



Engaging Ourselves to Engage Our Students

by Josie Danini Cortez, M.A.

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- ❖ **Remembering Women's History Month**
- ❖ **National student essay contest winners announced**



Through 19 years of Catholic school, it's safe to say that I was a pretty "engaged" student. Early on, it was made very clear that if I didn't give my total attention (mind, body *and* soul) to Sister Cornelius, I was destined to go south in a hand basket. Engagement came fairly easily in the early grades, but as I got older and more things competed for my attention, there were schooldays I spent picking out a cushion and bows for my hand basket. No matter how hard I tried to stay engaged, classes were unbelievably boring.

It would take years (and IDRA) for me to learn that engagement is always a two-way street. Yes, students need to do their part, but perhaps more importantly, teachers, principals and staff – as the adults – also must create, nurture and sustain engagement. This article goes directly into the *how* of engagement and skips over the *why*, since it is pretty clear that engaged students are more successful.

So how do you successfully engage students, especially older ones? Much has been written about student engagement over the past 15

years. But if you want to see one of the best examples of young people engaged, go to Peter Pappas' web site and take a look at Robbie Cooper's "Immersion" project (Pappas, 2008). You will see British and American youth playing video games and a remarkable illustration of what student engagement can look like. Students are riveted to the computer screen. You see them challenged, excited, not wanting the experience to end.

Imagine that happening in a classroom every day. Adela Solís, an IDRA senior education associate, gave some good examples in a recent *IDRA Newsletter* article on how to be sure your students are cognitively engaged (2008). Some key ones are:

- Students are included and treated fairly.
- Students show that they know when they are successful in tasks.
- Students can make real authentic choices and regulate their own learning.
- Students seem secure and safe in the classroom.
- Students are actively discovering, constructing and creating.
- Students are listening, observing,

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- noticing and being mindful.
- Students are immersed in tasks.
- Students keep busy and active. They are not clock-watching.
- Students say they understand task expectations.
- Students are saying, doing, writing and responding openly.
- Students look satisfied and fulfilled after responding.
- Students sit, walk tall, speak up, look self-assured.

You may have noticed that I mentioned “cognitive” engagement. Researchers, myself included, have a tendency to complicate simplicity. Engagement seems simple enough, yet there are a few complexities along the way. One complexity is the *nature* of the engagement. That goes back to Sr. Cornelius and her ability to engage her students’ minds, bodies and souls. It turns out that she was on the right track 45 years ago.

Ethan Yazzie-Mintz is the project director of the High School Survey of Student Engagement (HSSSE), which surveyed more than 81,000 students in

At its core, engagement is about relationships. And if adults aren’t comfortable relating to students who seem “different” or come from different experiences, then relating takes more of our minds, bodies and souls.

110 schools within 26 states (2007). The HSSSE was designed to look at three dimensions of engagement:

- Cognitive/Intellectual/Academic Engagement (“the work students do and the ways students go about their work...engagement of the *mind*”);
- Social/Behavioral/Participatory Engagement (“students’ actions in social, extracurricular, and non-academic school activities... engagement in the *life of the school*”); and
- Emotional Engagement (“students’ feelings of connection to or disconnection from their school... engagement of the *heart*”).

So who tended to be more engaged in school? The HSSSE showed that girls, White students, Asian students, and students who were not eligible for

free or reduced-price lunch programs tended to be more engaged across all three dimensions.

One reason for this result is probably that it is easier to engage those students who fit the traditional image of a “good” student. Yet that tells us more about our own comfort zones than anything about the students.

At its core, engagement is about relationships. And if adults aren’t comfortable relating to students who seem “different” or come from different experiences, then relating takes more of our minds, bodies and souls.

I have been writing about positive engagement thus far, yet negative engagement often can result. Yazzie-Mintz said it best when he wrote: “Two people become ‘engaged’ when they commit to entering a

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The Intercultural Development Research Association (IDRA) is a non-profit organization with a 501(c)(3) tax exempt status. The purpose of the organization is to disseminate information concerning equality of educational opportunity.

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Publication offices:

5815 Callaghan Road, Suite 101
San Antonio, Texas 78228
210/444-1710; Fax 210/444-1714
www.idra.org contact@idra.org

María Robledo Montecel, Ph.D.
IDRA President and CEO
Newsletter Executive Editor

Christie L. Goodman, APR
IDRA Communications Manager
Newsletter Production Editor

Sarah H. Aleman
Secretary
Newsletter Layout

Student Engagement

Dear reader,

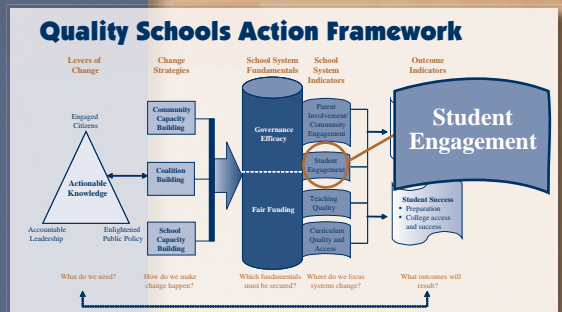
In the United States today, one in three students who enters high school does not graduate on time with a diploma. Several studies, including IDRA research, that have looked at why students drop out find that students say that they are not connected to school. Findings like these need to be unpacked carefully. And we need a response that is crafted with equal care, from a solid base of experience and best practices.



Engagement is integral – not a sideline – to learning. And, most importantly, broad-scale student disengagement points to the need for systems-level changes that have us ensure that students of all backgrounds encounter a curriculum that is challenging and relevant, teaching that engages them and supports them to succeed in learning, and the sense that they are valued in school. In “Engaging Ourselves to Engage Our Students,” Ms. Josie Cortez, points the way to taking on this issue constructively in our classrooms and school systems. With “Remembering Women’s History Month,” Dr. Bradley Scott, reminds us that we must use every opportunity – including special observances – to take stock of how well we are serving girls and indeed, all other students.

With this issue, we also introduce you to the student winners of IDRA’s Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program national essay contest. As a dropout prevention model, the Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program strengthens student connections and success in school in ways that yield powerful results: 98 percent of all Valued Youth tutors stay in school. One tutor, Crisol Ortuño wrote in her award-winning essay: “I remember seeing my tutees’ flashing white smiles as I entered their classroom. Who would have thought that I, the always quiet and shy girl, could have changed their minds about learning in school?” My heartfelt congratulations to all the tutors, their teachers and families – and a heartfelt wish that as adults we do all we must to make sure that every student is engaged, valued and on a path to success.

María Robledo Montecel



The Family Friendly Principal

by Aurelio M. Montemayor, M.Ed.



IDRA's principles for family leadership in education have been the basis of our work with families, schools and communities. A public school principal who models and carries out these principles creates a family-friendly school. The principles (applied by the principal) can be carried out in multiple ways, but the actions and behaviors are measured by the results with children, families, staff and teachers. No single template or management style achieves a family-friendly school. One can nevertheless point to the campus leader who has been critical to fostering that wonderful result: a family-friendly school with happy, academically successful students.

The principles applied to principals are as follows.

1. Families can be their children's strongest advocates.

Our first premise draws on the potential that all families have in speaking for, defending and supporting their children. The concept of parents as advocates has been difficult to capture in the research and literature, especially connecting it to student achievement, yet it is key to our vision. The principal holding this premise does not have an unreal, romanticized view of the reality of our families. He or she does not ignore that there are dysfunctional families in all classes, races and communities. Nevertheless, his or her view of families is that each must be approached with respect and high expectations.

2. Families of different races, ethnicities, languages and classes are equally valuable. Each group has assets, traditions and a language that are worthy of respect. The principal's experience demonstrates that when this principle is evident in the outreach and work done with families, there is a marked increase in the amount and quality of families' engagement with their children's schools and education.

3. Families care about their children's education and are to be treated with respect, dignity and value. The principal is aware that every major survey conducted in the Latino community has placed education as the number one issue of concern or very close to the top. He or she understands that parents of all races, classes and national origins have reinforced this almost universal concern families have for their children's education. He or she acts on this knowledge.

4. Within families, many individuals

play a role in children's education. The principal acknowledges, accepts and respects whoever the key caretakers are of children beyond the genetic parents. The combination of all who live within a home are important influences on children, and the principal attests that they can be a collective force for creating excellent schools.

5. Family leadership is most powerful at improving education for all children when collective efforts create solutions for the common good.

The family-friendly principal looks beyond the individualistic, charismatic leader model, agreeing that a lone leader focus is too narrow and does not sustain communities, families and excellent schools over time. As wonderful as the neighborhood mom in sneakers haranguing the school board about a serious concern is, the principal knows that our neighborhood schools need a network of families, co-supporting and co-creating action that improves schools. He or she realizes that our neighborhoods need a network of families who continue to support their neighborhood schools as each generation of children flows through them. The family-friendly principal welcomes collective efforts that are nourished by rich and deep democratic roots and sustained with peer compassion among families. He or she acknowledges that child rearing is a difficult and isolating responsibility, so he or she facilitates cooperation and rotating leadership so that when there is individual burnout, others from the network keep up the good effort.

6. Families, schools and communities, when drawn together, become a strong, sustainable voice to protect the rights of all children.

The family-friendly principal accepts that schools must be transformed; that positive change that lasts in the school requires internal and external leadership; and that when the internal suasion of the principal couples with the external support and strength of the parents, there is a solid foundation for the innovation to be sustained. The principal truly believes and practices the expectation that – with his or her leadership from within the school in welcoming collaboration and enthusiastic connection with families from without in the broader community – all together can achieve the cherished dream of excellent schools for all children.



Remembering Women's History Month

by Bradley Scott, Ph.D.

It occurred to me that a lot is being said about the need for periods of special observances for Americans of various ethnic and gendered extractions: “Why do we need a Black History Month?” “What purpose is served by acknowledging Hispanic Heritage month?” “Women already have equal rights. Can’t we let Title IX go?”

It is still important to highlight the need for special focus on the conditions of minorities and women regarding social justice, jobs, equality and outcomes because we have not yet reached parity where these groups are concerned. While the issues should be addressed throughout the year, these special observances allow us time to pause, reflect, highlight and assess what has occurred from a historical perspective, what is occurring, and what might occur for the group of focus.

March is National Women’s History Month. The Women’s History Project recently provided some background on the creation of the Women’s History Month observance. An excerpt of an online publication reads as follows (NWHP, nd).

“**The Beginning.** As recently as the 1970s, women’s history was virtually an unknown topic in the K-12 curriculum or in general public consciousness. To address this situation, the Education Task Force of the Sonoma

County (California) Commission on the Status of Women initiated a ‘Women’s History Week’ celebration for 1978. We chose the week of March 8 to make International Women’s Day the focal point of the observance. The activities that were held met with enthusiastic response, and within a few years dozens of schools planned special programs for Women’s History Week, over 100 community women participated in the Community Resource Women Project, an annual ‘Real Woman’ Essay Contest drew hundreds of entries, and we were staging a marvelous annual parade and program in downtown Santa Rosa, California.

“**Local Celebration.** In 1979, a member of our group was invited to participate in Women’s History Institutes at Sarah Lawrence College attended by the national leaders of organizations for women and girls. When they learned about our county-wide Women’s History Week celebration, they decided to initiate similar celebrations within their own organizations and school districts. They also agreed to support our efforts to secure a congressional resolution declaring a ‘National Women’s History Week.’ Together we succeeded! In 1981, Sen. Orrin Hatch (R-UT) and Rep. Barbara Mikulski (D-MD) co-sponsored the first Joint Congressional Resolution.

“**Overwhelming Response.** As word spread rapidly across the

nation, state departments of education encouraged celebrations of National Women’s History Week as an effective means to achieving equity goals within classrooms. Maryland, Pennsylvania, New York, Oregon, Alaska and other states developed and distributed curriculum materials to all of their public schools. Organizations sponsored essay contests and other special programs in their local areas. Within a few years, thousands of schools and communities were celebrating National Women’s History Week, supported and encouraged by resolutions from governors, city councils, school boards and the U.S. Congress.

“**The Entire Month of March.** In 1987, the National Women’s History Project petitioned Congress to expand the national celebration to the entire month of March. Since then, the National Women’s History Month Resolution has been approved with bipartisan support in both the House and Senate. Each year, programs and activities in schools, workplaces and communities have become more extensive as information and program ideas have been developed and shared.”

Education Opportunities

It occurs to me that March would be an excellent month to focus on what is currently happening to girls and boys in public schools. We

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should spend the month talking about need for greater access for girls to science, technology, engineering, and mathematics, or the STEM areas in curriculum. We should spend the month focusing on the condition and state of girls and boys in public school as a basis for action and accountability for their school success, graduation, college attendance and completion, and appropriate preparation for life. We should spend the month ensuring that girls and boys understand that they have a right under law (Title IX) to be free from discrimination, including sexual harassment and bullying. We should spend the month talking about women and men who are examples and role models for social and career excellence that our boys and girls can emulate. We should spend the month

in our various local communities and schools highlighting local positive examples of women and men who can serve as role models for our girls and boys to aspire to emulate so that they will understand that excellence is not

some far-off notion, but is ever close at hand.

Women's History Month is an excellent time for schools and communities to stop and take stock of how far we have come and what still needs to be done in realizing equal rights for girls and boys in our schools, communities, and society. Visit the National Women's History Project web site at <http://www.nwhp.org/> for ideas and activities for March and throughout the year.



Get more info online at IDRA Newsletter Plus

- Classroom activities
- Honor Roll of Notable Women created by kids
- Gender equity resources

www.idra.org/newsletterplus

Resources

National Women's History Project. "History of National Women's History Month," online (no date).

Bradley Scott, Ph.D., is director of IDRA South Central Collaborative for Equity. Comments and questions may be directed to him via e-mail at comment@idra.org.

Highlights of Recent IDRA Activities

In January, IDRA worked with **6,849** teachers, administrators, parents and higher education personnel through **53** training and technical assistance activities and **155** program sites in **12** states plus Brazil. Topics included:

- ◆ Teaching American History evaluation
- ◆ Math Smart! model training
- ◆ Science Smart! model training
- ◆ District Curriculum Coordinator consultations
- ◆ A FLAIR for Technology

Participating agencies and school districts included:

- ◆ Jefferson Parish Public Schools, Louisiana
- ◆ San Antonio Independent School District (ISD), Texas
- ◆ Pharr-San Juan ISD, Texas
- ◆ Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters (HIPPY)

Activity Snapshot

The Intercultural Development Research Association has been working with several schools to redesign and re-energize their reading programs to be more responsive to the characteristics of their diverse learners. In this three-year IDRA reading program, known as FLAIR (Focusing on Language and Academic Instructional Renewal), IDRA provides technical assistance that includes classroom demonstrations and observations of effective teaching strategies, coaching for success, nurturing of innovations, and guidance for finding funding options. FLAIR capitalizes on each school's strengths to increase reading scores, weave reading throughout the curriculum and recapture students' love of reading. The participants have become reinvigorated by this new instructional method that is based on three principles: active involvement, validating students and guidance.

Regularly, IDRA staff provides services to:

- ◆ public school teachers
- ◆ parents
- ◆ administrators
- ◆ other decision makers in public education

Services include:

- ◆ training and technical assistance
- ◆ evaluation
- ◆ serving as expert witnesses in policy settings and court cases
- ◆ publishing research and professional papers, books, videos and curricula

For information on IDRA services for your school district or other group, contact IDRA at 210-444-1710.

Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program 25th Anniversary

Texas Students Win National Essay Contest Award

San Antonio, February 24, 2009

– Six students received prizes in a national competition among participants in the Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program. A nationally recognized-cross-age tutoring program, IDRA's Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program is celebrating its 25th anniversary. In addition, IDRA's Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program in Brazil is celebrating its 10th anniversary. To celebrate these two milestones, the Intercultural Development Research Association sponsored an essay contest in the United States.

- First Place High School Winner/Grand Prize – Gabriella Guajardo, South San Antonio High School
- Second Place High School Winner – Nubia Cid, South San Antonio High School
- Third Place High School Winner – Nora Isaac of Uvalde High School
- First Place Middle School Winner – Jamillesh Hernandez, Dr. Javier Saenz Middle School, La Joya
- Second Place Middle School Winner – Mary Vidaurri, Memorial Middle School, La Joya
- Third Place Middle School Winner – Crisol Ortuño, Ann Richards Middle School, La Joya

Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program tutors wrote about how the program had helped them do better in school and how they had helped their tutees to do better. There were com-

“I truly believe that if it hadn't been for the Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program, I wouldn't have found the real me.”

**– Jamillesh Hernandez,
middle school tutor**

petitions at both the middle school and high school levels. Winners from each competition received \$500 for first place, \$250 for second place and \$100 for third place. A single grand prize winner Gabriella Guajardo has won an opportunity to represent all U.S. program sites at the Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program Brazil's 10th Anniversary Celebration in Brazil for herself, her mother and the teacher coordinator from South San High School.

In her essay, Gabriella Guajardo wrote, “Since I became a tutor, life to me has endless possibilities, dreams and goals that I can accomplish when I just sit down, relax and look at the small things in life.”

“The program is helping me reach my goal and dream, which is to become a teacher,” Nubia Cid wrote in her essay. “To me this program is a stepping stone to becoming a teacher. When I tutor the children, I feel like a real teacher. Hopefully when I grow up, my dream will be fully accomplished.”

“Being in the Coca-Cola Val-

ued Youth Program has inspired me,” wrote Nora Isaac. “I love helping the little kids learn. I feel so good inside when they finally understand what they are learning. They are always so proud of their work... I believe that if every kid had a tutor, they would most likely want to go to college and become good people for their communities. I love the Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program.”

In her essay, Jamillesh Hernandez wrote, “I have a purpose now because of this program, but most important is that I now know that I have a reason for being alive. Thank you Coca-Cola for caring enough to provide us with such a valuable and life-changing experience. For I truly believe that if it hadn't been for the Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program, I wouldn't have found the real me.”

“Tutoring means so much to me, it's hard to fit it all in one essay,” Mary Vidaurri wrote in her essay. “Teaching might be my calling, but I'm not so certain right now. One thing is for sure, I love tutoring!”

Crisol Ortuño wrote: “A memory is something that you can carry on forever. I have the memory of the Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program in my mind and in my heart. I remember seeing my tutees' flashing white smiles as I entered their classroom. Who would have thought that I, the

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permanent, ongoing and intimate relationship with each other; two forces become ‘engaged’ in battle when they confront each other, committing to an antagonistic, violent relationship... Engagement within the school context is also about relationship” (2007).

He goes on to write, “The degree to which a student is ‘engaged’ in school is dependent on the quality, depth and breadth of the student’s relationship with these various aspects of the life and work of the school.” Engaging students can be a positive and enduring experience or it can be dysfunctional and a battle of wills with the school having the upper hand.

According to the HSSSE, the majority of students surveyed are content with their high school, care about it, are engaged in school and feel they are an important part of their high school community. Yet, the survey also found that two out of three students are bored in class at least every day, most because the material isn’t interesting or relevant to them or because the work isn’t challenging enough. One third of the students said they were bored because they did not have *any* interaction with the teacher.

Another key finding was that the degree of importance that students place on an activity is a critical aspect of their engagement. Interestingly, even though students reported spending little time on academic activities, they considered these their most important activities.

And importantly, the study found that support from at least one adult in the school is critical for students “and is a foundation for student engagement.” Students felt most supported by teachers (81 percent), counselors (73 percent), other adults like secretaries and custodians (61 percent), and administrators (60 percent).

This study echoes IDRA’s early research in the Dallas Independent School District in which we found that one of the most powerful predictors of

keeping students in school was having one adult in school who cared about them (1989).

Yazzie-Mintz encourages researchers and practitioners to look beyond the achievement gap and include “the engagement gap” that exists in high schools to improve the context for student engagement (2007). He points to the qualitative data that were collected in the HSSSE that help explain the nature and quality of engagement. One student wrote, “My lit teacher is the best teacher I ever had,” while another wrote, “All our school really cares about is getting good grades on the standardized tests, not about life after high school.” Guess who is engaged?

In a 2005 article, Learning Point Associates listed four key elements of student engagement: student confidence (high self-efficacy), teacher involvement (care about students as individuals), relevant and interesting texts, and choices of literary activities. Underscoring all of this was the need for students to feel a sense of control – something that developers of video games figured out some time ago.

The authors state, “Teachers need to be able to create an engaging learning environment, implement research-based teaching strategies, augment students’ motivation to learn, and offer opportunities to use literacy skills across the curriculum” (Learning Point Associates, 2005).

At the higher education level, the

Community College Survey of Student Engagement provides a blueprint for community colleges to engage students. In *Committing to Student Engagement, Reflections on CCSSE’s First Five Years, 2007 Findings, Community College Leadership Program* (2007), the authors provide some lessons learned on engaging students:

- “Be Intentional. Engagement doesn’t happen by accident; it happens by design.” Institutions need to engage students at all levels and at all times – beginning with the moment a student steps on a campus.
- “Engagement matters for all students, but it matters more for some than others.” The CCSSE found that students considered to be “high risk” were actually *more* engaged than their low risk counterparts. But despite all of their hard work, they succeeded less often. There are two insights here: one is not to assume that the “usual suspects” aren’t engaged, and the second is to provide the support needed for them to succeed.
- “Data are our friends.” The authors write about building “a culture of evidence,” using credible information to “set goals, monitor progress and improve practice.”
- “Look behind the numbers.” Ensure that student perspectives and voice are part of the knowledge base.

One of the key findings from the CCSSE was that students need

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Password not required!

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to feel they matter, “Students seem to be looking to be respected and acknowledged as important parts of their school communities; taking students seriously and taking actions on their ideas is a step toward creating a more engaged student body and an engaging school community” (2007).

The CCSSE also provides strategies proven to be effective in engaging students, including high expectations and engaging instructional approaches. But perhaps the best strategy they propose is to “make engagement inescapable” (2007).

Think about that for a moment. Successful engagement means there is no escape, no excuse, no exit for any student. It means that as a teacher, administrator, faculty member or counselor, it is your job to convince each and every student that he or she matters, that they have something valuable to contribute to their school and their community. And that you care about them and are committed to their success, and then you give them your word – *un compromiso* – and opportunities to contribute.

So how can you be sure your students are engaged? The easiest and best way is simply to ask them. You can do this more formally through individual or focus group interviews, surveys or classroom observation checklists. Look for some examples of tools and resources on the IDRA web site and IDRA Newsletter Plus.

But a word of caution if you look elsewhere for tools. Often you will find student survey questions that assume the worst of students: “Students don’t want to do ‘x’ because they’re not motivated or lazy or bored.”

Among the things that distinguishes IDRA is the set of philosophical tenets that we use to guide our work, beginning with the intrinsic value of every child. You cannot be successful engaging students if you think that some are not worth your

The graphic is a dark blue rectangle with rounded corners. At the top, it says "Get more info online at IDRA Newsletter Plus" in white and yellow text. Below this are three white rounded rectangles containing the text "Student engagement research", "Engagement Based Sheltered Instruction", and "Survey results" in blue text. At the bottom, the website address "www.idra.org/newsletterplus" is written in white.

time, much less your mind and heart. So always begin with the end in mind, and the end that you want to visualize is *all* students excited, challenged and happy to be learning in your school, with you playing a key role in their success.

At the end of the day, when all of the engagement research and strategies and assessments are read, the greatest challenge is your own level of engagement. What’s keeping you from engaging all of your students? Are you excited, challenged, not wanting the day to end? If the answer is an honest “no,” then you cannot expect the young people in your school to be engaged, when you’re not.

Forty-five years later, I still occasionally fluff the cushion and bows for my hand basket and remember Sr. Cornelius. And it only now occurs to me that she engaged all of us with a vengeance as if our souls were at stake, in her mind they were, and it was up to her to make sure we made it through the pearly gates. The same is true for all of us in education – we have to engage all students as if their futures are at stake, because, in fact, they are.

Resources

Center for Community College Student Engagement. *Committing to Student Engagement, Reflections on CCSSE’s First Five Years, 2007 Findings, Community College Leadership Program* (Austin, Texas:

CCCSE, 2007).

Intercultural Development Research Association. *The Answer: Valuing Youth in Schools and Families* (San Antonio, Texas: Intercultural Development Research Association, 1989 Second Edition).

Learning Point Associates. “What are the Key Elements of Student Engagement?” AdLit.org web site (2005).

Pappas, P. “Look into the Face of Student Engagement,” Copy Paste blog (November 25, 2008).

Solis, A. “Teaching for Cognitive Engagement – Materializing the Promise of Sheltered Instruction,” *IDRA Newsletter* (San Antonio, Texas: Intercultural Development Research Association, April 2008).

Yazzie-Mintz, E. *Voices of Students on Engagement: A Report on the 2006 High School Survey of Student Engagement* (Bloomington, Ind.: High School Survey of Student Engagement, Center for Evaluation and Education Policy, February 28, 2007).

Josie Danini Cortez, M.A., is an IDRA senior education associate. Comments and questions may be directed to her via e-mail at comment@idra.org.

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always quiet and shy girl, could have changed their minds about learning in school?”

South San Antonio ISD has implemented the Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program in the district for the past 25 years and helped its students stay in school, have increased academic performance, improve school attendance and advance to higher education. Likewise, La Joya ISD has implemented the program for 17 years and Uvalde Consolidated ISD for the past five years.

The Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program, created by IDRA, is an internationally-recognized cross-age tutoring program. Since its inception in 1984, the program has kept more than 29,000 students in school, young people who were previously at risk of dropping out. According to the Valued Youth creed, all students are valuable none is expendable. The lives of more than 541,000 children, families and educators have been positively impacted by the program.

Engagement-Based Sheltered Instruction

Are your English language learners meeting state standards and passing required tests? IDRA's new research-based sheltered instruction model can assist you in improving the academic success of your English language learners.

The model focuses on student engagement. Engagement in the learning process is essential for academic success. Because of English language learners' different English proficiency levels, teachers often struggle to find ways to have them actively participate in their learning. IDRA helps teachers learn, reflect on use, and adopt instructional strategies so that English language learners are engaged in the instructional process.

This dynamic professional development series focuses on extending the teacher's knowledge of ESL strategies and sheltered instruction to ensure that the English language learner is engaged in learning the academic content. Technology to engage students is an interwoven feature of the training.

Topics that are addressed during the series include:

- ❖ Understanding Student English Language Proficiency Levels
- ❖ Understanding the Language Demands of the Content Areas, Texts and Tests
- ❖ Choosing Strategies that Address Student Language Levels
- ❖ Developing Student Academic Language in Content Areas

Benefits

- ❖ Teachers who feel empowered to make a difference for English language learners,
- ❖ Teachers who can build trusting relationships with English language learners,
- ❖ Teachers who maximize learning time for all students in the classroom,
- ❖ Teachers who can present content in a comprehensible way to all students, and
- ❖ Teachers who can spontaneously reflect and act.

Outcomes

- ❖ Strengthening the understanding that all students bring strengths and assets to the learning process,
- ❖ Creating a culture of meaningful engagement for student success,
- ❖ Applying principles of language learning to instructional strategies,
- ❖ Maximizing instructional strategies based on a student's level of English language proficiency, and
- ❖ Fostering student, parent and teacher partnerships for academic success.



- ❖ Planning, Teaching and Observing for Maximum Cognitive Engagement of English Language Learners
- ❖ Technology as a Tool for Student Engagement

To make success for all students a reality, IDRA presents comprehensive, in-depth learning opportunities for parents, teachers, administrators and community-based organizations that value and build upon the strength and knowledge that each partner brings, while developing new and effective strategies for engagement that focus on student success. When applied effectively, these positive practices can create a strong web of support to help prepare students for successful transitions throughout education, from preschool to college enrollment, and into the world of work and civic engagement.

IDRA Support

IDRA supports all phases of effective sheltered instruction, from planning through implementation with the goal of sustainability for student success through training of mentors and coaches. IDRA professional development support combines state-of-the-art technology, hands-on and face-to-face training that helps teachers and districts apply research-based strategies. The training uses a variety of ways to work with school staff, including workshops, video conferences, classroom demonstrations, on-site observations and problem solving, online discussions, and reflections. Participants are supported with research-based information and best practices. CPE credit is available.

IDRA Will Address Your Specific Needs

Cross-cutting themes that are incorporated into each session include:

- ❖ Cooperative Learning for Student Engagement
- ❖ Building Academic Vocabulary
- ❖ Building Content Literacy
- ❖ Integrating Technology
- ❖ Creative Use of Graphic Organizers
- ❖ Promoting High-Order Thinking Skills

An example of a model plan that IDRA could use with your district is in the box on the next page.

Sample Engagement-Based Sheltered Instruction Plan Tailored to District Needs

Session Description	Topic	Days	Follow-Up
Online Preparation*	Initial Needs Assessment and Setting the Climate		2-3 hours
Observations	IDRA classroom observations		1-2 days
Teachers Face-to-Face Session #1	Cooperative Learning for Student Engagement and Language Acquisition	1 day	2-3 hours
Demonstrations	Classroom Demonstrations	1	1-2 days
Teachers Face-to-Face Session #2	Assessing English Language Learners, Monitoring and Implementing Engagement-Based Sheltered Instruction		1 day
Coaching Session	Individual lesson observation and coaching session	1	1 day
Teachers Face-to-Face Session #3	Strategies for Sheltering Instruction for Increasing Comprehensibility		2-3 hours
Lesson Planning	Observing and planning with teachers		1-2 days
Online Mentoring and Coaching	Throughout the professional development model the learning team will communicate and engage in discussion of topics and issues. Resources will be linked and constantly updated for team use.		Continuous
Teachers Face-to Face Session #4	Strategies for Language Acquisition and Language Teaching: Techniques for Content Area Teachers	1	2-3 hours
Optional Session #5	How to Conduct Mentoring and Coaching Session – “Training of Trainers” (Days of in-class assistance dependent on total number of teachers participating)	1	1 5-9 full days plus online support and monitoring
Impact Evaluation			
*All online participation is timed and documented through our portal system.			

Build Student Leadership – continued from Page 4

for students, helping students become successful and positive leaders, opening doors for them and helping other teachers to see their potential. Of students who participate in the program, 98 percent stay in school and progress to the next grade.

Mr. de la Garza would like for students considered at risk to be given the opportunity to blossom because they have the same potential that other students do. “Do not close the door to these students,” he says.

In essence, the Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program teacher coordinator is an advocate and mentor for the tutors. Jerry de la Garza personifies this role. Because of his leadership and vision, the Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program tutors in this South Texas school have an expanded vision of life and see themselves as successful and positive leaders.

Resources

Peixoto, F. “What Kinds of Benefits Students Have From Participating in Extracurricular

Activities?” Paper presented at the Proceedings Third International Biennial SELF Research Conference (Berlin, Germany, July 3-7, 2004).

To hear more, listen to the Classnotes Podcast interview of Mr. de la Garza online at www.idra.org/podcast.

Linda Cantú, Ph.D., is an IDRA education associate. Juanita C. García, Ph.D., is an IDRA education associate. Comments and questions may be directed to them via e-mail at comment@idra.org.

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Episode 49: “The Civil Rights Impact of Response to Intervention” IDRA Classnotes Podcast – Bradley Scott, Ph.D., director of the IDRA South Central Collaborative for Equity, describes 11 equity conditions the national network of equity assistance centers believe must be in place for Response to Intervention to be successful.



Episode 48: “Properly Serving Secondary English Language Learners” IDRA Classnotes Podcast – Abelardo Villarreal, Ph.D., director of IDRA field services and a national expert on education of English language learners, describes what schools need to do to ensure that ELLs receive educational services that meet the quality and equity standards in order to graduate prepared for college and work.



Episode 47: “Building Critical Thought through Children’s Literature” IDRA Classnotes Podcast – Dr. Juanita García, an education associate at IDRA, describes how she uses children’s literature to encourage students to read deeply, analyze, question and make associations with the stories.



Episode 46: “Broadening the Conversation with Parents about Mathematics” IDRA Classnotes Podcast – Jack Dieckmann, M.A., a former senior math education specialist at IDRA and current doctoral student at Stanford University, discusses how teachers can converse with parents as peers even though they may have no knowledge of math instruction.

www.idra.org/podcasts

A podcast is an audio file that can be downloaded to your computer for listening immediately or at a later time. Podcasts may be listened to directly from your computer by downloading them onto a Mp3 player (like an iPod) for listening at a later date. The IDRA Classnotes podcasts are available at no charge through the IDRA web site and through the Apple iTunes Music Store. You can also subscribe to Classnotes through iTunes or other podcast directories to automatically receive each new podcast in the series when it is released. Classnotes is free of charge.



5815 Callaghan Road, Suite 101
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