



GRADUATION FOR ALL

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

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Graduation for All: Family Leadership

Decades of research have shown that family engagement in public education matters. As Henderson and Mapp’s well-known meta-analysis found “when schools, families, and community groups work together to support learning... children tend to do better in school, stay in school longer, and like school more.” But not all involvement or engagement strategies are created equal. In too many instances, the engagement or involvement of families is an afterthought or is laden with the same stereotypes and power imbalances that kept families, communities and schools apart in the first place. The good news is that more and more people are recognizing that for education to change—for all children to thrive and have a full range of opportunities—relationships among schools, families and communities must change.

Grassroots models like IDRA’s **PTA Comunitario** build new relationships among families; amplifying family leadership and voice; mobilizing communities, families and schools around a shared vision for children, an in-depth look at actionable data, and a framework for action; and galvanizing joint efforts to improve public education policy and practice. With a grant from U.S. Department of Education, we have the opportunity to expand on this model and study, document and share how it works.

[See this edition of Graduation for All in Spanish .](#)

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PTA Comunitario Model



“What all of our families have in common is a deep and fervent interest in our children’s future...Families, ARISE and IDRA, our “village,” are making every effort to make sure our children get an excellent education in a safe environment.” - Lourdes Flores, President, ARISE Support Center

Neighborhood Public Schools Belong to their Communities. The idea that parents don’t care about education is a myth. When families are treated with dignity and respect, they become the strongest long-term advocates for a quality public education for all children.

An example of this is the PTA Comunitario model, which is grounded in IDRA’s Family Leadership in Education process and decades of experience engaging parents and families in education and partnering with community-based organizations in South Texas working with poor families in distressed colonias.

That first cohort of 35 families report that all of their children, mostly children learning English as a second language, who were in high school and scheduled to complete their studies, graduated and those of college age went on to higher education.

There are now 75 PTA Comunitario families working with leaders in one school district to monitor the academic success of their children and other neighborhood children. Based on this success, in late 2012, IDRA was selected by the U.S. Department of Education to expand development of the PTA Comunitario model in five communities in Central and South Texas, through the i3 Initiative.

Learn More. Visit IDRA’s [Family Leadership in Education Center](#)

PTA Comunitario is Unique

The PTA Comunitario process is an innovation for parent organizations and also for school-family-community collaborations.



- Community-based organizations sponsor and collaborate with schools to establish and maintain PTA Comunitarios.
- Meetings and activities are conducted primarily in Spanish. Because this approach grew out of work with grassroots community organizations working with the poor English-learning recent immigrant families living in unincorporated and isolated communities (colonias) of south Texas, the meetings must be linguistically appropriate and culturally competent.
- Meetings include public school educational information and actionable data that leads to projects carried out by the membership.
- Centered on a promotoras, or peer organizing model, volunteer leaders from the community serve and engage families in education as leaders and for collective action to improve schools.
- PTA Comunitarios engage and support family leaders in the colonias or other marginalized neighborhoods, not to play auxiliary or fundraising roles in schools, but to examine data on how their own children, and children across the region, are doing and partner with their schools to expand educational opportunity.
- Connections are established with schools attended by the children of the members although the PTA Comunitario keeps an independent and separate identity.

PTA Comunitario Fosters Intergenerational Leadership



Youth Take on Budget Cuts - “We Want Fully Funded Schools”

Youth as Technology Bridges - Episode

69. Hector Bojorquez, an IDRA education associate, tells the story of how two

youth groups in south Texas overcame obstacles in their distressed communities by providing leadership and technology expertise for parents and community members.

i3 Grant Kickoff in Pharr, Texas, to develop PTA Comunitario in 5 RGV

Communities

The Investing in Innovation Fund (i3) grant kick-off was convened in Pharr, Texas on April 10 to announce the development of community-based PTAs in five communities in the Rio Grande Valley.



The event was attended by more than 60 people that included school personnel, PTA Comunitario officers and members, community members and the members of the media.

“Parents are integral partners in their child’s learning... Programs like PTA Comunitario can provide a valuable bridge between parents and the school system...” - **Letter of welcome and congratulations** from Congressman Rubén Hinojosa on the launch of the i3 grant to develop 5 PTA Comunitarios

Telemundo 40 **(video): “Educación Para Familias de Bajos Recursos,”** by Oscar Margain

The Monitor: “Group touts grant to launch more PTAs,” by Andrew Kreighbaum

Brownsville Herald: **“Nonprofit announces grant to launch PTAs in the Valley,”** by Andrew Kreighbaum

El Mañana: **“Busca PTA educación de calidad a estudiantes,”** by Victoria Roldán

IDRA press room - **news release**

See the PTA Comunitario Model in Action

The promotora model of community outreach evolved in neighborhoods in Mexico and Latin American countries to provide medical treatment often in marginalized communities. Community-based organizations in South Texas adopted the model naturally as women volunteer leaders from the community serve and inspire other women and families to leadership. In this podcast, Aurelio M. Montemayor, M.Ed., Frances Guzmán, M.Ed., and Hector Bojorquez describe the model. **Promotora Model for Family Leadership in Education - Episode 118**

PTA Comunitario members and school leaders in South Texas are using IDRA’s OurSchool portal, with its enhanced data on college readiness and college participation, to inform and develop action plans to strengthen K-12 education. **To visit the portal: OurSchool portal - Texas**

In this interview, four leaders of the nation's first PTA Comunitario talk about their experience and their passion for community engagement in education (interview is in Spanish). [New Model for Community Engagement in Education - Episode 91](#)

Dr. Rogelio López recently worked with a high school in Houston to transform how it engages with parents starting with the understanding that the responsibility lies with everyone in the school, not a single staff member. He describes how the school led in-depth discussions with parents about the new graduation requirements and worked together to prepare students for college and seek scholarships. They also focused on how to create a safe school environment by addressing bullying. [Transforming Schools through Parent Engagement - Episode 110](#)

For this 100th episode of Classnotes, Aurelio Montemayor, M.Ed., Linda Cantu, Ph.D., Josie Cortez, M.A., and Bradley Scott, Ph.D., give examples of effective parent and community engagement and share important insights that lead to successful engagement. [Expressions of Effective Parent and Community Engagement - Episode 100](#)

More Resources for Family, School and Community Leaders



In a speech, IDRA President, Dr. Robledo Montecel, describes the Quality Schools Action Framework that shows how we can transform schools into places of excellence and equity. And she gives examples of schools and communities that have done just that. [The Civil Rights Issue of Our Generation - Episode 88](#)

IDRA led the bilingual parent institute at the [Texas Association for Bilingual Education](#) with a focus on: “Bilingual Ed Paves the Road to College.” Rosie Castro presented the keynote and talked about the value of bilingual education in schools today, how she emphasized to her young sons (San Antonio Mayor Julian Castro and Texas Rep. Joaquin Castro) that they were going to go to college. Ms. Castro directs the Center for Academic Transitions at Palo Alto College in San Antonio. IDRA’s [Quality Schools Action Framework](#) emphasizes the role of community and families to strengthening public schools to work for all children. Ms. Castro has a powerful legacy of community advocacy and, during her keynote, gave suggestions for finding partners to help parents support their children’s education. [Rosie Castro on Parent Engagement](#) (video: 27 min)

José Medrano of the START Center in South Texas, describes how, in the Texas Rio Grande Valley, local community-based groups are working together to focus attention on education, particularly local dropout rates, through the Equal Voice

Network. **Engaging Parents through Powerful Coalition Building - Episode 96**

Anne Foster, executive director of Parents for Public Schools, describes how PPS is training parents to interpret data and to better understand how schools and school boards function. She gives examples of transformations that have occurred as a result. **Parents Using Data to Improve Schools - Episode 92**

After recently serving as a high school principal for five years, Dr. Rogelio López del Bosque shares how he created a culture of engagement among teachers and parents that welcomed and even expected dialog for student success. **Families and Teachers Communicating - Episode 43**

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