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## This month's focus: Early Learning



***"Successful early childhood programs take what we know from brain research and provide meaningful reading and writing activities that appeal to children's eagerness to learn about the world around them. All children benefit when these programs are accessible, well-funded and have well prepared teachers."***

- Celina Moreno, J.D., IDRA President &CEO

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## Early Learning

### **Current Proposals for Texas' Investment in English Learners Still Not Enough**

*by Morgan Craven, J.D.*

In the current Texas legislative session, the major school finance proposals would increase funding to serve some English learners, but most English learners will not benefit from the proposed change.



IDRA's **analysis of data** from the Texas Education Agency shows that 80 percent of English learners in the state are not in the dual language programs that would receive the additional funding under the proposed changes to the law.

English learners in Texas make up about one-fifth of the public school population, or 1 million students. It is especially important to support these students during early education and pre-K, when students are developing the basic skills needed for academic and social success. In order to support English learners in the state, we must invest in them.

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### **Building Culturally-Relevant Libraries for Young Learners**

*by Nilka Avilés, Ed.D., & José A. Velázquez, M.Ed.*

For children who are learning English, the classroom teacher and school librarian can work together to identify not only age-appropriate literature but also literature that is culturally authentic and relevant.



Children are attracted to books that represent their culture and with characters like themselves. These connections promote meaningful literacy development and building the cognitive, linguistic and affective skills for competency and academic engagement.

One example is **IDRA's Semillitas de Aprendizaje curriculum**, a unique set of bilingual materials that is closely connected to the Latino experience in the United States. In today's diverse classrooms, educators have the opportunity to share many stories



created by students' own narratives, which enriches classroom libraries with meaningful stories for children.



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## Fixing Asset-Based Early Childhood Education

by Hector Bojorquez

Despite an understanding that educators and schools need to approach their students, parents and communities from an asset-based perspective that values their innate gifts and talents, too often we see this idea twisted into language that implies that there are deficits in the home that need to be fixed in the early childhood classroom.



Early childhood education helps children considered to be in at-risk situations, but not because they are broken and in need of fixing. Asset-based practices must honor language, culture and diverse backgrounds in addition to being grounded in strength that actively engages students and families. We need to properly invest in education throughout the pipeline.



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## Bilingual Literacy Development Materials Perfect for Summer School!

**Help your pre-K and kinder students' reading readiness!**

This summer, extend the school year and deepen your young learners' ability to read with Semillitas de Aprendizaje, IDRA's early childhood resources. Semillitas de Aprendizaje is a bilingual (Spanish/English) supplemental early childhood curriculum, created by IDRA, based on the art of storytelling.



The teacher guide contains 10 units to lead your students through the Semillitas de Aprendizaje stories. Each unit has a set of classroom activities that include a morning song, storytelling, literacy connection with STEM explorations, learning center activities, phonemic awareness, writing and alphabet knowledge, English transition, family connections and informal assessment.

With Semillitas de Aprendizaje, you can provide the required eight-week bilingual summer school to students through a variety of interactive activities that generate excitement as students connect with the characters.

LEARN MORE

## Classnotes Podcasts on Early Learning

Science in Early Childhood Bilingual Classrooms - Podcast Episode 20

Bilingual Stories for Young Learners - Podcast Episode 80

Geometry in Early Childhood - Podcast Episode 139

Building Critical Thought through Children's Literature - Podcast Episode 47

Building Numeracy Skills in Early Childhood - Podcast Episode 157

3 ELL Scaffolding Strategies - Podcast Episode 160

English Learners and the New ESSA Law - Podcast Episode 163

Holding Back In-grade Retention - Podcast Episode 182

Stronger Parent Involvement through Family Leadership in Education Projects - Podcast Episode 185



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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.