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Transforming Education by Putting Kids First



IDRA Newsletter – This Issue's Focus: Bridging the Digital Divide

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What's Inside

Texas Needs an Equitable State Broadband Plan to Serve Students and Families

by Thomas Marshall

The digital divide impacts millions of people in the United States. Three-fourths of the 20 million U.S. households that lack home broadband or mobile data connections live in urban areas. As a result, more than 2 million Texas students face barriers to online academic engagement and learning opportunities.



Texas is one of only six states that does not have a state broadband plan. Despite three measures passed in 2019 that touch on expansion and study of broadband, the state must move forward substantially to create a permanent broadband infrastructure with a robust, positive student and family engagement strategy and with support for community reinvestment initiatives.

Visit IDRA's [education policy website](#) for details and resources.

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Teachers Share Best Practices for Virtual Instruction in the Age of COVID-19

by Aurelio M. Montemayor, M.Ed.

This article provides a look at best practices on virtual instruction from teachers and students as they have navigated the frontier of distance learning.

Among the recommendations are to use relevant apps for students to visually interact with information, keep the virtual class session open after instruction for student engagement, encourage tutoring, regularly connect with students and parents, use screen-sharing to ensure students are on the same page as



their teacher, and be empathetic and patient with students during this difficult time. This article also shares thoughts by the students who recommended the four teachers featured in this article.



Jennifer Schulze-Aguirre prefers to teach standing up. Teaching students online did not change that. She uses an extendable desk and a second monitor to be able to see her students while teaching. She also uses a tablet so that students can see her walk through calculus demonstrations. She said, “I have more energy and that gets translated to my students!”



Thomas Ray Garcia discusses college preparation with high school students.

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IDRA Classnotes Podcast #208

To my teacher colleagues...

Remember the impact that you have.

It doesn't matter if you're virtual or you're in person. What you say, how you act, how you interact with your kids, it says something to them. And you may not know the impact you have on them for a couple of years. That impact is probably even more important now that kids are isolated socially. Just remember, your words and actions mean so much to your kids.

— Jennifer Schulze-Aguirre, M.A.
Brandeis High School, Northside ISD



Podcast episode: Teaching High-Level Math through Distance Learning

<https://idra.news/Pod208>

Children First
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Equitable Practices for Online Learning Most Popular Webinars Available On-Demand

IDRA's webinar series is supporting educators as you continue student learning during this unprecedented pandemic.

- Teaching Science in Virtual Learning Environment
- Equitable Practices for Teaching Online
- Tools and Tips to Alleviate the Homework Gap - Interactive Teaching with Limited Internet Access
- Digital Divide: Connectivity, Infrastructure and Devices
- Nurturing Students' Hearts and Minds
- Teacher, Parent and Student Perspectives on Using Google Classroom Effectively



[See Webinar Hub](#)

Words Matter – The Case for Shifting to “Emergent Bilingual”

by *Araceli García*

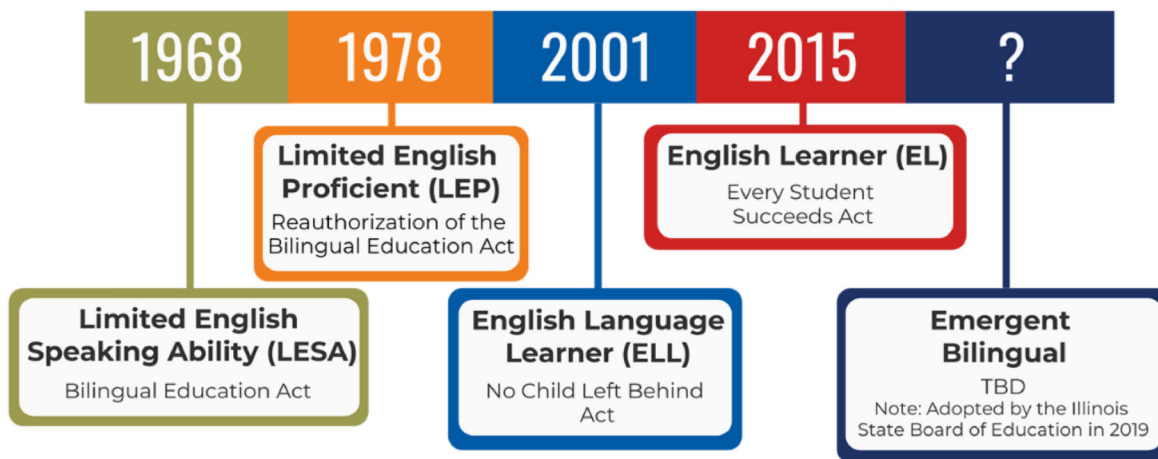
Words matter, especially when talking about people with unique needs or identities. Almost 5 million students in U.S. public schools are learning English as a second language, a number that has almost doubled over the last 15 years.

A close inspection of common terms, such as *English learners*, shows that they are deficit-based and define students by what they lack. IDRA believes in the value of bilingualism and biculturalism. Schools must protect the civil rights of all students by preserving and celebrating cultures and experiences tied to diverse languages students bring into the classroom. For these reasons, IDRA prefers using the term emergent bilingual students.



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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.

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.

March 1, 2021