



Quality Teaching: A School Reform Dilemma

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- ❖ Children in science

**by Abelardo Villarreal,
Ph.D.**

Each year for about nine months, teachers spend a large part of the day with our children. Teachers are among the most important persons in the lives of young individuals. There are numerous stories of people who attribute their success in life to a dedicated teacher who cared for and influenced them in many positive ways. For many of our successes in life, we owe gratitude to committed, caring and well-prepared teachers.

Unfortunately, not enough students can attribute their academic success to teachers for us to be able to call our educational system a success. We hear it in comments, like: "My teacher gets angry at me every time I speak Spanish with my friends"; "No one here cares for me; I know I will flunk anyway"; "I am just waiting to be old enough to get out of school"; and "We parents feel lost and helpless; we try to keep our children in school, but many times we have to side with them after seeing what we feel are injustices."

Further, the low numbers of

minority students who can claim academic success suggests that our educational system is not relevant to our diverse student population. Statistics on the academic performance of students, particularly minority students, show some improvement, but so minor that the wide educational gap has not diminished.

H. Mizell from The Edna McConnell Clark Foundation states: "Most teachers and administrators do not know how to help all their students perform at significantly higher levels. For those who have been teaching for the past seven to 10 years, their pre-service education did not prepare them for the realities of today's classrooms nor for the levels of performance states now expect" (2002).

Achievement gaps between minority students and White students are primarily attributed to teacher quality. For example, 40 percent of variance in student test scores in reading and math is attributed to teacher quality (Ferguson, 1991). Teacher quality, when combined with small class size at the elementary school level, has an even more dramatic impact on student achievement (Ferguson, 1991).

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In addition, the federal government has asked states to put a highly-qualified teacher in every public school classroom by 2005. There is no doubt that greater financial investment in developing teacher expertise yields greater achievement gains than investment in other resources.

Given the strong connection between student achievement and teacher quality, it should be obvious that professional development is critical. The better prepared and updated a teacher is, the greater the academic achievement of students.

In spite of the strong research support for professional development, schools face two major obstacles that diminish their professional development efforts. First, there is federal pressure to further reduce the number of centers that provide training and technical assistance to school districts. Second, funding to develop teacher expertise is declining, and steps are being taken to diminish the number of learning and training opportunities provided to teachers.

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Six Tenets of Successful Professional Development

The issues are grounded on six basic tenets of successful professional development that translates into enhanced student achievement. These tenets are described below.

Professional Development is a Lifelong Process

Students are the ultimate beneficiaries of an effective professional development program in our schools. Teachers in today's schools feel the urge to keep up to date on new teaching techniques and strategies. Tons of information are becoming available to teachers on a daily basis. Professionals such as physicians, attorneys, and accountants

update their skills and knowledge periodically. Teachers are no exception. Learning is a lifelong process.

Unfortunately, many teacher preparation programs at universities are either ill preparing teachers for the realities of today's classrooms, or student teachers are not provided enough opportunities to experience and apply learning in a real classroom. New teachers are coming into our classrooms with serious professional development needs.

J. McRobbie states, "Teaching is a lifelong journey of learning rather than a final destination of 'knowing' how to teach" (2001). Teachers must continue to update their skills and knowledge to become more effective teachers. Professional development

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

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Prepared Teachers Needed

Permits and Alternative Certification Make Matters Worse

by Albert Cortez, Ph.D.

Every school teacher should be well prepared and qualified to work in today's schools with students from different cultural and language backgrounds. Abundant studies show a connection between teacher preparation and student success. In other words, the more qualified the teacher, the greater the chances that our children will succeed in school. Excellent teachers make a huge difference in the academic achievement of students.

Yet we are faced with the fact that our schools tend to be more successful at teaching White students than Hispanic and other minority students.

The achievement gap is even larger for this country's 4.5 million children whose first language is one other than English. These students are being taught, in some capacity, by 1.3 million teachers. But only 154,000 of those teachers have had eight or more hours of preparation in the last three years on how to teach these students (NCES, 2002).

Teachers want to do a good job. But many do not have opportunities or support to prepare themselves adequately.

The good news is that this problem

The more qualified the teacher, the greater the chances that our children will succeed in school.

has a solution. We have the expertise to develop qualified teachers.

For this development to be successful, it is important that the public understand the issues and become actively engaged in creating a scenario where every student, regardless of color, national origin, religion or gender, is taught by a qualified teacher.

What Are the Issues?

There are not enough prepared teachers to serve all students. We do not have enough teachers for most subjects, particularly in bilingual education, English as a second language (ESL), special education, mathematics and science.

In the 2001-02 school year, 24 percent of all teachers in Texas, for example, were not fully certified. The highest shortage of teachers was in elementary bilingual and ESL classrooms. Reports by the Texas A&M Institute for School-Community Partnerships indicate that one in three new teachers hired was not certified to teach in the area in which they were placed (Texas A&M, 2001).

Few colleges and universities have bilingual or ESL teacher preparation programs. We need teachers to be able to work with students from diverse culture and language backgrounds. But colleges and universities where most teachers get their initial training have been slow in creating teacher preparation programs that will meet this need.

For example, in Texas only 17 out of 169 universities with teacher preparation programs have a specialized program to develop bilingual and ESL teachers. No wonder Texas is facing a critical shortage of bilingual and ESL teachers. What will become of the fastest growing student population in Texas if we continue to shortchange their educational potential by not providing them with good, qualified teachers?

Alternative Certification Not the Solution

Critical teacher shortages have forced policymakers to find other ways of certifying teachers. These alternative routes sometimes are not based at universities or colleges. Some teachers are certified only by passing a certain test or by taking a series of workshops and classes that prepare them to pass the test.

These alternative routes are raising a number of questions about the
Teachers Needed – continued on Page 4

quality of teachers who are being certified. We should not forget the attempt that Texas made at one time to hire more bilingual teachers by having them take just 100 hours of language training. These teachers were granted a bilingual endorsement to teach without making sure that they knew their students' language well enough to teach them. The result was disastrous to the majority of their students.

Research is already confirming fears that alternative certification programs have produced mixed results. Many of these teachers need extensive support when they begin teaching, much more so than teachers who have been prepared through a college or university program.

Teacher Shortage

An inadequate number of new teachers is one factor that limits student access to quality teaching. Teacher attrition from the profession also contributes to limited access. Teachers are leaving the profession at alarming rates. New teachers soon face the reality of a classroom full of wide-eyed children. The enormous demands, coupled with perceptions of inadequate resources create quick burnout and dissatisfaction.

The first years in teaching are difficult, and teachers need extensive support and guidance. Many states have set up programs to support teachers, such as mentoring and coaching. Although the reasons are not clear, studies attribute the quick turnover to teacher burnout and not to reasons that are monetary.

Whatever the reason for shortages, the end result is that many districts are hard-pressed to find and hire the personnel required to ensure that all students have access to high quality teaching. Though certification does not, in and of itself, guarantee good teaching, it certainly improves the prospects that teachers will be well

Percentage of Teachers on Permit	Districts with Teachers on Permits	Percent of School Districts	Total Student Enrollment	Percent of State Student Enrollment
0 %	321	31.1	224,703	5.7
.01-4.9 %	376	36.4	2,175,463	55.0
5.0-9.9 %	208	20.1	1,031,421	26.1
10.0-14.0 %	83	8.1	453,480	11.5
15.0- 19.9 %	26	2.6	67,264	1.7
20.0 %+	21	2.1	8,398	.3
Totals	1,035	100*	3,960,729	100*

** may not equal 100 due to rounding*

Source: Intercultural Development Research Association

prepared.

Impact on Students

Information on access to high quality teaching is difficult to locate though states such as Texas routinely collect data on district staff profiles. One Texas Education Agency (TEA) publication *Snapshot* does include teacher-related information including the total teacher full time equivalents (FTEs) in each district, average teacher salary, average number of students per teacher, and percentage of teachers with one or more permits.

According to TEA's latest *Snapshot*:

Educators who have not yet earned the appropriate certification may be granted one of five types of permits in order to perform their assigned duties: non-renewable, temporary classroom assignment, temporary exemption, emergency and district teaching permit. Each of these permits allows a person to be employed in the public school system for varying lengths of time. *All but the district teaching permit are for individuals who seek to achieve the appropriate*

certification but are currently lacking in some credential" [emphasis added] (Texas Education Agency, 2002).

Districts in Texas report that 5.2 percent of all teachers hold one or more active permits of some type. According to TEA, the number of permits issued varies by subject area and student population served. The major designated teacher shortage areas in Texas include special education, ESL, bilingual education, science, mathematics, foreign languages, and technology applications (Texas Education Agency, 2002).

Distribution of Teachers on Permits

In order to provide some insights on the distribution of teachers with permits across Texas school districts, the Intercultural Development Research Association (IDRA) reviewed the data. IDRA rank-ordered all public school districts by the percentage of teachers with one or more permits and analyzed the distributional characteristics of various sub-groupings of these districts. The

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Teachers Needed – continued from Page 4

box on Page 4 summarizes key data gleaned from our analysis.

Perhaps the most noteworthy observation is that most of the state's school districts employ teachers who are on temporary permits, although 321 (31.1 percent) reported having no teachers with permits. These 321 districts had a total enrollment of only 224,703 pupils, accounting for about 5 percent of the state's 3.9 million pupils. Many of these districts tend to be smaller – less than 500 – though a few larger affluent districts such as Highland Park in Dallas were included.

Another 376 school districts reported having between 0.01 percent and 4.9 percent of their teachers with at least one permit. Collectively these 376 school districts enrolled more than 2.1 million pupils or approximately one half of the state pupil enrollment.

More disturbing was the observation that 208 of the 1,035 (20.1 percent) Texas school districts had between 5 percent and 9.9 percent of their teachers on one or more permits. Even more disconcerting was the observation that these 208 school districts enrolled 1,031,000 pupils, almost one fourth of all students educated in the state's public schools.

Eighty-three school districts, with a total of 453,480 pupils, reported that 10.0 percent to 14.9 percent of their teachers had at least one permit. Houston Independent School District was one of the 83 and accounted for more than half of pupils in that single category.

Another 26 school districts enrolling a total of 67,264 pupils reported that they had between 15.0 percent and 19.9 percent of their teachers with at least one permit.

Surprisingly 21 districts reported that more than 20 percent of their teachers had one or more permits, though these schools reported a total enrollment of only 8,398 students.

IDRA proposes that if the

statewide teacher FTEs total approximately 270,000 and if, in fact, 5 percent of teachers are not fully credentialed to teach in the area to which they are assigned, an estimated 13,500 teachers are impacted. Multiplying the number of teachers by an average class size of 15 students yields a total of 202,250 pupils affected by the lack of quality teaching.

What Needs to be Done?

Research shows that schools and other institutions have already identified ways to recruit persons with specific skills. They offer incentives to get other professionals into the teaching field and tap community resources such as *normalistas* (people who were trained to be teachers in Mexico and other countries) to pursue teacher certification in this country. Some also provide incentives for people in the community to pursue a college degree and teacher certification.*

Policymakers have special responsibilities to provide resources at the national, state and local levels to alleviate the teacher shortage situation and ensure that all students have qualified teachers. There are important things that colleges and universities and individuals can do as well. Community members play an important role in supporting efforts aimed at developing cadres of teachers who are prepared to work with diverse student populations. Whatever solutions are proposed it is clear that a united and coordinated effort among numerous sectors is needed.

**For more information on IDRA's Project Alianza, see www.idra.org/Alianza or call IDRA at 210-444-1710.*

Resources

Fuller, E. *Estimates of the Teacher Shortage in Texas Public Schools for the 2000-2001 and 2001-2002 Academic Years* (Austin, Texas: State Board for Educator Certification, June 18, 2002).

National Center for Education Statistics. (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Education, 2002).

Texas Education Agency. *Snapshot 2000-01 District Profiles* (Austin, Texas: Texas Education Agency, Winter 2002).

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Where to Go for More Information

Intercultural Development Research Association,
www.idra.org
210-444-1710

Center for the Study of Teaching and Policy,
University of Washington,
depts.washington.edu/ctpmail
206-221-4114

Institute for School University Partnerships,
Texas A&M University,
partnerships.tamu.edu
979-458-3563

National Clearinghouse for English Language Learners,
www.ncbe.gwu.edu
800-321-6223

Quality Counts Survey 2003, Education Week
www.edweek.sreports

Texas Education Agency,
www.tea.state.tx.us
512-463-9734

WestEd, www.wested.org
1-877-4-WestEd



Expanding Children's Access to Science

by **Bradley Scott, Ph.D.**

It is science time in Mrs. Miller's pre-school classroom. Everywhere there is an excitement in the air as children build with wonderful junk, examine distances in a bean-toss activity, explore the scientific properties of "Oobleck," and ponder the interaction, or lack thereof, between oil and water in a mystery bottle.

Lydia moves toward an activity that has caught her interest and, in the process, bumps Brooks who is just about to examine the force of gravity in an activity using ramps. Lydia, in a wheelchair, is a bright-eyed bundle of dynamite who also happens to be learning disabled. Lydia watches Brooks with the intensity of a surgeon as she waits for her turn to try the experiment. When Brooks is finished, Lydia picks up a ball and a block.

"Which do you think will roll down the ramp?" Mrs. Miller asks.

Lydia holds up the ball. Mrs. Miller challenges: "Maybe you are wrong Lydia. Maybe you should try to roll each one before you answer."

"The ball," Lydia insists. "It's round."

"Well, scientist Lydia, you'll just have to prove it to me," Mrs. Miller says with a half smile.

Lydia places the block on the

ramp. It does not roll. She places the ball on the ramp. It rolls to the bottom. With great satisfaction, Lydia looks at Mrs. Miller, smiles and says, "I told you."

Proof once again that science *is* for everyone.

IDRA's South Central Collaborative for Equity has been committed to helping public schools fight discrimination and increase educational equity for 30 years. It is an essential part of the center's mission to ensure that no child is left behind in schools because of race, national origin or gender.

The center has provided assistance and training to education personnel, parents, and others to ensure

that they work to include all learners and expose every student to quality learning experiences. The work the equity assistance center has conducted regarding equity in mathematics and science in schools has been reported in several *IDRA Newsletter* articles (Dieckmann, 2002; Dieckmann, 2003; Scott, 1995).

In addition, IDRA has developed the Six Goals of Educational Equity as a framework for its technical assistance. In a continuing effort to assist educators to embrace these goals by reflecting them in practices and programs in schools and to provide greater access to all learners, the equity

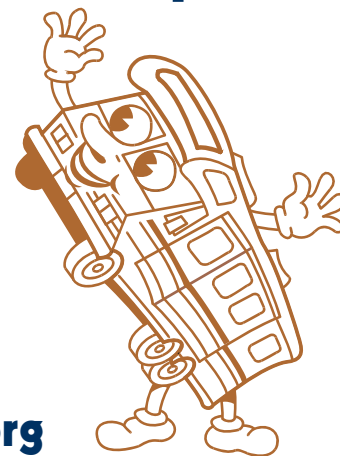
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- ✦ Learn about Internet resources
- ✦ Find extensive useful Internet links
- ✦ Use IDRA's topical index to find what you are looking for

www.idra.org



assistance center is now available to assist school personnel to make the *Playtime Is Science* parent-child early childhood science curriculum available to disabled children.

Why is this important? Griershaber and Diezmann give two very good reasons. They observe, “Science is an important way... to help people understand issues facing them and the world.”

Secondly, they note, “Opportunities to tinker with materials and equipment... in situations with other learners give young children scope to observe and reflect on the consequences of actions taken,” (2000).

A third reason is found in a set of values reflected in the goals for school science put forth by the National Research Council (1996). School science is valuable because it allows learners to:

- Experience the richness and excitement of knowing about and understanding the natural world;
- Use appropriate scientific processes and principles in making personal decisions; and
- Engage intelligently in public discourse and debate about matters of scientific concern.

These values are important for all learners regardless of their race, national origin, gender, economic status or disability. The equity assistance center is excited to announce the expansion of the *Playtime Is Science* materials to accommodate the special needs of disabled pre-school and early learners.

The center has worked collaboratively with the creators of *Playtime Is Science*, Educational Equity Concepts, since 1994. It has provided training throughout its service area in the hands-on, science-based, pre-school curriculum that provides a strong family involvement component as a tool for helping families engage their pre-school

children in the love of science. The curriculum is structured to provide children and families with a practical way of embracing the notion that science is for everyone regardless of their different characteristics.

Playtime Is Science is a scientifically research-based curriculum that has demonstrated its capacity to help racially, culturally, and gender different learners to embrace science and to empower teachers of diverse young children to approach classroom science experiences in a way that accomplishes the goals of the National Research Council.

Educational Equity Concepts, Inc., based in New York City, has expanded the original curriculum by adapting all of the activities to make them accessible to children who are blind or visually impaired, deaf or hard of hearing, physically disabled, learning disabled, speech and language impaired, and emotionally disabled.

The curriculum also:

- familiarizes students with vocabulary and basic concepts of science;
- breaks activities into discrete steps to ensure success;
- provides items for experimentation to challenge and test hypotheses;
- prepares students for activities by creating “recipe-like” charts;
- allows for the creation of questions for inquiry and investigation;
- provides opportunities for students to make choices; and
- instructs adults in ways to make science more accessible for disabilities.

The increased visibility given to science for pre-school and early elementary school learners as a result of current educational reform activities and the *No Child Left Behind Act* makes revisiting this dynamic curriculum a worthwhile and important activity for educators and parents. Now that the curriculum has been adapted to provide for greater access and inclusion for children who are disabled, clearly

parents and educators have an opportunity to move closer to ensuring that no child is left behind.

Lydia’s satisfaction as she demonstrated her scientific knowledge to Mrs. Miller, shows how it makes sense to ensure that disabled and challenged learners have an equitable, high-quality opportunity to learn science.

For more information on either *Playtime Is Science* or *Playtime Is Science for Students with Disabilities* contact IDRA or visit the SCCE web site at www.idra.org/scce or the Educational Equity Concepts web site at www.edequity.org.

Resources

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- Griershaber, S. and C. Diezmann. “The Challenge of Teaching and Learning Science with Young Children,” *Promoting Meaning Learning*, N.J. Yelland (Ed.) (Washington, D.C.: National Association for the Education of Young Children, 2000).
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activities must be aligned with new knowledge and related to the real responsibilities of a good teacher. Activities must not be disconnected from the curriculum and knowledge about the students. Teachers must be afforded the necessary time to develop their professionalism.

Teachers are not the only ones who need professional development. The research tells us about the important leadership role that principals play in effective schools. And school board members must be knowledgeable of basic pedagogy to support policies that facilitate the instruction in the classroom.

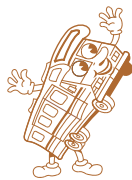
Education is a team effort that cannot be relegated solely to teachers. The U.S. Department of Education presently makes competitive grants to assist high-need local education agencies to recruit and train principals and assistant principals, and it supports teachers seeking advanced certification or advanced credentialing. It also makes competitive grants to schools and partnership organizations to improve the knowledge and skills of early childhood educators who work in communities that have high concentrations of economically disadvantaged children.

Professional Development Requires Commitment and Support from Federal and State Levels

Funds made available that target professional development are becoming smaller and smaller. At the federal level, the 15 comprehensive assistance centers (training and technical assistance centers) have been targeted for recission and will cease operations soon unless funding is restored. Also, the U.S. Department of Education has eliminated the Eisenhower Professional Development grants in mathematics and science. States, however, are

Did You Know?

- **There is a strong connection between student achievement and teacher quality.**
- **The better prepared and updated a teacher is, the greater the academic achievement of students.**
- **Achievement gaps between minority and White students are primarily attributed to teacher quality.**
- **Financial investment in developing teacher expertise yields greater achievement gains than investment in other resources.**
- **In spite of all the research supporting the training of teachers, there is still federal pressure to reduce the number of centers providing training and technical assistance to school districts.**
- **Investment in developing teacher expertise is declining, and steps are being taken to diminish the number of training opportunities provided to teachers.**
- **Teachers who lack the knowledge and understanding of the implications of a diverse student body fail to provide adequate learning opportunities to minority students.**
- **There is a 40 percent variance in student test scores in reading and math that is attributed to teacher quality.**
- **Teacher quality, when combined with small class size at the elementary school level, has an even more dramatic impact on student achievement.**
- **The federal government has asked states to put a highly-qualified teacher in every public school classroom by 2005.**



For more facts and statistics, go the "Field Trip" on IDRA's web site.

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allowed to use federal funds for reforming tenure systems, teacher testing, and pay differentiation initiatives.

Any local education agency receiving funds to operate a federal program is required to use between 5 percent and 10 percent of their allocations for professional

development aimed at ensuring that all teachers are highly qualified by the end of the 2005-06 school year. This requirement will be lowered to the 5 percent floor in 2004. However, local education agencies and schools identified as low performing must use at least 10 percent of their allocations

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for professional development for correcting the deficiencies that led to their identification as low performing.

Professional Development is Essential for Quality Schools for Minority Students

Research tells us that a standards-based approach to professional development is needed. It also tells us the essential elements of a successful school for minority students. A standards-based approach is needed that defines the characteristics of a good teacher in a school with a diverse student population.

For example, a great teacher for English language learners has the following characteristics:

- Knowledgeable about the cultures

represented in the classroom;

- Practices people skills, such as empathizing with the needs of others and caring with a critical eye;
- Willing to unlearn myths (interference of the first language, poverty as the reason for underachievement, and parents seen as not caring about the education of their children) that interfere with quality teaching of minority students;
- Knowledgeable about effective assessment and teaching strategies (active, inquiry-based, activating prior knowledge, cooperative learning, accelerated learning, critical pedagogy);
- Knowledgeable of first and second language acquisition and learning; and
- Knowledgeable about curriculum standards.

Consequently, any professional development program for teachers of English language learners must address these characteristics.

Professional Development Can be Enhanced through a Technology Enriched Environment

Concerns have been raised that pulling teachers out for a prolonged number of days affects the quality of instruction in those classrooms. These concerns are supported by a lack of a well-prepared substitute pool. Schools are faced with a dilemma: lack of qualified substitutes and the critical need for professional development, which typically requires teachers to be out of the classroom.

Technology can bring professional development to the classroom and offer many opportunities for teachers to learn and grow. The amount of time for teachers to be out of their classrooms can be minimized.

Furthermore, educators can learn at their own pace and on their own time. Timely access to information and flexibility add to the potential of technology to address the professional development challenge.

The use of technology has greatly enhanced the traditional live workshop, but it will never replace the one-on-one interaction that is central to effective communication. The workshop provides opportunities to produce together with guidance from an expert and to be challenged cognitively to produce responses to problems. Guidance during the application process can be provided through technology.

Professional Development Must be Partnered with a Strong Curriculum

A research-proven curriculum customized for a diverse student population is a prerequisite for student

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Why Should I Care about Teacher Quality?

- If you have school-age children, you should be concerned that they are taught by teachers who are consistently upgrading their knowledge and skills to ensure that your children get the best education.
- If you are a taxpayer in the school district, you should be concerned about the net gain of your investment in education. Any successful investor searches for an investment broker who is knowledgeable and skillful and is responsible for the success of his or her investments.
- If you are a new or transfer teacher, you should be concerned that the school provides you the opportunities to grow and become a great teacher.
- If you are a minority parent, you should be concerned about the quality of instruction that your children get so they have the same learning opportunities to demonstrate academic success.
- If you are an investor in the community, you should be concerned with a school that does not produce enough high school and college graduates for an efficient and productive workforce.
- If you are a citizen who cares for the betterment of your community, you will be concerned for all the reasons stated in the box on Page 8.

success. Like many other states, Texas has a standards-based curriculum that must be adhered to by all teachers. Texas tests all of its students on these standards. Students who fail to meet minimum expectations do not graduate or pass to the next grade.

Professional development topics must be connected to these standards and equip teachers to use them to prepare their daily lesson plans. Successful teachers align their teaching to these standards, and their students do well on the state standardized tests.

Professional Development is Critical in an Accountability System

An accountability system that ignores the value of professional development is flawed and is not consistent with what we know about factors that contribute to student success. The *No Child Left Behind Act* has tightened the requirements by specifying acceptable rates of progress to ensure that all groups of students succeed in school. Student performance data must be disaggregated by poverty, race, ethnicity, disability, and limited-English-proficiency.

The Texas Education Agency has similar requirements for schools to be rated as *acceptable*, *recognized* or *exemplary*. Educators must rely on quality teaching to achieve these results.

Quality teaching is the result of strong teacher support, the right teaching strategies and techniques, a strong curriculum and teachers' high expectation and positive attitudes toward diversity.

Policies Are Needed to Support Professional Development

Policies should support in-service education as a means of keeping teachers up-to-date on new knowledge,

Failing to provide students with a qualified teacher is a major factor in the struggle for student high academic achievement.

research and skills that create learning opportunities for a diverse student population. Policies that strengthen any school improvement initiative aimed at improving student achievement and removing the educational gaps among different student groups must be formulated and implemented at once. Such policies include the following.

Make Professional Development (In-service Education) a Priority

This ensures that a significant portion of the federal budget to education is allocated to the development and enhancement of teacher quality in our schools. In addition, all education programs funded by the federal government should require a significant amount of attention and resources to professional development of existing and future educators.

Establish a Standards-based Approach in Defining Professional Development for Teachers in Schools with Diverse Student Populations

This ensures that all teachers working with diverse student populations are knowledgeable of the different cultures represented in their school, value and respect other cultures, use the community as a resource, are familiar with the research on effective methods and techniques, and can identify and use appropriate assessment instruments. These standards will be supported with a mechanism for evaluating and assessing the effectiveness of professional development activities

on the achievement of *all* students.

Provide Time and Resources for Teachers and Other Educators to Participate in Professional Development

School districts provide a minimum number of days for professional development. The time allocated and vehicles used to provide professional development should be reconsidered and should generally be expanded. Districts should provide other resources, such as journals, video tapes, and video conferences, through which teachers can participate. The Texas state requirement barely meets the minimum for a complete and effective professional development program.

Provide Flexibility to Allocate Greater Portions of Federal and State Funding for Professional Development Related to Education of Diverse Student Groups

Reconsider the allocations made for professional development. The fact remains that the student body is becoming more culturally diverse as years go by. Not all teachers who will at some point work with culturally diverse students are prepared to serve these students. Therefore, it is imperative that schools initiate professional development programs that target topics related to this issue.

Summary

Although the federal government has asked states to put a highly-qualified teacher in every public school classroom by 2005, funding is not sufficient to meet the challenge. It is a common assumption that all teachers are adequately prepared when, in fact, many are not. The issue becomes even

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more acute when it is evident that knowledge and understanding of the implications of a diverse student body are lacking in many teacher preparation programs. Failing to provide students with a qualified teacher is a major factor in the struggle for student high academic achievement.

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In February, IDRA worked with **7,370** teachers, administrators, parents, and higher education personnel through **41** training and technical assistance activities and **263** program sites in **10** states plus Mexico and Brazil. Topics included:

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- ◆ *WOW Workshop on Workshops*
- ◆ School Finance Policy Issues
- ◆ English as a Second Language Strategies for Kindergarten through Fifth Grade Students

Participating agencies and school districts included:

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- ◆ Northeast Independent School District (ISD), Texas
- ◆ Community School District #7, New York
- ◆ Texas Education Service Center, Region II
- ◆ San Antonio ISD, Texas

Activity Snapshot

With help from the IDRA South Central Collaborative for Equity (SCCE), a New Mexico school district has implemented a plan to restructure classroom processes to ensure greater access to learning opportunities for students. After an Office for Civil Rights investigation generated by a complaint under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act, the school district sought technical assistance in implementing a correction plan to protect the civil rights of language-minority students. The SCCE is the equity assistance center funded by the U.S. Department of Education to serve schools in Arkansas, Louisiana, New Mexico, Oklahoma and Texas. The center provided training of trainer sessions on how to embrace students' culture in the classroom, how to conduct appropriate assessment of language-minority students, and how to develop appropriate teaching styles and classroom practices that value the second language learning characteristics of students. The strategies helped teachers to provide equal access to learning opportunities for all children.

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