



# Big IDEAs

Dropout  
Prevention  
Strategies

## Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program

### Purpose

First developed by the Intercultural Development Research Association (IDRA) in 1984, this cross-age tutoring program takes students who are considered at risk of dropping out of school and places them as tutors of younger students. Given this role of personal and academic responsibility, the tutors learn self-discipline and develop self-esteem, and schools shift to the philosophy and practices of valuing students considered at risk. Results show that tutors stay in school, have increased academic performance, improved school attendance and advanced to higher education. The program has helped schools keep 98% of program participants in school, more than 12,300 young people who were previously at risk of dropping out. The lives of more than 220,000 children, families and educators have been positively impacted by the program. The key to the program's success is in valuing students who are considered at risk of dropping out of school and sustaining their efforts with effective, coordinated strategies. The program is flexible—readily adaptable to individual schools—but careful design and assessment have shown that certain elements are critical, such as paying tutors for the work they do or having experienced content area teachers serve as the program's teacher coordinators.

### Major Components

Seven important tenets express the philosophy of the Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program.

- All students can learn.
- The school values all students
- All students can actively contribute to their own education and to the education of others.

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- All students, parents and teachers have the right to participate fully in creating and maintaining excellent schools.
- Excellence in schools contributes to individual and collective economic growth, stability and advancement.
- Commitment to educational excellence is created by including students, parents and teachers in setting goals, making decisions, monitoring progress and evaluating outcomes.
- Students, parents and teachers must be provided extensive, consistent support in ways that allow students to learn, teachers to teach, and parents to be involved.

### *Five Instructional Components*

#### Classes for Tutors

Tutors meet with their secondary school teacher/coordinator once a week in order to: develop tutoring skills that enable them to become successful student tutors; reflect on and celebrate their successes and contributions, thus developing self-awareness and pride; and improve reading, writing and other subject matter skills enabling them to teach these skills to elementary school students. This class, coupled with the actual tutoring sessions, which occur four times a week during the same class period, is offered as an elective or as a state or local credit course.

#### Tutoring Sessions

Tutors tutor a minimum of four hours a week for one class period a day. The student tutors earn a minimum wage stipend for their efforts. Their primary responsibility is to work in a one-to-three ratio with tutees. Tutoring young children (at least a four-year grade level difference) forces the tutors to use all

their own experiences and apply them to the difficult task of teaching.

#### Educational Field Trips

At least two to three times throughout the year, students are invited to explore economic and cultural opportunities in the broader community. The field trips are an opportunity for career awareness by exposing the students to a variety of professional environments about which they would otherwise not have concrete insights. They can make more connections between what they are learning in school and what they will need to know to work as professionals.

#### Mentor and Role-Models

Adults who are considered successful in their fields and who represent students' ethnic background are invited to participate. Career and leadership awareness is developed through five guest speakers who model a variety of professions and experiences.

#### Student Recognition

Students are acknowledged for the efforts and contributions they make while fulfilling their responsibilities as tutors. Throughout the year, students receive certificates of merit and appreciation; are invited on field trips with their tutees; receive media attention, and are honored at a luncheon or supper. Through these events, students experience the importance of their tutoring to the school, the district, and their community.

#### *Support Components*

##### Curriculum

A primary goal of the curricular framework is to prepare secondary school students to tutor elementary school students. The objectives are improving the students' self-concept, tutoring skills, and literacy skills.

##### Coordination

Periodic meetings are held to coordinate all activities, facilitate communication among personnel and provide first-hand information for monitoring the program. Coordination is formalized through the Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program implementation team at each participating site. The team includes

the teacher coordinators at the secondary school, the counselor, the evaluation liaison, the family liaison, an elementary school receiving teacher representative, and the principals of the participating schools.

#### Staff Enrichment

Training and other instructive or enriching experiences strengthen the individual program components. The Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program includes training and technical assistance by IDRA in response to the participants' needs assessments. Staff enrichment is achieved through technical assistance and in-service.

#### Parent Involvement

Efforts to inform and involve families in the Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program communicate to the tutors' families that the school takes their children's education seriously and values the families' contributions. Parent meetings and sessions, a minimum of four per year, are conducted bilingually or totally in the language of the parents.

#### **Evidence of effectiveness**

The Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program was extensively researched in 1989 using a longitudinal, quasi-experimental design with data collected for the treatment and comparison group students before tutoring began, during implementation, and at the end of the first and second program years. The results from this research study showed that the program had a statistically significant impact on the dropout rate, reading grades, self-concept, and attitudes toward school. Only one tutor out of 101 (1%) dropped out of school toward the end of the second year of the program compared to 11 students of the 93 comparison group students (12%). Similar results were found for reading grades, self-concept and attitudes toward school with the tutors outscoring the comparison group.

[http://www.youthdevelopment.coca-cola.com/ach\\_ccvy.html](http://www.youthdevelopment.coca-cola.com/ach_ccvy.html)

By Josie Danni Cortez, M.A.  
Intercultural Development Research Association