

**National Dropout Prevention Center
Partnering with Parents in Dropout Prevention:
"The Need and the How"
Dixie Jordan, Deborah Leuchovius, Aurelio Montemayor
November 9, 2006**

MODERATOR: And now I'd like to introduce our speakers for today's seminar, sponsored by the National Dropout Prevention Center for Students with Disabilities entitled, "Partnering with Parents in Dropout Prevention: The Need and the How."

We have with us today Aurelio M. Montemayor. He's the director of the Parent Information and Resource Center at Intercultural Development Resource Association. He is also a senior education associate and master trainer at IDRA, having worked extensively in the development and implementation of training and technical assistance programs for diverse students and communities. This includes work with youth and families in leadership training and his highly popular Wow Workshop on Workshops Guide and Seminar. He is proficient in English and Spanish

Also with us today is Dixie Jordan, the co-director of the Family and Advocates Partnership for Education at the Parent Advocacy Coalition for Education Rights, or PACER. She is an expert on the educational rights of children with disabilities. She has written curriculums that are widely used by parent centers across the country on IDEA, positive behavioral interventions, and diversity issues. She is also the parent of an adult son with disabilities.

Also welcome, if you would, Deborah Leuchovius. She has served as project director for PACER's federally-funded Technical Assistance on the Transition Rehabilitation Act (TATRA) Project since 1994. Deborah, who is the parent, sibling, and daughter of family members with disabilities, also represents PACER and several national technical assistance projects addressing transition and family issues. Through the TATRA Project, annual conference for Parent Information and Training Centers, presentations to professional audiences, nationally-disseminated publications and collaborative activities with other national programs, she has helped families, consumer advocates, and professionals increase their knowledge of family contributions to successful post-school outcomes for youth with disabilities.

And, up first today, is Dr. Loujeania Williams-Bost, director of the National Dropout Prevention Center for Students with Disabilities. Dr. Bost holds a Ph.D. in Special Education from Pennsylvania State University. She has an extensive background in working with students with disabilities and was the chief of statewide compliance monitoring and technical assistance for the Pennsylvania Department of Education. She has been a public school teacher, a program administrator for agencies serving adults and adolescents with mental retardation, and a researcher.

Loujeania, I'd like to take this opportunity to welcome you to the program.

DR. LOUJEANIA WILLIAMS-BOST: Good afternoon, and welcome to today's teleseminar entitled, "Partnering with Parents in Dropout Prevention: The Need and the How."

Beginning at birth, parents are a child's most influential teacher. As the child grows, parents continue to exert powerful influences over all aspects of the child's life, including their school participation. Thirty years of research has shown that families play an important role in ensuring that their student graduates, whether or not they have a disability. Positive parental involvement includes staying involved in their child's life, focusing their individual strengths, finding the right school setting, and having and expressing high expectations of academic achievement.

To encourage this type of parental involvement, both the elementary and secondary education acts—No Child Left Behind and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 2004—contain statutory requirements regarding the participation of parents in regular and meaningful communication concerning student academic learning and other school activities. Parents also are encouraged to be actively involved in their child's education at school and full partners in the educational planning for their children, and are included, as appropriate, in decision-making, and on advisory committees to assist in the education of their child. These requirements support the idea that an inclusive school creates a society of learners that involves parents and the school's community in meaningful contributions to improve educational results of its students.

In sum, when schools collaborate with parents to help their children learn, and when parents participate in school activities and decision-making about their child's education, children do better in school, and schools improve.

How to keep parents involved in their children's education and the school's program when there are so many things competing for their time is often a major question asked by both parents and educators. In today's teleseminar, we'll provide insights into the "what" and the "how" of parental involvement that helps students with disabilities stay in school and graduate.

At this time, I'd like to turn the program over to our collaborators and partners today.

MODERATOR: Thank you, Loujeania. And before we continue with Deborah, I first would like to ask the audience to participate in another polling question. We would like you to use your telephone keypad in answering the following question about family involvement strategies. The question is, *What family involvement strategies are of the greatest interest to you today?*

Press 1 on your telephone keypad if it is "Help schools engage parents in the middle school and secondary school education of their children." Or press 2 if it's "Help parents promote the academic achievement of middle school and secondary school students at

home." Or press 3 "Help parents who want to develop the leadership skills needed to become effective advocates for all students at both the school and school-district levels."

I'll cover that again. I want you to get an understanding of this question *What family involvement strategies are of the greatest interest to you today?* "Strategies that help schools engage parents in the middle school and secondary education of their children," press number 1. Or "Strategies that help parents promote the academic achievement of middle school and secondary school students at home," press number 2. Or "Strategies that help parents who want to develop the leadership skills needed to become effective advocates for all students at both the school and school-district levels," press the number 3.

And while those numbers are coming in, Deborah, I'd like to welcome you to the program.

DEBORAH LEUCHOVIUS: Thank you, Dick. Dixie and I are very pleased to be here today to talk with you about family involvement strategies that promote school completion, or I should say, school achievement.

Before we begin, I want to acknowledge the work of Loujenia and the National Dropout Prevention Center, and thank them for providing leadership on this issue and this opportunity to share information with you all.

Also, I just want to recognize up front that while Dixie and I see parent partnerships and family involvement as an essential *piece* of the puzzle, they should be viewed as part of a more comprehensive and multifaceted approach to improve post-school outcomes for youth with disabilities. This includes collecting data to evaluate and improve schools.

And I wanted to mention that PACER is working with the National Post School Outcomes Center to disseminate information to help parent centers and families prepare them for the first wave of surveys that states will be conducting this coming spring and summer to gather information on the post-school employment and education outcomes of youth with disabilities who drop out of school, as well as those who are recent graduates.

And the last thing I want to do to, hopefully, help our listeners is to let you know that during the first part of this presentation, Dixie and I are going to be following an outline that, basically, follows a National Center on Secondary Education and Transition Parent Brief that was published this summer. If you haven't been provided a copy of the parent brief, itself, there's a list of online publications, and there's a link provided to that on that handout of additional materials.

And Dick, do you have the results of that polling question?

MODERATOR: I do, Deborah. Of those that responded, 68 percent of the respondents chose Number 1 as being of the greatest interest to them today, and that was "Help schools engage parents in the middle school/secondary school education of their

children." Five percent chose Number 2, "To help parents promote the academic achievement of middle school and secondary school students at home." And 26 percent chose Number 3, "Help parents who want to develop the leadership skills needed to become effective advocates for schools at both the school and school-district levels." Back to you.

D. LEUCHOVIUS: Okay, thank you. We'll keep that in mind as we go through our prepared remarks. And, also again, the list of handouts that is available online contains some publications and articles that were written to address the first two issues. So, some that are geared towards helping professionals involve families, and some that are more geared directly towards families with strategies that they can use at home. And, of course, professionals can use those to share with families, as well.

So why are we here? I am going to be following along a PowerPoint. I understand you have copies of that PowerPoint. If it is helpful to orient you, and you want to follow along by that, I'll refer to the slides as we go along.

I'm starting in the presentation that has that sort of Hollywood Squares presentation of nine spaces of views. And, actually, I'm going to start with the next one, Cause for Concern, which is just to acknowledge why we're here. And that is that we know that students who drop out of school face a difficult future. Students who do not earn a high school diploma are more likely to face unemployment; live in poverty; engage in criminal activities; be incarcerated; have children at an early age; use drugs, tobacco, or both; and become dependent on welfare and other government systems. So these consequences are serious, not only for the individual, but for society.

Dropout and Disability. I'm on the next slide if you're following along. Again, I imagine that those of us who are listening in to this topic are aware that students with disabilities are at far greater risk of dropping out of school. The Twenty-Sixth Annual Report to Congress reports a dropout rate of 37.6, almost 40 percent, which is more than twice that of their peers without disabilities.

Among students with disabilities, students with emotional and behavioral disorders and students with learning disabilities are at the greatest risk of dropping out. For some minority students with disabilities, the dropout rate goes as high as 50 percent, and Hispanic youth have experienced the smallest improvement in school completion over time. So, such statistics have made school completion one of the highest profile issues in special education.

The Role of Families. Again, as Loujeania began, and as many of you are already aware, research shows that one of the most essential strategies for promoting school completion and achievement is family involvement. When families are involved, students are more likely to earn high grade point averages and score higher on standardized tests. They enroll in more challenging academic programs, and they pass more classes, earn more credits, attend school more regularly, display positive attitudes about school, graduate from high school, enroll in post-secondary programs, and refrain from destructive

activities, such as alcohol, drug use, and violence. The source of that list is the National Parent Teacher Association. And I'll just say, again, unless otherwise noted, you can find the research that I'm citing in the references to that National Center on Secondary Education and Transition Parent Brief.

So, I've moved along to, I'm now on my slide 5, Family Involvement and School Completion. And I'm looking at a family and a graduate here. Parents *do* have a powerful influence, or they *can* have a powerful influence over whether their children finish high school. The most accurate predictor of a student's school achievement—I just want to stress that—the most accurate predictor is the extent to which families encourage learning, and communicate high expectations for the student's education and future career.

One of the more interesting results of the National Longitudinal Transition Study that was published this summer, which looked at the involvement of families and the educational development of secondary school-age children or youth, suggests that family expectations for the future will shape the academic engagement—and “engagement” is a term we'll come back to and really stress again—that those high expectations help shape academic engagement and achievement of youth with disabilities, regardless of the nature of the youth's disability and their level of functioning.

And here I'm quoting, “If other factors are equal, youth with disabilities whose parents expect them to go on to post-secondary education after high school have more positive engagement and achievements while in high school than youth whose parents do not share that optimism for the future.” So it's essential that we cultivate that involvement, and cultivate high expectations.

I'm on Slide 6; this very studious young man writing in his notebook. Middle school and high school students whose parents remain involved tend to make better transitions. And I say remain involved because many parents who are actively involved in the education of their children at the elementary school level become less involved when their children reach middle school. So if they stay involved, students make better transitions, maintain the quality of the work, develop plans for the future, have higher graduation rates, and advance on to post-secondary education.

I want to stress, too, that the idea of early intervention and the earliest intervention (both in terms of addressing problems when they arise, but also in promoting parent involvement) at this middle school time is crucial, not only for maintaining the engagement of the student, but for continuing to make efforts to have parents meaningfully involved in the education of their youth.

Dixie, I'm going to turn it over to you.

DIXIE JORDAN: Okay. You need to know that I'm probably a little less of a researcher than Deborah. I just have practical experience, and I'm beginning with the slide that says “Why Do Youth Drop Out?” There are lots reasons, as most of you already

know, why kids drop out of school. They don't like it; they don't have personal relationships with teachers; their grades are so low that they're feeling unable to catch up; there are financial problems at home; they have to take care of their younger siblings; they need to have a job. We heard it all. What's *not* on this list is, a lot of times kids find more reinforcing environments somewhere else. If school's not fun, they're going where fun is. And so, lots of kids go to the mall. When I dropped out of school, it was to save face. When my son dropped out of school, it was because he could not be emotionally successful in a school environment, and people really didn't know how to adjust school at that time.

71 percent of youth surveyed who had dropped out of school felt that the key to keeping them in school would have been better communication between parents and the school, and to increase parental involvement in their child's education.

This, to me, is the key of the entire discussion today, because it's really easy to talk about parent involvement. It's really easy for us to acknowledge that we have a problem, but we've admitted it for a lot of years. We don't even have a concrete, common definition of what parental involvement is. And until we get one that fits within the context of the lives of families, I think we're forever going to hire specialists at school to do outreach programs for parents that will always miss the mark with the parents that we're trying most desperately to reach. So there are some things that we can do about this, and there are some things to talk about later.

D. LEUCHOVIUS: The 71 percent of youth surveyed (that Dixie mentioned) that felt one of the keys to keeping students in school was to have better communication with their parents and the school, just so you know, that is not cited in the inset briefs, but that comes from the *Silent Epidemic* publication, which is listed on your handout.

D. JORDAN: Moving to the next page, the Risk Factors for Dropping Out, we know that kids who are retained in school—as popular as that notion is becoming—are kids who are at increased risk of dropping out. They wind up being older than other kids in the same grade; they feel the need to go out and explore the world at 19 years old by the time they're a senior, or 20 or 21. Many have limited English proficiency, and many have family or economic problems.

What *isn't* listed on this overhead are kids who are repeatedly suspended from school who may be marginal students to start with, but who get into behavioral trouble at school and are often those kids who leave school because they just can't catch up anymore. Their parents may have dropped out of school. These kids may have had problems with the law, as well, which goes back to our high dropout rate for kids with emotional disorders and kids with severe learning disabilities.

Okay, let's take a look at the warning signs, which is page nine of your overhead. And, Deborah, you may have information on this, as well. But I wanted to point out before we

deal with the warning signs, that parents should be involved *when*, and we're going to go through the areas where it's important to get parents involved. But we're almost putting the cart before the horse because the idea of parental involvement hasn't been fully explored. Kids want families involved; they've said so. Schools want families involved; they've said so. We know *when* families should get involved. We don't know how to do it. I think that's really the topic of today's discussion.

D. JORDAN: I think we all know that truancy, or poor attendance at school, is one of those huge warning signs that sends off red flags everywhere. Kids who are emotionally withdrawing from school. I work a lot with children who have suicidal ideation, and that emotional withdrawal is a cause for concern for many areas. But school dropout is probably one of the first things they do, or inappropriate conduct. All of these can indicate that a child has disengaged from school. And no one knows this better than the teachers who are at school with the children. But, really, families who know and see this going on, it's a critical time for them to get involved in their schools. So, we can say that they should contact the school to address the issues, but realistically, we need to figure out a better way to get families in, to start with.

D. LEUCHOVIUS: One of the things that we have to[do to] help parents, is to provide them with education [on] what it is that they *can* do. And part of what they need to know is what are key strategies, what [can be done] in order to promote school completion. I'm now Slide 10, with the heading "Connectedness" at the top.

And that word "connectedness"—doesn't that sound so nice and fuzzy? ...I'm sure researchers have found ways to measure this, but it is an essential part of what keeps youth in school. [Youth who actively] participate in and identify with their school are more motivated to stay in school and more likely to graduate than those who are not involved at school.

Youth with emotional disorders have a pattern of difficult experiences throughout their school careers, and have parents who disengage and who are disconnected, as well as themselves. If school's just been a battleground, it's really important that we find opportunities and we create strategies to engage not only the youth, but their parents.

One of the things that always occurs to me is that there are all kinds of parenting classes, and parent education classes in the early childhood area. But in the teens, especially the middle school years, there's actually as much developmental growth as in infancy, and yet, we haven't offered parents the same kind of opportunity to learn about how they can have meaningful relationships with their children, deal with...those difficult, turbulent teen years, and alert them to what can be symptoms of greater problems, and inform them about the consequences of youth dropping out early so that they can realize the benefits of education and convey that to their children.

D. JORDAN: To me, this is where the rubber hits the road. If we don't know how to get kids connected to school, if we don't know how to get parents connected to school, we'll never get kids to connect to the school. It's really easy to say that we have this didactic

relationship between the teacher and the student that will make the school years meaningful for a child. But I know, full well, that I can sabotage anything a school is doing if I don't feel that the school has my child's best interest, or mine, at heart.

So, to me, that connectedness feeling is family to school, not child to school, but family to school. And figuring this out is, I believe, paramount to any kind of success, primarily, because if I don't believe in the value of formal education, that doesn't mean in my mind that my child will quit learning. It means he will quit going to school. And until I understand the relationship between going to school for myself, as a parent, the relationship between going to school and future outcomes—until I really understand that and integrate it, and feel welcome at the school, and feel that my child will be cared about and cared for at the school—until I get to that point, school is an extra “thing” that I'm expected to do when my child is of high school age. And I think that's really something that, in parenting programs or outreach programs or whatever we want to call them, we miss. If I'm not engaged, if I don't believe the teacher likes me, why would I believe the teacher likes my child? And I think it's something we really need to spend lots of time on in parent development programs, rather than simply coming up fun night at school, or doing some of those sort of standard things that we do all along, that work with a select group, but really don't work with people like me.

D. LEUCHOVIUS: Thanks, Dixie. And I'll just add, again, that I want to stress that middle school is a really important time [to promote family involvement] because [typically] families become less involved in their son or daughter's education at that level, and you have to do outreach to show them that there are ways that they can still be engaged in a meaningful way, or you're going to lose them. It will be hard after you've lost that initial opportunity if they don't feel that, not even just that they're welcome, but that they have a role, and they certainly do.

So I'm going to move on to just the next slide in talking about supporting student engagement--supporting *family* engagement, as Dixie says, is probably more accurate. But one of the things—and this is more practical—that we can encourage families to do is that if students find academics frustrating, if it's the academic part of school that is causing frustration, we want to be able to build on their strengths, and encourage them to seek other kinds of activities where they can have more positive experiences, develop friendships, build new skills, have success, and feel good about that. There are many opportunities to do that through school programs, after-school programs, and extracurricular activities; or it could be community programs, it could be an after-school job or employment. It could be volunteering or service learning. And I would encourage both educators and parents, when they recognize that the strengths of a young person who's struggling in academics lie elsewhere, to encourage building on those strengths.

And I am now going on to Slide 12, Identify and Accommodate Disabilities. Well, talking about students who are frustrated by academics, one of the most important means of promoting student engagement is to identify and accommodate disabilities so that a student's academic knowledge can be accurately assessed, and once accurately assessed, they can either be addressed or recognized. Different learning styles, as well as learning

disabilities, different life experiences can all contribute to low academic achievement or problem behavior. I believe this is also from that *Silent Epidemic* document talking about the student surveys.

Sixty percent of students surveyed said they do not know *how* to do better in school. Sixty-five percent think they have no control over the grades that they get in school. When there are unaddressed disabilities that are the cause of frustration, we need to be able to accommodate those disabilities. And, again, I think it's been documented that many youth with problem behaviors that end up in the juvenile justice system have disabilities that have not been diagnosed, or have disabilities that have not been really addressed effectively in their secondary school years. So that's something that both families and educators need to continue to work on. And I have to put in a [personal] plug for the concept of universal design for learning.

There are all kinds of reasons why students and families can become disengaged. But when you find that your son or daughter is being included in an academic class, but not really doing the same things as his or her peers, it can almost be more isolating than sitting at home in front of your home computer and doing your own research. So I do think that's something that parents can advocate for, and I would encourage school districts to more actively adapt.

I'm on Slide 13, Exploring Career Education and Workforce Readiness. One of the things that is disturbing, I think, to many educators and to family advocates is that with the focus on academic achievements, there are fewer opportunities for career and technical education. The National Longitudinal Study finds that youth with emotional disorders or disabilities are less likely to be taking occupationally-specific vocational education than students in the general population, even though such training has been shown to contribute to higher rates of post-secondary vocational training and competitive employment for youth with disabilities. So I think that that's something that we have to, again, look at how we can engage youth in integrated academic and vocational education, career development, and hands-on, work-based learning. Youth with disabilities, and even emotional disabilities, are more likely to be taking these pre-vocational education, these skills-building [courses], rather than hands-on, work-based learning. And that, also, has been shown to be linked to better employment outcomes after high school. Dixie, do you want to add to that, or go on?

D. JORDAN: I think that's fine, Deborah. You've got that covered very well. However, I think we're moving into our next slide, which is School Discipline. And this is near and dear to my heart because for 20 years I've worked exclusively, with children with emotional and behavioral disorders and their families. And we know that discipline issues are *inextricably* tied to dropout. We know that 14 percent of students are suspended or expelled in the last year of elementary school. Those numbers are staggering to me, but they double—more than double—by the time kids are in secondary school.

The repeated use of these exclusionary, disciplinary practices—like suspension, or removal from class—is really one of the major factors that contributes to dropout. And

because it's such a problem with kids who have discipline problems at school, it is certainly something worth paying attention to.

We have lost instructional time when we have in-school suspensions with people who are not adequately prepared to teach curriculum; or worse, out-of-school suspension, where even homework completion is sometimes not allowed. These things lead to increased academic difficulties, which in turn, lead to a lack of connectedness to the school. And, yet it's one of the things as an advocate, I know one of the most useful tools I have at my disposal is letting parents know what their rights are.

Now, I know that sounds pejorative ...but we rarely bargain from an equal position at school, when our children are in trouble at school in particular. And so I spend a great deal of time teaching parents what their rights are. Not necessarily how to get along with other people, but what their basic, foundational rights are, because around the issue of discipline, where we all know the rights are complicated to start with, if a parent knows the starting point, their relationships with schools are much greater, much more greatly improved than if they don't understand.

So they can go and advocate for individualized discipline procedures or modifications of particular school policies, such as producing alternatives to out-of-school suspension, but it gives them a base of power. And that base of power also, then, gives them a feeling of equality at school, which further develops the parent/professional relationship.

Another approach would be to help kids learn how to do problem solving. And I find this isn't always taught at school. How do you engage in effective problem solving? Do you even know how to think about who owns a problem? Those are things that I think would be *extremely* helpful, not just for children, but for their parents.

Engaging students in developing and enforcing school rules can help them learn to evaluate the consequences of misbehavior or not following those rules. So, there are lots of things that we *can* do, that I think all of us out there do in one form or another, but we need to put it together as a package. Deborah?

D. LEUCHOVIUS: Well, thank you. I am going on to just continue on [to the next slide], to talk about the fact that youth need adults who care. [Family members can be those adults that provide guidance and support Family members] can also help connect their youth to [other caring] adults. Students who drop out often feel that their teachers or administrators are not interested in them. So, this is something that parents and educators can work on together, as well. And that is, I should say, administrators can make their schools a place that encourage building strong caring relationships through organizational structures that provide time and the opportunity for those kinds of things. And these relationships enhance that connection to school and, ultimately, contribute to better school completion. ...It may be especially important for youth who do not have family support at home to have these kinds of relationships at school. Mentoring is certainly the catch word of the day. And there are certainly mentoring programs that exist to connect youth to caring adults, as well. And parents or educators can help facilitate that process.

D. JORDAN: Not only do *youth* need adults who care, but families need to know that other people who are involved in their kid's life care. Kids need adults who care, and families care. Kids need adults who care and who know how to support their development. And they need it, overtly. I've never met a teacher who said 'I don't like the kids I teach.' But I've met thousands of kids who say, "The teachers don't like me." So somewhere there's a disconnect between the relationship, and I think it's not as overt as it needs to be. As we've become more sophisticated in teaching curriculum, sometimes we get less sophisticated in teaching children.

D. LEUCHOVIUS: I'm on Slide 16 now, looking at helping middle school students succeed. I've already stressed, I think, how strongly I feel that this is a crucial time. High school's too late to begin dropout prevention programs.

Attendance problems and truancy usually begin well before high school, and when identified early, those attitudes and behaviors can often be changed before they become entrenched. So, again, in the interest of time, I will move on, but I want to tell some of the listeners who are interested in information about things that parents can do to engage their children, things that they can do at home, to refer them to some of the handouts that we provided links to.

Helping High School Students Succeed. Again, the teen years are notoriously turbulent ones. Teenagers are challenging their parents' authority. Youth still need their parents, but it's challenging for their parents to remain involved in many ways. They are rethinking their authority relationship as their child becomes an adult. And limit-setting and guidance are needed. At the same time, those need to be balanced with independence. And, again, there are developmental changes that necessitate teenagers being self-absorbed, and that can make being a parent of a self-absorbed teenager very difficult. And I also want to add that parents of children with disabilities, oftentimes it's in high school when they realize they're re-experiencing how different from the norm their child is, as their peers go off and on to other kinds of adult rites of passage that are, perhaps, not open to them. There are tips for parents of high school students in the handouts that I won't spend time going over. But I want folks to make sure they know they're there, and that they can share them with either families or youth. Dixie?

D. JORDAN: I'm going to move us in to a slightly different direction. It is an overhead that begins, *When There's a Problem*. Clearly, for special education, there's a process for resolving major problems, and that's the process for IEP development, or problem solving, that's imbedded in federal law. We almost need to think broader than this. I think it's important that families understand the importance of IEPs, as it is important that the general education teacher understand the importance of IEPs, and that this document become dynamic, and people participate in an effective way.

But if we're talking about how to engage families in supporting their kids' academic achievement, I just need to say this. I think we need to start with the definition of what is meaningful family involvement, and how involved are the families and parents in your

school in creating that definition? Because I've seen the definition—many of them, across the country—and some of them are replete with strategies that involve family picnics, or other activities. But I've never met a parent not involved in their child's education. I've met lots of parents whose level of involvement does not include going to school, does not include, perhaps, monitoring homework, but parents know that their kids are in school, and they're involved in their education. The trick is going to be for us to find out what's their level of involvement? What's their desired level of involvement? And really reconsider what family involvement means.

The other thing I think schools could do that would be *enormously* helpful is begin to overtly value the importance of alternative school settings. We have focused for so long on every kid's going to go college—and I'm not de-valuing post-secondary education—but college just isn't for everyone, and, particularly, it's not for a lot of kids who have academic difficulties throughout their school careers. And, yet, alternative school settings would give them that leg up for post-secondary settings in a much more effective way, than when they get sent to an alternative setting solely because they're unable to cut the mustard in a regular setting, and then it's seen as that dropout place or that lesser place.

When I was a child in school, we didn't have that. We had alternative schools, and they were great. We had schools that future farmers attended, you know? Today, though, it's the place where you go if you *fail*. And instead of talking about school, *in school*, if teachers would simply stop talking about college as the only option, and begin to embrace the whole continuum of alternative settings when kids are *out of school*, they could be more hopeful that they could see themselves *in* one of those settings, and their parents would be more hopeful in supporting them. When we feel *pushed* into those settings is when we really fight, rebel against, or not want our children there, even though they may be *much* more successful in the alternative setting. So that's that piece.

And there's one more piece that I think is critical, and that is schools really need to put a focus on creating an environment at school that is truly welcoming of families. I know that we have a focus on reduction of school violence, and I understand the necessity for that. But when you tell me that I need to report to the principal's office, sign in, and wear a badge, and the last time I signed something, because I don't *read* well, or I don't *write* well, the last time I signed something, I signed away my rights, or I signed a document that was harmful to me, I'm not gonna tell you I can't read or write. I'm not gonna sign it. I'm not going to come. So we have to, at least conceptually, think about *why* families don't get involved in the building, itself—the structure, this imposing structure, itself—even before we start thinking about why they don't get involved in supporting their older children's education. Because if we don't do that, then we're wasting our time with a seminar like this.

And I think it's different when you have families who are from different cultures, perhaps, because maybe their perspective on the value of formal education isn't the same as the mainstream value. And it's not because they don't value education or want their children to be successful, it's because they don't understand. No one's tied those pieces

together between the importance of coming to school *and* a future outcome. No one's tied that together for them.

There's a power imbalance. And whether you believe it or not, it's a *perception* in the minds of most of our families that they're not powerful beings when they go to school. There's a perception about how much their information isn't valued. I think there were policies that actively *discouraged* the kind of involvement we're talking about in supporting students staying in school. And until we really begin to do an assessment of what those policies are, and really begin to look at this from the eyes of someone from a different culture and language, it's really hard to develop a program plan approach, outcome, whatever we want to call it, a philosophy around family involvement that works with the diversity of families in our country today. We have to really value the importance of family involvement..

D. LEUCHOVIUS...Dick, do we time for questions from the audience at this point?

MODERATOR: Sure. We'll open it up for questions right now. You can ask a question of Deborah or Dixie by simply pressing "star" and then the number 1 on your telephone keypad. That will place you in the live queue, and then I'll call on you by your city and the first name of the person that registered at your site. If you're on the speakerphone, please use the telephone handset, if possible. This way, everyone will be able to hear you more clearly, and then when replacing the handset, remember to press and hold the speakerphone button so that you're not disconnected for your answer. If your question's answered before we call on you, press the pound key and you'll be taken out of the queue. So, if you have a question or a comment, go ahead and press star 1 now.

And you can also continue to email questions during the program to moda@krm.com. And while the audience is deciding if they want to queue in for a telephone question or not, let me go to the email first. I see there are a couple of phone questions coming in, so first email question is, *Is there a list of professional references to refer to in regards to the data that's being shared?*

D. LEUCHOVIUS: ...I would refer you back to the parent briefs. The statistics around dropout are from the most recent OSERS report to Congress on IDEA. I would also say that some of the specific statistics are referenced in that brief. In addition, some of the student surveys are found in that *Silent Epidemic* document from the Bill Gates Foundation. And if people have more specific questions about particular references, you can email those to Dick, and he can get those to me, and I can get more specific citations for you.

MODERATOR: All right. Thank you. We've got a couple of people on the phone. So let's go to Albany, New York. And after that, we're going to go to Eugene, Oregon. Albany, welcome to the program.

ALBANY, NY: Hello.

D. LEUCHOVIUS: Hi. We're ready for your question.

WOMAN: I just have a general question on the statistics. I wanted to know if they were from youth, in general, or youth with disabilities?

D. LEUCHOVIUS: In the *Silent Epidemic* Report, those are for youth in general. However, I think that another great source for statistics is the website for the National Longitudinal Transition Study. They have statistics in their reports on, one, family involvement, and two, on the academic or school experiences of youth with emotional behavioral disabilities. So that's a really great source for that information.

D. JORDAN: I think the dropout statistics came from the Twenty-Sixth Annual Report to Congress on the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.

ALBANY, NY: Great, thanks.

MODERATOR: Thank you for that question. Let's go on to Eugene, Oregon. Welcome to the program.

EUGENE, OR: Deborah and Dixie, this is Roz. I'm really enjoying listening to you and learning from what you have to teach us. I have a question. When you mention "graduate from high school," Deborah, what do you mean when you say "graduate?"

D. LEUCHOVIUS: Well, when I say "graduate from high school," I mean leave with a diploma. ...It may differ in states that have special education diplomas that differ from regular education diplomas. [For example,] if the youth qualifies for services from 18 to 21, after the completion of that.—

ROZ: There might be a variety of ways, then, for one to graduate?

D. JORDAN: Roz, I think that's a wonderful question because No Child Left Behind and IDEA have put such a heavy emphasis on academic achievement, that academic achievement has now been defined as "graduate from school with a regular diploma." I prefer to think of it as graduate from school with the skills to move into your next life experience. And for some kids, for me, a GED is *as* viable and, perhaps, more so than a high school graduation diploma, depending on your future course. And I don't know that there's a universal definition of graduation because states are so different.

ROZ: Thank you, Dixie. That's really why I was asking. Another question, actually. Dixie, you talked about post-secondary education not being an option for many young people. But there are a variety of ways for one to attend post-secondary education, and I'm hoping that parents, teachers, and young people understand the variety of ways they can do that.

D. JORDAN: If I called it post-secondary, as opposed to college, then I do apologize because I think most of our expectation for most kids is that they will pick up some form

of post-secondary education, whether that happens to be vocational training, or an enriching academic experience in an ivy league school. I just really view it as continuing education. But I do think that the value we've placed on college, itself, as *the* outcome, has really diminished the importance of our vocational and trade schools. And that's just so wrong.

ROZ: Community colleges in some states, though, do provide the vocational opportunities. I'm not thinking about only four-year universities.

D. JORDAN: Right. Oh, I agree with you, and I think those are wonderful, but in our state, if you attend a community college, and you're in a high school class with a group of other kids, most of whom are going to a four-year university, that community college is seen as a place where the dumb kids go. And we have to change that perception. But I think that teachers sometimes tie into that perception by always looking at college as the outcome for kids, rather than training or further education, as the outcome. Maybe it's just a question of terminology.

D. LEUCHOVIUS: I think it may be a question of terminology. I think both Dixie and I would encourage post-secondary opportunities for all youth, and youth with disabilities. But I think that they're very prescribed at this moment. I think there are more opportunities for youth with intellectual and cognitive disabilities to attend post-secondary education, and some very exciting models are taking place along those lines. But I also think of the [increased] emphasis on academics[in many] trade and vocational programs.... We've just encountered families with young people who are able to complete some of the tasks [in a vocational program] perfectly but can't complete the whole, entire program, now that it includes a larger portion of academic classes. So they're not getting the certificate that qualifies them to go on and [successfully] pursue a vocation [of their choice]. Rather than, again, saying that "we certify that you can do A, B, C and D," you just have to do everything.

D. JORDAN: And, Deb, if I may, what I find is the door *to* those alternative programs—the alternative education programs beyond high school—is wide open for kids who do well academically in public schools. But I have to tell you that a lot of our schools, whether they be for someone who wants to become a cook, or someone who wants to pursue a variety of potential options, those doors are closed if you are not beyond the tenth grade, or beyond the sixth grade in reading, or beyond the eighth grade in something else. And so the strictures that are put on a lot of our post-secondary schools rule out the possibility for a lot of kids with severe learning disabilities and emotional disturbance to go there. Even though once you get out, I always tell my kids, the ones I work with, "If you survive high school, you'll do okay when you're out in the real world in post-secondary." But then the post-secondary doors are not always open to those kids, either, even though they may have the skills to be successful.

D. LEUCHOVIUS: And there may be some variation in what's available to youth and families in states, as well.

D. JORDAN: That's true.

D. LEUCHOVIUS: Dick, are we running out of time?

MODERATOR: Well, actually, we are. I've got one more quick question before we move on to Aurelio, and then we do have to go. *Has the question of student mobility been addressed when discussing dropout rates?*

D. LEUCHOVIUS: Well, I can tell you that it definitely has been, but that's probably a question that someone else could answer better than me.....—

D. JORDAN: I guess I'm not really clear. Is it a contributory factor? Because we know that homeless and highly mobile students drop out of school at a much greater rate than other students. But I'm not sure the intent of the question.

D. LEUCHOVIUS: If you're looking for statistics on that, I have not addressed that in any of the references or the handouts that we provided to you. And I would refer you back to the National Dropout Prevention Center, and I would check their website because they have quite a wide range of information related to the topic.

D. JORDAN: But I think it's a critical question because, in fact, family involvement for highly-mobile students is crucial, and it's not being done because it's too hard.

MODERATOR: All right. Well, with that, we've got to move on. So, Aurelio, you're up next. Welcome to the program.

AURELIO MONTEMAYOR: Thank you. All families are valuable. None is expendable. At IDRA for the last 33 years, as child advocates, we've been especially concerned about families of children who are undervalued and not taught well in school, and the attitude of schools towards those families. Families can be economically disadvantaged, minority, or speak a language other than English. So, as we've done our parent engagement work, we've had to address some very central things.

Valuing versus deficit assumptions are critical to this. For example, in our work with children who don't finish school—usually labeled dropout—we had to turn the at-risk label to the valued label. And, when we think about kids that don't finish school, instead of thinking of dropouts, we think of school holding power. Because until we change the conversation about our institution and the children, we're going to continue to put the spotlight on what's wrong with the child and what's wrong with the family.

We look at family engagement in four dimensions. You know, one of the major leading researchers in parent involvement, Joyce Epstein, has six types of involvement. Those are 1) parenting, 2) communicating, 3) volunteering, 4) learning at home, 5) decision making, and 6) collaborating with the community. That's a very good outline, but it comes from looking at the institution and what the institution, the schools, have to do to better engage parents.

Our outline, our dimensions, are from the point of view of the parent, all parents. But it is especially focused on those that are just hanging on by their fingernails economically, or considered a minority, or have some other societal view of them that they are not players in the field. So, we start with parent as teacher, but not from the point of view of parenting, helping a parent be a better teacher, but validating who the parent is, exactly where they are, and how they are.

Next level is parent as resource. The sequence is wrong here. When the child goes to school, or to Headstart, or an institution, the parent is a resource. But in that list, very low, is volunteering. Number One is that the parent is the expert on that child. Whether that child has special needs, or speaks a language other than English, the parent has to be seen and drawn in from what they know about the child because I, as a teacher, need that information. So, parent as resource, again, not as a cheap labor pool, but as an expert on the child.

Then, parent as decision-maker. All parents, especially those that are hanging on by their fingernails economically, that are poor, make tremendous decisions every day, every week. So, we had to figure out how to connect their decision-making power to what the campus and the school needs in terms of making decisions.

And then the fourth level we see is parent as leader and trainer of others. Validating who they are and bringing other parents to the question of how we can have the best possible school systems for our kids. Our structure is one starting from valuing. And, for example, one thing that IDRA doesn't do a lot of—first of all, because there are a lot of other people doing it well—is parenting, because that's *how* to fix the parent, or *how* to help the parent. Obviously, all families need help.

And the business of parenting pushes the guilt button. I can ask you right now, all of those listening that are parents. *Have you been the perfect parent?* Especially the parent of an adolescent, somebody going through puberty. You're hanging on by your fingernails. Even if you have a Ph.D. in child rearing, you're going to need some help. And the problem with that is that we're going to you as fixing something that's broken. And so we really need to look at the institutions, put the spotlight on the institutions, because we know for the last 50 years, looking at the culture of poverty and what's wrong with poor people hasn't helped fix it. We can handle our institutions.

Instead of just going back to college is not for everyone—'cause as a minority, I've heard that all my life—in my neighborhood, in Spanish, in Laredo, I used to hear [Spanish saying], "Get an education, or you'll suffer what I suffered." Families know the value of education, but they're just hanging on by their fingernails, and they're also so cynical about what the institution can do that rejects them at every turn. Even in the PTA, you have the select parents that look at these other parents. So if you have a child that doesn't speak English and has special needs, who's going to listen to you?

And so what we need to focus on is the institutional assumptions about these children of these families, and look at the institutions to modify. One of our problems with alternative campuses, our DAP's, if these are tanks holding the kids that either behaviorally don't fit in, or whatever, and when and how are we going to create those campuses to be excellent campuses and parent friendly is going to take a big push because the assumptions are still we're sending them over there because they're not good enough for the regular campus. Okay?

So, our goals are to have our parents become active in having excellent schools for all children. And we go through a process where we listen to them in a language that they understand, value who they are and what they've already done, and share that because if the dialogue that where the emerging parent, the parents that have not been heard are silent in a school setting have a lot to say. We experience that all the time. But it's a setting that has to be parent-friendly, culturally, linguistically, and [inaudible phrase] of class. There are many poor, white parents that failed in school, and they're going to feel the same feeling of 'I'm powerful at home in my kitchen, but when I walk into that institution, I didn't do well.' And so you have all this bad stuff come up, and the institution reinforces it. That's why the assumptions are so important.

When we have diminished expectations based on social and institutional feelings and limitations, of course these institutions are going to be appropriate. We're not even accommodating for language, forget for a disability. I mean, people had to chain their wheelchairs to buildings so that the buildings were created so that you could even go up. So we said, 'Okay, let's figure out how we can get that wheelchair up the steps,' rather than just put a ramp. In other words, the institution has to become flexible to the needs of the learner because a lot of these children, I know, some of them are not college material. But I come from a history where most of us are told we're not college material. And the middle-class, wealthy kids, even if they're dumb, they'll go to Yale because of the legacy. So, you know, we have to be very careful with that college is not for everyone because the institution will quickly give up on the kid, especially if he's minority, especially if he doesn't speak English, and especially if he has identified disabilities.

So, yes, I don't want to be with my head in the clouds, on the good ship lollipop about what children can achieve. But the way [inaudible phrase] at least, I don't hear counselors saying 'College is for everybody.' I don't hear most of the public schools saying most kids are college material. If you're middle class, if you speak English, and you come from a professional home, you're automatically assumed to be college material. And if you have a disability, those parents will make sure that they're going to protect that child from getting inappropriate expectations, and be guided into an inappropriate profession.

So in our look at parent involvement, we look at peer listening, building mutual support among families to support each other in what is an *extremely* difficult task—raising children. And as long as we just want to solve individual kids' and individual families' problems, and it's certainly in the field of special ed when you have that individualistic push—I'll get it for my kid, and I'll fight for my kid—we never have the collective will to make every single public school the best possible school for all kids, regardless of

what we consider their disability. We need to look at parent leadership because that's what's going to save the schools. Public monies are going to leave to private schools, and public schools that most need to stay open are going to shut down if these families don't, collectively, support having that school the best possible school for their kid. I'll stop there.

MODERATOR: All right. Aurelio, do you want to open it up for questions now?

A. MONTEMAYOR: Sure. We've got about 10 minutes left, or five minutes left, I don't know.

MODERATOR: All right. We'll do that. So if you would like to ask a question of Aurelio, just press "star" and the number 1 on your telephone keypad, then that will place you in the live queue, and I'll call on you by the name of your city. So, go ahead and press star 1 now. You can also continue to email your questions to moda@krm.com.

Let's go to our email. I have a question here, *What is your opinion about fusing career and technical training in the secondary curriculum?*

A. MONTEMAYOR: I have a very strong opinion about secondary education. I don't have any weak opinions, actually. But when you look at how teachers in schools are trained, elementary schools are much more family friendly. Middle school teachers—and I come from being a high school teacher—middle schools and high schools don't have a tradition of real family engagement of any kind. You have band boosters, you have a PTSA here and there. But, generally, if a school becomes family friendly, they're going to be able to integrate what the family needs are. In other words, if you have, say, a very active PTSA—Parent Teacher Student Association—and parents are saying we don't have enough connection to the world of work here, this is all college prep—and, actually, you might call it college prep, but most kids don't even finish the college prep. So, if we had an effective program, we should have some technical training, some high level training, or even chef classes. But, in other words, it's going to come from the community having input into the curriculum. I think a secondary school can do it very, very well. I think there's an amazing array of things that secondary schools can do if the will is there and the community says we need this.

For example, if at the high school level, I want to have a pre-chef training school, also that means that that campus, though, is going to have to work on its own attitudes about kids and what kids can do. So that if my skills in reading are limited, just consider the societal attitudes towards accent. If I have a German accent or a French accent, there's a societal notion that I'm somehow educated or sophisticated. Generally, if I have a Mexican accent, I'm a dumb Mexican. I mean, that's the societal attitude. So if we don't handle how we look at kids and listen to them, whether they know how to read or not, that secondary technical training program is not going to work because we still have low expectations for the children. So, yes, you can have that if there's a lot of input from the

communities if they want it, but you really have to get at the diminished expectations aspect of the adults on that campus.

MODERATOR: All right. Thank you for that. And Deborah and Dixie, you can weigh in on that if you wish.

D. JORDAN: I think Aurelio said it for me. Aurelio, I think that you and I have a lot in common because I've been down that road a lot of times.

A. MONTEMAYOR: I want to mention that we have some podcasts. If anybody wants to listen in on them, it's www.idra.org/podcasts. We do these about twice a month, and some of these issues we talk about more in depth on those podcasts.

MODERATOR: All right. Thank you. I'd like to remind the audience that you can ask a question of any of our speakers for today by pressing "star" and then the number 1 on your telephone keypad. And, of course, email address is moda@krm.com. And with that, let's go to Little Rock, Arkansas.

LITTLE ROCK, AR: Leverage point six, in the state's education agency monitor [inaudible phrase] programs and ensure the law is carried out. How is that completed in Texas?

AURELIO MONTEMAYOR: Leverage point six? I'm not thinking clearly right now. I know Title I. Are you talking about No Child Left Behind? Oh, yeah, okay, okay. I know what you're [inaudible]. Well, actually our state agency is monitoring through computers and telephones. We were reduced by two-thirds a few years ago at the state agency, so people don't even go out and monitor. So it's very cursory; it's self-reported. For example, if a district doesn't have a district-wide parent involvement plan, there aren't a lot of ways that you can find that out. If, for example, I blanked out on my own handout. If—

LITTLE ROCK, AR: You [inaudible phrase] question. I wanted to know if you were in that same process. That's what's happening in our state, as well.

AURELIO MONTEMAYOR: Yeah, Texas has very little actual monitoring going on. And so district self report—if they're asked to report on it—it's very cursory. What we have in our districts is a rubber stamp plan that was developed somewhere. It's there in the files. But it's not a very real one. You know, Title I is supposed to spend at least one percent of its resources on parent involvement. And most of it is not very meaningful. It's not very engaging, if at all.

LITTLE ROCK, AR: [inaudible phrase] that's the same money that IDEA uses, right? Okay.

AURELIO MONTEMAYOR: No, IDEA is a different pot of money. This is just the Title I parent involvement requirement. One percent of the funds, for example, if my

district is getting six million dollars in Title I money, one percent of that has to be spent, a minimum of one percent, in what is called parent engagement. And the law now requires a more meaningful parent engagement.

D. JORDAN: I also think, Aurelio, that despite the requirement that families be involved, and No Child Left Behind gives you involvement at a different level—school choice being one of those levels—fewer than two percent of parents across America exercise their right to choice when their school's in need of improvement. So I don't know what the disconnect is there. I don't know if it's just the information problem that we're having [overlapping voices]

AURELIO MONTEMAYOR: There's not an awful lot of choice.

D. JORDAN: Well, in an inner city, there's sometimes none. I agree.

AURELIO MONTEMAYOR: But you know, one of the things that I think is very important that parents of children with special needs look at, number one, to make sure that the generic needs of our children are met through the Title I resources, and that the school saying, okay we have the ARD, and we've got an IEP and all that other stuff [inaudible] okay that's well and good, but we are economically disadvantaged, and, therefore, under Title I, my child should be getting some after-school support because the school is not doing well on AYP and stuff like that. There's, I think, a lot of resources that most families don't realize are there. And that they have the right—not just the privilege—the right to go and say, "My child is not getting the support, in terms of reading and writing." And if it means adapting the classroom, adapting the curriculum, that is not just because IDEA says it's so, Title I says however you do it, these kids need to learn to read and write and learn math, you know? So it's not just [inaudible] okay, special ed, that goes over there, every child that goes to this school has money coming from the state and [inaudible] under Title I from the Feds, that should be used so the school does what it has to do to teach that child. And IDEA is just a more focused one on a child with special needs.

My problem with most of what the school does is they stigmatize, or label, the kid, but don't do much about it. You know, you're labeled limited English proficient, or you're labeled special ed, or whatever. But what happens? What is the institution doing to make sure that it's a family-friendly campus? The kid is really enjoying it, and is working at his or her best level, and is engaged, and all that? I mean, all the resources a school has from the state funding at the basic level, to the federal funding, all that should do to adapt this institution, not to some idealized child, but to the children we have.

And if this child comes to me in a wheelchair, we'll figure out how that wheelchair's gonna fit, because part of what I think is important, I do know that sometimes for special kinds of situations, you need to separate children. But I think, I don't want our public schools to lose that essential piece of democracy that this is the marketplace where we meet and engage. And if we engage across race and class, we also engage across special needs. And we all need that. I mean, I think mainstreaming has done a lot of bad things

because schools and teachers are not ready for it. But in an ideal world, any campus would be welcoming, and quite ready to accept the child if the child comes in a wheelchair, or the child has an emotional problem. Just like if a child [Spanish saying] we have to use the language the child understands, at least until the parents and kid can connect to what's going on in school.

And by the way, in terms of language instruction, we already know a heck of a lot of how to teach children who don't speak English. It's a matter of having the training and the will to do it at the campus level.

MODERATOR: All right. Thank you. Now, Aurelio, we have some audience members here who have asked that you repeat the Web address for the podcasts that you mentioned a few minutes ago. [overlapping voices]

AURELIO MONTEMAYOR: Oh, I'd love to, yes. It's www.idra.org. Now, that's our website. If you do www.idra.org, that gets you to our website. If you add a back slash and the word p-o-d-c-a-s-t-s, that takes you straight to the podcasts. And you know, the last one we did was brilliant. I was the one being interviewed. It was just wonderful. [laughter] I'm sorry I'm so [inaudible] I [inaudible phrase] in this domain [inaudible phrase] to get me going. I'm a little bit neutral on these things.

MODERATOR: The next question's actually for Deborah. And it would like you to explain the statement about the Latino student population improving their dropout rate. Would you please explain that, Deborah?

D. LEUCHOVIUS: ... I'm looking to see where I found that. "Hispanic youth have experienced the smallest improvement in school completion over time"...

AURELIO MONTEMAYOR: There's been a slight increase. Let me tell you, though, my organization has done a statewide attrition study in Texas for the last 22 years, I think. And we have looked at the attrition rates for all children. What we do, we have a formula. We look at them as incoming freshman, and four years later, where are they? And we've seen, for example, that the attrition rates for students of color are much greater than for Caucasian or white students. Latino rates have not improved. Our current, for our last report, if you visit our website, there's an October newsletter that shows that 46 percent of Latino students are not around four years later. And our formula already allows for in and out migration and other stuff. The official state data, and what schools self report, is different because they have all kinds of lever codes, and they figure out how to play a little chess game with all this stuff so that it doesn't look so bad.

I'm really concerned, for example, that they're counting GED as high school completions. But that has been, for Latino kids, an age-old way for the schools to get money from the state and not have to teach them the full course. You're overage, get your GED, you still get your allotment from the state. But the Latino community's being told that a GED is as good as a high school diploma. And [inaudible phrase] an employer

would consider that. I know there are special cases of some children that the GED is the best route. The problem is it's being used with students of color, with both black and brown kids in Texas, as the way to not have to educate them and telling them 'that gets you into community college,' and, of course, they're not gonna get into community college. Our figures are horrible there. So you've got to be very careful about that.

What we do know is, nationally, Latino school holding power rates are really disastrous, really disastrous.

D. LEUCHOVIUS: Thank you, Aurelio, for jumping in there. I appreciate it. If you're looking for the citations, it sounds like the website for Aurelio's organization would have information on it. There's also information on the OSEP website about school completion, and that's broken down by ethnicity and gender and all of that.

MODERATOR: All right. Thank you. And with that, we've got time for one quick question. We've got about one minute. *What are some of the recommended ways to best reach Latino parents?* And we've got about one minute.

AURELIO MONTEMAYOR: Approach them with dignity and validate who they are. Have someone who speaks their language be the connection. And find out how much they really value education.

MODERATOR: All right. Thank you for that. And we would like to extend our appreciation to Deborah Leuchovius and Dixie Jordan of the PACER Center, and Aurelio Montemayor, of IDRA, for today's informative telephone seminar.

Thanks, also, to our listening audience for participating today. We appreciate your interest in building school and family partnerships, and are pleased to have been able to offer you today's seminar. We look forward to your joining us for future seminars in this series. Please visit our website at www.ndcp-sd.org for future events, and transcripts and keypoints from past telephone seminars. Again, that web site is www.ndcp-sd.org.

If you have any questions about the material that was presented today that were *not* answered, we invite you to email those questions to Deb Hall. That email address is dhall@edc.org.

And I would, again, like to remind our participants to carefully fill out the evaluation form and to fax it to the number listed on the page, or use the krm online evaluation site. The link to that site is toward the top of the printed evaluation form.

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