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March 2017 IDRA Newsletter

This month's focus: Student Leadership and Engagement



This issue of the IDRA Newsletter has stories on project based learning for student success, community projects with youths and academic learning, Libre software in education, IDRA's new literacy learning series on instructional strategies for building inferencing skills, and news about the upcoming Annual IDRA La Semana del Niño Parent Institute™.

Student Leadership and Engagement

Project Based Learning for Student Success - Teaching Across Content Areas for Diverse Learners

by Mark Barnett

Adopting project based learning was a primary goal of Principal Dawn Worley at the newly formed the JSTEM Academy, a middle school in Converse, Texas, two years ago. Mrs. Worley started with the expectation that all of her staff would be teaching through project based learning, not just those who are teaching STEM courses at her STEM-focused middle school. She knew that her staff needed training, expertise and coaching to get the ball rolling.



IDRA worked with Mrs. Worley and her staff to create a three-year plan for project based learning (PBL) implementation where Year 1 was exploratory, Year 2 focused on growth and Year 3 will have all teachers teaching through project based learning at least 80 percent of the school year.

Project Based Learning Culture Starts with a Bold Vision from Leadership

In order to facilitate the challenges of project based learning, a strong commitment from school leadership is needed to sustain long-term success. Adopting project based learning will lead to some challenges, like moving a scope and sequence around to fit a particular project or changing the entire school schedule for a week for student presentations . - [Keep reading](#)



Get our [graphic on the 8 elements of PBL lessons](#)



Get info on IDRA's PBL professional development

Community Projects, Youths and Academic Learning - Student Voice in Solutions to Challenging Problems

by Aurelio M. Montemayor, M.Ed., Bronce Yahir Márquez, Andrea Guadalupe Guzmán and Litzy Castro

At 9:00 Saturday morning, more than 25 youth are at the ARISE Support Center buzzing with activity. While munching on fruit and sweetbread, they are completing a video that will be submitted to "Make Mercy Real," a national Sisters of Mercy contest focused on their own critical concerns, especially around environmental justice.

While one group is editing video clips, another is recording voice-over, and a third is working on an essay on the three projects highlighted in the video. This venture illustrates meaningful community projects conducted by young people that also are being documented for school credit.



The youth attend 10 different schools from six school districts. High-schoolers form the core of the group accompanied by younger siblings. Three ARISE centers located in *colonias* (unincorporated rural communities) sponsor and mentor the youth's leadership projects with, in this case, the common theme of environmental justice. Deeply connected to families, ARISE faces community issues and challenges directly. Their children take on projects to

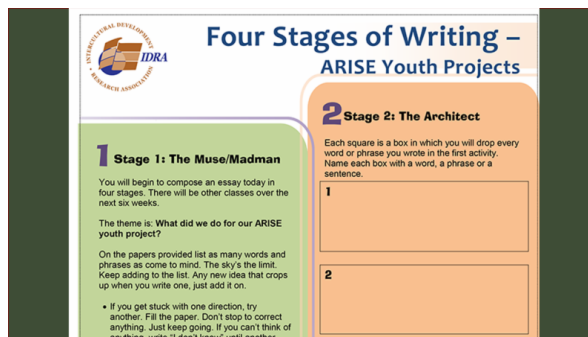
help meet those challenges. Adult mentors and teachers assist with and facilitate the activities.

These student-led projects addressing community issues are rich learning contexts with inherent academic and social lessons, well known to educators who use project based learning. Project based learning is an ideal instructional process, undergirded by knowledge and skills standards, learner-centered, authentically connected to challenging problems or questions, and an opportunity for student voice, choice, reflection and presentation to their families and schools.

But these projects began in the community and are engaging with their schools rather than the traditional school-to-community route . - [Keep reading](#)



[See our photo slideshow with highlights from the students' PBL work](#)



[Get the 4 Stages of Writing activity the ARISE students used](#)

Libre Software in Education - Affordable Technology that Supports the User's Freedom

by Mark Barnett

Did you know that a vast proportion of the Internet is built and operated on libre software? You may have never heard the term libre software before, but you may have heard of free and open source software. Much of what we call the Internet is a series of servers that operate on libre software from Gnu Linux and Apache, among others. The term libre means freedom and is a matter of liberty, not price, which is why I prefer the term libre software instead of free software.



Why should you care about software liberty and freedoms in education? Many schools openly use proprietary software from Microsoft, Apple and Google that cost schools thousands of dollars and leave schools with few options in regards to user freedoms, such as data collection, redistribution and licensing. Few schools are aware that there are software options that protect user freedoms.

According to the Free Software Foundation (2016), there are four distinct user freedoms that Libre software can provide - [Keep reading](#)



[See Mark's TEDx SA speech: "Everyone is a Maker, but Not Everyone has Access"](#)



[Get a list of Open Source Tools for Education](#)

Three-Day Literacy Learning Series - Instructional Strategies for Building Inferencing Skills

Three-Day Literacy Learning Series
Instructional Strategies for Building Inferencing Skills

IDRA conducted research on the reading test questions that a high percentage of students miss across grade levels. We found that students were having difficulty with questions that require a high level of proficiency in the underlying and foundational skill of inferencing.

And we looked at the professional development that teachers had received. After an analysis of the topics, we saw a heavy emphasis on pedagogy and little, if any, on strengthening the content that teachers must deliver. Specifically, this means inferencing as the content: what it is, what types of inferences are addressed during instruction and testing, how inferences are foundational skills that affect the curriculum throughout the day, and how to address inferences during instruction.

At the end of these workshops, teachers report being filled with hope that, as one teacher stated, "excites and boosts our efficacy as effective teachers."

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- Instructional leaders

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To learn more, please contact Dr. Sulema Sánchez at 210 444-1750.

Intercultural Development Research Association
New York: Intercultural Development Research Association, Inc. 2017
1600 Cambridge Road, Suite 201, Cambridge, New York 13613-2001 (USA) • www.idra.org

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**Learn more about IDRA's Instructional Strategies
for Building Inferencing Skills Training**



Supporting the Success of Every Student

Ayorando el éxito de cada estudiante

Bilingual Parent Institute * April 27, 2017

Special event for families, community groups and educators

This annual institute offers families, school district personnel and community groups from across the country the opportunity to network, obtain resources and information, and receive training and bilingual materials on IDRA's nationally-recognized research based model for parent leadership in education.

This year's institute, funded in part by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, will highlight family engagement as it relates to the new Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), which replaced the No Child Left Behind Act.

This institute is interactive and participatory. All presentations are bilingual (English-Spanish).

Date: April 27, 2017

Time: 9:00 am - 2:00 pm

Place: Whitley Theological Center, 285 Oblate Drive, San Antonio

Highlights coming in 2017

- Bilingual presentations on successful family engagement
- Roundtable educational presentations
- Parent interviews
- Breakout sessions on education topics
- Refreshments and lunch
- Exhibitors, including service providers, college and universities and non-profit agencies

Event Registration

The fee is \$60 per person (includes presentations, materials, exhibits, refreshments and lunch). For more information, contact Ms. Jocellyn Rivera (e-mail contact@idra.org; phone 210-444-1710).

Register Today!

Or print the [registration form](#) (PDF) or the [Microsoft Word form](#).

Also see photos, videos and articles to find out why IDRA's parent institute is so powerful!

Classnotes Podcasts on Student Leadership and Engagement

Intergenerational Family Leadership for Schools - #167

TEDx Speaker on Maker Education - #162

STEAM Education for Every Child Part 2 - #153

STEAM Education for Every Child Part 1 - #152

Student Voices on Being Valued - #54

Student Engagement and the Language of the Mathematics Class - #51

Fostering Student Questions - #40



Fostering Student Engagement English Language Learners - #19

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The Intercultural Development Research Association is an independent, non-profit organization. Our mission is to achieve equal educational opportunity for every child through strong public schools that prepare all students to access and succeed in college. IDRA strengthens and transforms public education by providing dynamic training; useful research, evaluation, and frameworks for action; timely policy analyses; and innovative materials and programs.

We are committed to the IDRA valuing philosophy, respecting the knowledge and skills of the individuals we work with and build on the strengths of the students and parents in their schools.