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Transforming Education by Putting Kids First



IDRA Newsletter – This Issue's Focus: Family Engagement

In This Issue

Solving the Digital Divide Requires Authentic Family Engagement

Education CAFE Families Provide Insight on State-Level Education Policies

The Case for Alternate Assessments and Community Oversight

IDRA Valued Youth Partnership

Recent News

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Solving the Digital Divide Requires Authentic Family Engagement

by Thomas Marshall

The digital divide negatively impacts millions of Texas households without reliable access to broadband, and the COVID-19 pandemic only increased the barriers that many families faced to communicating with teachers and school leaders.



This article details the initiatives, reports and partnerships that IDRA has forged with families, communities and Texas leaders to assess the digital divide in the state and provide recommendations for how to engage with families, invest in broadband across the state, and approach the issue of making up for lost instruction time over the past two years. Family engagement must be at the forefront of solving the digital divide and allowing all students to thrive.

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New IDRA Report
Digital Destination
Texas Needs Broadband Connectivity for All Students & Families
 by Thomas Marshall & Christina Muñoz, IDRA Education Policy Fellows

4 Key actions for Texas to address the digital divide in education:

- 1** Invest in sustainable broadband infrastructure within Texas communities
- 2** Continue distribution of digital devices that are consistent, reliable and suitable for students' education needs
- 3** Offer training and support to educators, students, and families in digital literacy and citizenship
- 4** Invest in robust community engagement programs, such as ongoing community-led digital equity studies and resources for school district capacity to support students and families

Learn more in IDRA's report:
<https://idra.news/DigitalDestinationPDF>

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[See Report PDF](#)

[Get Video Campaign Info](#)

Digitally Divided, Community United
Got 15 seconds?

Students, Parents, Educators:
How has the digital divide impacted you?

The Texas Legislature is considering bills to support broadband access.

Join our video campaign!
Share your story about how the digital divide has impacted your learning & your life.

We need your voice!
Record a 15-second testimony in English or Spanish

It's a fun way to have an impact!

<https://idra.news/VideoAdvocacy>

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Education CAFE Families Provide Insight on State-Level Education Policies

by Aurelio M. Montemayor, M.Ed.

The Texas Legislature is hearing from a new contingent of families through IDRA's Education CAFE network. One group started preparations in the fall of 2020 with the leadership of ARISE Adelante, which supports leadership in education through the work of community centers located in colonias (unincorporated communities with scarce public services).



They held their Mesa Comunitaria online in the fall of 2020 and identified major issues including, inequitable school funding, college preparation and access, the digital divide exacerbated by COVID-19, isolation, effective dual language programs in their schools, and mental health and wellness issues aggravated by the pandemic.

IDRA provided several training and support sessions to help families better understand the legislative process and how to submit their comments and testimony to the legislature. These networks realize the power of IDRA's Family Leadership in Education framework because they enable communities to receive the training and data they need to advocate for and impact school policy and practice.

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IDRA Education CAFE
Community Action Forums for Excellence

“IDRA developed a family-leadership-in-education model that brings parents together to focus on how to improve the school. Instead of promoting a deficit view of families, this approach is participatory and honors the culture and language of the parent.”
- Carolee J. Adams, Education Week

Innovative Approach to School-Family-Community Collaboration
An Education CAFE is a family group rooted in a community-based organization, rather than in a single school. Its sole purpose is to collaborate with schools to improve the success of students in the community.

Networks of family leaders transforming their public schools

Community-based, Distributive Leadership
Meetings are attended by parents, grandparents, students, older siblings, neighbors and all who consider themselves cocreators of children's academic success and future. By rotating leadership roles, the Education CAFE is based on input and action from all.

School Partnerships
Education CAFE members come together and partner with schools in their neighborhood to ensure student success. Collaboration includes co-planning and sharing responsibility for shared, self-directed activities that improve education in their neighborhood public schools.

Education Projects
Education CAFEs partner with neighborhood public schools on identifying education needs and gaps, and improving educational quality, equity and outcomes. Families co-lead meaningful projects, like promoting the accessibility of advanced placement, dual credit and pre-algebra courses.

See how to start an Education CAFE in your area!
<https://idra.news/EdCAFEw>

The Intercultural Development Research Association is an independent, nonprofit organization. Our mission is to advance equitable educational opportunities through public-private partnerships, research, and technical assistance.

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IDRA
EAC-South

Education CAFE Brochure

Family Engagement Tools

IDRA EAC-South
Family Engagement
Online Assistance Package

Few people question the value of parents being involved in schools. But many school leaders labor with traditional strategies that have little meaning or success. This IDRA EAC-South Family Engagement Web-based Technical Assistance Package is designed to provide educators tools for embracing what, for many, is a new vision for engaging with families and community members.

This free web-based package includes five chapters, each with a video and supporting resources, infographics, articles & podcasts.

Chapter 1  Introduction to Family Leadership in Education	Chapter 2  Authentic Outreach	Chapter 3  The Six Principles of Family Engagement	Chapter 4  School Strategies for Family Engagement	Chapter 5  Education CAFE Overview
Get an overview of family leadership in education and its benefits. 5:15 min.	See how authentic family outreach differs from traditional ideas of parent outreach. And get specific strategies for implementing authentic outreach. 4:30 min.	Explore the six principles of creating meaningful family leadership in education. 4:52 min.	Get some strategies for schools that support family leadership in education which is the key path for families to influence policy and practice. 5:43 min.	Find out how Education CAFEs work and hear from members on how it has helped them and their schools. 3:08 min.

<https://idra.news/webFamEngage>

The IDRA EAC-South is the equity assistance center that provides free or low-cost technical assistance to schools in the U.S. South. With roots in the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the four federally-funded equity assistance centers help school districts build capacity to confront educational problems occasioned by race, national origin, sex and gender, and religion.

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EAC-South

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The Case for Alternate Assessments and Community Oversight

by *Chloe Latham Sikes, Ph.D., Hector Bojorquez, & Morgan Craven, J.D.*

COVID-19 has made it extremely challenging for many schools across the country to properly administer state assessments. Districts must balance both the physical and emotional health and safety of all stakeholders – from students and their families to educators as they struggle with the feasibility of virtual testing during a pandemic.

Short-term strategies to provide student support while assessing their mastery of academic content include using diagnostic assessments, expanding the use of formative assessments that measure student progress over time, and collecting data complementary to diagnostic assessments to help determine how successfully schools are educating their students.

Long-term solutions include a comprehensive look at testing and researching the impacts of assessment on teaching and learning over time. As states evaluate, they can also look to well-established research on avoiding harmful impacts of testing systems that hurt students and adopt strategies to accurately measure achievement.

Family engagement should be a vital component of this process and could help schools identify the culturally-sustaining practices and assessment tools that would best help students connect to their schools and engage in their coursework.



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Children First
IDRA
— Transforming Education

Celebrating **48** years

How can you help?

Donate

& Share

School districts across the country are working through unprecedented educational challenges as a result of the COVID-19 crisis. Your donation of **ANY** will help IDRA to **continue supporting policies** that expand **college access** and **affordability** for **all** students.

idra.news/Donate.48thBirthday



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Research Asociacion](https://www.linkedin.com/company/idra)

Donate Now!

IDRA Valued Youth Partnership








Now more than ever, reconnecting with students is critical. IDRA can help!

The IDRA Valued Youth Partnership is a proven cross-age tutoring program that works by identifying middle & high school students in at-risk situations and enlisting them as tutors for elementary school youngsters who are also struggling in school. Given this role of personal and academic responsibility, the Valued Youth tutors learn self-discipline and develop self-esteem. Schools shift to the philosophy and practices of valuing students considered at-risk.

- ✓ **98% stay in school**
- ✓ **Strengthen academic skills**
- ✓ **Build socio-emotional skills & self-esteem**
- ✓ **Increase attendance**
- ✓ **Reduce discipline rates**

Adjustments are available for virtual and remote learning.

► **Five Instructional Strategies** ◀

 Cross-age Tutoring <small>Tutors tutor a minimum of four hours a week for one class period a day.</small>	 Classes for Tutors <small>Tutors meet with their secondary school teacher coordinator once a week.</small>	 Educational Field Trips <small>Tutors go on at least two to three trips to explore career, economic and cultural opportunities.</small>	 Mentors and Role-Models <small>Adults who are considered successful in their fields and who represent students' ethnic background are invited to participate.</small>	 Student Recognition <small>Students are acknowledged for the efforts and contributions they make as tutors.</small>
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► **Five Support Strategies** ◀

Curriculum <small>Focused on self-concept, tutoring skills and literacy skills.</small>	Coordination <small>For program monitoring, communication & support.</small>	Staff Enrichment <small>Provided by IDRA based on campus staff needs.</small>	Family Engagement <small>Values the families' contributions.</small>	Evaluation <small>Analysis to inform program implementation.</small>
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Let the IDRA Valued Youth Partnership touch the lives of students, parents and educators in your district.

www.idra.org/valued-youth • www.facebook.com/IDRAed • Instagram @idra_vyp



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Recent News

IDRA is Hiring!

Get details and help us spread the word!

- Education Associate – with experience in emergent bilingual (English learner) education
- IDRA EAC-*South* Consultants
- Grant Writer Consultant
- Policy Communications Strategist
- IDRA Summer 2021 Internship Program

Weekly Texas Education Policy Update – Advocacy News

- [April 26, 2021: English](#) • [Español](#)
- [April 19, 2021: English](#) • [Español](#)
- [April 12, 2021: English](#) • [Español](#)
- [April 5, 2021: English](#) • [Español](#)

Plus!

[IDRA testimony and public comments on 22 bills in the Texas Legislature in April](#)

Other News

[Learning Goes On – New IDRA eNews – A COVID-19 Resource for Education \(English\) • \(Español\)](#), April 16, 2021

[Texas Plan Must Address Digital Divide in Education – IDRA Releases New Report, Launches Video Campaign Addressing Digital Divide](#), April 21, 2021

[Texas Schools Need Federal Relief Funds Now! Students pay the price as Texas leaders sit on federal funds, IDRA Statement \(English\) • \(Español\)](#), April 19, 2021

[New Coalition Formed to End Pasco County’s Predictive Policing Program](#), April 26, 2021

[TEA Announces Release of \\$11.2 billion in Federal Relief for Schools](#), April 28, 2021

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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.

April 30, 2021