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School Opening, Hutto Closing • www.idra.org • September 2009

As summer ends and warm days give way to cooler evenings, we have the chance to rededicate ourselves to making sure that all children—those in our own lives and in our communities—have access to a high quality education. This issue is dedicated to supporting your work to provide all children with a first-rate education that will prepare them to graduate and succeed in what lies ahead. As always, we welcome your comments and input at gradforall@idra.org.

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Schools and Communities in Action

"I am a teacher, not a Border Patrol agent" - from "Understanding Plyler's Legacy: Voices from Border Schools" by Nina Rabin, et al., 2007



School Opening

The U.S. Supreme Court ruled in *Plyler v. Doe* (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."

And, like other students, undocumented students are required under state laws to attend school until they reach a legally mandated age. As schools open, it is a good time to take stock: do educators, family and community members in your district have the information they need to protect children's rights? Here is a link to the School [Opening Alert](#) to help you share the information.

Starting the School Year off Right: Support for First Year Teachers. *"Students attend class more often where they have strong relationships with their teachers and when they see school and their coursework as...important for their future."* - [Consortium on Chicago School Research](#)

How can schools set the stage?

Listen in to: "School Change Strategies," a conversation with IDRA president & CEO María Robledo Montecel, PhD on how schools, communities and coalitions can build capacity to improve student outcomes. Hear "[Supporting First Year Teachers](#)" and "[Coaching and Mentoring New Teachers](#)," two new IDRA Classnotes podcasts featuring senior education associates Adela Solis, PhD and Linda Cantu, PhD, that offer practical actions schools can take to support new teachers and strategies for new teachers during their first days with their students.

Join us! for an Introductory Seminar on the IDRA Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program to learn about how this award-winning dropout prevention program can help you keep students in school. The seminar will take place on October 21, 2009, in Houston, Texas. To learn more, visit the [IDRA website](#) or [register online now](#).

Toolbox (below) for "advice I wish I'd been given at the start of school" from IDRA professional development specialists, who are former classroom administrators and teachers.

Hutto Closing...though detention to continue

When IDRA was asked by the ACLU to assess educational quality and access for children at the T. Don Hutto Family Residential Center—a medium-security prison in Central Texas that had been converted into a detention center for families seeking asylum—we found abysmal conditions. IDRA found learning conditions were "inappropriate to the minors' level of development, [that] basic academic competencies [were] not adequately taught and English language learning curriculum [was] not in compliance with Texas state requirements." Hutto was in violation of *Flores v. Meese* (1997), which requires that children in immigration custody

be placed in the least restrictive setting possible and guarantees their basic educational rights. As Barbara Hines, director of the Immigration Law Clinic at the University of Texas School of Law, had found, children at Hutto were made to wear prison uniforms, “cooped up in cells for most of the day...and [receiving] only an hour of so of lessons” ([article in The Economist](#)). In response to these conditions, a broad cross-section of concerned family, community, education and legal advocates called for change. This summer, the Obama administration committed to ending family detention at Hutto. Outcomes like these affirm the possibility that working together, people can make a dramatic difference in educational opportunities for youth.

Toolbox

Tips for Starting the New School Year Right - Advice I wish I'd had

1. Set the stage for real relationships with families, students, colleagues—then no matter what comes up, you and a core team of people can tackle it.
2. Begin with the end in mind as Covey said. Work back from the expectation that every student will graduate, prepared for college. Be pro-active in finding out who your students are, don't wait to hear from a counselor 4 months in.
3. Get organized. A good organizational structure can be a lifesaver when life gets really busy.
4. Make the first day both substantive and fun. Infuse learning with creativity and challenge.
5. Your suggestion here: _____. To add to the list, email us at gradforall@idra.org.



Links to catch up on the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009

- [Overview of the Recovery Act](#)
- [ESEA Title I LEA Allocations Under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act](#)
- [IDRA resources for your school district on www.idra.org](#)

Back by popular demand - Quick Science Picks to Keep Your Classroom Buzzing:

"Cockatoo can dance." See how neuroscientists tested whether Snowball, a now-famous sulphur-crested cockatoo, can keep a beat on [NPR's Science Friday](#).

Youth Voices

"...I'm not really sure if I would graduate from a university—because how expensive tuition is right now, but I think that if I had the money and my grades are good and everything, I think I could make it." - from [Listening to Latinas: Barriers to High School Graduation](#), just released by the National Women's Law Center and the Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund



Wishing you success in the new school year. As the new school year begins, it is time once again when around the country, dedicated teachers introduce students to new ideas and ways of thinking, shaping their sense of who they are, and what they can contribute and become. In the new school year, you can continue to count on us to bring you research, resources and models to help you take leadership in your school community. And, as always, we welcome and look forward to your comments, questions and stories of success 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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