



GRADUATION FOR ALL

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

- [All Students Need Great Teachers](#)
- [Kerry L. Arrington: Teaching Real-World Applications](#)
- [Transition to Teaching: Teachers Learning and Leading, in Community](#)
- [“My childhood dream has always been to become a teacher.” - Martha Alonso](#)
- [Chris Thelan: Building a Diverse Kit Bag](#)
- [IDRA's Transition to Teaching Partners](#)
- [Marlene and Martha Alonso: A Dream to Teach, A Passion for All Students' Success](#)
- [Caminos and T³: To Learn More and Apply](#)
- [Resources](#)

We welcome your questions, suggestions and input at gradforall@idra.org

Laurie Posner,
Graduation for All

All Students Need Great Teachers

“One of my favorite things is seeing the pride in their faces.” Ms. Louanne Rintala, teacher, IDRA Caminos Program

While the United States has seen improvement in graduation rates, substantial graduation gaps persist and are especially acute for African American, Latino and Native American students, male students and low-income students attending high poverty schools. In closing the gaps, a key area that must be addressed is teaching quality and teacher preparation.

A [study](#) by the Education Trust, using the latest available national data, found that in schools that serve mostly African American and Latino students, 30.3 percent of mathematics classes “lack qualified teachers.” In high poverty secondary schools, four in ten mathematics classes are taught by out-of-field teachers.

This issue of *Graduation for All* focuses on strategies IDRA has undertaken in Texas in partnership with K-12 public schools, universities and communities that are promoting the preparation and placement of skilled teachers in high-need classrooms, particularly in mathematics, bilingual education and special education.

The Transition to Teaching projects are funded by the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Innovation and Improvement and Teacher Quality Programs. The views in this issue are not necessarily those of the DOE.

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Kerry L. Arrington: Teaching Real-World Applications

“I wanted to help students make a connection from real-world applications to

Coordinator

**Intercultural
Development
Research
Association**

María “Cuca” Robledo
Montecel,
Ph.D., President &
CEO



taught concepts. I knew math could be fun and exciting, and I wanted to help students understand that as well. IDRA’s program has equipped me with the tools needed to teach all students.” - Ms. Kerry L. Arrington, who is pursuing a general education and LEP certification through Dallas ISD and is combining her training with a love of learning and a commitment to all students’ success.

Transition to Teaching: Teachers Learning and Leading, in Community

To be successful, schools must have skilled, committed teachers who are passionate about innovation and engaging all students. IDRA has teamed up with universities and K-12 schools across Texas to address this need. IDRA’s teacher preparation strategy is cultivating hundreds of new teachers to serve a more diverse student body, engaging seasoned teachers as mentors, and building networks for ongoing growth and support.

During the past 12 years, IDRA has been awarded five multi-year grants from the U.S. Department of Education’s Transition to Teaching program. These are statewide grants that have helped recruit, prepare, place and retain a critical mass of highly qualified mid-career professionals and recent graduates as teachers in high-need Texas school districts. The teacher certification occurred through accelerated programs offered to already-degreed professionals. As part of IDRA’s Transition to Teaching grants, IDRA has partnered with teacher preparation programs in colleges, universities and school districts throughout Texas.

We have prepared teachers in high-need areas that were identified by school districts, such as bilingual/ESL, special education, math, science and other subjects with an added supplemental certification in ESL and special education. As a result, more than 600 prepared new teachers have been placed.

[**Learn more about the program and how to apply**](#)

“My childhood dream has always been to become a teacher.” - Martha Alonso



Chris Thelan: Building a Diverse Kit Bag

“[IDRA’s] program has helped equip me further by building a more diverse ‘kit’ bag...Each session gifted me and my students with better ideas, calmer solutions and a greater ability to relate mathematical content.” Mr. Chris Thelan is



working to become a teacher with Dallas ISD. Following five years of active military service, he is committed to learning, as that fulfills the potential of every child in his classroom. He is proud to bring the kind of leadership and respect for people of all backgrounds to work on behalf of children that not only connects them to math, but to a world of possibility.

IDRA's Transition to Teaching Partners

Dallas ISD (Texas Woman’s University and University of North Texas); Eagle Pass ISD; Ector County ISD, Edgewood ISD (in San Antonio), Fort Worth ISD (Tarleton State University); Harlandale ISD (in San Antonio), Houston ISD (St. Thomas University); Lamesa ISD, Lubbock ISD; Pasadena ISD (St. Thomas University); Pearsall ISD, Pecos-Barstow-Toyah ISD, Plainview ISD; Poteet ISD and Presidio ISD; Rio Grande CCISD. In addition, two San Antonio academies (George Gervin Academy and Higgs Carter King Charter School) are partners. Additional high-need districts in San Antonio and Laredo area are being served based their need for math and science teachers. Partnering IHE’s include Texas Tech University, Our Lady of the Lake University, Alamo Colleges, South Texas College, and Texas State University.

Marlene and Martha Alonso: A Dream to Teach, A Passion for All Students' Success

“I feel like I am really making a difference in all my students’ lives, not only academically but also teaching and motivating them to see that they can be successful. I was raised in this neighborhood, so I can relate to my students.” – Marlene Alonso.

Sisters Ms. Marlene and Ms. Martha Alonso had both originally set off on different career paths. Marlene earned an MBA and had gone to work in the banking industry. But with a true passion for teaching, she left the business world three years ago to pursue certification through IDRA’s program. Martha earned a degree in accounting and became an internal auditor for San Antonio ISD. But her childhood dream was to teach, and every time she visited a campus, that calling tugged at her until she was able to make it a reality.

Today, Marlene is a fourth grade bilingual teacher at in San Antonio ISD. Her management background serves the new work well:

Marlene is the campus lead bilingual teacher and chairs the

community involvement committee at her school, securing donated supplies and engaging community and school partners in student tutoring and mentoring. Marlene says: **“I feel like I am really making a difference in my students’ lives, not only academically but also teaching and motivating them to see that they can be successful. I was raised in this neighborhood, so I can relate to my students.”**

Martha is in her third year at a middle school in San Antonio ISD teaching sixth through eighth grade ESL. As the only ESL teacher in the school, she serves all 60 ELL students on campus, connecting with core content teachers and her students’ families, and tutoring her students in math and science, before and after school, based on the ongoing analysis she does of student data. Martha says, **“My childhood dream had always been to become a teacher.”** And she is not stopping there. Next up is a Ph.D. in organizational leadership at the University of the Incarnate Word, to deepen her expertise in English language learning.

Caminos and T³: To Learn More and Apply

Caminos and Teachers for Today & Tomorrow (T³) are statewide consortiums for accelerated teacher certification led by IDRA that offer the following to teacher candidates:

- High-quality training and university coursework;
- An accelerated but rigorous certification route of 12-15 months;
- A “grow-your-own” approach where, after a three-month orientation program, applicants become teachers of record while completing a preparation program;
- Support for tuition and expenses up to \$3,000;
- Online and on-site mentoring support during the first two years of teaching; and
- Review sessions to help participants pass certification exams.

An individual is eligible to participate, if he or she:

- Is a second-career professional with excellent employment and academic records from an accredited college or university; or
- Is a recent graduate (within the past three years) with excellent academic record from accredited college or university;
- Is a paraprofessional in a high-need school district enrolled in a degree and certification program at an approved college or university; and
- Meets entry requirements of the partner alternative certification program, including bilingual skills in English and Spanish.

To learn more and to apply

Resources

IDRA's Quality Schools Action Framework links what is needed in schools for all students to succeed with the policy contexts and community- and school-based strategies to bring this about. The framework includes a focus on teaching quality as a key indicator of quality schooling. To learn more, [hear a podcast conversation on change strategies, featuring an interview with IDRA president and CEO, María “Cuca” Robledo Montecel, Ph.D.](#)



[Hear a podcast conversation with teachers Martha Alonso, MBA, and Marlene Alonso, MBA.](#)

Learn how Pre-AP chemistry teacher, Carole Henry is [working to expand access to science and math at her school](#), part of a new IDRA series on creating STEM-focused schools.

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Intercultural Development
Research Association
5815 Callaghan Road, Suite
101
San Antonio, Texas 78228
210.444.1710
www.idra.org