



The Institute for Democratic Education in America | democraticeducation.org

P.O. Box 452 • Tarrytown, NY 10591

Contact: Melia Dicker, Communications Director

1-800-878-5740, ext. 3

cell: 601-862-4886

mdicker@democraticeducation.org

www.democraticeducation.org

For immediate release.

May 4, 2010

Education startup advocates for a democratic approach to education.

The Institute for Democratic Education in America (IDEA) launches publicly in the US this week with launch parties in communities around the country. In locations that include New York, Mississippi, California, and Hawaii, people are gathering in homes and public spaces to discuss what they can do to transform the American education system. Whereas the national debate about education reform tends to focus on how much standardized testing is appropriate, IDEA advocates for true change: an education that develops student motivation and social responsibility.

IDEA's launch also marks the release of a provocative video short, "Make Your Voice Heard" that was produced by award-winning filmmakers at PureWest. The video showcases some of the many schools and programs whose students are already learning skills that they can use outside of classroom walls.

Inspired by the success found by Yaacov Hecht and the Institute for Democratic Education in Tel Aviv, Israel, IDEA co-founder Dana Bennis hopes that IDEA can fuel substantial education reform based in democratic values and human rights. Bennis co-founded IDEA with educators Scott Nine, Jonah Canner, Melia Dicker, and Chris Balme, a recent Ashoka fellow.

"Throughout the U.S. there are teachers, young people, parents, and others who are frustrated with the current nature of schooling yet don't have the support or resources to make changes in their schools and communities," says Bennis.

IDEA will provide the tools that educators, youth, parents, and activists need to fuel research-based, accountable, and relevant educational change based on democratic values and human rights. For example, teachers can download lesson plans designed to maximize student voice and choice in the classroom.

"Many of the efforts to reform or reimagine schools are either too distant from teachers and students, too deeply ideological and dogmatic, or lack accountability for their impact on youth and the planet." says IDEA's incoming Executive Director, Scott Nine.

"We think there is a deep need for an organization that can listen, that asks bigger questions than how to improve test scores, but also is rooted in research and sees the value of assessment and discussions of quality," says Nine. "We hope IDEA can meet that need."

The organization plans to accomplish its goal of transformative educational change through a community-driven website, social media, local organizing, training, and consulting.

Scott Nine and Dana Bennis are each available to talk with interested press.