

Increasing School Holding Power for All Students

**– Part 1: Overview of IDRA Research on
Dropouts and School Holding Power**

**Dr. María “Cuca” Robledo Montecel
Executive Director,
Intercultural Development Research Association**

**NDPC-SD Teleseminar
December 8, 2005**

Introduction

- ❖ Materials
 - ❖ IDRA Quick Facts
 - ❖ From “Dropping Out” to “Holding On” – Seven Lessons from Texas
 - ❖ Quality Schools Action Framework

Objectives

- ❖ Review IDRA's major research on the dropout issue and prevention strategies
- ❖ Review a proven dropout prevention program: the Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program and its critical elements
- ❖ Present a new framework for transforming schools

Missing: Texas Youth

❖ Brief History of IDRA's Work

- ❖ 1986 Texas Dropout Survey Project
- ❖ Measure magnitude of school dropout problem in Texas
- ❖ Determine benefit/cost of impact of dropouts on criminal justice and human services systems
- ❖ Identify and evaluate in-school and alternative programs for dropouts in Texas

1986: A Landmark Study

- ❖ Commissioned by Texas Department of Community Affairs and the Texas Education Agency
- ❖ First comprehensive study of school dropouts in Texas

Initial Finding

In 1986, Texas did not collect nor have its school systems collect, any information on number or characteristics of students who dropped out before graduation.

IDRA Attrition Rate

- ❖ Start with ninth grade enrollment and see how many of those ninth graders are enrolled in the 12th grade.
- ❖ Adjust 12th grade enrollment for growth/loss to ninth grade cohort (in-out migration)

Major Findings

- ❖ 86,000 students did not graduate from Texas public schools in 1986
 - ❖ 33 percent of Texas students dropped out of school during their high school years
- ❖ Cost the state \$17.12 billion in foregone income, lost tax revenues, and increased criminal justice, welfare, unemployment and job training costs

State Impact

- ❖ Following the study, TEA was required to calculate and report dropout rates by campus, district, county and regional service center for each grade level from seven to 12 by race and ethnicity.

In the Meantime

- ❖ IDRA's attrition formula has remained the same
- ❖ Other researchers have corroborated IDRA's attrition numbers (Gary Orfield, Harvard Civil Rights Project, Walt Haney, NCES) and validated attrition as an estimate

What IDRA and Others Have Determined About Texas Since Then

- ❖ Since 1986, Texas schools have lost 2.2 million students with an estimated net loss of \$500 billion.
- ❖ Texas schools are losing one student every four minutes.

- ❖ The picture has not changed much in 19 years:
 - ❖ In 1985-86, Texas schools lost 33 percent of their students.
 - ❖ In 2004-05, 36 percent of students dropped out of Texas schools.

Dropouts Include All Groups

- ❖ Of those who dropout of Texas schools:
 - ❖ 22 percent are White students,
 - ❖ 48 percent are Hispanic students, and
 - ❖ 43 percent are African American students.

Dropout Prevention in 1986

- ❖ About one out of 10 Texas school districts reported having a dropout prevention program
- ❖ Nine out of 10 dropout programs had no evaluation data

In 2005...

- ❖ Many, many students are leaving Texas schools without every earning their high school diploma.
- ❖ Schools are still not effectively evaluating effectiveness of dropout prevention efforts.
- ❖ The state has focused more on lowering the dropout numbers rather than on lowering the numbers of dropouts.

Dallas Dropout Study

- ❖ 1986: 30-month study of dropout issue in Dallas Independent School District
- ❖ Purpose: To identify factors contributing to and preventing student dropouts

Methods

- ❖ IDRA interviewed students who dropped out (N=200) and students still in school (N=200)
- ❖ IDRA interviewed parents of both groups

Major Findings

- ❖ Students first think about leaving school while still in middle school.
- ❖ Most leave school between eighth and ninth grades, and ninth and 10th grades.
- ❖ If a student's mother is foreign born, the student has a greater chance of *staying* in school.

Major Findings

- ❖ Students tend to leave school if they:
 - ❖ Change schools often
 - ❖ Work more than 15 hours per week
 - ❖ Are behind in academics and get no support
 - ❖ Are retained in grade
 - ❖ Are bored with classes
 - ❖ Are encouraged by school personnel to leave

Major Findings

- ❖ Students tend to stay in school if they believe there is someone who cares about them and if they are involved in school activities

Arizona Dropout Study in 2002

- ❖ Conducted by IDRA for Arizona Minority Education Policy Analysis Center (AMEPAC)
- ❖ Purposes:
 - ❖ Develop estimates of dropouts
 - ❖ Develop estimated costs to state of Arizona
 - ❖ Identify effective dropout prevention programs

Major Findings

- ❖ State of Arizona system of counting dropouts is less complex than other states
- ❖ 31 percent of students (21,472) were lost from the 1997 freshman class
- ❖ Hispanic students (43 percent) and Native American students (48 percent) have highest dropout rates

Arizona Dropout Study

- ❖ Few programs have research or evaluation data.
- ❖ Arizona has no central clearinghouse on dropout prevention programs for the state.



INTERCULTURAL DEVELOPMENT RESEARCH ASSOCIATION

5835 CALLAGHAN ROAD, SUITE 350

SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS 78228-1190

210-444-1710 • 210-444-1714

CONTACT@IDRA.ORG • WWW.IDRA.ORG

Creating schools that work for all children