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IDRA Newsletter

This month's focus: The Promise of Public Schooling



Public schooling is the cornerstone of freedom, democracy and economic opportunity. Its imperfections are not reasons to give up on public education. Instead, the best way to strengthen public schools is to strengthen public schools - schools that are accountable to us all.

This issue of the IDRA Newsletter has stories on how we can improve graduation rates by changing key policies and practices, how families are working together to transform their public schools and IDRA's six priority policy issues for Texas in 2017 along with news about the upcoming Annual IDRA *La Semana del Niño* Parent Institute™.

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The Promise of Public Schooling

America Does Not Have to Stay Stuck at Losing One in Four High Schoolers

by María "Cuca" Robledo Montecel, Ph.D.

"Look to your left... Look to your right... Look behind you. One of you won't be here in four years." Do you remember hearing that speech during high school orientation? It's an old standby because speechmakers can count on it. One in four freshmen in Texas disappears from school by their senior year (Johnson, 2016a). Nationally, that figure is almost one in five (Johnson, 2016b).



When the new letter grades for Texas schools were released in January, one predictable thing we heard was that certain schools are having a more difficult time because of the student population they serve. The underlying message of "We would do better if we had better kids" is that some kids - minority, poor, English learner - are, by their very being, difficult.

But children are not the problem. Children are not the reason U.S. schools have been losing between 21 percent and 16 percent of high school students annually for the last five years (Johnson, 2014 , 2015 , 2016b). - [Keep reading](#)



See our Infographic: [6 School Policies that Lead to Higher Dropout Rates](#)

Families Transforming Public Schools - Gathering Data, Informing Policy and Practice

by Aurelio M. Montemayor, M.Ed.

Given the current challenges in public education and the critical need that our public schools survive and grow, it is crucial that those closest to their schools propose the solutions. Parents across the country are coming together to ensure equitable and excellent public schools for all children. In contrast to traditional parent participation through volunteering and

fundraising, these families are collecting data, surveying their communities and informing public education policy and practice.

In the states served by the IDRA EAC-South (one of four national equity assistance centers), from Texas to Florida and Washington, D.C., communities and schools are working toward improvement. Following are examples of parents and communities in Louisiana, Georgia, Arkansas, Mississippi and Texas who are taking action.



Louisiana - Community-Schools Approach

The Louisiana Alliance to Reclaim Our Schools promotes the idea of community schools over the more drastic step of turning over underperforming schools to charter operators that are privately run. The community-schools approach involves getting parents and other community members more involved in schoolhouse decision making, as well as bulking up services like mental health care and tutoring (Vanacore, 2016). They are ensuring that their public schools stay public and that the community voice is heard. They also are part of the national Reclaim Our Schools effort. (Follow them on Twitter @ReclaimOurSchls or [online](#)).

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[Learn more about IDRA's Education CAFE \(Community Action Forums for Excellence\) model \(formerly known as Comunitario PTA\)](#)

IDRA Priority Policy Issues for Texas for 2017

The issues identified highlight priorities for the current session, but readers should know that IDRA works with its partners in many other important areas, including early childhood, school discipline, bullying, multicultural education, school integration, teacher and teaching quality, and sex/gender equity.

- ▶ Fair Funding Means Equity and Excellence for All Students
- ▶ Keep the Public in Public Education
- ▶ Effective Accountability that Supports Schools and Puts Children First
- ▶ Testing that Doesn't Hurt Children
- ▶ Instruction for English Learners Must be Bolstered
- ▶ Higher Education Access for Success

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[See IDRA's stands, rationale and resources for each of these issues.](#)

For questions, please contact IDRA's National Director of Policy, [David Hinojosa, J.D.](#)

Classnotes Podcasts on The Promise of Public Schooling

"How Principals Can Support their Teachers," featuring Judith Urdiales

"Equity-Centered Capacity Building for Stronger Schools," featuring Dr. Sheryl Petty

"School Boards that Lead for Equity," featuring Dr. Larry Leverett

"Intergenerational Family Leadership for Schools," featuring Aurelio M. Montemayor

"A Principal on Leadership for a Turnaround School" Part 1, featuring Dr. Nilka Avilés & Gregory Rivers

"A Principal on Leadership for a Turnaround School" Part 2, featuring Dr. Nilka Avilés & Gregory Rivers



Sign up to receive free e-mail notices when new episodes are available.

Annual IDRA La Semana del Niño Parent Institute™



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 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. Jocelyn 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!

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The Intercultural Development Research Association is an independent private non-profit organization dedicated to ensuring educational opportunity for every child. 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.

IDRA works hand-in-hand with hundreds of thousands of educators and families each year in communities and classrooms around the country. All our work rests on an unwavering commitment to creating self-renewing schools that value and promote the success of students of all backgrounds.