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October 14, 2020 Edition

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More resources and trainings for teachers, school administrators, families and communities are on our [Learning Goes On website](#). See [Spanish-language version](#) of this edition.

Policy Update**Reopening Presents Opportunities for
Innovation and Collaboration throughout the
South**

Across the country, students, families and school communities face numerous challenges to safely, effectively and equitably reopening schools. To meet

these challenges, school districts across the South have developed [innovative and collaborative strategies](#) that may serve as examples to school districts across the region.

Increasing Engagement with Communities to Provide Support for Families

The COVID-19 pandemic has illuminated longstanding disparities in engagement between schools and communities. Those that have focused on engagement use a number of strategies to not only understand the needs of their communities but also to provide corresponding support to meet those needs.

For example, the Miami-Dade County Public Schools in Florida conducted a survey of over 250,000 families and incorporated the feedback from those surveys into a plan that prioritized a variety of supports to help parents navigate the start of the school year. The plan featured a week of welcome, a parent academy, and resources focused on topics relevant to resuming learning, including navigating student and parent portals, accessing resources for mental and social-emotional wellness, and building organization and study skills. In addition, the district developed a range of communication tools to disseminate resources to parents and families, including the use of a Distance Learning Help Desk, a K-12 Help Desk, and a Mental Health Hotline.



Similarly, the Houston Independent School District (ISD) created a plan to engage parents based on the most common mediums that parents use. The plan uses a combination of social media, news media, guides, blog posts, in-person and virtual meetings, and the district's website to communicate with parents.

Increasing Engagement to Support Disengaged and Disconnected Students and Families

As a result of the pandemic, schools were forced to rapidly switch to remote instruction and have been working to find and engage students from a distance. To address this challenge, districts have had to find ways to track students who have become disengaged and to provide resources to staff and educators to work together to support those students.

For example, San Antonio ISD launched a student interaction tracker app that helps the district track disengaged students. The app documents interactions between teachers, support staff and students as well as whether or not students are completing assignments. It allows all of the teachers and staff who work with an individual student to stay up to speed on their engagement and progress and when they need additional support or specific help.

School districts also are working to address additional resource gaps that create disconnections with students and families. For example, Guilford

County Schools in North Carolina took several deliberate steps to expand access for families. The district purchased devices for nearly every student, teacher and instructional staff member. It also is addressing internet infrastructure by deploying 125 “smart buses” in high-need communities to help bridge the digital divide. In addition, the district is working with city officials in High Point to jointly identify more locations with city-owned and managed Wi-Fi that can be accessible to students and families. The district offers free-of-cost learning centers in targeted areas of the county for students to participate in remote learning as well.



These are but a few of the examples of innovative strategies being undertaken across the South to address the challenges presented by COVID-19. To ensure equitable outcomes for students this fall, education leaders should continue looking to their contemporaries across the region and adapt these strategies for the benefit of all students and families that they serve.



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Instructional Tools

Hispanic Heritage Month – An Identity Preface

While Hispanic Heritage Month closes on October 15, the importance of culturally relevant pedagogy continues year-round. This month has been a special time to celebrate the cultures and histories of all diverse communities, including identities that intersect with Hispanic heritage.



Hispanic is an ethnicity, but many do not identify as Hispanic. Identity is intersectional, so we should also be inclusive of celebrating the cultures, histories and contributions of Mexican Americans, Chicanos/as, Puerto Ricans, Dominicans, Salvadorians, Hondurans, Latinos/as, Chileans and more.

Identity is not linear, singular or fixed. As we learn more about our heritage and history, we discover a new part of our identity. As Gloria Anzaldúa said, “There is no one Chicano language just as there is no one Chicano experience.” The same is true for other identities.

Hispanic Heritage in STEM

Since women of color are often overlooked in STEM subjects and grossly underrepresented in the field, IDRA's STEM and gender equity specialist, Dr. Stephanie Garcia, has been showcasing a STEMinista (Latina in STEM) every day of Hispanic Heritage Month. Below are a few STEMinistas and a brief summary of their contribution in STEM. They are a few of many that serve as an inspiration and trailblazer in STEM.

Born in Puerto Rico, **Olga D. González-Sanabria** was granted a U.S. patent for her innovation. Her long cycle-life nickel-hydrogen battery helped power the International Space Station. She became the highest-ranking Hispanic at the NASA Glenn Research Center.

Frances Córdova earned her Ph.D. in physics from Cal State. She studied white dwarfs and pulsars at Los Alamos National Laboratory, authored more than 150 published articles, became chief scientist for NASA, president of Purdue University, and a director at the National Science Foundation.

Gabriela Mistral, literary pseudonym of Lucila Godoy Alcayaga, was South America's first Nobel Laureate. Her poems had many themes, but one was nature. She wrote about nature in the Poem of Chile. This is a great example of STEAM (art integrated in STEM).

Ynes Mexia is a famous Mexican American botanist who received her degree at U.C. Berkeley. She discovered two new plant genera and 500 new plant species.

Rebeca Guber is a famous computer scientist from Argentina. She taught at the University of Buenos Aires and co-authored Elements of Differential and Integral Calculus. She also co-developed the first computer in Argentina!

11 Women scientists who should be in the Texas K-12 science standards just to get the ball rolling

IDRA Recommends Accurate Inclusion of Scientific History

Rosalind Franklin
As of 2020, every scientist named in the Texas science standards is a white male. As state board members consider revisions to the Science Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS), it's past time to include the scientific achievements of women and people of color. When students cannot see themselves as scientists, they do not pursue careers in the sciences, and we are all denied the benefits of their creativity and brilliance. — Dr. Stephanie Garcia, IDRA
Rosalind Franklin should be named in the biology standard because of her discovery of the structure of DNA [8.5A]

Mae Jemison
Mae Jemison's story should be embedded in one sixth through eighth grade units on space science, because she was the first Black woman in space [6.11C, 7.9B]

Marie Curie
A famous physicist and chemist, Marie studied how unstable nucleus emit particles and release energy, called "radioactivity." She was awarded with a second Nobel prize in chemistry for her discovery of and research on polonium and radium. This needs to be in eighth grade science curricula about the properties of atoms [8.5B]

Wang Zhenyi
A Chinese astronomer, poet and mathematician, she created an eclipse model to help prove her theories about how the moon blocks out viewing of the sun during an eclipse. This could be integrated in any third through seventh grade earth and space unit [3.10C, 4.8C, 5.9B, 6.7B]

Maria Sibylla Merian
A German entomologist she was the first to classify and understand insects, especially in dangerous rain and heat. This can be taught in science units covering the impact of environmental changes in third grade and all the way to high school levels and classification organisms [3.9C, 4.9A, 7.11A, 8.9A]

YouYou Tu
YouYou Tu is a famous food scientist who created a drug to inhibit the malaria parasite, saving millions of people. This contribution can be included when discussing the classification of parasites or how they can disrupt the health of their organisms [4.9B, 4.12D, 8.11A]

Gladys West
Gladys West should be discussed in an eighth-grade science unit on earth science and topography, because she was instrumental in the development of the Global Positioning System [8.9D]

Sally Ride
Sally Ride was the first U.S. woman to fly to space. She also helped to develop a robotic arm to release satellites into space. Her contributions need to be included in middle school science [6.11C, 7.9A, 8.9B]

Helen Rodriguez Trias
The first Latina president of the American Public Health Association, she helped to bring national attention to HIV and AIDS crises, earning the Presidential Citizens Medal. Her story can be incorporated in a biology unit covering cell differentiation and division, or how ethical and social decisions are involved in science [8.4C]

Katia Krafft
Katia Krafft was a famous geologist and volcanologist who documented how volcanic eruptions affected ecosystems and researched volcanic formations. This should be studied in elementary to high school science [2.7C, 4.7B, 6.10D, 8.9B]

Katherine Johnson
Katherine Johnson applied her math skills to physics where she helped calculate the path for the first manned mission to the moon. She also worked on the space shuttle program and was the first African American woman to be named a NASA scientist. This needs to be incorporated into the history and culture of science units in sixth and seventh grade [6.11C, 7.9A]

See article and other sources about women in STEM <https://idra.news/nlSept20d>

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In 1944, **Enriqueta González Baz** became the first woman to graduate with a math degree in Mexico from the National University of Mexico (UNAM) and she co-founded the Mexican Mathematical Society.

Dra. Helen Rodríguez Trías was the first Latina president of American Public Health Association. She brought national attention to the HIV and AIDS crisis and exposed inequities in healthcare. She was also an associate professor of medicine at the Albert Einstein College of Medicine.

Ellen Ochoa is the first and only Hispanic female astronaut. She recently retired from her NASA director position in Houston. She was a mission specialist and a flight engineer, and she conducted robotics development.

These incredible contributions all connect to computer science, biology, mechanical engineering, aerospace and aviation, medicine and literature in STEM. Educators should find creative ways to acknowledge and authentically connect these mujeres pioneras (women pioneers) and their contributions to the STEM curriculum. This work is important because we want our future STEMinistas to see themselves in the field.

Said beautifully by Gloria Anzaldúa: “Do work that matters. Vale la pena.”

Resources

[Antiracism in Science](#) – Infographic

Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza, book by Gloria Anzaldúa

[11 Women scientists who should be in the Texas K-12 science standards, just to get the ball rolling](#) – Infographic

See more STEMinistas via Dr. Stephanie Garcia’s Twitter account [@STEMinistx](#).



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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.