



IDRA Research for Fair Funding

Throughout IDRA's history, our research has assessed fair funding policy efforts undertaken in Texas and other states to examine progress made toward achieving equity in school funding for all students. These efforts have served to inform policymakers, educators and communities about areas where additional reforms are needed and have included specific recommendations to help achieve more equitable funding systems. IDRA fair funding research has impacted policy dating back to IDRA's inception, leading toward reductions in gaps in funding between property poor and property wealthy school systems. IDRA founder, Dr. José A. Cárdenas, summarized IDRA's first two decades of this work in [Texas School Finance Reform: An IDRA Perspective](#). IDRA later published [The Status of School Finance Equity in Texas – A 2009 Update](#) summarizing changes that had occurred by that point and identifying changes that were still needed.

IDRA's research on funding for English language learners also has informed state and national policy including our seminal bilingual education cost studies for Texas, Colorado and Utah in the 1970s, finding that the lack of equitable and sufficient funding for special programs has been a continuing problem for decades.

In addition to informing the policymaking process, IDRA's research has been used in court cases related to equity in funding dating back to the 1970s up to the current school funding equity case in Texas. Our research has informed several court rulings requiring that the state of Texas change its public school funding system in order to make it more equitable for all students and communities. (See [February 2014 story](#)).

Samples from IDRA's Early Childhood Education Research and Development Work

Data Analysis – 1970s

The story of IDRA's research in the area of school finance consists of a cyclical process of conducting studies, producing publications and interpreting legislation. This began in 1973 when IDRA was founded. The next year, IDRA created what was then a unique database detailing the current system of school finance in Texas to better inform the public and officials. It was to be designed using information provided by TEA and TEE's own research initiatives to provide the capability for a district-to-district comparison of school finances, demographics, and educational programs and services. Early research studies included:

- An Analysis of Educational Resources Available to Anglo and Mexican American Students in Texas School Districts.
- An Analysis of Educational Resources Available to Anglo and Black Students in the Texas School Districts.
- An Analysis of the Education Resources Available to Persons of Different Income Levels in Texas School Districts.
- An Analysis of the Relationship between School District Wealth, the Income Level, and Ethnicity of School District Residents in Texas.
- A Study of the Cost and Impact of Conventional Models of School Finance in Texas.
- Estimates of the Cost of Education vs. the Cost of Not Educating in Texas.

Bilingual Education Cost Analyses

In the early years of special population programs, the lack of research data regarding add-on costs associated with delivering supplemental services to students with special needs led to arbitrary levels of funding for such programs. IDRA conducted one of the earliest cost studies of bilingual programs in the mid-1970s. In that seminal bilingual education cost study, the IDRA research team used a panel of experts methodology to identify what practitioners in the field of bilingual education considered to be critical elements of an effective bilingual education program (*Bilingual Education Cost Analysis*, Cárdenas, Bernal & Kean, 1976). In the IDRA-developed bilingual education cost model, only those costs unique to the implementation of the specialized program were considered. The initial IDRA study focused on implementing bilingual programs in Texas. Later replications of the study by IDRA included analyses of bilingual programs costs in the states of Colorado (*Bilingual Education Cost Analysis: Colorado*, Robledo, Zarate & Guss-Zamora, 1978) and Utah (*Utah: Bilingual Education Cost Analysis*, Guss-Zamora, Zarate & Robledo, 1979). These later two studies determined that, in addition to the basic costs identified in the Texas study, Colorado and Utah costs included additional resources needed to recruit and retain bilingual teachers, a resource much more available in Texas than in most other states around the country.

The Cost of Inequity in Education – A Review of Policy-Related Research (Issue brief).

This literature review looks at the policy-related research regarding education and the cost of inequity. Research has established that the benefits of providing additional schooling for a greater percentage of students far outweigh the additional expenses that are associated with keeping more students enrolled all the way to graduation from high school and college. (Cortez, 2010). [This issue brief is available online.](#)

Analysis for Litigation

IDRA provided expert analyses to inform numerous court cases regarding equitable school funding, including *Edgewood vs. Kirby I*; *Edgewood vs. Kirby II*; *Edgewood vs. Kirby III*; *Edgewood vs. Kirby IV* and *Edgewood V* along with *West Orange-Cove vs. Neeley case in 2005* and the current *Texas Taxpayer and Student Fairness Coalition vs. Michael Williams, et al.* IDRA's initial report from the most recent Texas school funding case is online: ["The Extent of Equity in the Texas School Finance System and Its Impact on Selected Student Related Issues."](#)