



PTA Comunitario

The Power of Family Leadership in Education... with a Powerful Twist

Community members come together. They partner with schools. Students excel.

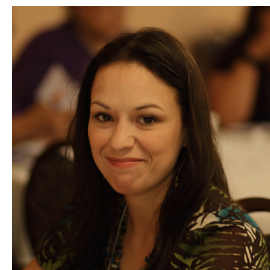
Meaningful family and community engagement is a critical element for strengthening schools. IDRA has transformed the traditional PTA organizational model into a more effective vehicle for parents who have been previously excluded or underserved through a mutual school-home partnership in support of children's academic and social success.

PTA Comunitarios gather family leaders in Texas' poorest communities. First started in the ARISE South Tower Center, PTA Comunitario meetings are bringing families together to examine Texas education policies and their implications for children's access to advanced placement, dual credit and pre-algebra courses; the state's education budget; and college readiness strategies. And they meet with school administrators to talk about shared concerns.

PTA Comunitarios are Different than Traditional PTAs

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

- Community-based organizations sponsor and collaborate with schools to establish and maintain PTA Comunitarios. Collaboration includes co-planning, sharing in responsibilities for outreach and conducting ongoing activities to improve education in their neighborhood public schools.
- Family leadership in education takes the place of traditional parent volunteerism and fundraising.
- Meetings and activities are conducted primarily in Spanish. Because this approach grew out of work with grassroots community organizations working with the poor English-learning recent immigrant families living in unincorporated and isolated communities (colonias) of south Texas, the meetings must be linguistically appropriate and culturally competent.
- The organization follows the essential elements of establishing a formal PTA, and it elects officers who hold monthly membership meetings and pay the required dues. Leaders are elected from the participating families regardless of formal education, class or language capabilities.
- Meetings include public school educational information and actionable data that leads to projects carried out by the membership.
- Centered on a promotoras, or peer organizing model, volunteer leaders from the community serve and engage families in education as leaders and for collective action to improve schools. Outreach and connection with families is critical to family participation, and transportation services are provided or organized to make possible attendance at events.
- PTA Comunitarios engage and support family leaders in the colonias or other marginalized neighborhoods, not to play auxiliary or fundraising roles in schools, but to examine data on how their own children, and children across the region, are doing and partner with their schools to expand educational opportunity.
- Connections are established with schools attended by the children of the members although the PTA Comunitario keeps an independent and separate identity.



"What all of our families have in common is a deep and fervent interest in our children's future... Families, ARISE and IDRA, our "village," are making every effort to make sure our children get an excellent education in a safe environment."

— Lourdes Flores, President, ARISE Support Center and co-founder, PTA Comunitario

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Neighborhood Public Schools Belong to their Communities

The idea that parents don't care about education is a myth. When families are treated with dignity and respect, they become the strongest long-term advocates for a quality public education for all children.

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

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

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



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