

Dr. Paula Johnson

Biography

Dr. Johnson is an education associate at IDRA with more than 25 years of experience developing educational programs and integrating STEM and instructional technology into classrooms. She holds a bachelor of science in math and a minor in computer science from Prairie View A&M University, a master of arts in education with a concentration in instructional technology from the University of Texas at San Antonio, and a master of science in progress with a concentration in mathematics from Prairie View A&M University.

She earned her doctorate in the Interdisciplinary Learning and Teaching program at University of Texas at San Antonio. Her research foci include: (1) curriculum and instruction related to females and minorities in STEM, (2) equity in education, and (3) learner identity. She holds a lifetime secondary mathematics certificate.

Dr. Johnson directs the IDRA EAC-South, spearheading its work in assisting states and school districts to protect students' civil rights and provide equal educational opportunities for all students. She leads the center's technical assistance and professional development pertaining to diversity, cultural competency, underrepresentation in advanced courses, and disproportional disciplinary actions against students of color. The IDRA EAC-South builds bridges among administrators, teachers, parents, students and community members so that all stakeholders can find that common higher ground where all students will benefit regardless of race, sex or national origin. The IDRA EAC-South is one of four federally-funded centers that provide technical assistance and training at the request of school districts and other responsible governmental agencies to build capacity of local educators to ensure a more equitable learning environment for all students.

Dr. Johnson has served public schools systems in two of Texas' largest school districts as a classroom teacher, department chair, academic coach and district curriculum specialist for mathematics. During her service, she has designed and developed several technology-infused math intervention programs for students struggling to master competencies required to meet expectations on state assessments.

She has implemented IDRA's Math Smart! professional development program that focuses on increasing access to mathematics for all students. Math Smart! presents a shift in mathematical thinking for instructors that develops the five dimensions of mathematical proficiency using scientifically-based researched strategies. Math Smart! is an interactive, high-tech model that addresses teacher knowledge, teacher practice and parent-school collaboration through coaching and mentoring. The impact has been significant with the majority of schools meeting AYP within one to two years of implementation, and teacher leadership and instructional transformation evident through classroom observations and improved student achievement, as demonstrated through student success on state-mandated tests.

For several years Dr. Johnson led the professional development program for one of IDRA's Transitions to Teaching projects, MASS (Math and Science Smart), funded by the U.S. Department of Education to recruit and prepare elementary, middle, and high school teachers to serve English language learners and diverse student populations. Similarly, she continues to create and deliver professional training on mathematics instruction, assessment and curriculum standards, fostering positive student-teacher relationships, technology, student engagement, and differentiated instruction.

Dr. Johnson has served in the education field for more than 25 years. From 2001 to 2010, she has held positions as a district curriculum and instructional specialist, mathematics department chair, academic coach and instructor at the high school level. In addition to her high school experience, she was a PREP program logic and problem solving instructor for many years. This University of Texas at San Antonio Pre-freshman Engineering Program encourages young potential engineers to develop skills in the areas of computer science, engineering, logic and problem solving. Dr. Johnson has developed and directed two summer transition courses for incoming ninth graders, Algebridge (Cypress-Fairbanks ISD) and Algebra CAMP (Northside ISD). These summer programs were designed to provide a solid foundation of Algebra I for students who had had difficulty with middle school math or assessments. Both programs supported a strong concentration on hands-on activities and high student engagement in an effort to model the level of rigor students would face in Algebra I.

The Intercultural Development Research Association is an independent, non-profit organization, led by Celina Moreno, J.D. Our mission is to achieve equal educational opportunity for every child through strong public schools that prepare all students to access and succeed in college. IDRA strengthens and transforms public education by providing dynamic training; useful research, evaluation, and frameworks for action; timely policy analyses; and innovative materials and programs.