



GRADUATION FOR ALL

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Principals and Principled Leadership

The School Principal as Leader (2013), a **synthesis** by the Wallace Foundation based on a decade of research and lessons on strengthening school leadership, asserts that effective principals carry out five key practices well: (1) Shaping a vision of academic success for all students; (2) Creating a climate hospitable to education; (3) Cultivating leadership in others; (4) Improving instruction; and (5) Managing people, data and processes to foster school improvement.

This issue of Graduation for All highlights facets of each of these practices, as well as the underlying characteristic—principled leadership—that draws them together. We dedicate this issue to Sandy M. Doland, a visionary leader, who retires this year as principal of Harold Keller Elementary in the Jefferson Parish Public School System. IDRA had the great privilege of **partnering** with Ms. Doland for the past eight years as she led her school to excellence.

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School Transformation



“We are so stuck on the content being our standard that we lose sight of these critical thinking skills that students need.” – Principal Roland Toscano, M.S.

Often, the concept of college readiness has meant offering specific courses at the high school level and focusing on students who were likely to do well. Roland Toscano, M.S., a principal at East Central High School in San Antonio, says that while access to those courses is critical, that model has left many students behind. He describes how he and his staff saw transformation when underserved, underperforming students were given access to great teaching, excellent curriculum and strong support systems along with effective communication with parents, those students excelled beyond anyone’s expectations. In this “Courageous Connections” feature, Principal Toscano

describes how his high school is **developing a college-going culture** for all of its students rather than for a select few.

Learning and Leadership

“I am training teachers to be leaders, and they have stepped up to the plate every time.” – Principal Sandy M. Doland



Sandy M. Doland leads by example. Ms. Doland became principal of Harold Keller Elementary School in Metairie, Louisiana, in 1999, having grown up in Jefferson Parish, graduated from Jefferson Parish High School and taught in the parish. Each day since then she says she arrived at school thinking, “I can’t believe I am the principal of Harold Keller-- It is one of the greatest honors ever bestowed upon me.” Her school serves a highly diverse community of more than 400 children, grades preK-5. Keller has served students who, as first languages, speak Urdu, Vietnamese, Korean, Arabic, Spanish and English. And she has strived to create **a culture of learning and leadership** that values every child, without exception. Principal Doland has partnered with IDRA to integrate technology across all content areas and to implement IDRA’s Focusing on Language and Academic Instructional Renewal (FLAIR) professional development model to improve education for all children, including linguistically diverse students. Also, beginning with just five teachers, she established a school leadership team that engaged 70 teachers as school leaders, working with her over the years as a kind of “think tank” for Harold Keller to plan together, examine data, and problem solve. For three years running, and the midst of dramatic changes following Hurricane Katrina, the school ranked in the top three Jefferson Parish campuses. And since 2010, Keller third graders exceeded state averages on Louisiana’s iLEAP in math, science and English language arts.

[Learn more about IDRA’s FLAIR professional development model](#)

Commitment to Excellence



The Carroll High School Medical Magnet Program in Louisiana is becoming an exemplar of effective school leadership. In **A Pocket of Excellence in a Sea of Diversity** by Dr. Bradley Scott, learn how school leaders Dr. Kathleen J. Harris, superintendent; Ms.

Patricia Johnson, director of the 21st Century Learning Center; Mrs. Shandra N. Smith, program coordinator for the Medical Magnet; and Carroll High School Principal, Mr. Patrick R. Taylor have launched a forward-thinking medical magnet program that is dramatically expanding college and career opportunities for its students. The IDRA South Central Collaborative for Equity has worked with Carroll High School

Medical Magnet staff to bring into focus and to shape this program. Principal Taylor emphasizes the commitment of Carroll High teachers: "[Our] teachers have committed their time, energy, and lives to helping students learn and be prepared for an ever-changing world. They are in this profession because they want to have a positive impact on young people, not only in their learning but also in their lives."

Student Viewpoint



"I'm so proud of you. Do your very best because this is your chance to show them who you are.' That day, my hopes and self-esteem went up by a lot. I was no longer the girl that was looked at by teachers as always failing. I was going to be somebody in life, and it started now." - María Del

Rosario Zuñiga, 8th grade, Dr. Javier Saenz Middle School, La Joya, Texas, recounting what her mother said when she told her about her selection as a tutor for the Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program (excerpt from her award-winning essay. - [Full Essay](#).)

Tools for Action

Action for School Change. With schools losing one-third of their students on average, dropout prevention programs, even the most effective ones, cannot solve the persistent large scale problem we face. Schools as systems themselves must change to increase their ability to engage and educate students through to graduation. IDRA's Quality Schools Action Framework shows how communities and schools can work together to identify weak areas and strengthen public schools' capacities to improve the holding power of schools. In the first of a set of podcast episodes on this topic, IDRA president and CEO, María "Cuca" Robledo Montecel, Ph.D., [describes the four elements in the Quality Schools Action Framework that must be in place](#) for schools to be successful.



The Family Friendly Principal. In this IDRA Classnotes podcast, Rogelio López del Bosque, Ed.D., discusses how he [created a family friendly school](#) during his recent five-year term as a high school principal in order to bring families into the conversation of creating a school that achieved success for all students.

Building Levels of Leadership to Support English Learner Success. From the central office to the classroom, school leaders at all levels need to be well-equipped to respond to rapidly changing demographic shifts. And where the population change includes English language learners with varied first languages, leaders need a special skill set. In this

Classnotes podcast conversation with Kristin Grayson, M.Ed., and Bradley Scott, Ph.D., director of the IDRA South Central Collaborative for Equity, you'll be briefed on the literature on education leadership and hear how two schools with which IDRA has partnered in Oklahoma are **crafting strategic plans to support English learners at all levels**. One district has more than 60 languages represented.

Professional Development in the 21st Century - Nine Structures for Coaching and Mentoring. Effective school leaders create opportunities not just for teachers attend professional development sessions, but to learn from one another through coaching, mentoring, reflection and collaborative problem-solving. This article by Juanita C. García, Ph.D., explores the **elements that must be in place to develop a quality peer coaching and mentoring program**.

Strengthening Schools' "Immune Systems" to Fight Mediocrity and Failure. In this article, Abelardo Villarreal, Ph.D. describes how school leaders can build vibrant and healthy organizations with the capacity for self-renewal to remedy some of the everyday challenges they face. This article demonstrates how this immune system can **ensure that all of a school's interacting parts can be aligned to create a healthy school** by: (1) describing what constitutes a healthy school, (2) briefly discussing two major woes that threaten a healthy school's existence and functionality, and (3) outlining ways to build up a school's immune system.

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