



# GRADUATION FOR ALL

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## On Creating a College-Going Culture • [www.idra.org](http://www.idra.org) • May 2011

**“Our goal is to connect every single student to a meaningful future, college and career ready, and on a college track before they leave us...”** - Dr. Daniel King, Superintendent, Pharr-San Juan-Alamo ISD, Pharr, Texas, 2011

As we race toward the end of this school year, our partners in schools around the country are working hard in the midst of great uncertainty to close gaps and improve teaching and learning. In charting this course, strong and visionary school leadership is essential. Spotlighting three interviews with school leaders conducted as part of IDRA's *Courageous Connections* series, this issue of Graduation for All shares how education leaders are expanding post-secondary opportunities for all students. As always, we welcome your questions and comments at [gradforall@idra.org](mailto:gradforall@idra.org)

[To see this issue in Spanish.](#)

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## Schools and Communities in Action

**“Connecting Every Student to a Meaningful Future” - An interview with Superintendent Daniel King.** When Daniel King, Ph.D., superintendent of the Pharr-San Juan-Alamo school district, first arrived at the district in 2007, he faced a dropout rate that was “double the state average.” In this interview, Dr. King describes steps he took to recover 12th grade dropouts and lead them to graduate not just with a diploma but also with college credit. He shares how his district has cut the number of dropouts by 85 percent and is well on its way to reaching its ambitious goal of having every student earning dual credit by the time they graduate. Dr. King is interviewed by Aurelio Montemayor, M.Ed., director of the [IDRA Texas Parent Information and Resource Center](#).



[Hear the interview with Dr. Daniel King.](#)

**On “Creating a College Going Culture,” a conversation with Principal Roland Toscano.** Principal Roland Toscano, M.S., describes how this high school has developed a college-going culture for all of its students rather than for a select few with great teaching, curriculum, support systems and effective communication with parents. Mr. Toscano is interviewed by Nilka Avilés, Ed.D., an IDRA senior education associate. Also see toolbox (below) for a related article by Dr. Avilés, “What a Principal Can Do to Create a College-Going Culture.”

[Hear the interview with Mr. Roland Toscano.](#)

**On “Dramatic School Transformation” an interview with Principal Lucious Brown.** Start with a school that is failing and reshape it into a space where students excel and the community members are engaged. Dr. Lucious Brown, principal of John F. Kennedy Middle School in Atlanta, talks about how partnering in the community, engaging students and building teacher effectiveness has led to dramatic school transformation. Dr. Brown is interviewed by Sulema Carreón-Sánchez, M.A., an IDRA senior education associate.

[Hear the interview with Dr. Lucious Brown.](#)

The above interviews are part of IDRA's *Courageous Connections* series. To learn more about this series, visit: [http://www.idra.org/Courageous\\_Connections/](http://www.idra.org/Courageous_Connections/)

## Toolbox

### **Policy Roadmap: Ensuring America's Future**

The Roadmap for Ensuring America's Future developed by Excelencia in Education in collaboration with 60 national partners is a tool for stimulating and facilitating dialogue in communities across the nation about action needed to increase degree attainment generally, and Latino degree attainment specifically. IDRA is partnering on this initiative as part of its commitment to promoting college access and success for all students. [To visit the roadmap.](#)



### **Closing the Gaps - New Professional Development Program**

IDRA has developed a professional development program designed to assist administrators and teachers to create a college going environment, enhance their curriculum to make courses college compatible for advance placement and dual credit, and prepare teachers and support staff to enhance their instruction with the rigor and relevance required for college credit. [To learn more.](#)

**“What a Principal Can Do to Create a College-Going Culture”** by Nilka Avilés, Ed.D. describes steps school leaders can take to foster a college-going culture in their districts. [To view the article.](#)

[Visit IDRA's Newsletter Plus \(free\) for more resources on promoting college access and success.](#)

## Youth Voices

**“Thanks to those young children, I am a much better person than ever. It makes me feel as though anything is possible.”** - Kayla Rugg, from her award-winning essay on her experience as a Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program tutor. This year, Ms. Rugg has been accepted to Wingate University with a Presidential Scholarship of \$50,000. [To see Kayla Rugg's full essay.](#)

[To meet five more tutors on their way to college.](#)

[To learn more about how IDRA's Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program is valuing youth, preventing dropout, and changing lives.](#)

Graduation for All is published monthly (in English and Spanish) by the Intercultural Development Research Association. IDRA is an independent, private non-profit organization whose mission is to create schools that work for all children. To learn more about IDRA's work, visit us online at [www.idra.org](http://www.idra.org).

**We want to hear from you!** Have a story of school-community partnership that's raising graduation rates? We welcome your comments, questions and suggestions at [gradforall@idra.org](mailto:gradforall@idra.org). **Forward to a Friend!** Feel free to [share Grad4All](#) with anyone who shares your passion for every student's success.

Thanks for reading!

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