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Transforming education by putting children first

**IDRA**  
**eNews**

## Teens Win 2023 National Essay Contest Awards

**IDRA Valued Youth Partnership Program Tutors Share Stories of the Program's Impact on Their Lives**



**“The thing that gets me up in the morning is the kids. Every morning I get up because I know I have to tutor them, and they depend on me to help them with their work... I think that’s what makes the IDRA Valued Youth Partnership amazing.”**

**– Brianna Garza, 8th Grade, San Antonio**

Six students received prizes in a national competition among participants in the [IDRA Valued Youth Partnership](#) program, a nationally-recognized cross-age tutoring program. The VYP tutors wrote about how the program helped them do better in school and how they had helped their tutees to do better.

- High School First Place Winner – [Mariah Rodríguez](#), 11th Grade, Odessa High School, Texas
- High School Second Place Winner – [Carly Oliver](#), 10th Grade, Odessa High School, Texas
- High School Third Place Winner – [Alina Lozano](#), 10th Grade, Odessa High School, Texas
- Middle School First Place Winner – [Michelle Ramos](#), 8th Grade, Abraham Kazan Middle School, San Antonio
- Middle School Second Place Winner – [Daynah Ramos](#), 8th Grade, Alan B. Shepard Middle School, San Antonio

- Middle School Third Place Winner – [Brianna Garza](#), 8th Grade, Alan B. Shepard Middle School, San Antonio

## Meet the VYP Essay Contest Winners 2022-23



### Mariah Rodríguez High School First Place

“Every time I walk into their classroom and see their excitement coming to me, for me to read, work on their sight words or help them understand, brings me so much joy. It shows me I’m doing my best, and they actually want to learn with me.”

[See Mariah’s full essay](#)

11th Grade  
Odessa High School  
Ector County ISD, Texas



### Carly Oliver High School Second Place

“Before VYP, I would never talk to anyone I didn’t know, and I was always scared to speak my mind. Answering simple questions during class was challenging. But now, I know that my opinions are important, and I won’t get anywhere if I keep my questions to myself. I am more brave now and have more confidence. Being in VYP has shown me that my presence matters, and I do have a meaning in a student’s life one way or another. This class has shown me how much meaning I can have in the world, and it makes me extremely proud.”

[See Carly’s full essay](#)

10th Grade  
Odessa High School  
Ector County ISD, Texas



10th Grade  
Odessa High School  
Ector County ISD, Texas

## Alina Lozano

### High School Third Place

“What people don’t understand – and I wish everyone could see it from my point of view – is that the little kids you get assigned aren’t just little kids, they become a family. You form a special bond with the littles throughout the year of working with them... Getting into the program has made me realize that I want to continue working with kids in the future. I am so glad and thankful that I was introduced to the program, because it has shown me a different perspective of how teachers actually deal with us.”

[See Alina’s full essay](#)



8th Grade  
Abraham Kazan  
Middle School,  
South San Antonio ISD,  
Texas

## Michelle Ramos

### Middle School First Place

"When I started encouraging my tutees, I saw their confidence level rise. As an example... I was grading their papers when I realized that all my tutees got 100s... They all looked at me in disbelief. They couldn't believe that they had accomplished such a thing... Their faces lit up, and they were as happy as they could be... It made me happy because when I think back at my younger self, I didn't have anyone who congratulated me for my accomplishments. No one was happy for me. And now I realize that me being their tutor and congratulating them will help them feel better about themselves and will help them be even more confident."

[See Michelle’s full essay](#)





## Daynah Ramos

### Middle School Second Place

“The IDRA Valued Youth Partnership is an amazing program... I have learned things from my students too, because when I was in elementary, I was not the best kid. But I have learned from that. They [my tutees] have really made me a better person. They have made me more kind, respectful and patient. I now keep my grades up only to A's and B's to set a better example for them.”

8th Grade  
Alan B. Shepard  
Middle School,  
South San Antonio ISD,  
Texas

[See Daynah's full essay](#)



## Brianna Garza

### Middle School Third Place

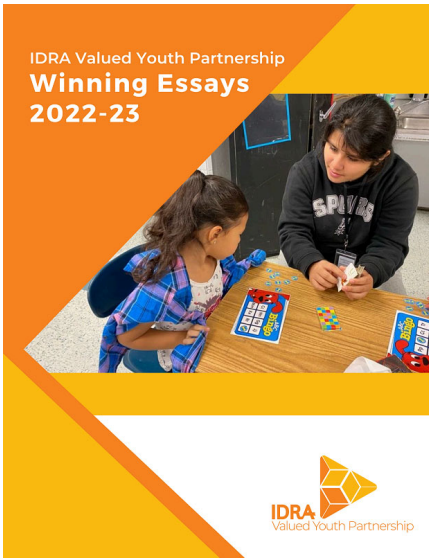
“I've always wanted to be able to help kids with things that I used to struggle with as a kid. The whole experience being a tutor makes me feel great. But the thing that sticks out to me the most is the way the kids [tutees] light up when they see me, and how they thank me for helping them throughout the day. The thing that gets me up in the morning is the kids. Every morning I get up because I know I have to tutor them, and they depend on me to help them with their work... I think that's what makes the IDRA Valued Youth Partnership amazing.”

8th Grade  
Alan B. Shepard  
Middle School,  
South San Antonio ISD,  
Texas

[See Brianna's full essay](#)

## Honorable Mentions

- Brianna Rodríguez 12th grade, Odessa High School, Texas
- Hailey Al-kayali, 8th Grade Kazan Middle School, San Antonio



**IDRA Valued Youth Partnership  
Winning Essays  
2022-23**

**IDRA**  
Valued Youth Partnership

**See eBook with full essays (PDF)**

**IDRA Valued Youth Partnership  
Congratulations to our 2023 Essay Contest Winners!**

**High School First Place**  
**MARIAH RODRIGUEZ**  
11<sup>th</sup> Grade • Ocala High School • Ocala County, Texas  
"Every time I walk into the classroom and see their excitement waiting for me to read or work on their sight words or help them understand things me no much joy it shows me the things my best, and they actually want to learn with me!"

**High School Second Place**  
**CARLY OLIVER**  
10<sup>th</sup> Grade • Ocala High School • Ocala County, Texas  
"Being a YVP I would never talk to anyone I didn't know, and I was always scared to speak my mind. Answering simple questions during class was challenging. But now, I know that my opinions are respected, and I can get anywhere I'll keep my questions to myself. I am more brave now and have more confidence. Being in YVP has shown me that my presence matters, and I do have a meaning in a student's life one way or another. This class has shown me how much meaning I can have in the world, and it makes me extremely proud!"

**High School Third Place**  
**ALINA LOZANO**  
10<sup>th</sup> Grade • Ocala High School • Ocala County, Texas  
"What people don't understand - and I wish everyone could see it from my point of view - is that the little kids you get assigned aren't just little kids. They become a family. You have a special bond with the kids throughout the year of working with them. Getting into the program has made me realize that I want to continue working with kids in the future. I am so glad and thankful that I was introduced to the program, because it has shown me a different perspective of how teachers actually deal with us."

**High School Honorable Mention**  
Brianna Garza - 12<sup>th</sup> Grade • Ocala High School • Ocala County, Texas

**Middle School First Place**  
**MICHELLE RAMOS**  
8<sup>th</sup> Grade • Alvin B. Steiner Middle School • San Antonio  
"When I started encouraging my sisters, I knew that confidence was key. An example I was giving them papers when I realized that all my sisters got 100%. They all looked at me and said, 'They would be better if they had accomplished more.' Their faces lit up, and they were as happy as they could be. I made me happy because when I think back at my younger self, I wish that people who congratulated me for my accomplishments, also saw me happy for me, and now I realize that me being the tutor and congratulating them will help them feel better about themselves and will help them overcome their confidence." 

**Middle School Second Place**  
**DAYNAN RAMOS**  
8<sup>th</sup> Grade • Alvin B. Steiner Middle School • San Antonio  
"The IDRA Valued Youth Partnership is an amazing program. I have learned things from my students to become a better leader in elementary. I was not the best, but I have learned from that. They joy tutors have really made me a better person. They have made me respectful, respectful and patient. I now help my grades to go up by 10 and it's a better example for them."

**Middle School Third Place**  
**BRIANNA GARZA**  
12<sup>th</sup> Grade • Alvin B. Steiner Middle School • San Antonio  
"I've always wanted to be able to help kids with things that I used to struggle with as a kid. The whole experience being a tutor makes me feel good. But the thing that sticks out to me the most is the way the kids listened to what I said when they see me and how they thank me for helping them throughout the day. The thing that got me up in the morning in the last. Every morning I get up because I have to go to work, and they depend on me to help them with their work. I think it's what makes the IDRA Valued Youth Partnership amazing."

**Middle School Honorable Mention**  
Malia Al-Khatib - 8<sup>th</sup> Grade • Alvin B. Steiner Middle School • San Antonio

**IDRA**  
Valued Youth Partnership

**See the full essays online!** VYP Essays 

# Valued Youth Partnership helps students build their socio-emotional skills

The IDRA Valued Youth Partnership has provided leadership experiences for students all over the country. It increases students' connectedness, academic achievement, self-efficacy and self-esteem by placing students in leadership positions.

The Valued Youth Partnership's key philosophy of valuing youth's gifts and developing social skills can provide leadership experiences for students who most need engagement.

The IDRA Valued Youth Partnership has demonstrated tremendous success helping students focus on their education and increasing the school's holding power by concentrating on students with the highest need of support. For almost four decades, YVP has kept 35,000 students in school and positively impacted the lives of 750,000 children, families and educators!



**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- and 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 practice 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:** Tutors tutor a minimum of 10 hours a week for 10 weeks a year.
- Classes for Tutors:** Tutors meet with their knowledge school teacher/mentor coordinator once a week.
- Educational Field Trips:** Tutors get to experience first-hand the educational opportunities.
- Monitors and Role-Models:** Adults who are considered successful in their field and are successful students are highlighted and invited to participate.
- Student Recognition:** Tutors are recognized for the effort and contribution they make as tutors.

**Five Support Strategies**

- Continuation:** Focus on academic, social, and self-esteem skills.
- Continuation:** An ongoing mentoring relationship is developed through a structured curriculum.
- Staff Development:** Tutors receive ongoing training and support.
- Family Engagement:** Parents receive information and support.
- Evaluation:** Academic and social outcomes are tracked and reported.

**Let the IDRA Valued Youth Partnership touch the lives of students, parents and educators in your district.**

[www.idra.org/valued-youth](http://www.idra.org/valued-youth) • [www.facebook.com/IDRAid](https://www.facebook.com/IDRAid) • [Instagram idra\\_vyp](https://www.instagram.com/idra_vyp) **IDRA**

**See flier on how YVP transforms student socio-emotional learning and relationships with school**

**The IDRA Valued Youth Partnership directly addresses socio-emotional factors that are essential to reconnecting and re-engaging with students.**

In unprecedented times such as these, schools and districts need a partner with a record of proven success, because all children are valuable, none is expendable.

**Join the VYP school-family-community partnership.  
When you do, every student can go beyond!**



See our video overview of how the IDRA Valued Youth Partnership Program impacts students and schools.



### Learn more about the Valued Youth Partnership



**Ready to bring the VYP experience to your school?**  
Contact IDRA today to learn how to get started!



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IDRA 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.

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