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Focus: College Access and Success

Brown at Sixty

How Far Have We Come and How Far Must We Go to Fulfill the Promise of *Brown vs. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas*

by Bradley Scott, Ph.D.

As of May 31, it will be 60 years since the U.S. Supreme Court rendered its historic 9 to 0 decision that “separate educational facilities are inherently unequal.” Sixty years later, the real question may be: How far have we come and how far must we go to fulfill the promise of *Brown*? It was just 10 years ago that IDRA was helping to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the *Brown vs. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas* U.S. Supreme Court decision.

Ten years ago, IDRA played a role in three important ways regarding the commemoration of the *Brown* decision. First, IDRA was asked by the *Brown vs. Board of Education* 50th Anniversary Commission, created by the U.S. President and Congress, to co-sponsor a dialogue across sectors and across race to discuss the implications of the *Brown* decision on Latino Americans. IDRA conducted this dialogue event in San Antonio in which the question posed above essentially served as the backdrop for conversations about the application of the decision to the quality of education Latino students receive in public schools. The *Mendez vs. Westminster* appellate case connected the experience of Latino American students directly to the *Brown* case. But more importantly, it expanded the historic conversation to a more diverse application and context of students across the United States. Highlights of the event are on our Fulfilling the Promise of *Brown* and *Mendez* website (<http://www.idra.org/mendezbrown/>).

<http://www.idra.org/mendezbrown/>).

Second, IDRA seized the opportunity to follow that event with a series of cross-sector, cross-race conversations in Alabama, Arkansas, Louisiana, New Mexico, Mississippi, Oklahoma and Texas. These dialogues were designed to assist stakeholders in talking with each other about local plans of action to, as a part of their commitment to fulfill the promise of *Brown*, support African American students and Latino students in public schools, including their graduation from high school and college going. These dialogues challenged local people to examine the barrier and facilitating forces in their own community and the local education system that impacts educational success for Black and Brown students.

And third, IDRA created a set of materials that other communities can use to replicate the conversations and create local plans to transform schools into engines of success and college going for African American students and Latino students across the nation. The most comprehensive is *Creating Your Education Blueprint for Action – Mendez and Brown Community Dialogues – A Launch Kit*, which is available from IDRA and free online.

Dr. María “Cuca” Robledo Montecel, IDRA’s President & CEO, made comments about the
(cont. on Page 2)

“Inclusion, success, and economic productivity demand that students of all backgrounds and financial circumstances be prepared to enter and graduate from college. Colleges and universities must adapt to welcome students and provide the supports needed for them to graduate. Their future is our best legacy.”

– Dr. María “Cuca” Robledo Montecel, IDRA President and CEO

(Brown at Sixty – How Far Have We Come and How Far Must We Go... continued from Page 1)

Brown decision during the initial Latino Pursuit of Excellence and Equity dialogue event in 2003 that still stand today:

“Almost 50 years later, the promise of *Brown* remains unmet. In fact, the promise of *Brown* may be slipping further out of reach.

“According to the Harvard Civil Rights Project, public schools in the United States are re-segregating. As we began the new millennium, 40 percent of Black students attended schools that were 90 percent to 100 percent Black. This is up from 32 percent in 1988. In nine out of 10 of these schools the majority of children were poor. This is not the promise of *Brown*.

“Latino children are the most segregated, and they attend the poorest schools. They receive the poorest preparation by the least trained teachers and have little access to rigorous curriculum that would prepare them for college. This is not the promise of *Brown*.

“Seventy-five percent of the 4.5 million students who speak a language other than English have a seat in the classroom but are left out of the class because of English-only policies that are concerned with politics instead of learning (Kindler, 2002). This is not the promise of *Brown*, of *Mendez*, of *Lau* or of *Plylar*. This is not the promise we have made to children.

“So, how do we make good on this promise? It seems to me that we must secure three foundations: We must keep the public in public education, we must press for accountable schools, and we must fund schools for the common good.”

The U.S. President, the Secretary of Education and the Assistant Secretary for the Office for Civil Rights have presented to the nation the

latest update of the Civil Rights Data Collection (CDRC). When one examines various education snapshots about the condition of education across the nation, based upon the self-report of all districts and schools in the United States, one can see that Dr. Robledo Montecel’s observation about the unmet promise of *Brown* still rings true for far too many of learners across race, gender and national origin, including language, citizenship status and economic level. The CDRC provides many snapshots of findings about public education in the United States. An example of one snapshot focusing on college and career readiness with explanations taken from the CDRC shows the following.

- **Limited access to high-level math and science courses:** Nationwide, only 50 percent of high schools offer calculus, and only 63 percent offer physics.
- **Significant lack of access to other core courses:** Nationwide, between 10 percent and 25 percent of high schools do not offer more than one of the core courses in the typical sequence of high school math and science education, such as Algebra I and II, geometry, biology and chemistry.
- **Even less access for Black, Latino, American Indian and Alaska Native students:** A quarter of high schools with the highest percentage of Black students and Latino students do not offer Algebra II, a third of these schools do not offer chemistry.
- **Growing opportunity gap in gifted and talented education:** Black students and Latino students continue to be disproportionately under-represented.
- **Black students and Latino students continue to be disproportionately under-**

represented in Advanced Placement (AP) and dual credit courses.



- Disproportionately **higher rates of retention** continue for students of color, English learners and students with disabilities.

Snapshots about discipline, teacher quality, resource distribution and more also are available. These snapshots show the work that lays out a path of what we have yet to do. We have made so many changes over 60 years. We have been able to elevate so many people, so many generations, in so many ways. At one point, we were able to expand the middle class, move diverse people into the middle class, support college going and building platforms for life success for their daughters and sons. We cannot deny that some things have changed in 60 years. To do so would be dishonest.

What we cannot afford to do is to think that because some things have changed, everything is all right. Everything is not all right. We still have work to do. We cannot afford to take another (cont. on Page 6)

IDRA South Central Collaborative for Equity

For more information about the IDRA South Central Collaborative for Equity or to request technical assistance, contact us at 210-444-1710 or contact@idra.org.

Additional resources are available online at http://www.idra.org/South_Central_Collaborative_for_Equity/

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The Cognitive and Affective Dimensions of College Readiness

by Rosana G. Rodríguez, Ph.D., and Nilka Avilés, Ed.D.

Making college readiness a reality for all students is a challenge for our high schools. The challenge involves changing hearts and expectations and establishing a system for personalizing instruction, an understanding of college readiness skills, a commitment to all students, and a system to monitor progress. Impressive improvements in academic performance of students result when we focus on developing cognitive and affective competencies needed to excel in school and college. Students acquire requisite knowledge and skills and boost their abilities aligned with college expectations when they prepare for college through rigorous, high quality education programs that incorporate genuine social, emotional, developmental and academic support systems by caring adults. One has to be intentional in understanding what constitutes rigor, high expectations and college readiness in order to develop a frame of reference that guides teachers into action for the intended outcomes pertaining to curriculum and instruction.

The affective domain also must be cultivated to enhance teaching and learning. Teachers can build positive relationships and promote a supportive community among students where they help each other succeed in school. How can we accomplish this? Some schools have effectively incorporated the following practices resulting in successful outcomes.

- Facilitating peer support.
- Offering transitional bridge classes.
- Ensuring active involvement of caring adults.
- Fostering open communication and discussion by groups of students talking about their beliefs.
- Supporting students' values and cultures.
- Empowering students to take risks in a safe environment.
- Providing incentives for improvement and

high achievement.

- Encouraging families as part of a circle of support for students.
- Providing opportunities for community service where students can demonstrate leadership skills.
- Mentoring provided by positive role models.

It is important to demystify access to higher education and inspire strong cognitive and meta-cognitive skills, such as self-determination, persistence, resilience and self-discipline, that support success in college. It is our obligation to ensure that all students are prepared to succeed in college. College readiness requires competency in both the cognitive and affective domains. Both are necessary to ensure more students, particularly those most underserved and underrepresented, not only enter college prepared but persist to complete their degree of choice.

To accomplish this, we can reflect on supportive practices and policies that create meaningful and sustainable change. Developing a system of college readiness indicators along with genuine supports and interventions through community-wide advocacy, collaboration and partnerships with post-secondary institutions is effective in fostering the knowledge and tenacity students need to accomplish their dreams.

As schools strive to create a culture of engagement and high expectations for graduation and college readiness, we must continually advocate for policies and practices that ensure equity, access and success for all students. However, amidst all the structural inequities and systemic reforms that certainly need addressing and are long overdue, teachers' perceptions and their relationships with each of their students remains paramount. This type of internal change is deep and requires that educators connect with their students as they live out their vocation each day in every classroom.

(cont. on Page 4)

Impressive improvements in academic performance of students result when we focus on developing cognitive and affective competencies needed to excel in school and college.

(The Cognitive and Affective Dimensions of College Readiness, continued from Page 3)

Seasoned and new teachers alike are challenged to recognize their role as leaders of change in their schools, with the noble responsibility of helping form the next generation of citizens who will shape this nation.

Inspiring and preparing students for college requires razor-sharp skills in content areas and a willingness to reach out and connect with students to ignite their passion in learning and belief that they can succeed. What does it mean to be a teacher in today's world? It means in a special way to never forget the student who is marginalized or who typically falls through the cracks of the system. In such a data-driven reality where student scores are paramount, it means taking time for the weakest or struggling students who are often viewed as the least important.

At IDRA we believe that all students are valuable, none is expendable. While technology and resources grow for some, inequities tragically continue to exist that affect the most unequal parts of our communities, perpetuating the cycle of under resourced schools, low expectations and poorly trained teachers for students of greatest need. This situation surely cries out for justice and structural changes and demands even greater commitment and expertise from teachers serving in these classrooms.

One is inspired by teachers in whose classrooms you immediately sense the living vocation of a true educator in action. What are some qualities that are so recognizable and palpable in those classrooms where high expectations and high support value and encourage each student toward graduation and college and career readiness? Those teachers exemplify a student-centered approach and willingness to really listen to what their students are saying, feeling and experiencing. They display a capacity to stay close to their students and hear what their needs are.

A sense of humor and humility are evident in those classrooms. Students seek role models to emulate and teachers who have an easy style, who are approachable and who display a sense of humor and humility. These are irresistible to students, drawing them in for meaningful learning experiences, encouraging and offering advice on how to stay on track for graduation and college. It may be risky for teachers to engage in this manner, but it is worth the risk to reach students who are shy or need special encouragement. This approachability allows students

to feel close to their teacher, as a confidant and advocate who believes they can succeed. Barriers to learning come down when teachers connect to their students and their inevitable frustrations and doubts about graduation and college.

Teachers and classrooms that remain isolated close in on themselves, become stale for students, uninspiring and old. If teachers are not reaching out to their students, there is no continuity. They risk moving backwards, becoming irrelevant or losing their students altogether. Teachers need to help students continuously see education as an unfolding journey of self-discovery. They must inspire their students to succeed despite setbacks that occur.

High expectations are the fruits of hopefulness. A teacher who believes his or her students will succeed inspires courage and persistence necessary for the journey through graduation, college and work.

What are the teachers around you passing on to young people? Is it a sense of hopefulness in their ability to succeed, coupled with the requisite skills and support to demystify the college process? When they get older, who will our students remember as teachers who inspired them the most to succeed, despite any odds? They will remember those who genuinely valued them, made time to get to know them, and believed in their brilliance. All students have gifts. It is up to us to discover and foster those gifts for graduation and beyond.

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- Resources from Brown and Mendez community dialogues
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- Photos and podcasts from the Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program anniversary events
- Publication: *College Bound and Determined*
- Classnotes podcast on college readiness competencies
- Info for parents about the new Texas high school curriculum
- Info on IDRA's publication: *Achieve College - ¡Hacia Adelante! - A Guide for College Access*

Visit www.idra.org for more information.

Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program Celebrates 30 Years of Keeping Students in School

by Linda Cantu, Ph.D.

As IDRA's Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program has been celebrating its 30th anniversary this year, we have been highlighting milestones and creating new memories. South San Antonio ISD hosted a visit to the program at South San Antonio High School so that guests could see tutors as they worked with their younger tutees. Two Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program tutors were interviewed by the media about how they felt the program was helping them. Michaela Valdez, a 15-year-old who tutors three kindergarten students, said she had been failing algebra, performing poorly on standardized tests and struggling to adapt to high school. But then she was recommended for the Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program. "Michaela fell in love with tutoring... She found the motivation to pull up her grades because she wanted to be a good role model" (Vara-Orta, 2014).

Norma de Hoyos, a third-grade teacher, spoke about the 14-year-old tutor in her classroom, Nicholas Alderete, saying that when Nicholas enters her class each day "the students get excited because they feel cool getting to hang out with a teenager" (Vara-Orta, 2014).

The Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program is a research-based, internationally-recognized dropout prevention program that has kept 98 percent of its tutors in school. Created by IDRA, it is a cross-age tutoring program that identifies middle and high school students who are in at-risk situations and enlists them as tutors for elementary school students who are also struggling in school. Results show that tutors stay in school, have increased academic performance, improve school attendance and advance to higher education.

The program has helped more than 33,000 students, young people who were previously at risk of dropping out. The lives of more than 787,000 children, families and educators have been positively impacted by the program in cities

across the United States and in Brazil, Puerto Rico and the United Kingdom.

For the 2013-14 school year, IDRA implemented the program in three new school districts: Chicago Public Schools, Los Angeles Unified School District and New York City Public Schools. Detroit Public Schools and a district in Sacramento will be starting programs in the next school year.

The school leaders at Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program sites are helping students do better in school because they provide them an opportunity to become involved in the education of younger children, which in turn improves their own academic skills as they tutor. Their attendance and behavior improves, and their grades improve. Additionally, they start feeling more connected to their school. Their teachers and classmates begin to see them differently, and they get recognized for their contribution as tutors.

At an event in February, South San Antonio ISD also was recognized for its 30th year implementing the program, and La Joya ISD for its 21st year anniversary. School district administrators, teachers, students, parents and San Antonio city officials attended the event, as well as many current and former tutors. And representing the Coca-Cola Company San Antonio PAC, Luisa Casso joined us for the reception.

For this year's anniversary celebration, we were honored to have a dramatic presentation called, "When the kids see us coming, they start calling my name," during which current tutors read excerpts from essays written by other tutors over the years about how the program has affected their lives and their tutees. The excerpts were selected by distinguished authors: San Antonio Poet Laureate, Carmen Tafolla; Texas State Poet Laureate, Rosemary Catacalos; and author, historian, and retired educator, J. Gilberto Quezada.

(cont. on Page 6)



Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program tutor, Michaela Valdez, talks to a reporter while tutoring in San Antonio.

"I am grateful that I could make a difference in the lives of our future generation because they have certainly made a difference in mine."

– Andre Merritt, Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program tutor

(Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program Celebrates 30 Years of Keeping Students in School, continued from Page 5)

They read comments from Lanala Hayes, a former tutor in Houston ISD: “Like the first rocket to land on the moon, something changed. I was a kid with no thought of what I would be doing after high school, a kid who didn’t care about my grades. Just like a flower trying to stay nourished in a desert or a flower trying to bloom in concrete, it seemed impossible. But soon enough the Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program helped to change me.”

Among the other excerpts was this by Andre Merritt, a former tutor in North Carolina: “Every day, I saw Lloyd and treated him the way I wanted to be treated when I was his age. He saw himself as a nobody, a failure, even a mistake. I made sure that by 9:10, he felt like a somebody, and a winner, and a blessing. I made sure that I encouraged him to never give up and to always do your best, no matter what. I am grateful that I could make a difference in the lives of our future generation because they have certainly made a difference in mine.”

Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program tutors are also exposed to new opportunities through educational field trips and guest speakers. Tutors go on college and university tours and learn about college life and its possibilities in their future. Leadership days are held at universities so that students can experience being in a classroom setting an entire day. These opportunities demystify college for students. It isn’t just a building they drive by occasionally but a place that becomes familiar to them. At one such tour for Odessa High School tutors visiting the University of Texas in the Permian Basin, faculty from the admissions office and the president’s office came to meet and speak to the students. The president’s office offered all of the Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program tutors who were seniors a \$500 scholar-



Dr. María “Cuca” Robledo Montecel, IDRA President & CEO, with Pablo López, former Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program tutor.

ship if they attend their university.

At the anniversary reception in February, a special guest, Pablo López, spoke about how the program impacted him. López was a Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program tutor in Brownsville ISD 20 years ago and is currently an investigator at the University of Texas at Pan American. He said: “A long, long time ago, I was a kid with a dream. The more I thought about that dream, the harder it seemed I would be able to achieve it. Then one day I was given an opportunity to be part of the Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program... Now, I’ve been a police officer for 12 years. I married my junior high sweetheart. I have two beautiful babies who see me as a hero. But little do they know that they are my inspiration, just like my tutees were 20 years ago. I want to say congratulations to the Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program’s 30th anniversary of changing lives and in molding

these tutors of today to be leaders of the future.”

The Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program continues to provide opportunities for students to succeed in school and graduate. More information about the program is available online (www.idra.org) or by contacting IDRA (210-444-1710; contact@idra.org). IDRA’s Classnotes Podcast also features highlights from the student presentations, Mr. López speech, and the Art of Writing panel with tips for teachers (www.idra.org/Podcasts/).

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(Brown at Sixty – How Far Have We Come and How Far Must We Go..., continued from Page 2)

60 years to come to the reality that writing off generations of American citizens, regardless of their diverse characteristics, or relegating them to second and third class citizenship status is a viable road to keeping this nation strong, competitive and a leader in the world. We must be excellent in a 21st century world with all learners achieving at the highest levels. The fact remains, “We should not kid ourselves, excellence still requires (educational) equity” (2000). Happy Birthday to

you, *Brown* decision.

Resources

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HB5 Does Not Have to Block Students from College

San Antonio City Council Encourages College Preparation for All Students

Statement by Dr. María “Cuca” Robledo Montecel, Intercultural Development Research Association, April 17, 2014

IDRA commends the San Antonio City Council for its resolution passed on April 17 to encourage local school districts to choose the distinguished level of achievement as the default in graduation plans for all of their students. The recommendation was made by the San Antonio Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, the Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund, ¡PRESENTE! and IDRA. This distinguished achievement designation signifies that high school students have taken Algebra II, which is required for them to be eligible for “top 10 percent” automatic college admission. Also the SAT and ACT require knowledge of Algebra II. Making the distinguished achievement designation the default affirms the intention of school districts to prepare all students for college.

San Antonio’s action is consistent with its “smart city” initiatives and investments in creating a college-going culture, citywide. San Antonio ISD and several other school districts across the state have already announced plans to make the distinguished level of achievement the default for their students, including Austin ISD, Houston ISD, and Pharr-San Juan-Alamo ISD.

TG examined data on high school graduates whose parents did not go to college and who enrolled in a four-year institution (2006). The TG study found that of these students who took only Algebra I and geometry, only 11 percent went on to college. For the students who also took Algebra II, the percentage jumped to 34 percent who went to college. And those who took math beyond Algebra II, 64 percent went to college.

The City Council’s action and hopefully subsequent action at the school district level is an important first step to ensuring our schools provide an excellent education to all students. To have the option to attend college and graduate, IDRA’s Quality School Action Framework™ demonstrates that students must be prepared with high quality curriculum and high quality

teaching.

Even though the Texas Legislature took the state several leaps backwards by eliminating the 4-by-4 plan as the required path for all students (16 high quality core curriculum courses – four years each in English, math, science and social studies), school districts can encourage and even require their students take a high quality curriculum that prepares all of their students for college entrance and graduation. This includes requiring Algebra II for students to earn the distinguished level of achievement as well as requiring English IV, chemistry, physics, world history, and world geography. Until the recent legislative changes, most Texas students were taking these courses.

Rigor and high expectations work. IDRA recently released a report, *College Bound and Determined*, showing how the PSJA school district in south Texas transformed itself from low achievement and low expectations to planning for all students to graduate from high school and college. In PSJA, transformation went beyond changing sobering graduation rates or even getting graduates into college. This school district changes how we think about college readiness.

The rigor of high school curriculum is a key indicator for whether a student will graduate from high school and earn a college degree. A study by the U.S. Department of Education shows that the rigor of the high school curriculum is the most important factor in a student’s success and graduation from college – more important than the education level of the parents, their income, and their race-ethnicity (Adelman 2006).

Education has been shown to be correlated with increases not only in individual wealth but also with greater civic participation, health and well-being, and economic competitiveness. This holds for adults across race and gender.

To create true opportunities for all of our children,



Laurie Posner, IDRA senior education associates, speaks to the San Antonio City Council about its resolution encouraging local school districts to choose the distinguished level of achievement as the default in graduation plans for all of their students.

we must commit to high quality curriculum for all students. The young people in San Antonio and across the state – students of all backgrounds and every zip code – need our support to be prepared for the opportunities of today and tomorrow.

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IDRA Research for College Access and Success

For decades, IDRA has researched the critical transition between high school and college access and success, particularly for minority and low-income students. IDRA's research provides critical insights and solutions, such as our studies of a community college that yielded strategies that improved its recruitment and retention of Hispanic, low-income students, and students who were the first in their families to attend college. In 2007 when the Texas Legislature was considering limiting the number of students offered automatic admission under the **Top Ten Percent Plan**, IDRA compiled and analyzed data on students entering the University of Texas at Austin and all the Texas high schools that contributed graduating seniors to those incoming freshmen classes between the years of 1995 and 2006. In another example, IDRA's **Alianza** project and research helped several universities improve their teacher preparation programs, increasing the number of teachers prepared to teach English in bilingual and multicultural environments. IDRA's **InterAction** initiative focused on improving college access and success of Latino students and building lasting linkages among K-12 schools, higher education, and the community and business sectors. IDRA's research set the context for action with the resulting 31 policy solutions informing state policy. And just a couple of months ago, IDRA released **College Bound and Determined**, a report showing how a school district is changing how we think about college readiness. More examples and resources from IDRA's curriculum quality research work are online at www.idra.org/Research/IDRA_Research.

*Assuring educational opportunity for every child
through research, materials development, training, technical assistance, evaluation and information dissemination*