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In his acceptance speech in Grant Park on November 4th, President-elect Barack Obama cautioned the country not to equate an election itself with change, but rather “the chance for us to make that change.” As the President is set to infuse public education with one of the largest single allocations in history, our nation’s new Education Secretary prepares to [manage the distribution of a \\$100-plus billion](#) budget that includes, as of this printing, \$54 billion in state fiscal stabilization and a \$5 billion incentive fund to reward progress.

Meanwhile, we all have the chance to make changes at the state and local level that will transform public schooling. Along with local and district-level actions, state-wide efforts that bring together families, community members, educators and policymakers to overcome inequity and raise graduation rates are critically needed. This issue spotlights several examples. As always, we want to hear from you! Send in stories and examples from your communities to gradforall@idra.org.

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Schools and Communities in Action

“Show me a successful school district, and I’ll show you a community that wraps its arms around its schools, partnering with them for the success of all students.” - Anne Foster, national Executive Director of Parents for Public Schools, Northeast Mississippi Daily Journal, February 9, 2009.



Mississippi Model. Parents for Public Schools (PPS), which recently selected Anne W. Foster as its new Executive Director, is developing a statewide network in Mississippi that it hopes can become a model for parent engagement in other states. According to the Southern Education Foundation, per-pupil spending in Mississippi, as in other southern states, lags behind national averages, and it [remains the only Southern state without state-supported pre-kindergarten](#). Research compiled by Multicultural Education, Training & Advocacy in partnership with IDRA shows that in Mississippi just one in two African American and Latino students graduate on time with a diploma. Through the *Schoolhouse to Statehouse* initiative, PPS provides training and tools to help parents become more powerful advocates for their children. Its aim is to “mobilize parents and their supporters to work to achieve equitable distribution of resources to support public education and access to opportunities for all students.” To learn more about PPS’ emerging model, visit “[We’re Everywhere](#)” or visit [Parent Press](#). Aurelio Montemayor, M.Ed., director of the IDRA Texas Parent Information and Resource Center, serves on the national board of Parents for Public Schools--visit “Toolbox” (below) for a link to a podcast conversation with him on “The Power of Parent Leadership.” Looking to learn more about community organizing to improve public education in Mississippi? Visit [Southern Echo](#), a leadership development, education and training organization, strengthening grassroots leadership in the African-American community in rural Mississippi and the region.

Kentucky Can-Do Spirit. “Top 20 by 2020” is a statewide campaign in Kentucky led by the Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence to “propel Kentucky to rank in the top 20 states for student achievement by 2020.” Launched at Liberty Elementary School in Lexington, the campaign aims to expand quality preschool; provide highly qualified and well-supported teachers for every student; eliminate achievement gaps; improve high schools; increase college-going and completion rates; and improve math, science and technology achievement at all levels. To learn more about how the campaign is designed to catalyze action around key educational indicators, visit [Top 20 by 2020](#).

A True Test for Texas. Texas has an opportunity that doesn’t come along every day. Granted, it was wrapped in a [court ruling](#) that the state falls short in its obligation to effectively educate secondary level English language learners. Texas recently won the chance to postpone the overhaul

of programs for secondary English-language learners—an overhaul that U.S. district judge William Wayne Justice has described as “urgent.” But rather than delay action, the state has a chance to do the right thing. In doing so, it not only serves the children of Texas but paves the way for better practices in other states. As Education Week’s [Quality Counts 2009: Portrait of a Population](#) points out, across the country academic achievement gaps between English language learners and their peers are significant and persistent. To support action by concerned policymakers, educators, families and community advocates in Texas and to encourage good work around the country to close the gaps, IDRA has developed a series of resources.

- [Properly Serving Secondary English Language Learners](#), an IDRA Classnotes podcast, features a conversation with Abelardo Villarreal, Ph.D., director of IDRA field services and a national expert on education of English language learners that outlines what schools should do to ensure that ELLs graduate from high school well prepared for college and work. Dr. Villarreal is interviewed by Bradley Scott, Ph.D., director of the IDRA South Central Collaborative for Equity. You may also want to visit the companion article to this podcast: [“Ten Principles for an Effective Education Plan for English Language Learners at the Secondary Level – Part I.”](#)
- [“A Framework for Effective Instruction of Secondary English Language Learners”](#) by María “Cuca” Robledo Montecel, Ph.D. provides guidance on how to lead improvements at the local, district and state level.
- For more background and policy recommendations, visit [“Bilingual Education in Texas – Where It is Now, and What is Still Needed”](#) by Albert Cortez, Ph.D., and Roy L. Johnson, M.S.
- For a research-based rubric for action, see [Good Schools and Classrooms for Children Learning English: A Guide](#) by María “Cuca” Robledo Montecel, Ph.D.; Josie Cortez, M.A.; Albert Cortez, Ph.D., and Abelardo Villarreal, Ph.D.

Toolbox

Follow the Money. For clearly-written analyses of the education budget in the 2009 Stimulus Bill, visit the [New America Foundation’s Ed MoneyWatch Blog](#).

Learn more about the Power of Parent Leadership. Almost everyone agrees that parent involvement in schools is key. But what does “involvement” mean? Isn’t it time to go beyond the idea of mere involvement to a model of parent and family leadership? To learn more, listen in to The [Power of IDRA’s Parent Leadership Model](#), a Classnotes conversation with Aurelio Montemayor, M.Ed., director of the IDRA Texas Parent Information and Resource Center.

Want more ways to take action to secure the rights of all students? See Resolution #6 “Overcome Inequities” of IDRA’s [January Grad4All e-letter](#) (the New Year’s Resolution Issue) and visit [“Six Goals of Education Equity”](#) developed by the IDRA [South Central Collaborative for Equity](#).

Youth Voices

“Stereotypes about students are never true...the question is: how can we make our schools better?” - Student, Canton High School, IDRA Community Blueprints for Action Initiative, Canton, Mississippi, September 19, 2008



We want to hear from you! You received this e-letter either because you’ve expressed interest in the topic or somebody who likes you forwarded it to you. To submit questions or comments, write to us at gradforall@idra.org.

Tell a friend: Feel free to [forward Grad4All](#) to anyone who shares a passion for every student’s success.

The [Intercultural Development Research Association](#) is an independent, private non-profit organization whose mission is to create schools that work for all children.

Thanks for reading!

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