



Focus: Curriculum Quality

<i>Using Semillitas de aprendizaje™</i>	3
<i>Cultivating Learner Success</i>	5
<i>Texas Regional Attrition Study</i>	7

When It Doesn't Add Up – Developing a New Formula for Math Education

by Paula Martin Johnson, M.A.

Mathematics literacy is essential for any child to be prepared for the future. The National Mathematics Advisory Panel asserts that we can no longer accept that a rigorous mathematics education be reserved for those who intend to enter science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) related fields (2008). Gauging student success in mathematics, however, goes far beyond state exams, aptitude tests, college entrance exams and international assessments.

The manner in which we teach must address more than the content alone. There are three major components of a high quality mathematics curriculum: quantity, sequence and rigor. We must prepare learners for the potential application of mathematical concepts, problem-solving and high cognitive thinking that will be crucial in a technology driven society. The national workforce of future years will surely have to handle quantitative concepts more fully and more deftly than at present.

Past president of the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM) Cathy Seeley suggests that, when a school's or district's mathematics performance differs significantly from group to group, the system has a problem not with an underachieving group but with its mathematics program (2009). Furthermore, in order to reach our full potential, we must take a hard look at reality. To launch today's student into the expanding digital

generation, math curriculum must adopt a new format and method of delivery for instruction.

We live in an innovative world, the Information Age. The number of vocations that demand a high level of aptitude in the use of mathematics, or mathematical modes of thinking, has flourished with the progress of technology. Yet in this time of ever-advancing technologies, we fall short as a nation in our effort to develop a culture of individuals capable of sustaining and continuing this growth. This country is accustomed to being a world leader in innovation. However, the last decades have proven that we are in fact losing the battle to maintain that position in the economic and education communities.

The Trends in International Math and Science Study (TIMSS) was designed to evaluate student performance worldwide on traditional classroom content at targeted grade levels in math and science. U.S. eighth graders placed ninth overall in 2007, rising from 15th in 2003.

In contrast, the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) exams, first given in 2000, aim at measuring literacy of 15-year-old school students in math, science and reading. Based on assessment results, the United States' ranking in mathematics has fallen from 24 in 2003 to 30 in 2009.

(cont. on Page 2)

“Schools must change and innovate, providing challenging curriculum to match the characteristics of their students and embracing the strengths and contributions that students and their families bring.”

– Dr. María “Cuca” Robledo Montecel, IDRA President and CEO

(When It Doesn't Add Up – Developing a New Formula for Math Education, continued from Page 1)

What to teach...

Contemporary U.S. education systems build curriculum programs that incorporate numerous concepts over a short amount of time. Broad topics within narrow time frames, sometimes referred to as a “surface” approach to instruction, follow an “inch deep, mile wide” pattern. Topics that are launched at too early an age then with too little depth are not cemented into the learner’s understanding.

The preferred approach would pursue an enriching “inch wide, mile deep” philosophy, providing students with the needed time to be introduced to, process and apply new concepts. This is imperative to nurturing a community of problem-solvers.

The trend in the highest-performing countries on TIMSS (Singapore, Japan, Korea, Hong Kong, Flemish Belgium, and the Czech Republic), sometimes called the “A+ countries,” is to cover fewer topics in greater depth over the course of an academic year (NMAP, 2008). The primary challenge is to determine which elements of each course are considered interesting but not useful; those that are useful but not critical; and finally the attributes that are critically important to the development of a student’s mathematical reasoning, thinking and self-evaluation skills. With this achieved, educators can design a syllabus allocating suitable amounts of time for each area of focus. These actions enable learners to gain higher-order knowledge as they progress in their sequence of courses.

...and when do we teach it?

Progressive instruction runs concurrent with the selection of vital subject matter. Research has found that, in comparison to our “A+” counterparts, topics in the United States are not presented in a logical, step-by-step order (Hook, et al., 2007). Content

tends to be introduced in isolation, without relating items to components found in other areas of the mathematical sequence, minimizing concepts’ connectedness.

This is most influential in elementary school, where teachers do not usually have advanced education in mathematics. They are inclined to rely on prescribed textbook scope and sequences to determine the curriculum calendar, rather than on a foundational understanding of the mathematics series.

Common among many U.S. schools, our intended content is highly repetitive. We introduce topics early and then repeat them year after year (Schmidt, et al., 2002). To make matters worse, very little depth is added each time the topic is addressed because each year we devote much of the time to reviewing the topic. The results leave us with curriculum that is not very demanding by international standards. This is especially true in the middle school years, when the relative performance of U.S. students declines. During these years, the rest of the world shifts its attention from the basics of arithmetic and elementary science to beginning concepts in algebra, geometry, chemistry and physics.

In the end, how are we going to teach what we have deemed imperative? TIMSS has observed that even when teachers begin with a challenging student task, they frequently provide excessive guidance or intervene at the first signs of difficulty. We must, as a community of educators, realize that we can guide students’ learning without doing so much of the work for them, spoon-feeding information. As it is when babies learn to walk, students must learn to problem-solve by trial and error. Seeley purports that we should teach in ways that present students with challenging problems, help them build perseverance, and develop their creativity

and mathematical perspective (2009).

Greater consistency and quality across schools and districts in the United States can be achieved through a common, coherent curriculum. As found in A+ countries, virtually all students through the eighth grade have a common curriculum, independent of their socio-economic status, location, race or gender. The children of this nation deserve the greatest exposure to a rich, sequential, and rigorous curriculum that will broaden their minds and prepare them for the technical workforce of the future.

Resources

- Hook, W., & W. Bishop, J. Hook, J. “A Quality Math Curriculum in Support of Effective Teaching for Elementary Schools,” *Educational Studies in Mathematics* (2007) Vol. 65, 125-148.
- Mullis, I.V.S., & M.O. Martin, G.J. Ruddock, C.Y. O’Sullivan, C. Preuschoff. *TIMSS 2011 Assessment Frameworks* (Chestnut Hill, Mass.: TIMSS & PIRLS International Study Center, September 2009).
- National Mathematics Advisory Panel. *The Final Report of the National Mathematics Advisory Panel* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Education, 2008).
- Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development. *PISA 2009 Results: What Makes a School Successful?: Resources, Policies and Practices (Volume IV)* (OECD Publishing, 2010).
- Seeley, C. *Faster Isn’t Smarter: Messages About Math, Teaching, and Learning in the 21st Century* (Sausalito, Calif.: Math Solutions, 2009).
- Schmidt, W., & R. Houang L. Cogan. “A Coherent Curriculum – The Case of Mathematics,” *American Educator* (2002) Vol. 26(2), 3-18.

Paula Martin Johnson, M.A., is an education associate in IDRA Field Services. Comments and questions may be directed to her via e-mail at comment@idra.org.

The Intercultural Development Research Association (IDRA) is a non-profit organization with a 501(c)(3) tax exempt status. The purpose of the organization is to disseminate information concerning equality of educational opportunity.

The IDRA Newsletter (ISSN 1069-5672, ©2011) serves as a vehicle for communication with educators, school board members, decision-makers, parents, and the general public concerning the educational needs of all children in Texas and across the United States.

Permission to reproduce material contained herein is granted provided the article or item is reprinted

www.idra.org

in its entirety and proper credit is given to IDRA and the author. Please send a copy of the material in its reprinted form to the IDRA Newsletter production offices. Editorial submissions, news releases, subscription requests, and change-of-address data should be submitted in writing to the IDRA Newsletter production editor. The IDRA Newsletter staff welcomes your comments on editorial material.

Portions of the contents of this newsletter were developed under a grant from the U.S. Department of Education. However, those contents do not necessarily represent the policy of the U.S. Department of Education, and endorsement by the federal government should not be assumed.

Publication offices:
5815 Callaghan Road, Suite 101
San Antonio, Texas 78228
210-444-1710; Fax 210-444-1714
www.idra.org | contact@idra.org

Maria Robledo Montecel, Ph. D.
IDRA President and CEO
Newsletter Executive Editor

Christie L. Goodman, APR
IDRA Communication Manager
Newsletter Production Editor

Sarah H. Aleman
Secretary
Newsletter Layout



Using Semillitas de aprendizaje™ in the Early Childhood Classroom

by Juanita C. García, Ph.D., and Rosana G. Rodríguez, Ph.D.

Teachers and parents have a unique opportunity to share in preparing young children in early literacy and language development. Effective preschool programs designed by IDRA as Centers of Excellence reinforce the need for mutual goal setting, language- and vocabulary-rich environments, and delightful stories that captivate a child's imagination and foster creative thinking.

IDRA's newest resource for teachers and parents, *Semillitas de aprendizaje*, stems from research conducted in our Reading Early for Academic Development (READ) project, funded by the U.S. Department of Education. The series offers a unique bilingual set of early childhood materials based on the art of storytelling. Each *cuento* of the theme-based curriculum encourages the richness of language and print. It is designed to help early childhood teachers and parents encourage communication and language exploration through literature discussions in both Spanish and English.

Young children begin the process of learning to read at birth. Experiences such as being read to and playing with words and letters help children develop the vocabulary and knowledge base they need to be readers and writers. *Semillitas de aprendizaje* encourages early literacy experiences by basing each classroom lesson unit on a book and its message, using music and songs to promote awareness of sounds and structure of language, and including activities that encourage conversations and descriptions of their learning.

The curriculum reflects elements of Ellen Galinsky's (2010) seven essential life skills every child needs to thrive as life-long learners and to take on life's challenges: focus and self-control, perspective taking, communicating, making connections, critical thinking, taking on challenges, and self-directed engaged learning. These skills give children the ability to focus on goals, expand their intellectual capacity, cultivate strong, positive self-esteem and stimulate intellectual

curiosity. Using culturally appropriate and robust language encourages children to learn easily and communicate what they have learned.

The Literacy Connection

Semillitas de aprendizaje focuses on the important connection between language and literacy by providing meaningful language and literacy experiences for children during every part of the daily classroom experience. Given that listening, speaking, reading and writing develop together, lesson activities promote early high levels of academic language. Early literacy is a vital academic skill in school readiness, and school learning is contingent upon literacy development. Learning to read is highly dependent on children's language skills and vocabulary development (Green, 2004). Understanding and using oral language (listening and speaking) is the first step in mastering printed language (reading and writing).

Research shows how language and literacy develop in young children, underscoring the connection between spoken and written language, with literacy emerging gradually in the early years. Reading and writing begin with learning language and looking at books in infancy and continuing through preschool years.

Semillitas de aprendizaje incorporates the Head Start Early Childhood competency indicators through literacy center activities that focus on listening and understanding, speaking and communicating, phonological awareness, comprehension, book knowledge and use, and print knowledge and emergent writing. Through storytelling, song and poetry reading with a spirit of valuing diversity, the curriculum encourages the use of rich language and print.

The framework used to create the lesson units for each story incorporates: speaking and communicating, listening, reading, writing, English transition, literacy connections and key
(cont. on Page 4)

As we walk through these lessons with our children in school and at home, let us do so through their fresh eyes, enthusiastically looking for the new, in joyful appreciation for what is, excited about the possibilities of what can be, and eager for more.

IDRA Texas PIRC

For more information about the Texas IDRA Parent Information and Resource Center or to request technical assistance, contact us at 210-444-1710 or contact@idra.org.

Additional resources are available online at www.idra.org/Texas_IDRA_PIRC.htm

funded by the U.S. Department of Education to serve the state of Texas

(Using *Semillitas de aprendizaje* in the Early Childhood Classroom, continued from Page 3)

vocabulary.

The first element of *Semillitas de aprendizaje* that IDRA has released is a set of Big Books that were recently featured in New Mexico's Dual Language Conference. La Cosecha, were celebrated at the San Antonio school district's Parent Institute at Education Service Center Region 20, and were presented at Harris County Department of Education Early Childhood Winter Conference in Houston.

Examples from Practice

Imagine a classroom where an ostrich, *La Chamaca Machaca*, prances about to the rhythm of the cha-cha-cha, and students join her in discovery of how to overcome loneliness, become more independent, and foster a positive self-concept by admiring and enjoying themselves in independent play. Chamaca reflects on her current state of affairs and soon creates her own song and dance to celebrate herself. In the process, she learns an important lesson about how to gain confidence, search for her own joy, and feel better about herself.

Introducing children playfully to concepts and words, such as *loneliness*, or *la soledad*, triggers an engaging pre-reading anticipation of how these relate to the story and artwork, depicting a beautiful, self-absorbed ostrich with flowing eyelashes, a huge red bow and a flurry of colorful feathers. These concepts serve as clues to help children predict the story outcome and relate it to their own lives. Music and dance help foster gross motor skills, coordination and motion. The story reinforces curiosity and initiative, engagement and persistence and reasoning and problem solving, all important elements of early learning. Phonetic awareness also is introduced through play with vowel and consonant sounds, rhyme and rhythm.

The spirit of evaluation for the curriculum is to improve learning and measure success. Periodic assessment of progress toward the objectives of each lesson helps the teacher make course adjustments and enrich the environment to promote learning, providing the individual support needed for each child to learn best. Teachers are encouraged to identify key concepts to be learned, specific questions to foster inquiry and measure success, and positive methods to share results with the home.

IDRA believes that children are our greatest gift, our future and our legacy. A child's self-esteem is built through a nurturing environment that presents material in a loving and supportive classroom and



semillitas

de aprendizaje™

Bilingual literacy development materials

- Based on the art of storytelling
- Culturally-relevant
- For classrooms with 3- and 4-year-olds
- Each set includes 10 Big Books
- Bilingual (Spanish/English)

View one of the books, *Dos Pollitas Listas*, online!

Listen to a Classnotes Podcast episode about *Semillitas de Aprendizaje*: "Bilingual Stories for Young Stories" online at www.idra.org/Podcasts

Titles

- El Curioso Tomás / Curious Tomás
- La Chamaca Machaca / Machaca the Ostrich
- El Collar de Margarita / Margarita's Necklace
- Los Números del 1 al 10 y otras Coplas
- Jesúsita y las Arañas / Jesúsita and the Spiders
- Confusión en el Circo / Confusion in the Circus
- Dos Pollitas Listas / Two Smart Chicks
- Mi Abrigo de Verano / My Summer Coat
- La Cajita de Primeros Auxilios / The First Aid Kit
- El Minero Jorge / Jorge, the Miner

Order your set of Big Books today!

Available from IDRA for \$75 per set plus shipping
210-444-1710 • www.idra.org

home that fosters inquiry and recognizes each developmental phase as a new opportunity for learning. A basic assumption of the curriculum is that of valuing children, an assumption that values their families, their neighborhoods, their ethnicity or race, language, culture and gender.

As we walk through these lessons with our children in school and at home, let us do so through their fresh eyes, enthusiastically looking for the new, in joyful appreciation for what is, excited about the possibilities of what can be, and eager for more. The delightful series will be accompanied by a set of home activity cards and preschool math and self concept books, soon to be released.

Resources

- Galinsky, E. *Mind in the Making: The Seven Essential Life Skills Every Child Needs* (New York: Harper Collins Books, 2010).
- Green, L.C. "Bilingual Word Power – Research-Based Vocabulary Strategies for English Language Learners," *IDRA Newsletter* (San Antonio, Texas: Intercultural Development Research Association, April 2004).
- Rodríguez, R.G., & A. Villarreal, B. Scott, J. Rodríguez. *Creating Centers of Learning at Home and at School* (San

Antonio, Texas: Intercultural Development Research Association, 2004).

Villarreal, A., & R. Rodríguez, B. Scott. "Responding to the Need for Bilingual Early Childhood Education Literacy Development – Semillitas de Aprendizaje New Curriculum in Development," *IDRA Newsletter* (San Antonio, Texas: Intercultural Development Research Association, March 2008).

Juanita C. García, Ph.D., is an education associate in IDRA Field Services. Rosana G. Rodríguez, Ph.D., is director of IDRA development. Comments and questions may be directed to them via e-mail at comment@idra.org.



Cultivating Learner Success

by Veronica Betancourt, M.A.

When dealing with curriculum, we often do just that – focus on curriculum. We buy the ancillary materials that have already been “aligned” with the standards. Yet all too often, these material investments pump up the hype and fall flat in delivery. Ultimately, such investments become empty promises because these efforts are not responsive to students who are considered culturally and linguistically diverse thus ensuring they are unable to effectively meet the expected achievement on state-mandated tests.

Consequently, a blaming effect of nuclear proportions radiates to students and parents, further disconnecting families from the educational experience. This scenario is not a fairy tale or a recount of an isolated incident. It is an epidemic that is creating panic and pressure for educators.

But the real question isn't about how to fix this problem, it is about evaluating ourselves and asking if we are *really* focused on being responsive to the needs of the learner, or if we are responding to someone else's mandates. It is about asking how we define student success or how it is defined for us.

Student success is really an ambiguous term, as it can have multiple meanings based on the context from which it is referring. Within the context of academics, student success is synonymous with standardized testing. The term can be so elusive that it isn't even listed in the *Facts and Terms Every Parent Should Know About NCLB* (U.S. Department of Education, 2009). The *No Child Left Behind Act* (NCLB) actually delineates measures that define achievement, not success. This reliance on standardized measures creates parameters that are then used to define who is successful and who is not.

The focus on using standardized measures excludes the process of identifying other means of determining student success. This becomes especially true when accountability at the national level is not all-inclusive unless it is focused on math and reading. All the while, social studies and science

aren't even deemed important enough to collect progress measures. Yet children are required to partake in each of these content areas as a minimum standard for graduation.

However, this should not be the *only* method of determining whether or not a child is deemed successful, as children cannot be labeled and simply categorized as “pass or fail.” The elements for student success can vary, but they are certainly more expansive than this. It is critical to consider the whole child and not define or predict the success of the child based on a standardized test that was randomly constructed from a bank of questions that at one point or another were deemed statistically valid. It is as absurd as quantifying teacher success based solely on passing rates of their classrooms or attempting to identify current student weaknesses by analyzing test scores from the previous year's cohort.

Before we can fully define and determine indicators for student success, we must first visit the influences that contribute to student success (Robledo Montecel & Goodman, 2010). We must consider the whole child, the whole teacher, the whole environment. We must be cognizant of the culture of the learner and create a classroom and campus culture that is responsive to them if we are to ensure equitable learning opportunities for *every* child.

The Campus and Classroom Culture

So, what does it take to help make the environment conducive for students to be successful? The culture of the campus radiates and influences the culture of the classroom, which in turn, determines the relationships and learning opportunities that students experience. As such, it is necessary for educators to realize that “regardless of culture, educational attainment and socioeconomic standing, all families have strengths” (Delgado-Gaitan, 2007; Robledo Montecel & Goodman, 2010), and children bring those strengths to
(cont. on Page 6)

There are behavioral, curricular and emotional expectations of the campus and the classroom. And unless these factors are responsive to learner needs and the strengths and assets they bring forth, we will continue to have the achievement gap that has existed for so long.

IDRA South Central Collaborative for Equity

For more information about the IDRA South Central Collaborative for Equity or to request technical assistance, contact us at 210-444-1710 or contact@idra.org.

Additional resources are available online at http://www.idra.org/South_Central_Collaborative_for_Equity/

funded by the U.S. Department of Education

(Cultivating Learner Success, continued from Page 5)

school. If we turn a blind eye to the rich cultural experiences that students bring, we are essentially sending a message that their family heritage, their family knowledge, their family beliefs, and their family traditions are insignificant and have no place in education.

The shift in perceptions is a difficult task, because public schools have a long tradition of transmission-based education – one where we simply transmit knowledge to students, with no regard to the shifting trends of society or the knowledge and cultures of its people. It is a hierarchy of trickle-down power that silences the stakeholders who most need to be heard.

There are behavioral, curricular and emotional expectations of the campus and the classroom. And unless these factors are responsive to learner needs and the strengths and assets they bring forth, we will continue to have the achievement gap that has existed for so long. Betancourt & Grayson (2010) note, “When teachers are compelled to enforce behavioral expectations from a culturally monochromatic lens, there is little or no consideration for students’ experiences [or] cultural perspectives.”

There must be a shift in the operating principles that are often deficit-driven and instead embrace the need for establishing: (1) a caring school climate that is responsive to those it serves; (2) a focus on learning that is meaningful and relevant for students; and (3) a culture of high expectations from all students (Waxman, et al., 2007).

Establishing the kind of classroom and campus environment that is conducive to the needs of its children requires that we reflect honestly at the current conditions we have helped to create, the manner in which we help contribute to and sustain it, and the courage we need to challenge and change it.

Resources

- Betancourt, V., & K. Grayson. “An Unspoken Culture Clash – The Deeper Culprit of Teacher Beliefs,” *IDRA Newsletter* (San Antonio, Texas: Intercultural Development Research Association, February 2010).
- Delgado-Gaitan, C. “Fostering Latino Parent Involvement in the Schools: Practices and Partnerships,” in Gullotta, T.P., & H.J. Walberg, R.P. Weissberg (eds.), *Narrowing the Achievement Gap: Strategies for Educating Latino, Black, and Asian Students* (New York: Springer Science, 2007) pp. 17-32.
- Robledo Montecel, M., & C. Goodman (eds). *Courage to Connect: A Quality Schools Action Framework* (San Antonio, Texas: Intercultural Development Research

Association, 2010).

U.S. Department of Education. “Facts and Terms Every Parent Should Know About NCLB,” website (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Education, no date).

Waxman, H.C., & Y.N. Padrón, & A. García. “Educational Issues and Effective Practices for Hispanic Students,” in Gullotta, T.P., & H.J. Walberg, R.P. Weissberg (eds.), *Narrowing the Achievement Gap: Strategies for Educating Latino, Black, and Asian Students* (New York: Springer Science, 2007) pp. 131-151.

Veronica Betancourt, M.A., is an education associate in IDRA Field Services. Comments and questions may be directed to her via e-mail at comment@idra.org.

Get More Online at IDRA's Newsletter Plus

- Information on IDRA's Math Smart! and Science Smart! professional development models
- Online flip book: *Dos Pollitas Listas*, a sample from the *Semillitas de Aprendizaje* Big Book series
- IDRA regional school attrition study for Texas
- School holding power & dropout prevention checklist
- Podcasts about curriculum quality

Visit www.idra.org for more information.

Math and Science for Elementary and Secondary Schools

Math Smart!™

Grounded in best practices research, IDRA's Math Smart! professional development model focuses on increasing mathematical proficiency and achievement for all students, while deepening teacher knowledge. Math Smart! can help you excite student learning in mathematics and increase mathematical proficiency and achievement for all students.

“IDRA is the reason we are off of AYP; now we can breathe and focus on our next goal: increasing the number of kids in higher level math.”

– Principal, South Texas

Science Smart!™

Customized to strengthen your existing science curriculum and pedagogy, Science Smart! helps teachers engage diverse learners through an authentic inquiry-based curriculum that is aligned with state standards.

Math Smart! and Science Smart! enrich teaching and learning with workshop training, co-teaching, mentoring, demonstration lessons, pre-classroom observations, mobile labs, video conferences, online discussions and reflection. Each package incorporates an array of real-time and dynamic technology tools.

Contact IDRA for details: 210-444-1710; contact@idra.org

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

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 proceed at this pace," 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

Resources Online

See the full regional attrition study online, along with many related resources.

Also, look up your county or region to see attrition rates and numbers over time.

www.idra.org/Research/Attrition/

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/couragetconnect>) 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.



INTERCULTURAL DEVELOPMENT RESEARCH ASSOCIATION
5815 CALLAGHAN ROAD, SUITE 101
SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS 78228

Non-Profit Organization

U.S. POSTAGE PAID

Permit No. 3192
San Antonio, TX 78228

Focus: Curriculum Quality

“A vital nation must have educational parity for all students and not parcel out one set of opportunities for some and minimal expectations for others. Schools and educators, especially teachers, must be supported with the tools they need to ensure their students’ success, including technology, mentoring programs, and high quality curriculum.”

— Dr. María “Cuca” Robledo
Montecel, IDRA President and CEO

Intercultural Development Research Association

Classnotes Podcast



Twice monthly, award-winning podcast for people who care about excellent and equitable education for all children.

New Classnotes Podcast Episodes

This award-winning podcast series for teachers and administrators explores issues facing U.S. education today and strategies to better serve every student.

- “Principal on Creating a College Going Culture,” featuring Roland Toscano, M.S.
- “Connecting Every Student to a Meaningful Future,” featuring Daniel P. King, Ph.D.
- “Valuing Students and Children,” featuring Linda Cantu, Ph.D.
- “Principal on Dramatic School Transformation,” featuring Dr. Lucious Brown and Sulema Carreón-Sánchez, M.A.
- “Teacher Communities of Practice,” featuring Josie D. Cortez, M.A.
- “Tool for Building Quality Schools,” featuring Aurelio M. Montemayor, M.Ed., and Bradley Scott, Ph.D.

Visit www.idra.org/Podcasts. Also available from iTunes. Free!

*Creating schools that work for all children
through research, materials development, training, technical assistance, evaluation and information dissemination*