



Creating Your Education Blueprint for Action

Mendez and Brown Community Dialogues

A Launch Kit

- *Promote Graduation and College Readiness for African American and Latino Youth*
- *Create Successful Academic Pathways for All Children*
- *Dialogue and Catalyze for Joint Action*



INTERCULTURAL DEVELOPMENT RESEARCH ASSOCIATION

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About IDRA

For more than 36 years, IDRA has taken a strong stand in defending the rights of all children for equity and excellence in education. We take a stand for valuing families and communities, for supporting quality teaching and learning, for valuing every child to have access to an excellent education that will prepare them for high school graduation, access to college, and a future full of promise.

We know you share that commitment. Children of color, who are poor or non-English speaking often have no voice. That's the reason IDRA was founded, and that's the reason we continue our work today through this *Mendez* and *Brown* initiative. We believe that working together across race and sectors, we can create positive change and strong public schools that work for all children.

Mendez and Brown Community Gathering Process Resource Launch Kit – Creating Your Education Blueprint for Action

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The Mendez and Brown Initiative: Responding to a Need

At IDRA we see equal educational opportunity as a national imperative. We are all in this together, and we have a shared responsibility to protect the common good and build common ground. We believe that equal educational opportunity need not wait another generation.

The *Mendez* and *Brown* initiative responds to the need for joint African American and Latino leadership and action to improve high school graduation rates and college success for minority youth. As a community leader, we invite you to participate because of your commitment to excellence and equity in the education of all youth, and particularly African American and Latino youth.

The two historic cases of *Brown vs. Board of Education* and *Mendez vs. Westminster* offered a promise to all children. Communities must work together to embrace our respective leadership roles and develop a plan to ensure this happens. The two cases were not an end. Rather, they were a beginning. They hold a promise, and we must achieve it together for this generation and for those to come.

IDRA's Quality Schools Action Framework™ informs the process you are about to undertake and provides a way of looking at systems change, including key indicators that can tell us how schools are being transformed to support graduation and success for all students.

While we stress the importance of partnerships among families and communities in education



decision-making, one of the most essential elements in the equation for student success is student voice. It is not surprising that students often interpret a local landscape within schools and colleges as void of opportunities for

engaging them as key members of the local planning process. This process acknowledges emerging student leaders and communities as critical elements for improving school holding power and broadening access and success for all.

We really appreciate the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation for its support in making this launch kit possible.

Thank you for what you do each day in your local community and for your partnership with us. We look forward to staying connected and continuing to work together as we create pathways to graduation for all. We wish you success in your local efforts to respond to this call for action.

Dr. María "Cuca" Robledo Montecel
IDRA President & CEO

“ Neighborhood public schools **belong to their communities.** The strength and vitality of any community is, in part, dependent upon **the strength of its schools.** And the reverse is true.”



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Generating Dialogue

Our intent is to support and encourage your efforts at generating dialogue in your local community. We offer both an invitation and a process that we hope you find useful for beginning a *Mendez* and *Brown* dialogue in your community to cultivate organizational change in schools. These conversations will require personal commitment, trust, and courage to reach out, set aside our differences, and discover what is important for the future of our children as we co-create a blueprint for action.



About this Guide

The guide is organized into three sections:

- ▶ **Getting Ready**
- ▶ **Hosting Your Community Event**
- ▶ **Maximizing the Momentum**



Each section is vital to creating your community's blueprint for action. In each section, you will find the most important steps for helping you and other community leaders assemble the best ideas to engineer real transformation in your neighborhood schools.

This guide provides components of a framework to help you create a productive space for dialogue and planning. These components have been identified and proven over the course of our work throughout many states. The framework is flexible, so make it work best for you. There is no single way or one-size-fits all prescription for every community. It is precisely within our diversity that our strengths resonate. Each group of community leaders must bring their diverse voices, energy and spirit to envision and create the educational change that is best for their local context. We hope this chorus for change will be made up of many community voices, exercising their individual and collective gifts to their fullest, acting together to create schools that work for all children.

We invite you to take these steps and remember that IDRA is committed to working with you. Along with this guide, please use our additional resources available online.

We ask that you share your ideas and planning through our community web site so others in similar communities also can host successful dialogues. This password-protected web site is designed for communities that are planning or have already held a community dialogue about education. To get access to the web site, let IDRA know of your plans (210-444-710), and we will send you an e-mail invitation.

Thank you for your commitment and your dedication to making a difference for children. We look forward to hearing from you. Together, schools, families and communities can make their blueprint a reality so that all students regardless of their race or ethnicity, income or language have excellent support and opportunities for success.

A Promise to Fulfill

Mendez vs. Westminster and the California Board of Education

In March of 1945, Latino parents in Orange County, California, confronted the segregation of their children into “Mexican schools.” Gonzalo Mendez, William Guzmán, Frank Palomino, Thomas Estrada and Lorenzo Ramírez, with the help of the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC), sued four local school districts for segregating their children.

In February of 1946, this landmark case ended segregation in California school districts. Governor Earl Warren signed legislation prohibiting segregation in California, giving equal rights to all students. The *Mendez* case foreshadowed *Brown vs. Board of Education*. The *Mendez* case included the judicious



use of social science research, the application of the 14th Amendment, and the involvement of Thurgood Marshall, co-author of the amicus brief filed by the NAACP.

Brown vs. Board of Education

In 1954, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that compulsory segregation of races in public schools was unconstitutional. The court held that separate facilities for Black students and White students were “inherently unequal,” and in 1955, ordered states with segregated schools to open them to all races.

This ruling struck down the separate but equal doctrine, declared separation of Black students and



White students unconstitutional, and ordered desegregation of schools with “all deliberate speed.”

50 years of desegregation

“In the field of public education, the doctrine of ‘separate but equal’ has no place.” — Earl Warren, Chief Justice of the Supreme Court

In the Beginning

Mendez and *Brown* court cases, along with others like *Lau* and *Plyler*, transformed the nature of U.S. public education. Yet, the promise of quality education remains an elusive goal for many of our children. This century's civil rights issue is quality education. Often, the issues of civil rights in education are viewed in the deficit and limiting terms of "Black vs. White," causing divisions among minority and majority groups to the detriment of our children and the nation's future.

IDRA designed a series of cross-race, cross-sector community dialogues that gathered African American and Latino community, business and education leaders in various cities throughout the South to address key education issues in each respective community, including equitable funding, quality schooling, ensuring graduation for all, and access to higher education. These local one-day forums were successful in providing a space to set aside differences and create a common vision, engaging education stakeholders, across race and sector, in discussions about key issues and challenges in realizing the spirit of the *Mendez* and *Brown* decisions. They also provided information about current initiatives and began to seed new coalitions among groups that seldom have the opportunity to plan positive action for improving education for all children.

Restoring Hope

If we choose to be meaningfully engaged in working together, we can restore hope for a quality education for all children, one that will prepare them for high school graduation, college readiness, and a future filled with promise. We know that community conversations take time to build trust, listen to one another, and create a common vision. But we also recognize that we are at an extraordinary moment in our history that requires us to work together with urgency as never before, recognizing the possibilities and strengths that we share in our common hope for a better future for our children. It is essential for our communities across race and sector to enter into dynamic conversations and joint action on behalf of improving our public schools. Our collective



Principles for Community Advocacy in Action

This initiative is built upon the belief that there is great power in communities coming together to create change. It is based on core principles upon which communities of action can be created across race and sector to support schools in improving education for all students:

1. Coalition building must be inclusive, reflecting the diversity of race and ethnicity in your community, spanning sectors and disciplines, and breaking down traditional barriers and silos to collaboration.
2. Each community context is unique; specific action should be responsive to unique local needs, strengths and solutions.
3. An education system within a viable democracy must ensure fair and equitable funding for every public school.
4. Schools must develop greater school holding power that supports and prepares all students from preschool through high school and college.
5. Schools must be better prepared to teach and serve a diverse student body and their families.
6. Schools must value and meaningfully engage parents and diverse communities in educational decision making and action.
7. Student voice – the perspective of students themselves – must be an intrinsic part of any planning and decision making process in education.

voice and leadership can create the kind of lasting change that will benefit the teaching and learning process.

▶ Getting Ready

1 Start with the End in Mind

State your goal, such as “Revitalize the culture of expectations to encourage students’ graduation and transition to higher education.” It is important to build on local strengths and organizations that are already in place, with individuals across sectors and race who are committed to sustaining your vision and the effort entailed in accomplishing your goal.

2 Use a Cross-Section of Local Community Partners

Identify your personal circle of support and key contacts who will help you convene a successful Blueprint Dialogue planning forum and sustain the work beyond the event.

- *Identify local partners – leaders across sector and race – to co-host the event.*
- *Tap known connections and networks: funders who may also provide contacts and education and community leaders at the local, state and regional levels.*
- *Design a task force composed of key stakeholders representing both the community and schools, who will develop a vision and strategic plan and plan for a kick-off event.*

3 Gather Information about Your Neighborhood Schools

Identify data and materials to describe the local context for the dialogue. There are several ways to do this. You can research information online (our community web site has links to online datasets). You can enlist a volunteer or workgroup in your community to gather data or hire a consultant. In any case, it is helpful to create a “Quick Facts” sheet to provide your participants with at-a-glance data that can create a grounded and much richer conversation. We



Helpful Tip:

- Partners can also help plan for publicity and play a major role with local media.



recommend that this factsheet include:
recent demographic information and statistics
on local graduation rates, teacher quality, college
readiness, etc., that will inform the dialogues and
blueprint process.

4 Select a Site

The location you select will help set the tone for building trust and joint planning. Be sensitive to the politics and dynamics of the community.

- *Select a neutral site in a relaxed and comfortable setting, easily accessible to invitees and with sufficient space where representatives from the community will feel comfortable in engaging in deep listening, conversation and collaborative planning.*
- *Plan your budget to include light refreshments for the community reception and dialogues.*

5 Select and Prepare a Student Group for Reception Presentation

Contact schools to identify a group of students who will speak at the community reception. The group should include up to 10 juniors or seniors who are currently enrolled in school and who represent a cross section of Latino and African American male and female youth from diverse socio-economic perspectives.

Acquire written parent permission prior to working with students, including media releases and any school or district clearances.

Provide the students information about the two court cases and the initiative, and discuss application in the local context. Ask students to prepare a 30-minute presentation, individually or in teams, for the reception.



Helpful Tip:

- A local community center, centrally-located conference room or hotel can work well when selecting a site.

In helping students prepare their presentations, ask these questions:

- *What has been your experience in receiving support for graduation and college access?*
- *What barriers have you or others experienced?*
- *What recommendations do you have for schools to be more supportive of graduation and college readiness for minority students?*

See “Engaging Student Voices” on the resource CD for details.

The Big Picture:

- Create a space to listen to one another and plan.



Getting Ready, *continued*

6 Select and Invite Participants

Since this initiative strives to foster joint leadership and action across race and sector, it is important to have comparable representation of African American and Latino (and other minority) adults who will take on collaborative leadership roles in executing the blueprint for action.

- *Invite key decision-makers, community leaders, parent representatives and cross-sector representatives, including business leaders, educators, principals, administrators, leaders of faith communities, policymakers, directors of non-profits who work with or serve youth and their families and higher education leaders.*
- *Create two invitee lists, one for a community reception and the other for the blueprint planning day (a maximum of 50 people is ideal for the planning day).*
- *Send out invitations and an agenda early, and set an RSVP date to help you to plan effectively for both the community reception and the blueprint planning day.*
- *Be sure to invite the parents and family members of the students who will present at the reception, as their role in the process is critical.*

Helpful Tip:

- See the sample letter to invitees and agendas for the community gathering and dialogue event on the resource CD. Use the community web site to encourage participants to join the online community after the event.



7 Prepare Information Packets

Both guests of the community reception and designers of the community blueprints will need information to understand the initiative and do their work. Create two packets for your guests.

The first will be for the community reception with more general information that includes background about the initiative, the two court cases, and a link to the IDRA web site where they can learn more.

The second will be used for the blueprint planning process, including your factsheet about their schools and other resources that can be found online. Be sure to include name tags, media release forms for any photographs or taping you will do, and a media packet.

The Big Picture:

- What can we do together to create change for the common good?

Resources for Getting Ready to Host Your Events

The following materials are available on the resource CD and on the community web site:

- Identifying Your Circle of Support and Key Context worksheet
- Planning Your Community Action Dialogue – Create a “To Do” List for Scheduling Your Community Dialogue worksheet
- Sample Invitation Letter for Reception and/or Dialogue Planning
- Sample Participant Response Form
- Sample Reception Program
- IDRA Media Release (English)
- IDRA Media Release (Spanish)
- Engaging Student Voices guide





Hosting Your Community Event

The Community Reception

1 Set the Context

The convener must clearly explain the background, context and purpose of the initiative and the work to be accomplished.

2 Select a Speaker to Issue a Call to Action

The speaker should be a compelling advocate who should highlight the importance of equity, access and excellence in education for all children as the civil rights issue of this century. He or she will issue a call of urgency to work together and create a local blueprint for action and change.

3 Introduce the “Keeping the Promise” Video

The “Keeping the Promise” video provides historical background to the initiative and highlights voices of participants from other communities to build a sense of a larger movement across states. It is available on the DVD in this packet [5:05 min.].

4 Introduce the Student Presentations

Because student voice is a critical component in the planning and decision-making process in education, hearing diverse student perspectives is the springboard to the next day’s discussions. Present the student panel to the community as experts who have recommendations to be heard and acted upon. Students may use a variety of formats, including poems, slides, photos, skits, articles or speeches.



Helpful Tip:

- Samples of student presentations are available on the community web site.

5 Invite Conversation and Reaction from Participants

Honor the student presentations by inviting reaction and discussion from participants. Summarize the key points raised by students in the preparation for the work that follows. Thank the students, school administrators and guests by reinforcing an asset perspective that recognizes and builds upon the strengths of each group, sector, race and person in supporting excellent education. Acknowledge that the next day's discussions will build upon past and present work underway in communities.

The Planning Meeting: Creating a Community Blueprint for Educational Change

6 Set the Context

Underscore the importance of equity, access and excellence in education and the need to support graduation and college readiness for all children. Create an environment of trust and a safe space to dialogue and build open channels of communication. Everyone must participate fully in the roundtable discussions.

Introduce IDRA's Quality Schools Action Framework™, particularly highlighting the four school system indicators.

Explain that the work of community blueprint planning will focus upon four indicators in the framework:

- *parent involvement and community engagement;*
- *student engagement;*
- *teaching quality; and*
- *curriculum quality and access.*

Additional information about the Quality Schools Action Framework™ is available online (http://www.idra.org/School_Holding_Power/Quality_Schools_Action_Framework) and in the book, *Courage to Connect – A Quality Schools Action Framework*.

7 Re-Introduce the “Keeping the Promise” Video

For those who were unable to attend the previous night, the video provides a historical background to the initiative and highlights voices of participants from other communities to build a sense of a larger movement across states.

The Big Picture:

- Who else needs to be included in our dialogue and planning process?





Hosting Your Community Event, continued

8 Roundtable One: Assign Participants to Roundtables by Sector

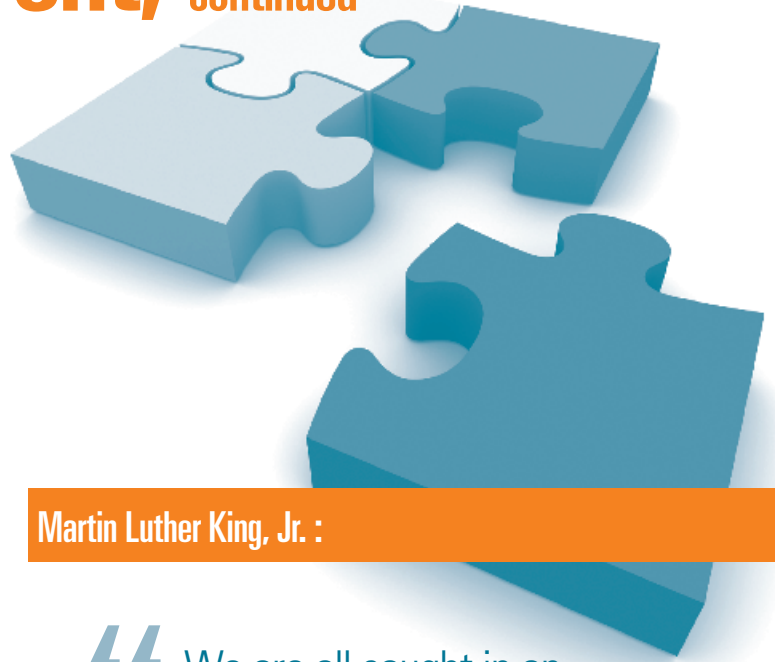
To begin the planning process, the initial discussion is focused on what each sector can bring to overcome the challenges to access and success for all students. Group participants across race but within similar sectors or similar categories, such as: district administrators, building principals, board members, state level administrators, leaders of community-based organizations, private non-profit leaders, funders, and faith community leaders. The goal is to have no more than 10 members per group. Make the groupings work for you.

It is important that the table facilitator carry out logistics for discussion. Be sure to review the factsheet on the status of education to support the blueprint planning process. Table leaders should help facilitate discussion so that everyone speaks and is heard. Each group should select a recorder and a reporter for the breakout sharing session that follows.

Sample questions and a table leader's guide are available on the resource CD and on the community web site.

9 Report Outs

Ensure that each group reports out and is heard without interruption in a plenary session. After each group reports, questions and discussions can continue for a designated time period. Five minutes per group is an optimal duration for discussion following the report out.



Martin Luther King, Jr. :



We are all caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly."

"Existimos en una red ineludible de la reciprocidad, atados en un solo hilo del destino. Lo que afecta a uno directamente nos afecta a todos indirectamente."

10 Roundtables Two and Three: Re-Assign Participants to Roundtables across Sector and Race

The second and third rounds of discussion are across race and sector to begin to build the local blueprint plan of action. Table leaders should facilitate discussion so that everyone speaks and is heard without interruption. Participants at each table again select a recorder and a reporter for the breakout sharing session at the end of the segment. The format questions to be addressed focus on the four Quality Schools Action Framework indicators. Ensure that student voice and perspective from prior presentations are considered in the plan.

11 Share Plans with the Whole Group

Each table should report out its plan and, if possible, post it on the community web site for future work. Delineate next actions that the group has identified for each of the four indicators.

After each group reports, questions and discussions can continue for a designated time period, for example with up to 10 minutes per group.

12 Delineate Next Actions for Self and Enlist Volunteers

Have each participant complete the commitment form. Participants will complete the evaluation forms and also indicate their commitment to be part of a core team that will continue the work and/or be willing workers to support the blueprint implementation, designating their area(s) of primary interest and expertise for next actions.

13 Send Thank You Letters and Acknowledgements to Key Participants

Following the dialogues, be sure to acknowledge and thank key participants, including students, their school principals, and any co-hosts.

Resources

for Hosting Your Community Events

The following materials are available on the resource CD and on the community web site:

- Sample Work Session Agenda
- Sample Roundtable Sign-in Sheet
- Quality Schools Action Framework™
- Introducing the Quality Schools Action Framework™
- Sample Table Leader's Guide

The Big Picture:

- What is my commitment to our shared vision?





Maximizing the Momentum

1 Design and Convene the Core Team

After your event, gather a small nucleus of volunteers (five to 10 people) who will comprise the core team that will provide leadership to sustain and expand the momentum and continue working on the blueprint initiated in the dialogues. The core team will solicit support from other volunteers to carry out the blueprint in each of the four indicator areas. The core team also should select one contact person to serve as liaison to IDRA for support.

2 Use Community Web Site for Communication and Support to Implement Your Blueprint

The core team and other volunteers can link to IDRA's secure community web site to access and update their blueprint plans, communicate with one another, and obtain resources to sustain their local work. The team also can use this site to receive support from IDRA in sustaining the effort.

3 Empower the Core Team

The success of the local effort depends upon the shared leadership of the core team to maintain the vision of transformed schools that will produce success, graduation and college readiness for all. The core team leader(s) should take on a powerful responsibility to ensure that this vision is accomplished in a timely manner. On an ongoing basis, the core team leader should acknowledge, value and elicit continued support from volunteers.



Resources

Maximize the Momentum

The following materials are available on the resource CD and on the community web site :

- Fulfilling the Promise of Mendez and Brown public web site
- Community Blueprint Dialogues web site
- "A Community Action Guide – Seven Actions to Fulfill the Promise of Brown and Mendez"
- Classroom Guide for Working with Students
- ¡Si Se Puede! – Yes! We Can!
- Making a School Visit about High School Graduation and College Access
- "Promoting Student Leadership on Campus – A Guide for Creating a Culture of Engagement"
- Assessing Your Choices
- Classnotes Podcast Episode 64: "Latino and African-American Communities Leading School Reform"

The Big Picture:

- How do I keep this going so my neighborhood public schools work for all children?

4 Monitor, Evaluate, and Update

Because the blueprints reflect the local context, they are active and dynamic documents that must be reviewed and updated on a regular basis with changes made as needed to maintain their viability. The core team is primarily responsible for ensuring this step is accomplished. This involves soliciting feedback from stakeholders and renewing their commitment to the newly revised and updated blueprint action plan.

5 Remain Connected with Students and Educators

Educators are encouraged to learn more about the two landmark cases of *Mendez* and *Brown* and incorporate them into classroom lessons and activities. Our web site has information about both cases, reference materials, and other educational links suitable for use with secondary students in the areas of civics, history, or social studies. We encourage you to share their ideas on the web site as well.

Students, as emerging leaders, should have an ongoing voice, providing feedback to adults on the blueprint. Communicate with the school principals to thank them, and ensure student presenters who presented content with their activity in the process and are interested in continuing participation.

Helpful Tip:

- Contact IDRA to get access to the Blueprints for Action community web site



Link and Leverage

National, Regional,
and Local Resources

Brown vs. Board of Education 50th Anniversary Commission
U.S. Department of Education
<http://www.ed.gov/about/bdscomm/list/brownvboard50th>

Brown Foundation for Educational Equity,
Excellence and Research
brownfound@juno.com

Foundation for the Mid-South
<http://www.fndmidsouth.org>

Intercultural Development Research Association
<http://www.idra.org>

League of United Latin American Citizens
<http://www.lulac.org>

Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund
<http://www.maldef.org>

National Association for the Advancement of Colored People
<http://www.naACP.org>

National Council of La Raza
<http://www.nclr.org>

South Central Collaborative for Equity, IDRA
http://www.idra.org/South_Central_Collaborative_for_Equity

Southern Poverty Law Center
<http://www.splcenter.org>



Next actions:

By when:

Who else should we involve?

What resources do we need?

César Chávez :

The end of all education should surely be service to others. We cannot seek achievement for ourselves and forget about the progress and prosperity for our community. Our ambitions must be broad enough to include the aspirations and needs of others for their sake and for our own."

"El final en toda educación debe ser, sin duda alguna, el servicio a otros. No podemos procurar realizarnos nosotros mismos y olvidarnos del progreso y prosperidad de nuestra comunidad. Nuestras ambiciones deben ser suficientemente amplias para incluir las aspiraciones y necesidades de otros por su bienestar y por el propio."



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