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Imagine what it would be like if every child had access to a high quality education that opened doors to college and the world of work. Welcome to **Graduation for All.** In each monthly e-letter, we will send you up-to-date information to take action in your school and community to realize this vision. To unsubscribe, click the link at the bottom of this e-mail.

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Schools and Communities in Action

Back to School. Leaves swirling, dog days of summer waning, this back-to-school issue of Grad4All provides some proven ways schools and communities can start the year off right and set a course for graduation for all.

#1. Break it Down - Get the Facts. Is attrition a problem in your school? If so, which students are lost? When are they most at risk, and why? Does your school have the capacity ("holding power") to graduate all students and prepare them for college and work? A daunting mix of data can keep people from getting straight answers to shape a plan of action. In What Your Community Can Do to End its Drop-Out Crisis, Robert Balfanz at Johns Hopkins University recommends a three-part plan, beginning with the data. To get started, take a look at Project U-Turn's citywide campaign, grounded in data analysis and designed to focus attention on Philadelphia's dropout crisis.

#2: Team up. From Title I Child-Parent Centers in Chicago that are reducing dropout rates through parent involvement to Study Circle Programs in Arkansas, Lexington and Montgomery County, people across the country are finding new ways to capture cross-sector capacities to strengthen schools.
Got coffee? A mug to share? Pick up a cup and Beyond the Bake Sale: the Essential Guide to Family-School Partnerships, Anne Henderson and Karen Mapp's hot-off-the-press guidebook on how and why to make family-school partnerships work. "When schools, families, and community groups work together," the authors have found, "children tend to do better in school, stay in school longer, and like school more."

For more help with community-school partnerships, see: IDRA's Community Engagement Review and Planning Guide and IDRA's Parent Information Resource Center. For a model of cross-sector, cross-race partnerships, see: Expanding Blueprints for Action: Children's Outcomes, Access, Treatment, Learning, Resources, Accountability, an article by Bradley Scott and Rosana Rodriguez on IDRA's "Blueprints for Action" dialogues in Texas; Albuquerque, New Mexico; and Little Rock, Arkansas.

Planning changes? Make sure teachers are at the table. In her interview with PBS, education researcher Linda Darling Hammond says: "there are two big problems in the way that we run schools today. One is that the schools…are constructed as though teaching doesn't matter, and secondly they're constructed as though relationships don't matter." To zero in on strengthening teaching quality, see: Seven Principles for Effective Professional Development for Diverse Schools by Abelardo Villarreal, Director of IDRA's Division of Professional Development.

Click here for more IDRA resources on quality teaching and learning.
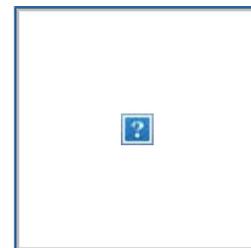
#3: At heart: Value all youth, without exception, without compromise. At Ysleta Independent School District, students gather on a stage in full cap and gown regalia, donning sashes of colleges and universities they plan to attend. They won't be heading off right away, though, as this is a graduation ceremony for pre-K students. Valuing youth, from their earliest years through graduation and beyond, is fundamental to strong schooling. In [Key Lessons: High-performing, High-Poverty Schools](#) , the Center for Public Education finds "High poverty schools with faculties that believe in their students, set high goals for their students, and have professional development activities that promote supportive and nurturing classroom environments have students with higher student achievement scores."

Toolbox

Does a sense of valuing all young people permeate your school? From a small seed program to an award-winning dropout prevention model serving 25,000 plus students in school districts across the U.S. and in Brazil, IDRA's Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program has kept seven core principles constant. Chief among them: "all students can learn," "the school values all students," and "all students can actively contribute to their own education and to the education of others." Click [here](#) for the full set of valued youth principles.

Listen in! **to [Learnings from the Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program](#)** (Episode 15), an IDRA Classnotes podcast featuring Linda Cantu and Juanita García on the implementation of IDRA's Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program. For a review of best practices in dropout prevention and how valuing youth is central, see [BIG IDEA—Dropout Prevention Programs Are Most Effective When They Begin With A Premise That All Students Can And Will Succeed Academically](#) by Josie Danini Cortez, published by The National Dropout Prevention Center for Students with Disabilities (NDPC-SD).

Coming Up Soon! Student Engagement Conference - in Texas, check out: [Solutions to the Texas Dropout Crisis: a Focus on Student Engagement](#), a conference to be convened by Children at Risk and other Texas partners in Houston on September 26, 2007. The conference will highlight research on student engagement, proven program methods, and a discussion on local & national school reform initiatives. For more information and to register, see: http://www.childrenatrisk.org.

Whatever it takes. For examples of what 12 communities are doing to reconnect youth to education and career options, see [Whatever It Takes](#). Here, the American Youth Policy Forum points out that "Many practices prevalent in successful 'alternative' and 'second-chance' education programs should be adopted by the 'first-chance' system to improve student retention and academic success." Knowing what works, we can make this happen.

Public schools are open...spread the word. Promote 14th amendment access and equity. In 1982, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in Plyler vs. Doe [457 U.S. 202 (1982)] that children of undocumented workers have the same right to attend public primary and secondary schools as do U.S. citizens and permanent residents. Copy, post and share this [School Opening Alert](#), first developed by the National Coalition of Advocates for Students (NCAS), to provide information for immigrant parents about the rights of their children to attend local public schools this fall.

Have a back-to-school practice for strengthening school holding power that you want to share? - Let us 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 question or comment, send e-mail to 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!

Laurie Posner
Graduation for All Coordinator
Intercultural Development Research Association
5835 Callaghan Road, Suite 350

San Antonio, Texas 78228
210.444.1710

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Contact

Intercultural Development Research Association

5815 Callaghan Rd., Suite 101
San Antonio, Texas 78228
(210) 444-1710

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