



GRADUATION FOR ALL

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Youth Call for Action • www.idra.org • June 2008

[Diplomas Count 2008](#), just out from Education Week, finds that while graduation rates have “inched up” nationwide, still only 71 percent of ninth graders graduate with a diploma four years later, and that rate falls to 58 percent for Hispanic students, 55 percent for African American students, and 51 percent for Native American students. IDRA’s most recent study of attrition shows that [eight Texas regions have higher school attrition rates than they did two decades ago](#).

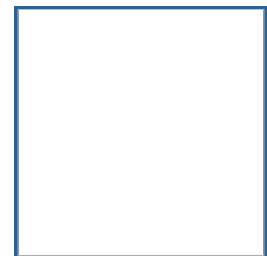
Youth in Action. A growing movement is afoot of youth themselves, speaking out on the need for change and becoming advocates in schools and communities across the country. This one-year anniversary issue of Graduation for All is dedicated to their perspective, energy and action – and the ability of caring adults to partner with them.

We want to hear from you! Do you have a story of school-community partnership and action that’s raising graduation rates? [Let us know!](#) Also, we welcome your ideas on how we can improve Grad4All in the coming year. Write to us at gradforall@idra.org.

[¡Usted puede recibir esta edición de Graduation for All en español!](#)

Schools and Communities in Action

Youth in Oklahoma City, New Orleans call for action to raise graduation rates. As part of IDRA’s [Fulfilling the Promise of Mendez and Brown](#) initiative, high school students gathered in Oklahoma and Louisiana to talk about what works and what changes must be made to graduate all students. Youth in New Orleans described the impact of Hurricane Katrina and its aftermath on their community and talked about their determination to graduate. They raised concerns about high-stakes testing and zero-tolerance policies, curriculum quality and making school environments and materials more welcoming and equitable. Students in both cities called for more rigorous, relevant courses and the encouragement to take advanced classes. And youth praised efforts by teachers, counselors and school leaders to recognize their value and leadership in the school community, thanking “all of our teachers who truly care.” For video clips on student perspectives, visit *Youth Voices* at <http://blueprintsforaction.idra.org/>. This fall, *Fulfilling the Promise* dialogues will take place in Alabama and Mississippi.



Students in L.A. raise concerns about dropout (“push-out”) rates, school safety and depression. This spring, South Central Youth Empowered Thru Action (SCYEA) released findings from a survey that the youth organization had conducted of 6,008 youth in seven south L.A. public schools. A [Los Angeles Times article](#) on the findings reported that “only about one-quarter of the students surveyed said they felt safe at school while 35 percent said they don’t. Just under half said their school is preparing them for college or a high-paying job, and 93 percent believe their school should offer more college-preparatory classes.” [Click here to learn more](#) about the study, which was conducted by SCYEA with technical support from faculty at Loyola Marymount University.

Dialogue to Change. From Indianapolis, Indiana, to Montgomery County, Maryland, to Lewiston, Maine, youth are taking part in “Dialogue to Change” programs to tackle issues like education quality, racism, and how to create more youth-friendly communities. These efforts are supported by Everyday Democracy (formerly the Study Circles Resource Center). To find out more or to bring *Dialogue to Change* to your district, visit: [Youth Voices: Engaging Young People in Dialogue and Problem Solving](#) and [How Can Schools and Communities Work Together to Meet the Challenge?](#)

Toolbox

Connect for Kids. Keep up on the issues that affect the nation's youth through the [Connect for Kids Update](#). CFK provides key information, facts, context and the tools to take action.

Join National Youth Leadership Team. America's Promise Alliance, which is supporting more than 100 state and local dropout prevention summits across the country in the next two years, has created a Youth Partnership Team to serve as a leadership body and a sounding board for the alliance. Youth between the ages of 16 and 22 are invited to join. [Applications are due Monday, June 30, 2008](#). Visit America's Promise to find out more about the [2008-09 Dropout Prevention Summits](#).

Call for Entries by Youth Artists with Disabilities. Sponsored by VSA arts, the Green Light Awards program is open to young artists ages 16 to 25 living in the United States who have a physical, cognitive or mental disability. Fifteen cash prizes will be awarded. [The deadline is July 11, 2008](#).

Youth Voices

"[When we're] not challenged by teachers and the curriculum, we enter college unprepared... some may ask themselves why they should even be there." - High School Student, Oklahoma City, IDRA [Fulfilling the Promise of Mendez and Brown initiative](#), March 2008

"In my family, me and my sister will be the only ones going to college. We want to show my grandfather that [though his children failed] we will graduate" - High School Student, New Orleans, [IDRA Fulfilling the Promise of Mendez and Brown initiative](#), May, 2008



It's June! Congratulations to the graduating class of 2008 and to the commitment and caring of families, educators, youth peers, and community leaders dedicated to their success and to the success of all those that follow. We remember the nearly [1.23 million members of the public high school class of 2008](#) who will not cross the stage with a diploma—more than [118,000 of which are in Texas](#). And re-commit ourselves to making a difference.

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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