Page 14).

In 2003, Texas was the most illiterate state in the country with a 10.74 percent illiteracy rate. This translates to more than 1.3 million people in the state who are illiterate. Texas has been among the top three states

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In This Issue...

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.

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Pathways of Leadership for Women of Color

by Rosana G. Rodríguez, Ph.D., and Pam McCollum, Ph.D.

Throughout generations, women of color have been a positive and creative force that has sustained their families and communities with energy, courage and persistence. However, their contributions and the valuable resource they represent have too often been overlooked, minimized or viewed in deficit terms.

Few opportunities have emerged to recognize and draw upon the inherent strength and leadership skills that can be found in communities of color and the women leaders who are the change-agents within them. Therefore, it is timely and important for their inspiring stories to emerge and be celebrated by the broader society.

The Intercultural Development Research Association project, Ohtli, funded by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, convened 30 women leaders of color from Native American, African American and Latina traditions to capture, honor and share their inspiring stories of leadership. The word *ohtli* means "pathway" in the Nahuatl (Mexican indigenous) language.

Five established leaders were selected from each of the three invited groups, who, in turn, each invited an emerging leader to attend the Ohtli *Encuentro*, or conference, held in New Mexico. This unprecedented event provided a space for the voices of leadership from minority women's perspectives to be heard, honored and shared with others.

Four dimensions, or pathways, of leadership were shared by the women as they told their personal stories: (1) history, language and culture; (2) community engagement; (3) vision, spirit and values; and (4) social change and institutional transformation.

What kind of leadership will be needed for the future? We believe a definition of leadership must be viewed through several diverse lenses. Older models of hierarchical, top-down leadership ("power over" others) are ill-suited to meet the challenges of this millennium.

Much of the current leadership

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Ohtli Encuentro Leaders – Bottom Row (left to right): Joycelyn Jackson; Gwen Shunatona; María Robledo Montecel; Dolores Huerta; María Antonietta Berriozábal; Henrietta Mann; Elouise Cobell; Beverly Divers-White; Ruth Simmons Herts; Angelia Hudson Second Row: Valerie Webb-Jaramillo; Carmen Tafolla; Elise García; Hilda Gutiérrez Baldoquín; Louise Dunbar; Nicole Adams; Karen Sánchez-Griego; Gabrielle Strong; Teresa Peterson; Claudia Martínez; Anna Alicia Romero Top Row: Kelly Concho; Kaffia Howard; Yolanda Chacon-Serna; Kenya Eddings; Derrith Watchman-Moore; Melissa Campobasso; Janice Coburn; Gina Hinojosa; Tanisha Taylor; Alexis Sampson

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literature cites the effectiveness of a more inclusive, participatory, and intergenerational model that stresses "power with" others. A shift in the traditional constructs of leadership seems to be emerging as our society acknowledges the need for more diverse models of leadership that stress the importance of interaction with others, our communities and our educational systems.

The Ohtli women's sharing of their leadership pathways demonstrated their ability to lead in participatory ways for the betterment of their communities and families while performing high-powered mainstream jobs.

Access and equity in terms of education was a salient theme across the women's leadership stories in all three racial and ethnic groups. Due to the deeply felt importance of quality education in the lives of the Ohtli women and their families, education provides a natural focus for future collaborative work across these groups. Acknowledging the existing resources that are present in communities and families and using them as a base for improving education for all children is a timely and vital effort.

The Ohtli project sought to create a cadre of intergenerational leaders who share and support each other's journeys within their institutions and communities, to add to the understanding of new models of thinking about access to education and leadership opportunities for minority populations, and to provide insight into new roles of leadership. Such work seeks to expand engagement in educational institutions and communities.

IDRA has long recognized that leadership is not for an "elite" few, but rather, is an awareness and disposition that all people can develop and cultivate within their culture, family, organization and community.

IDRA will release the compendium of the Ohtli women's stories in a book titled *The Ohtli Encuentro: Women of Color Share Pathways to Leadership* on May 2, 2005, at a book signing and leadership event hosted by IDRA and St. Mary's University.

IDRA salutes the courage, strength and personal journey of each of the Ohtli women. Their voices, experiences, and examples along their leadership pathways inspire us to re-examine educational and institutional practices to strengthen public schools for all children.

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Parents As First Teachers

Creating an Enriched Home Learning Environment

by Abelardo Villarreal, Ph.D.

By the end of the first semester of second grade, Emilio was so fed up with his performance in school that he decided to play sick every morning. His teacher blamed Emilio and his parents for his poor performance, and his parents angrily accused school personnel for the inadequate education that he was receiving. At the losing end of this dichotomy was Emilio and his future.

Unfortunately this is not uncommon. Ill-defined roles and responsibilities for school personnel and parents and an inadequate instructional program for Emilio kept his educational well-being in abeyance.

Numerous articles have been written to help school personnel reform their practices to assume a more responsible role in the education of all children and, in particular, the children who speak a language other than English or who share a minority culture (TEA, 1994; Díaz-Soto, 1991; Villarreal, 1993). Although schools are still struggling to become more responsive to all students, this lack of success is not always due to lack of information (Cárdenas, 1995).

Parents, on the other hand, decry the lack of access to information for them to play their part as children's first teachers (Schoonmaker, 1992). The purpose of this article is for parents and school personnel for use in parenting workshops on enriching learning opportunities during their children's formative years (ages three to five).

Through interaction with their children and the experiences that they provide, parents can guide children's growth and development.

Parenting involves taking responsibility seriously, taking advantage of every opportunity to enhance children's learning, and providing children with challenges. Children absorb life experiences indiscriminately. To a large extent, these life experiences form children's character, feelings and values, and they provide the window through which they will view the world (Scott, 1992; Villarreal, 1993). In other words, through interaction with their children and the experiences that they provide, parents can guide children's growth and development.

By age five, children will be exposed to school life. Parents can either provide learning experiences haphazardly or unknowingly (with good intentions, but with little knowledge and no plan) or they can conscientiously plan for quality experiences to occur and exercise their obligation in a more responsible manner. There are three major tasks that parents can do to improve the learning environment at home. These tasks are discussed below.

Task 1: Learn More About How Children Learn

Parents who have been successful in their role as the first teachers of children share a philosophy about children's learning. This philosophy is defined by eight key assertions about parenthood and learning (Bredekamp, 1987). The following outlines these major thoughts that are instrumental for parents as children's first teachers.

Children are always ready to learn

Children have an inborn capacity to learn (Forman and Kuschrer, 1983). They start learning from the time that they are in the mother's womb. The fact that children ask many questions and are eager to touch all they see is an expression of their readiness to receive input from their environment. This innate willingness to learn can be nourished or weakened by childhood experiences from the environment. Parents must be vigilant and support their children in learning experiences.

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What Parents Should Do
- Turn as many everyday life experiences as possible into learning opportunities.
- Model learning from everyday experiences.
- Talk about the importance of learning as a self-initiated activity.

What Parents Should Avoid
- Interact with children only when they ask a question ("I don't have time to talk").

Children have a curiosity for learning

Children test the world. When a child jumps from a chair the first time and finds out that it hurts, he or she has learned the consequences of such an act. The responsibility of the parent is to teach the child that risks need to be calculated. Killing curiosity for learning has serious consequences later in life.

What Parents Should Do
- Take advantage of children's questions to extend learning.
- Capitalize on children's interest in selecting learning experiences.
- Plan the home physical environment with children's needs and desires in mind.
- Purchase toys that are specifically designed to stimulate children's thinking and creativity.

What Parents Should Avoid
- Leave children's learning to chance.
- Tell children you are too busy to answer their questions.

Children learn from their environment

Children learn from all aspects of the environment (Greenman, 1988; Penny-Velázquez, 1993; Adame-Reyna, 1995). The environment is represented by people and objects that surround them. Every experience, whether it is positive or negative, will teach children something.

Some experiences that can be used to teach new concepts and develop appropriate behaviors are the following: (1) child sees a mountain and asks about it; (2) child is involved in a fight with another child; (3) sister is reading a book and child sits next to her; (4) child receives a ball of clay; (5) child accompanies mommy to the doctor's office; and (6) child watches a cartoon on television.

What Parents Should Do
- Expose children to experiences that teach social, academic and motor skills.
- Capitalize on children's interest in selecting learning experiences.
- Allow children to actively interact with the environment – allow them to explore and ask questions.

What Parents Should Avoid
- Expose children to experiences that focus only on one set of skills.
- Expose children to experiences that only interest the parents.

Children thrive in an environment of love and respect

Children need to feel secure in order to take risks and take advantage of a learning experience (Scott, 1992; González-Mena, 1991; Allen and Mason, 1989). Children are unique individuals whose feelings evolve from their experiences with other people and with the environment that surrounds them. These feelings form the basis for children's self-esteem – a love, an appreciation and an acknowledgment of one's uniqueness.

Feelings can facilitate or hinder learning. Feelings that facilitate learning are based on love and respect. Children who feel a sense of belonging and feel like worthwhile individuals who have unique qualities and characteristics experience love and respect. Parents have the responsibility to sustain an environment full of love and respect and to nourish children's self-esteem when confronted with a hostile or unfriendly environment (Bredekamp, 1987; Scott, 1992; Adame-Reyna, 1995).

What Parents Should Do
- Show love for all their children equally.
- Celebrate the uniqueness of each child.
- Respect children's views of the world.
- Ask and value children's opinion.
- Provide opportunities for children to excel and experience positive feelings about themselves.
- Model respect for other's beliefs and values.
- Expect children to respect other's beliefs and values.

What Parents Should Avoid
- Be partial to some of your children.
- Criticize children for their actions and behaviors.
- Impose your will without an explanation for your action.
- Demean children because of their actions or beliefs.

Children have a potential for acquiring language

Children learn from their parents and the persons with whom they live. Children have an innate capacity to process and use language (Sosa, 1993; Strickland, 1990; González-Mena, 1991). The process for learning a language is complex, requiring at least 12 years to formalize itself. In homes where the language is Spanish, children will become proficient in Spanish. If children live in an environment where a wide variety of languages are used, they will become proficient in those languages. Parents, siblings and other adults who spend considerable time with the children become language models.

Parents should make sure that children are exposed to effective lan-

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guage users. Talking and reading with children develops their control of the language. Once children have mastered one language, they can learn a second one quickly. For example, children who have mastered the Spanish language well, have been exposed sufficiently to the English language at the appropriate time, and are not forced to learn the new language, can become proficient users of both Spanish and English. Parents should ensure that children are not prematurely forced to learn a new language.

What Parents Should Do

- Talk to children as often as possible.
- Engage children in conversations.
- Ask for their views about certain topics of interest.
- Increase children's vocabulary on different topics.

What Parents Should Avoid

- Use language to request children's compliance only.
- Criticize children for the way they say words or express themselves.
- Turn down an opportunity to explain or respond to a question.
- Expect children to listen passively.
- Dominate a conversation with children.

Children can communicate ideas in many different ways

Children are versatile individuals who have learned to communicate ideas through language, behaviors and actions (Gandini, 1993; Greenman, 1988). Many have learned that they can communicate ideas on paper. That is, children have learned that people's scribbles communicate an idea. Children who are read to discover the excitement those scribbles represent. They begin to scribble themselves. Soon, their scribbling begins to communicate a feeling or an action. When asked, children will talk about the scribbling. Parents can help children master this form of communication by reading and providing them opportunities to scribble and talk about their masterpieces. Displaying their work guarantees acknowledgment of children's unique qualities and characteristics.

What Parents Should Do

- Provide opportunities for children to communicate ideas through speech or writing.
- Show children ways they can communicate ideas.
- Encourage children to use acceptable behavior.
- Redirect unacceptable behavior.
- Provide opportunities for children to appreciate art and music.

What Parents Should Avoid

- Criticize or demean cultures or languages that are different from theirs.
- Pressure children to react or respond in one specific way.
- Criticize children who use unacceptable behavior.

Children can acquire a love and desire for reading

Reading is the most efficient way of acquiring information. Reading is a skill that children can develop from a very early age (Strickland, 1990; Greenman, 1988). Children who are exposed to print at a very early age tend to become better readers and learners when they go to school. They develop a thirst for information and knowledge. Parents can help their children by talking about the beauty of reading, by getting books for them to own, and by reading signs, labels and a range of items that have print on them.

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Building Blocks of Reading and Writing

From several decades of research, we have learned a lot about how children learn to read and write. This research tells us that to become more skilled and confident readers over time, children need lots of opportunities to:

- Build **spoken language** by talking and listening.
- Learn about print and books.
- Learn about the sounds of spoken language (this is called **phonological awareness**)
- Learn about the letters of the alphabet.
- Be read to and read on their own.
- Learn and use letter-sound relationships (this is called **phonics**) and be able to recognize words when they see them.
- Spell and write.
- Develop their ability to read quickly and naturally (this is called **fluency**).
- Learn new words and build their knowledge of what words mean (this is called **vocabulary**).
- Build their knowledge of the world.
- Build their ability to understand what they read (this is called **comprehension**).

Excerpted from "A Child Becomes a Reader: Kindergarten Through Grade 3," The Partnership for Reading, Spring 2003.

Parents as First Teachers Checklist

Rate each item according to the degree that it is practiced in your household. Place a checkmark in the appropriate column.

Item	Often 1	Sometimes 2	Never 3
1. I take advantage of as many learning opportunities for my children as possible.			
2. I model by taking advantage of as many learning opportunities as possible.			
3. I talk about the importance of learning from every experience with my children.			
4. I take advantage of my children's questions by extending learning.			
5. I capitalize on my children's interests in selecting learning experiences.			
6. I plan my home physical environment with my children's needs and desires in mind.			
7. I purchase toys that stimulate children's thinking skills.			
8. I expose my children to experiences that develop social, academic and/or motor skills.			
9. I respect my children's views of the world.			
10. I ask children for their opinions.			
11. I acknowledge my children's efforts.			
12. I praise my children's accomplishments.			
13. I model respect for others' beliefs and values.			
14. I expect my children to respect others' beliefs and values.			
15. I talk to my children as often as possible.			
16. I engage in conversations and discussions with my children.			
17. I ask for my children's views about certain topics.			
18. I strive to increase my children's vocabularies in many different topics.			
19. I provide opportunities for my children to express their ideas in different ways.			
20. I model how ideas can be expressed in different ways.			
21. I acknowledge my children's use of acceptable behavior.			
22. I redirect my children's use of unacceptable behavior.			
23. I provide opportunities for my children to appreciate art and music.			
24. I probe to ensure that my children understand the importance of comprehending what is read.			
25. I provide opportunities for children to select topics or books to be read.			
26. I read to my children constantly.			
27. I have print material available at home.			
28. I read labels and signs with my children.			
29. I expose my children to classic literature.			
30. I provide my children opportunities to use the different senses to learn.			
31. I teach my children that some questions do not have a right answer.			
32. I provide my children opportunities for problem solving using the different senses.			
33. I provide my children opportunities to role play.			

IDRA Newsletter, Intercultural Development Research Association, April 1995

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What Parents Should Do

- Stress the importance of comprehending what is being read.
- Provide opportunities for children to select topics or books to read.
- Read to children at an early age.
- Have print materials (newspapers, books, letters, and forms and in whatever language) at home at all times.
- Read labels and signs with children.
- Expose children to different literature styles at an early age.

What Parents Should Avoid

- Ask children to conform with your selection of reading materials only.
- Force children to begin decoding works when they are not ready.
- Criticize children for not liking to read.
- Compare children to other children's accomplishments.

Children learn in different ways

Adults and children use the senses to learn (Forman and Kuschrer, 1983). Some learn by seeing. Others learn by hearing, reading or touching. Some of us are better at learning by using one particular sense or another. For example, some of us can learn better if the reading is accompanied by pictures. Reading about how to put a model together may be sufficient for some. While other children may learn better if presented with a "hands on" activity. Parents should keep this information in mind and determine which is the preferred way of their children to learn. Provide more opportunities for children to learn in their preferred way.

What Parents Should Do

- Provide children opportunities to learn by using all the senses.
- Teach children that some questions do not have a right or wrong answer.
- Provide children opportunities for problem solving using the different senses.
- Provide children with opportunities to role play.

What Parents Should Avoid

- Teaching children to learn only by reading and memorizing materials.
- Teach children that one way of learning is better than another.

Task 2: Establish a Vision and Goals

A vision is a mental picture of an event that has not yet occurred. A mental picture allows us to define what children would be able to do within a period of time. Getting there does not happen automatically; parents have to make sure that support is available to help them to get to that point.

After hearing about a successful learner who entered school at age five, a parent decided to write down his vision for his three-year-old child. The vision went like this: "My son will know about many things. He will be able to talk about them and express his desire to know more about certain things. He will not be afraid to ask if he is unsure of things. He will not be afraid of making mistakes. He will show respect and love for others and will always be happy. He will be highly dominant in Spanish, the language that we speak at home. He will be in the process of learning English in a meaningful manner and not feel frustrated or hurried to learn English immediately."

I challenge parents to do the same. Write or share with someone else a vision that will guide you and your children through the journey of childhood.

The parent proceeded to write his goals in meeting this responsibility. Goals are like guideposts that define responsibility in making a vision a reality. His goals were:

- Strive to learn more about how children learn by reading articles, books or watching informational television programs.
- Take advantage of every opportunity to engage my children in learning.
- Create an environment at home that is conducive to learning.
- Instill in my children a desire for learning.

These goals served him and his children well. The parent planned activities to ensure the goals were met and the vision was realized.

Task 3: Reflect and Plan an Enriched Learning Home Environment

The third major task is to take stock, reflect and plan the improvement of the home learning environment. The chart on Page 8 provides a checklist of activities that promote a positive home learning environment. Parents can use this checklist to reflect on what has been occurring at home. All ratings of "never" or "sometimes" merit some attention by parents.

After using the checklist, parents may identify those activities that they propose to improve upon during the next six months. Parents can write down their commitments to improve the learning environment. They can share this contract with their children and other adults and ask them to "check on them" periodically. They should post this contract on the refrigerator or a place where they will see it often. Repeat this process every six months.

Parents as effective teachers play several roles. First, they are good listeners. They listen to everything that children say, and they observe the environment that surrounds them. They respect what children have to say. There are no absurdities; whatever is said is said with a reason. Parents look for the message and question children when the message needs clarity. A good listener promotes the use of language by children. Children appreciate and are prompted to use language when they know that others listen and do not criticize them. One of the major responsibilities of a parent is to initiate conversations and take every opportu-

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Tools for

Excellent Instruction in Early Childhood

Adult literacy levels have improved in recent years, but illiteracy and low literacy persist as pressing, national problems. In an information-rich society, the capacity to read, write and problem-solve is essential. Yet 21 percent to 23 percent of the U.S. adult population lacks adequate literacy levels to "find and keep decent jobs… and participate actively in civic life" (National Institute for Literacy).

In the International Adult Literacy Survey, conducted by Statistics Canada, the United States ranked second (behind Poland) among 12 countries in the proportion of adults scoring at the lowest levels of literacy.

It is now widely known from brain development research that early literacy and reading begin at the start of life. Quality early childhood education and bilingual education programs are, therefore, essential to lifetime learning and success. It is often said that children's first years are spent learning to read, then in school, "reading to learn." Yet few children have access to quality early childhood education.

These realities come at a tremendous cost to individuals, families and communities. Forty-three percent of adults with low literacy live in poverty (National Institute for Literacy). Seven out of 10 U.S. prison inmates perform at the two lowest levels of literacy (NCES, 1994).

With a recognition of the critical role that adult literacy plays in quality of life and the role of intergenerational literacy in children's learning, IDRA has held a long-standing commitment to documenting literacy needs and trends, promoting best practices, and providing technical assistance on literacy policy. Since its inception, IDRA has promoted literacy initiatives that value the diverse cultural and linguistic heritage of adult learners and the unique knowledge and resources every learner brings to language learning and literacy. As a touchstone of this work, IDRA affirms that adults learning English as a second language must be provided learning opportunities that:

- Value their culture and language
- Continue their academic development (in this country) in environments that value their previous schooling
- Capitalize on their knowledge and proficiency in their first language to learn English
- Become literate in their first language to facilitate the transition to English literacy
- Include information and training on how to advocate a quality education for their children

A Snapshot of What IDRA is Doing

Conducting Research – Building on decades of research on adult literacy, this year IDRA re-examined literacy levels in San Antonio and the nation. This work, described on Page 1, assesses literacy trends in light of proposals to reduce federal funding for literacy programs.

IDRA's READ project, funded by the U.S. Department of Education, is establishing in preschool centers "classrooms of excellence" that collectively form a "center of excellence" that ensures reading, cognitive and emotional success for all preschool children through a print rich environment with appropriate accommodations for children with disabilities. IDRA is using a research-based classroom-based professional development initiative involving HeadStart and public school teachers to form a seamlessly-integrated instructional program.

Developing Leaders – In 2000 and 2001, IDRA studied exemplary bilingual education programs in schools across the nation as determined by limited-English-proficient students' academic achievement. Through this work, IDRA identified the 25 common characteristics that contribute to high academic performance of students served by bilingual education programs. IDRA is helping education leaders identify successful programs or raise the bar with their own bilingual education programs.

Informing Policy – IDRA's research, analysis, public education and testimony help to inform public debates on literacy by "connecting the dots" between school finance

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Action

policy, bilingual education and literacy. As examples, this past year, IDRA has analyzed how proposed changes in funding weights might affect students with limited English proficiency. In collaboration with the Texas Coalition for Bilingual Education, IDRA published a "Unified Position Statement on Bilingual/ESL Education" (See *IDRA Newsletter*, February 2005) to inform education policy.

Engaging Communities – IDRA engages community members in literacy and reading in multiple ways. Public forums, such as the recent InterAction Policy Forums (http://www.idra.org/InterAction/forum.htm), offer opportunities for community input into the development of state policies that close educational gaps and enhance the quality of instruction for English language learners. Through six centers in San Antonio's Edgewood school district, IDRA's TECNO project provides direct access for parents and students to computer literacy and online resources. Through its parent information resource center (PIRC), IDRA provides Texas school districts with the training and technical assistance to facilitate parents being partners in their children's reading and literacy development.

What You Can Do

Get informed about literacy programs and research and resources on bilingual education. Good places to start are listed on the IDRA web site at www.idra.org.

Get involved by weighing in on federal, state and local initiatives to promote literacy, equity, and quality educational programming. According to the National Institute for Literacy, "Nationally, fewer than 10 percent of adults who could benefit from literacy programs are currently being served." For this reason alone, public input on local, federal, and state literacy policies, spending and programming is critically needed to encourage policy and practice that address this gap. Online resources that support public involvement in literacy advocacy are listed on the IDRA web site at www.idra.org.

Get results by volunteering as a reading or literacy teacher or tutor, administrator or board member for a literacy initiative in your home town. You can become an advocate of quality instructional programs by collaborating with local community-based organizations to ensure that your community and schools provide opportunities for adults to enhance English language proficiency and parent partnerships with schools.

As a parent, you can enhance your own children's love of reading and learning by making book sharing, storytelling and problem-solving a part of everyday life. Page 5 and the box on Page 7 include more information on how parents can support literacy development through regular, easy, fun home activities.

You can find local literacy programs and volunteer opportunities in your area by searching the NIFL and Partner's online directory at: http://www.literacydirectory.org/ or calling 1-800-228-8813. Literacy USA's database at http://www.literacyusa.org/members.htm can put you in touch with a host of other volunteer opportunities in your community. For information for parents, grandparents and other caretakers on the importance of book sharing in children's literacy development, see *A Child Becomes A Reader* at http://www.cdl.org/pdf/NICHD_redr_brth_prK.pdf.

Additional Research and Resources

- Adult ESL Fact Sheet: Family Literacy and Adult English Language Learners at (http://www.cal.org/caela/factsheets/family.htm)
- Harnessing Technology to Serve Adult Literacy (http://www.alri.org/harness.html)
- Literacy USA, coalition of literacy coalitions (http://www.literacyusa.org/about.htm)
- The National Adult Literacy Agency, 100 ways to promote literacy (http://www.nala.ie/publications/listing/20010910132757.html)
- Other resources are listed online at www.idra.org.

Illiteracy – continued from Page 2

achieving that dubious distinction in each of the four years included in this analysis.

In two instances, Texas was at the very top of the list of the most illiterate states. The other two states were California and Kentucky, which also topped the list at least once.

Texas Counties

In Texas, five counties were included in the census multi-year analytical profiles. Their illiteracy rates are included in the box below. Their rates range from 6.60 percent to 12.48 percent in the period covered. Bexar County, where San Antonio is located, has been near the top with rates ranging from 9.52 to 12.72 percent. In 2003, its estimated rate was 11.30 percent, which suggests that nearly 100,000 people were illiterate that year.

Harris and Dallas counties have also been at the top of the list with 11.50 and 10.70 percent in 2003, respectively. That translates to nearly 250,000 and 150,000 people in these counties who were illiterate, respectively.

Texas Cities

As geographic units, three Texas cities were included in the longitudinal sampling, given their large populations. Their illiteracy rates also are included in the top box on Page 13. Their rates range from 10.51 percent to 15.81 percent in the period covered. With a 12.47 percent rate in 2003, San Antonio had more than 90,000 people who were illiterate. Houston (14.13 percent) and Dallas (13.88 percent) had more than 168,000 and 102,000 people who were illiterate in 2003, respectively.

San Antonio's illiteracy rate has fluctuated between 10.51 percent and 13.82 percent in the period 2000 to 2003. The year 2001 was a particularly good one, when the rate dropped about 2 percentage points from the previous year. However, the number of individuals who were illiterate in that population generally has exceeded 90,000 during the period (see center box on Page 13).

National Illiteracy Rates

Year	Illiteracy Rate	Population (25 years and over)	Number of People who were Illiterate
2000	6.09%	177,532,915	10,813,147
2001	5.93%	179,959,220	10,680,050
2002	5.79%	182,686,266	10,580,759
2003	5.56%	184,395,128	10,255,623

Source: U.S. Census Bureau. *2004 ACS Congressional Toolkit* (Washington D.C.: U.S. Census Bureau, 2004).

Summary

Although the trend is for the illiteracy rate to slowly decline, the numbers are still quite high, representing millions of people at the national level and tens of thousands or hundreds of thousands at the local level.

Texas has an illiterate rate twice as large as the country's average, and Bexar County's illiteracy rate is generally higher than the state average. San Antonio has an illiteracy rate consistently higher than Bexar County throughout this four-year period. Houston and Dallas demonstrate the same tendency toward higher local illiteracy rates.

A Future of Universal Literacy is More Remote

In 1994, IDRA projected that it

***Illiteracy** – continued on Page 13*

Texas Illiteracy Rates by Major Counties,

Based on Population of 25 Years Old and Over, 2000 to 2003

2000			2001			2002			2003		
Rate	County	Population	Rate	County	Population	Rate	County	Population	Rate	County	Population
12.48%	Harris	2,033,758	12.72%	Bexar	838,768	12.08%	Dallas	1,393,638	11.50%	Harris	2,160,316
11.74%	Bexar	832,545	11.85%	Harris	2,063,245	11.87%	Harris	2,152,153	11.30%	Bexar	877,677
10.98%	Dallas	1,337,771	9.60%	Dallas	1,350,016	9.52%	Bexar	865,163	10.70%	Dallas	1,380,282
6.68%	Tarrant	1,217,154	7.49%	Tarrant	896,496	7.38%	Tarrant	932,524	6.94%	Tarrant	944,942
6.60%	Fort Bend	209,141	7.04%	Fort Bend	222,025	7.18%	Fort Bend	238,998	6.93%	Fort Bend	247,753

Source: U.S. Census Bureau. *2004 ACS Congressional Toolkit* (Washington D.C.: U.S. Census Bureau, 2004).

Texas Illiteracy Rates by Major Texas Cities,
Based on Population of 25 Years Old and Over, 2000 to 2003

2000			2001			2002			2003		
Rate	City	Population	Rate	City	Population	Rate	City	Population	Rate	City	Population
15.81%	Houston	1,177,798	14.62%	Houston	1,183,939	14.83%	Dallas	720,237	14.13%	Houston	1,195,010
13.37%	San Antonio	686,775	13.82%	San Antonio	694,510	13.53%	Houston	1,214,854	13.88%	Dallas	738,147
13.01%	Dallas	706,753	12.60%	Dallas	721,613	10.51%	San Antonio	712,516	12.47%	San Antonio	728,353

Source: U.S. Census Bureau. *2004 ACS Congressional Toolkit* (Washington D.C.: U.S. Census Bureau, 2004).

Illiteracy *– continued from Page 12*

would take San Antonio another three decades to solve the literacy problem, and concluded that progress, at that rate, would be too slow (Montecel, et al., 1994). These estimates were made by extrapolating the 10 percentual point decrease in the illiteracy rate from 1980 to 1990. Three decades – a whole generation – is far too long.

With the benefit of the new data presented here, we applied the same simple lineal projection technique and found that today – 10 years later – San Antonio is even further away from its universal literacy goal (see box below). The updated projection shows that San Antonio now needs 37 additional years to solve its illiteracy problem, assuming that efforts would be sustained at current levels. Again, these are conservative estimates.

This is no time to cut funding or weaken efforts to ameliorate illiteracy at the local, state or national level.

Conclusions

At least three conclusions can be drawn from this analysis. First, the proposed virtual elimination of funds for literacy development is misguided. We continue to have a significant illiteracy problem that requires creative solutions. In some areas, such as in Texas, the problem is even worse than projected.

Second, efforts to curb the problem must start at the local level, particularly in the cities included in this analysis in which the rates are much higher.

Third, since funds soon may be unavailable from the federal government, communities across the country must work together by creating coalitions to find the most appropriate solutions in their particular situations, probably using their own resources.

San Antonio Illiteracy Rates

Year	Illiteracy Rate	Population (25 year and over)	Number of People who were Illiterate
2000	13.37%	686,775	91,822
2001	13.82%	694,510	95,981
2002	10.51%	712,516	74,885
2003	12.47%	728,353	90,826

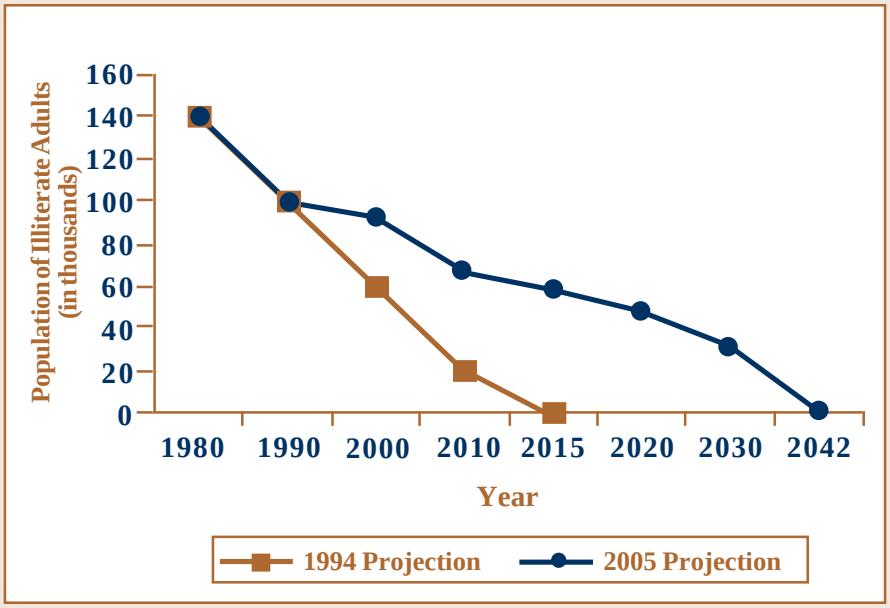
Source: U.S. Census Bureau. *2004 ACS Congressional Toolkit* (Washington D.C.: U.S. Census Bureau, 2004).

Resources

Cárdenas, J., and S. Jackson, D. Ramírez. *The Status of Illiteracy in San Antonio* (San

Illiteracy *– continued on Page 16*

1994 and 2005 Projections of the Number of Adults Who Will Be Illiterate in San Antonio



Source: Intercultural Development Research Association.

United States Illiteracy Rates by State,

Based on Population of 25 Years Old and Over, 2000 to 2003

2000			2001			2002			2003		
Rate	State	Population	Rate	State	Population	Rate	State	Population	Rate	State	Population
11.62%	Kentucky	2,585,238	**10.76%**	**Texas**	**12,613,324**	10.71%	California	21,594,245	**10.74%**	**Texas**	**13,188,692**
10.81%	California	20,740,042	10.49%	Kentucky	2,596,609	**10.51%**	**Texas**	**13,032,477**	10.21%	California	21,985,965
10.77%	**Texas**	**12,419,245**	10.24%	California	20,864,293	10.51%	Kentucky	2,672,274	9.47%	Kentucky	2,646,695
10.16%	West Virginia	1,217,154	10.14%	West Virginia	1,205,993	8.89%	Mississippi	1,741,109	9.28%	New Mexico	1,155,887
9.59%	Mississippi	1,709,302	8.63%	Tennessee	3,689,753	8.89%	New Mexico	1,152,867	8.90%	West Virginia	1,217,163
9.27%	Louisiana	2,692,334	8.62%	New Mexico	1,121,099	8.28%	West Virginia	1,217,142	8.06%	Mississippi	1,747,328
8.97%	Tennessee	3,660,149	8.50%	Mississippi	1,708,691	8.21%	Louisiana	2,711,795	7.99%	Arkansas	1,718,936
8.47%	New Mexico	1,111,241	8.29%	Louisiana	2,667,853	7.98%	Tennessee	3,753,053	7.84%	Louisiana	2,739,001
8.11%	Alabama	2,812,635	8.26%	Arkansas	1,689,790	7.56%	Nevada	1,388,930	7.22%	Tennessee	3,789,235
7.97%	North Carolina	5,150,795	7.79%	Arizona	3,242,125	7.50%	Alabama	2,853,602	7.19%	North Carolina	5,356,059
7.88%	Arkansas	1,680,179	7.77%	Alabama	2,823,284	7.29%	North Carolina	5,308,455	7.19%	Rhode Island	701,015
7.77%	Georgia	5,048,186	7.50%	North Carolina	5,181,994	7.26%	Arkansas	1,711,494	7.06%	Nevada	1,437,140
7.50%	Arizona	3,180,898	7.02%	Illinois	7,925,280	7.17%	Arizona	3,365,815	7.02%	Arizona	3,435,332
7.27%	Rhode Island	679,827	6.92%	Georgia	5,128,506	7.07%	Rhode Island	699,637	7.02%	New York	12,503,233
7.24%	South Carolina	2,525,939	6.80%	North Dakota	405,540	7.05%	New York	12,396,264	6.97%	Alabama	2,866,706
7.23%	North Dakota	397,643	6.75%	Rhode Island	686,163	6.73%	South Carolina	2,627,714	6.65%	Georgia	5,361,208
6.94%	New York	12,184,401	6.68%	District of Columbia	374,825	6.59%	North Dakota	401,044	6.22%	Illinois	7,992,566
6.86%	Illinois	7,775,033	6.48%	Virginia	4,581,483	6.55%	Georgia	5,284,450	6.15%	District of Columbia	377,677
6.64%	Virginia	4,555,970	6.42%	Hawaii	784,290	6.42%	Illinois	7,949,828	6.12%	South Carolina	2,634,137
6.21%	Hawaii	784,502	6.42%	New York	12,276,420	6.31%	Hawaii	811,147	6.05%	Virginia	4,731,871
6.17%	Indiana	3,795,586	6.29%	South Carolina	2,560,282	6.11%	Virginia	4,676,826	6.03%	North Dakota	401,120
6.15%	Florida	10,733,834	6.02%	Nevada	1,337,622	5.92%	South Dakota	468,434	5.95%	New Jersey	5,658,565
6.12%	District of Columbia	370,634	6.01%	South Dakota	472,463	5.91%	Florida	11,184,263	5.60%	South Dakota	469,606
6.05%	South Dakota	460,514	5.96%	Florida	10,902,961	5.85%	District of Columbia	378,881	5.57%	Florida	11,327,312
5.93%	Missouri	3,535,366	5.56%	New Jersey	5,720,017	5.60%	Indiana	3,853,005	5.50%	Indiana	3,860,175
5.60%	Oklahoma	2,137,971	5.50%	Indiana	3,885,447	5.44%	New Jersey	5,647,970	5.47%	Hawaii	816,603
5.59%	New Jersey	5,532,569	5.40%	Oklahoma	2,147,675	5.30%	Connecticut	2,237,437	5.09%	Oklahoma	2,185,412
5.40%	Massachusetts	4,158,807	5.30%	Missouri	3,567,825	4.98%	Oklahoma	2,182,574	4.88%	Massachusetts	4,252,186
5.28%	Connecticut	2,232,500	5.04%	Idaho	782,522	4.88%	Colorado	2,856,011	4.71%	Colorado	2,887,866
5.07%	Vermont	398,866	4.96%	Connecticut	2,271,517	4.77%	Massachusetts	4,262,361	4.55%	Missouri	3,613,723
5.03%	Maryland	3,403,822	4.96%	Maine	879,420	4.75%	Missouri	3,607,694	4.46%	Idaho	823,835
5.02%	Pennsylvania	8,017,844	4.96%	Pennsylvania	8,085,006	4.69%	Maine	883,159	4.38%	Vermont	410,797
4.75%	Idaho	771,021	4.88%	Maryland	3,431,740	4.65%	Pennsylvania	8,069,694	4.36%	Connecticut	2,286,106
4.74%	Wisconsin	3,398,503	4.77%	Vermont	410,309	4.62%	Idaho	810,634	4.12%	Wisconsin	3,489,447
4.68%	Nevada	1,285,350	4.75%	Massachusetts	4,255,673	4.62%	Iowa	1,865,410	4.04%	Delaware	525,447
4.63%	Oregon	2,185,522	4.68%	Delaware	508,010	4.61%	Wisconsin	3,478,463	4.04%	Maryland	3,549,482
4.49%	Maine	851,088	4.59%	Wisconsin	3,471,493	4.51%	Minnesota	3,183,619	4.03%	Kansas	1,687,045
4.42%	Delaware	499,884	4.44%	Colorado	2,777,995	4.44%	Maryland	3,503,106	3.90%	Iowa	1,876,363
4.34%	Iowa	1,839,150	4.38%	Oregon	2,233,068	4.36%	Delaware	520,500	3.86%	Pennsylvania	8,110,218
4.16%	Minnesota	3,086,128	4.37%	Minnesota	3,194,925	4.13%	Oregon	2,293,132	3.82%	Oregon	2,319,217
4.05%	Kansas	1,660,887	4.24%	Iowa	1,846,641	4.08%	Kansas	1,682,692	3.76%	Michigan	6,396,371
4.05%	Montana	572,946	4.05%	Nebraska	1,065,127	3.98%	Vermont	407,818	3.68%	Maine	882,561
4.04%	Ohio	7,236,603	3.99%	Kansas	1,699,800	3.92%	Nebraska	1,077,199	3.66%	Nebraska	1,086,209
4.01%	Michigan	6,263,911	3.88%	New Hampshire	837,202	3.79%	Ohio	7,261,319	3.60%	Minnesota	3,214,281
4.01%	Nebraska	1,060,246	3.81%	Michigan	6,407,508	3.68%	Washington	3,881,066	3.46%	Ohio	7,324,021
3.83%	Colorado	2,720,777	3.80%	Ohio	7,366,371	3.55%	Michigan	6,346,040	3.44%	Washington	3,945,050
3.44%	Washington	3,749,855	3.53%	Alaska	370,363	3.29%	Montana	587,518	3.20%	New Hampshire	846,531
3.43%	Alaska	368,259	3.51%	Montana	575,804	2.99%	New Hampshire	838,178	2.98%	Montana	590,841
3.12%	New Hampshire	809,019	3.44%	Washington	3,809,133	2.98%	Wyoming	315,510	2.91%	Alaska	379,077
2.95%	Utah	1,178,255	2.68%	Utah	1,207,115	2.85%	Alaska	382,225	2.75%	Utah	1,276,300
2.80%	Wyoming	306,485	2.44%	Wyoming	310,871	2.65%	Utah	1,270,186	2.50%	Wyoming	317,515
6.09%	**U.S.**	**177,532,915**	**5.93%**	**U.S.**	**179,959,220**	**5.79%**	**U.S.**	**182,686,266**	**5.56%**	**U.S.**	**184,395,128**

Source: U.S. Census Bureau. *2004 ACS Congressional Toolkit* (Washington D.C.: U.S. Census Bureau, 2004).

Parents as First Teachers *– continued from Page 9*

nity for their children to use language.

Secondly, parents who are resourceful promote learning in many different ways. They have print available for children to see. They model the use of print to communicate ideas. A resourceful parent creates opportunities for learning.

Resources

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Parents as First Teachers *– continued on Page 16*

Highlights of Recent IDRA Activities

In **February**, IDRA worked with **9,611** teachers, administrators, parents, and higher education personnel through **58** training and technical assistance activities and **166** program sites in **nine** states plus Mexico and Brazil. Topics included:

- ✦ Demonstration lessons for Focusing on Language and Academic Instructional Renewal
- ✦ Expanding higher educational opportunities for Latino students
- ✦ WOW (Workshop on Workshops)
- ✦ School finance overview
- ✦ Parent leadership series

Activity Snapshot

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

Participating agencies and school districts included:

- ✧ Dilley Independent School District (ISD), Texas
- ✧ National Title I Conference, Georgia
- ✧ Emporia State University, Kansas
- ✧ Southside ISD, Texas

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.

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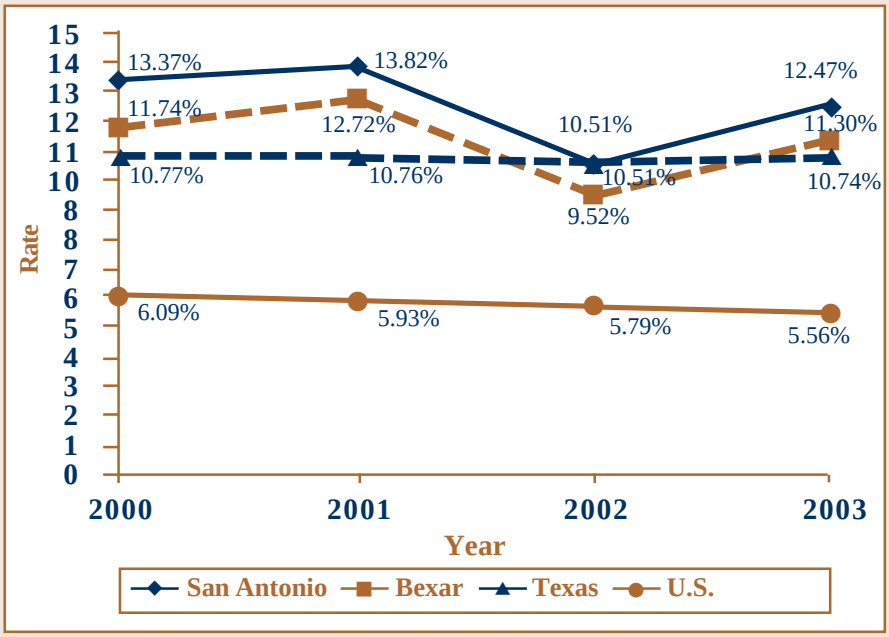
Illiteracy Rates, 2000 to 2003 for United States, Texas, Bexar County and San Antonio



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Parents as First Teachers *– continued from Page 15*

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