



GRADUATION FOR ALL

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Dropout Prevention: San Antonio to São Paulo • www.idra.org • April 2009

Internationally-Acclaimed Dropout Prevention Program turns 25. It started small. When IDRA created the Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program in 1984, we began with a seed grant to work with a handful of San Antonio schools. The program put into practice two ideas that staff knew in their bones were true: (1) that every single student is valuable, not one is expendable and (2) that this intrinsic value shows up when you give students the challenge, the chance and the support to contribute. Grounded in a strong research base, the program enlists secondary students who are considered at risk of dropping out as tutors of elementary school students. The results are clear: the program has consistently kept 98 percent of Valued Youth tutors in school.

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Schools and Communities in Action

From these beginnings, since 1984 [IDRA's Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program](#) has grown to serve over 116,000 youth in Brazil, the United Kingdom, the continental United States and Puerto Rico. The lives of more than half a million children, families and educators have been positively impacted.

This year marks two milestones: The program's 10th year anniversary in Brazil and 25th in the United States. In this issue, Graduation for All brings you excerpts of essays by participating tutors. This issue celebrates the administrators, teachers, families and students who make the program work. And it is dedicated to the fierce and unwavering cause of valuing youth— without compromise.



Toolbox

To learn more about the Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program, visit the program online at www.idra.org/Coca-Cola_Valued_Youth_Program.html. Here, you will find [information on the program's research-based design](#) and [five instructional components and support components](#), as well as [how to bring the program to your school](#).

To find out more about how the program got started and why it succeeds, visit the National Center on Secondary Education and Transition's (NCSET's) ["What Works in Dropout Prevention?"](#)

To get articles, videos and professional development resources on improving student engagement at your school, visit: www.idra.org/newsletterplus/March_2009/. To increase "School Holding Power" for all students, [visit this teleseminar](#).



Youth Voices

What Tutors Tell Us...

[Translated from Portuguese] "The Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program (Programa Coca-Cola de Valorização do Jovem) represented a major triumph in my life, since I learned things that will benefit me forever...I know what I am and what I'm capable of doing. I want to continue setting a good example at home and I want to have a good profession, because now I know how important family and school are in my life." - Tutor, Escola Municipal Shopping Park, Uberlândia-MG, Brazil

"When I was chosen to participate in the Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program, I was so nervous that my hands were sweating but at the same time I was so proud of myself because the teachers chose me. When they said that I was chosen I really couldn't believe it because I thought that I didn't deserve to be in the program. But once I started to tutor, I felt really proud of myself because I actually helped someone....I started to know how it feels when the teachers say, 'I feel proud of you.' When a person shows someone kindness and compliments them, that person feels happy that you care. That's how I feel when the teacher gives me another chance to change my mistakes." - Tutor, Gladstone Academy, Kansas City, Missouri

"Throughout my life, I have always been taught to believe that I was no good and that I could never do anything right, and that maybe I should have never been born. I felt that my parents and former teachers were always disappointed in me because of



my low grades. I too, began to believe what they believed of me and my grades went down. I became very rude and disrespectful. [My teacher] told us that this class was open to those kids that she thought would be 'good for the program' and that could be 'positive role models.' I can remember the feeling I got when she said those words because I had never been told that I could be 'good' at anything, much less that I could be a positive 'role model.' Boy, imagine the feeling of someone who is happy to see you! It is the most awesome feeling in the world; a feeling that I thought I would never have." - Tutor, Dr. Javier Saenz Middle School, La Joya, Texas

"The reason I enjoy this program is because it has helped me become a mature young man. When I come in the class [the children] all say 'Hi...Mr. Alex!' Every kid asks me 'You play football?' and I say 'Yes. In fact I'm the quarterback and I am the leader of the team.' They all get a smirk on their faces and they start saying 'I wanna play football.' I just tell them to never give up. I tell them they have to pass their classes." - Tutor, Lorenzo De Zavala Middle School, La Joya, Texas

"I feel that I can take on the world knowing that I am part of my tutee's future. I am now more dedicated with my homework because I know that it is expected from a responsible person. Just knowing that my tutees look up to me has encouraged me to think of school in a positive way. It makes me feel worthy, special, and unique." - Tutor, Lorenzo De Zavala Middle School, La Joya, Texas



We want to hear from you! You have received this e-letter either because you expressed interest in the topic or somebody who likes you forwarded it to you. Have a story of school-community partnership that's raising graduation rates? Let us hear from you. To submit questions or comments, send e-mail to gradforall@idra.org.

Tell a friend: Feel free to [forward Grad4All](#) to anyone who shares a passion for every student's success.

The [Intercultural Development Research Association](#) is an independent, private non-profit organization whose mission is to create schools that work for all children.

Thanks for reading!

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