Five Texas Regions Have Persistently High Student Attrition Rates
Racial-Ethnic Gaps Have Increased in All Regions

San Antonio (April 5, 2011) – Three of 20 regions in Texas have higher high school attrition rates than they did 24 years ago. **Overall, Texas schools are losing one-third of their students.** IDRA has released detailed findings showing that five Texas regions have persistently high rates of losing students from public school enrollment. Education Service Center regions with traditionally high attrition rates are: Region 1 (Edinburg), Region 4 (Houston), Region 10 (Richardson), Region 19 (El Paso) and Region 20 (San Antonio).

The numbers of students lost to attrition in 2009-10 ranged from a low of 422 students in Region 9 (Wichita Falls) to a high of 27,953 students in Region 4 (Houston).

Seventeen regions had improved attrition rates compared to IDRA's inaugural study 24 years ago. Fifteen regions had improved attrition rates over the previous year, and the other five regions remained the same. Yet no region has had an attrition rate lower than 13 percent at any point in IDRA's current or previous studies.

"Since 1984, when Texas began counting dropouts, we have lost more than 3 million students. The **cumulative cost is $927 billion** in foregone income, lost tax revenues and increased job training, welfare, unemployment and criminal justice costs," stated Dr. María "Cuca" Robledo Montecel, IDRA President & CEO.

IDRA has been releasing attrition data each year for Texas schools using the same methodology since its inaugural statewide study in 1986, making year-to-year comparisons meaningful. This study examines regional trends in Texas for the number and percent of students lost from public high school enrollment prior to graduation.

For the most part, the highest attrition rates are concentrated in regions with the largest student enrollment counts, particularly those in urban areas and those with the largest low-income and minority populations.

In all regions, the **gap between the attrition rates** of White students and Black students has increased dramatically, some by more than 18 points. In 13 regions, the gap between the attrition rates of White students and Hispanic students has increased as well.

The regions with the worst attrition rates for Black students are: Region 20 (San Antonio), 41 percent; Region 14 (Abilene), 39 percent; Region 4 (Houston), 35 percent; Region 11 (Fort Worth, 35 percent; and Region 12 (Waco), 35 percent.

The regions with the worst attrition rates for Hispanic students are: Region 10 (Richardson), 45 percent; Region 11 (Fort Worth), 42 percent; Region 7 (Kilgore), 42 percent; and Region 4 (Houston), 42 percent.

"Given the changing demographics in our public schools, Texas cannot afford to educate some students and not others," Dr. Robledo Montecel added. "We cannot continue funding gaps; we cannot put our children in over-crowded classes; we cannot dumb down the curriculum and track our kids into vocational classes; we cannot cut college financial aid; and we cannot release schools from their responsibility to provide an excellent education for every child."

In Austin, proposed cuts in education will likely lead to cuts in dropout prevention programs as well as staffing of support personnel who help guide students who are on the margins. At the same time, as students struggle to succeed in a budget cut-back, watered-down school environment, even more will find themselves pushed to the margins. Considering the persistently high attrition rates in some regions, targeted resources and support services to schools and communities will be needed in these regions.

The annual attrition studies released by IDRA include regional- and county-level data by race and ethnicity. **Trend graphs** of high school attrition in each Texas region and each county are available online.

IDRA's **Quality School Action Framework** guides communities and schools in identifying weak areas and strengthening public schools' capacities to graduate and prepare all students for success. IDRA's new book, ***Courage to Connect – A Quality Schools Action Framework™*** shows how communities and schools can work together to be successful with all of their students. The book's web page (http://www.idra.org/couragetoconnect) provides a table of contents, excerpt, related podcasts and other resources. In addition, IDRA has developed a one-page **School Holding Power Checklist** with a set of criteria for assessing and selecting effective dropout prevention strategies and for making sure your school is a quality school.

Visit http://www.idra.org/Press_Room/ to view the report, attrition by county and region, and background information.
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IDRA Attrition Study & Resources Online

Attrition and Dropout Rates in Texas website
http://www.idra.org/Research/Attrition/

Regional Study – High School Attrition Rates Across Texas Education Service Center Regions, 2009-10
http://www.idra.org/images/stories/Texas_Regional_Attrition_Study_0910.pdf

2010 Statewide and County-Level Study – Texas Public School Attrition Study, 2009-10
http://www.idra.org/images/stories/IDRA_Attrition_Study_2010.pdf

Supplemental Analysis – Sluggish Attrition Rate Descent Means 1.9 Million to 3.5 Million More Texas Students May be Lost
http://www.idra.org/images/stories/Zero_Attrition_2010.pdf

Look Up Your Region or **Look Up Your County** – See attrition rates and numbers over time
http://www.idra.org/Attrition/Study/Look_Up_Your_Education_Service_Center/
http://www.idra.org/wrapper/

Tool – **Quality School Holding Power Checklist**
http://www.idra.org/images/stories/QualitySHPChecklist_2010.pdf

OurSchool data portal – see district- and high school-level data (**in Spanish**)
http://www.idra.org/OurSchool
http://www.idra.org/OurSchoolsp

Courage to Connect: A Quality Schools Action Framework
http://www.idra.org/couragetoconnect/

Overview of the **Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program**, which keeps 98 percent of students in school
http://www.idra.org/Coca-Cola_Valued_Youth_Program.html/

Ideas and Strategies for Action
http://www.idra.org/School_Holding_Power/Communities_in_Action/

Set of **principles for policymakers** and school leaders
http://www.idra.org/School_Holding_Power/Policy_Principles/

Classnotes Podcast: "Counting Dropouts"
http://www.idra.org/Podcasts/Resources/Counting_Dropouts/

Graduation for All E-letter (English/Spanish)
http://www.idra.org/School_Holding_Power/Graduation_for_All_e-Letter/

Frequently Asked Questions
http://www.idra.org/Press_Room/Reporter_Resources/Frequently_Asked_Questions/

Listing of other dropout and graduation studies
http://www.idra.org/Attrition/Study/Dropout_and_Graduation_Studies/

See www.delicious.com/IDRA for **related articles and studies** (keyword: dropouts)
http://www.delicious.com/IDRA