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Taking Action on a Promise

by Bradley Scott, Ph.D., and Rosana G. Rodríguez, Ph.D.

As the nation challenges itself to reform public schools, increase teacher quality, engage parents, strengthen core content, and raise student achievement, we are still compelled to ask ourselves to what extent we have fulfilled the promise of *Brown vs. Board of Education* and *Mendez vs. Westminster*.

It was more than 50 years ago that the U.S. Supreme Court ruled, in *Brown vs. Board of Education*, that sending children to separate schools solely on the basis of race was unconstitutional. Seven years earlier, the ninth Circuit Court of Appeals similarly ruled, in the *Mendez vs. Westminster* case, that Mexican American children could not be denied a quality education because they were Mexican American.

Both of these cases suggested a promise for access to education that would be equitable, fair and free from discrimination. Such an education would properly prepare learners for competent, responsible citizenship as well as teach the skills and competen-

cies to build and sustain a productive professional career and life.

The question still remains: Has the promise of quality education that is fair, equitable and free from discrimination been realized for African American students and Latino students? More importantly, what must be done to make good on the promise?

Dr. María Robledo Montecel, executive director of IDRA, asked the question, "How can we create a future in which the color of a child's skin, the language a child speaks, and the side of town that child comes from are no longer barriers to a great education and a good life?"

As we attempt to answer this question, we have to accept that public education has diverging realities. On the one hand, there have been some reform efforts that improved education for many children across the nation. On the other hand, many disparities continue to exist that limit individual opportunity, weaken the potential of the nation's economy, and weaken the social and democratic health of the nation.

It was with these thoughts in

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mind that IDRA undertook an effort to create local responses to answer the question of a promise fulfilled or unfulfilled. With funding from the Annie E. Casey Foundation, IDRA convened a cross-sector, multi-racial group of educators, community members and parents to participate in dialogues in Dallas, Houston and Tyler, Texas. The dialogues focused on creating blueprints for action for improved educational opportunities for all children, and especially minority children.

These cities are uniquely suited for such an effort as they represent a microcosm of the changing demographics throughout the United States and, as in the case of Tyler, represent areas of Latino hyper-growth in regions that are historically African American and White.

During these Blueprints for Action meetings, participants examined local education and demographic information. They were challenged to create ways for education and community leaders to identify key educational issues within

The question still remains: Has the promise of quality education that is fair, equitable and free from discrimination been realized for African American students and Latino students?

their community and to identify blueprints for action outlining possibilities for realizing the spirit of *Brown* and *Mendez*.

The blueprint dialogues produced three important results:

1. There were new or strengthened alliances among groups, with local leaders committed to continuing the work through additional local dialogues.
2. Participants expressed a need for a process that could be used to guide the continued dialogues that also would move words to action.
3. With the information generated in the dialogues in the three communities, IDRA created a synthesis of ideas that served as the basis for a new publication, *A Community Action Guide – Seven Actions to Fulfill the Promise of Brown and Mendez*.

The guide contains two major sections. The first section presents the seven critical actions local communities must take to fulfill the promise of *Brown* and *Mendez*. The seven actions are:

1. **Protect civil rights** as the foundation of a viable healthy democracy, framed in the Declaration of Independence, guaranteed in the U.S. Constitution and codified by civil rights legislation.
2. **Engage community** to protect the civil rights of all children by holding states and schools accountable for excellence and equity in education.
3. **Demand fair funding** so that every child receives a quality education through fair and equitable distribution of resources.
4. **Hold schools accountable** for high

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Perspectives on the Texas Legislature's Latest School Funding Plan

by Albert Cortez, Ph.D.

In May, the Texas Legislature passed its long-awaited school funding plan, HB1. As a result, the gap in funding between wealthy school districts and all the rest will grow by hundreds of dollars per student, school districts will get across-the-board increases in funding without regard to wealth or need, special needs of districts and students will continue to be under-funded, schools will be saddled with an array of new “reforms” with very little promise of improving achievement and little or no new money to implement them, and the state will face a revenue shortfall by the 2007 legislative session.

No matter how much spin is touted by proponents of the latest plan to “improve” education in Texas, the outcome of the special session gets a grade of D. (The only reason it does not get an F is that some very limited increases in funding were provided to all schools.) Efforts by a number of legislative members to improve the outcome notwithstanding, Texas lawmakers once again fell far short of doing much that will improve either quality or equity in Texas public schools.

Compounding their failure was the fact that they spent over \$10 bil-

To allow such a unique opportunity where the chance for substantive tax reform was wasted to return the state to a level of inequity not seen since the early 1990s is nothing less than shameful.

lion of new state tax revenue, and close to \$3 billion of an unexpected “windfall” (from state funds that had been reserved for public education, but left un-appropriated in the 2005 regular legislative session), to accomplish very little.

With so much hype being generated by the state’s political leaders, it is helpful to take time to separate fact from fiction and then determine what has or has not really been achieved, and where the state needs to go from here.

Increased Inequity Takes Us Back a Decade

The legislature adopted a new provision to address the Supreme Court’s requirements related to “meaningful local discretion.” The new plan allows local districts to “enrich” the state’s foundation funding

by a total of 6¢ (up to 4¢ in 2006-07; and with local voter approval up to 6¢ in 2007-08).

Wealthy schools will be excused from sharing this enrichment tax revenue via recapture.

Although state leaders had not considered or been concerned with the impact that such totally unequalized enrichment would have on the equity in the overall system, strong efforts by a bi-partisan group of legislators led to the adoption of some equalization features in this new enrichment tier. Those efforts resulted in the incorporation of a guaranteed yield feature similar to that in current law where all districts are assured a certain level of return for every penny of local tax effort.

For instance, if a local school district only generates \$10 per penny of tax, but the state guarantees \$30, that district gets an additional \$20 in state funding. If the local district generates only \$20 per penny of tax, it gets an additional \$10 in state aid. This “guaranteed yield” portion of the funding system results in equal return for equal tax effort – one of the fundamental requirements the courts had outlined in earlier Texas school funding cases.

Though the guarantee of \$41.19 per penny of tax guaranteed

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to all school districts helped reduce the growth in inequity, the fact is that more than 100 school districts generate more than that amount per penny of tax. In fact, as many as 31 school districts generate more than two times that total.

The failure to require recapture at the enrichment tier, coupled with the state’s arbitrary decision to limit enrichment equalization funding to the level of Austin ISD’s yield, increased the amount of inequity in the Texas funding system.

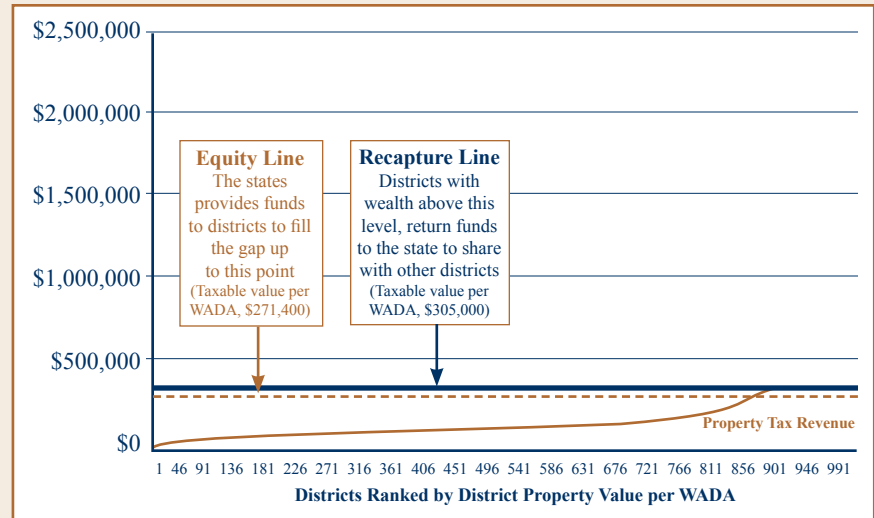
The House and Senate debates reveal that many legislators were aware that they were increasing inequity but voted for it anyway. Some were being pragmatic, believing that this was the best that could be accomplished. Others were swayed by contentions that providing \$41.19 for each penny in the new enrichment tier was the highest level of equalization funded to date. In fairness to some who voted in favor of the plan, the impact projections provided excluded unequalized revenue that would be available under the new plan.

A closer look however, reveals that this claim of never-before-achieved levels of equalization funding was over-stated. The guaranteed yield applies only to 4¢ of a maximum tax effort of 137¢ in 2006-07, and an overall tax effort of 106¢ in 2007 and beyond. For the majority of tax effort, the state guarantee remained at a modest level of \$31.90 per penny of tax, not a major improvement over the \$27.14 per penny of tax levels of equalization funding provided in the plan that HB1 has replaced.

Most importantly, the bill’s sponsors downplayed the fact that while the 900+ poor and average wealth districts were ensured a return of \$41.19 for the new enrichment tax effort allowed, more than 100 school systems would generate much more than that, setting the stage for the

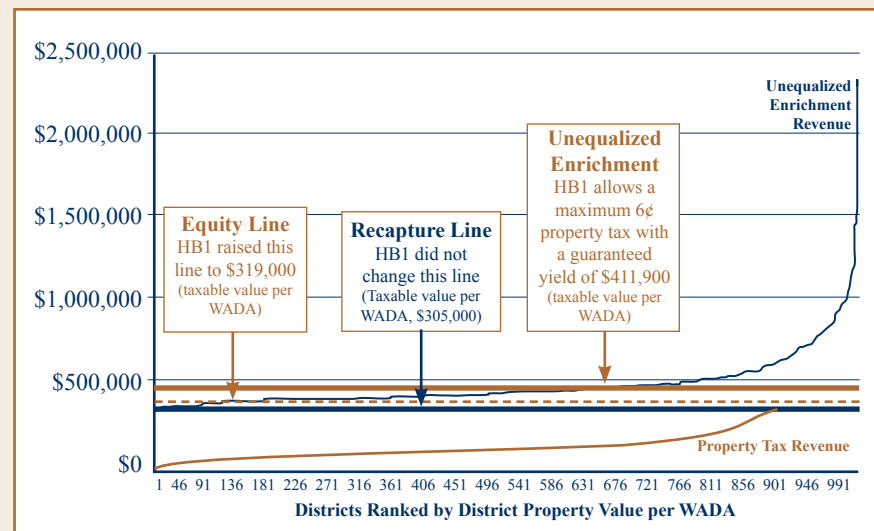
Texas School Districts by Wealth Before HB1

As a result of the equity provisions put in place in 1995, Texas schools have had roughly the same levels of funds available to spend on educating their students.



Texas School Districts by Wealth After HB1

The funds raised through the 6¢ enrichment tier are not equalized. Thus as a result of the latest actions, 4.1 million children will be in schools with severely limited resources for qualified teachers, up-to-date curriculum, and basic supplies. At the same time, 200,000 children will be in well-funded schools receiving an excellent education.



Data sources: Legislative Budget Board; Intercultural Development Research Association; Center for Public Policy Priorities.

greatest increase in the equity gap seen in over 13 years.

After the final debates, the Texas legislature had voted to provide minimal new state funding increases to property poor and average wealth districts to minimally offset the great increase in inequity that resulted from

its other actions. It is fair to say that the limited level of funding provided for equalization reflects the low level of concern that many legislators had for equity in educational opportunity in Texas.



Casting the Net

Technology and Public Engagement in School Reform

by Laurie Posner, MPA

Public engagement in public institutions is central to a thriving democracy. And it is the lynchpin of thriving neighborhood public schools. Gold, Simon and Brown suggest in *Strong Neighborhoods, Strong Schools* the transformation of public schools “will neither come about nor be sustained unless there is authentic parent and community engagement in reform” (2002).

When communities partner with schools, benefits can include upgraded school facilities, improved school leadership and staffing, higher quality learning programs, new resources to improve curricula and teaching, resources for after-school programs, and enhanced social and political capital among participants (Mediratta and Fruchter, 2001; Gold, Simon and Brown, 2002; Mapp, 2002).

Americans consistently rank education as a top national priority. It stands to reason, then, that public engagement can be a major force in strengthening schools.

Over just two decades, new information and communication technologies – the Internet, e-mail, listservs, web sites – have become

a fact of life. Computer-mediated communication is changing not only the landscape of learning, but also the ways in which many parents and community members interact with one another and with their schools.

In the midst of school reform, new communication technologies have taken root within and beyond educational settings and are already informing change. Will these technologies support or diminish public engagement in schools? Will they help communities advance a vision for excellent public schools for all children? What lessons for school reform can be drawn from the broader debate on the role of new communication technologies in public life?

Net Worth: Is the Internet a Tool for Public Engagement?

In 2005, about 79 percent of people in the United States went online, spending an average of 13.5 hours a week on the Internet (Center for the Digital Future, 2005).

For many, the Internet is an unprecedented tool for gathering

information and connecting with a broad social network. A majority of users consider the Internet their “most important source of information” (Cole, 2003). An estimated 60 million people in this country use online communication to gain input for making major life decisions (Boase, et al., 2006).

A survey of locally-elected public officials found that some 73 percent of online officials report that e-mail exchanges with constituents “help them better understand public opinion.” More than half (54 percent) say that “their use of e-mail has brought them into contact with citizens from whom they had not heard before” (Pew, 2002). Further, Internet users are far more likely than non-users to contact government officials (Horrihan, 2004).

While serious inequities persist, demographic patterns of Internet use are undergoing rapid shifts, in some cases closing gaps among the gender, race and ethnicity of current and new users (Fox, 2005). School-age children are leading this trend. By 2003, nine out of 10 children living

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in households with a computer used it (Day, Janus and Davis, 2005). A March 2006 student walkout for immigrants' rights was largely orchestrated by text messaging and messages on myspace.com, a social networking web site that includes interactive networking, blogs and e-mails (Gonzalez and Gonzales, 2006).

Fueling or Depleting Community Engagement?

The advent of the Internet and its use as a means to facilitate civic engagement are relatively new social enterprises. While some theorists argue that “notions of [electronic] interactivity” have existed for at least four decades (Stromer-Galley and Foot, 2002), many date the emergence of an active, dynamic medium – the world wide web and studies on the Internet and public engagement – to the late 1980s and early 1990s.

Regarding the role of new communication technologies in the nourishment or decline of civic life, three general schools of thought have emerged. These can be loosely grouped as (1) “cyber-optimism,” (2) “cyber-skepticism,” and (3) “it’s too soon to tell.”

Cyber-optimists hail new communication technologies as new channels of communication that strengthen ties between citizens, civic and democratic institutions (Norris, 2001). Porto suggests that, from its infancy, the Internet’s founders recognized the potential for this medium to be used to promote social impact (2003).

Chew’s case studies on citizen empowerment document an increase in activism by residents involved in a community listserv addressing local public policy (2003). Katz and Aspden found that Internet users are more likely than non-users to engage in political activity (1998). Uslander

Tools for

Community Engagement

Strong public schools build strong communities, and vice versa. Engaging with parents, schools and universities is an important investment in the future of our young people and will have a lasting positive impact on communities. Even though the process of forming partnerships through engagement can be challenging, doing so can yield significant results for all stakeholders in the education system.

A Snapshot of What IDRA is Doing

Developing Leaders – IDRA defines a parent leader as one who listens deeply to his or her peers, who accepts responsibility for advocating the rights of all children, who is assertive but also accepts rotating responsibility, who values collective action more than personal recognition, and who trains other parents to be leaders. Parents are partners in IDRA’s work, such as the Bilingual Parent Leadership Academies. During these leadership academies, parents take an active role in having excellent schools for all children. Because of this active role, and perhaps for the first time in their children’s educational life, parents understand that they are a catalyst for their children’s academic success.

Conducting Research – InterAction was an IDRA initiative supported by Houston Endowment, Inc., that included a series of three policy action forums leading into a statewide seminar that presented the policy solutions generated from the forum participants who represented three communities of interest – the border, urban, and rural areas of Texas. A policy brief, *InterAction – The Initiative: A Call to Action*, presents the research and the 31 policy solutions that are aimed at changing the status quo for Latino students and their communities. The policy solutions are listed online at: http://www.idra.org/Equitable_Resources/Initiatives/InterAction.

Informing Policy – One of the ways IDRA has leveraged an engaged community for informing policy is by spearheading information dissemination during this past spring’s special legislative session. After analyzing policy proposals based on a set of principles for fair funding for the common good, IDRA kept the community of stakeholders informed of these policies through e-mail alerts, web site postings, small group presentations and teleconferencing. More information about IDRA’s analyses is available in the article on Page 3.

Engaging Communities – IDRA has developed a community engagement toolkit to support and encourage engagement with parents and families. IDRA offers these resources, workshops, materials and technical

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Action

assistance tools for schools, universities, community groups and parents. The toolkit includes seven publications and a video. One of the publications, *Improving Educational Impact Through Family Engagement – A Review and Planning Guide*, helps to foster meaningful and lasting educational impact through mechanisms for engagement with parents and families. It provides helpful ideas to address the most significant barriers to parent involvement that have been reported in the literature in K-12 programs. The guide is available free online in either English or Spanish at <http://www.idra.org>.

What You Can Do

Get informed. Research indicates that when schools actively engage families and community to improve neighborhood public schools and when there is mutual respect, positive changes result. In the 1990s, the University of Texas at Austin Dana Center studied successful schools in Texas that have a high number of minority students and a high concentration of low-income families. They found that one of the marks of a good school is how well it informs and involves families. The benefits are clear. Familiarize yourself with the wealth of research on collaborative partnerships, even private foundations wanting to maximize the impact of their gifts in the area of education require community collaborations. One useful resource is, *A New Wave of Evidence: The Impact of School, and Community Connections on Student Achievement*, which is available online at: <http://www.sedl.org/connections/resources/evidence.pdf>.

Get involved. *Identify the issues* around which you are going to engage parents, students and other members of the community. *Find allies* – friends in education reform are everywhere. As a leader in education, you must be in tune with the questions and concerns of your community. *Build on assets* – everyone is equipped with a talent that can be shared. An abundance of resources can be found in your own backyard. *Sustain the effort* – success does not occur from one day to the next automatically.

Get results. Every community and every school campus is unique and requires your vigilance and rapid response. To begin:

- Create a plan to begin the school year with clear, measurable goals and objectives.
- Involve your key stakeholders early and often.
- Measure your progress.
- Where you have successes, celebrate them and acknowledge your partners.

The Annie E. Casey Foundation has a link that is useful for evaluating programs at <http://www.aecf.org/publications/evaluation/index.htm>.

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notes, “Rather than being a substitute for human connectivity, computer communications may well enhance... involvement [and] community” (2004).

Cyber-optimists note that as Internet use has expanded, so too have promising examples of web-based tools, products and initiatives designed to facilitate public engagement and meet the needs of under-served communities. These include the development of online library resources; transit services; support groups, unions and associations; job training and employment resources; childcare resources; and community calendars that serve as hubs of local information.

Many point to the emergence of new expressions of social capital and the proliferation of online activism as clear signposts of the benefit of citizen “connectivity.” Nachison, for example, reports that in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, “The Internet became a disaster lifeline for evacuees” (2005).

Others note that the network of community technology centers around the country has expanded access not only to hardware, software and training but also to online literacy programs, multilingual web sites, portals, listservs, and blogs authored by youth, educators, parent groups and community leaders to serve their neighborhoods and communities.

Cyber-optimists also outline serious concerns about digital divides that prevent full civic participation by everyone and seek solutions to these inequities. They find hope for e-democracy in the increasing affordability of personal computers and the growing availability of new communication technologies in public spaces, such as schools, libraries and museums.

Cyber-skeptics, by contrast,

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argue that not only will the use of communication technologies do little to increase public engagement, it may even be the cause of disengagement (Norris, 2001; Kraut, et al., 1998). Seen to extend the pernicious effects of television, skeptics argue, the Internet will further “isolate us from others” and promote a society of “misanthropes who need to get a life beyond their computer screens” (Uslaner, 2004).

Kraut, et al., find the Internet “adversely affects social involvement and psychological well-being.” Collaborating on a survey with *National Geographic* magazine, Wellman, et al., find that while e-citizenship enhances some forms of civic participation, this tends to occur mainly among those who are already politically active, rather than to energize currently inactive citizens (2003).

Noveck also finds “no noticeable improvement in the democratic quality of political institutions” in “wired societies” but suggests that it may be possible to promote democracy if web sites are “architected” with these goals in mind (2000).

Further, some researchers suggest that the demographics of Internet use not only mirror existing social and economic disparities, but exacerbate them. Despite dramatic growth of the medium, as of June 2005, more than one third of U.S. adults had not gone online, many citing cost as a principal reason (Fox, 2005). Some note that while trends in Internet use are rapidly changing, e-citizenship is still more often exercised by White, middle-age males, who are relatively more educated and affluent, than by other demographic groups (Boase, et al., 2006).

In *From the ‘Digital Divide’ to ‘Digital Inequality:’ Studying Internet Use as Penetration Increases*, DiMaggio and Hargittai point out

Public Engagement Online at IDRA

In the last three years, IDRA has designed four web-based initiatives that support public engagement in school reform by combining web-based technology with in-person capacity building and action.

Cross-sector, Cross-race Leadership

The *Mendez* and *Brown* web site (<http://www.idra.org/mendezbrown/>) serves as a complement to in-person community action dialogues on fulfilling the legacy of *Mendez vs. Westminster* and *Brown vs. Board of Education* and drawing on these cases as catalysts for creating excellent, equitable schools for all children.

School Finance Equity

The Fair Funding for the Common Good section of the IDRA web site (www.idra.org) and listserv support public knowledge and engagement in school finance policy debates, with resources on school finance equity.

School Holding Power

The School Holding Power Portal, a database and portal, was first used at the Graduation Guaranteed ~ Graduación Garantizada Statewide Summit on School Holding Power, convened by IDRA and LULAC in November 2004. The portal is being expanded as a resource to support school and community partnerships to improve school holding power. IDRA also has uploaded a series of podcasts on the characteristics of school holding power and successful dropout prevention at <http://www.idra.org>.

that the notion of a “digital divide” has been too narrowly focused on technical means, such as hardware, software and connectivity, when in fact, divisions also are shaped by a community’s access to training, support and unrestricted use (2001). Until the nation addresses these patterns of exclusion, some argue, the Internet will not be a *net*, but a *snare*, entangling us more deeply in longstanding patterns of inequality.

A third school thought that *it’s-too-soon-to-tell* suggests that new kinds of civic engagement facilitated by online technologies cannot be measured using traditional yardsticks. This position argues that the use of such technologies spurs new individual behaviors and social interactions not yet captured by

traditional measures of engagement and political participation (Johansson, 2003).

Johansson argues that it may not be the case that civic engagement is in decline, but rather that “citizens have found alternative, new arenas for channeling their commitment and engagement.” To the extent that these alternatives are expressed electronically, Johansson suggests that traditional terms and measures both for the participation and use of technology may be inadequate.

Garton suggests that research on human-computer interaction, online person-to-person interaction, and computer-supported communication among small user groups misses the most important unit of analysis – the

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Why IDRA Prints the “School Opening Alert” Every Year

Many educators are not aware that the education of undocumented students is guaranteed by the *Plyler vs. Doe* decision or that certain procedures must be followed when registering immigrant children in school to avoid violating restrictions on obtaining personal information without obtaining prior parental consent.

In *Plyler vs. Doe*, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that children of undocumented workers have the same right to attend public primary and secondary schools as do U.S. citizens and permanent residents. Like other students, children of undocumented workers in fact are required under state law to attend school until they reach a mandated age. As a result of the *Plyler* ruling, public schools may not deny admission to a student on the basis of undocumented status, treat a student differently to determine residency, or require students or parents to disclose or document their immigration status.

The Supreme Court arrived at this decision because such practices:

- **Victimize innocent children** – Children of undocumented workers do not choose the conditions under which they enter the United States. They should not be punished for circumstances they do not control. Children have the right to learn and be useful members of society.
- **Hurt more than they claim to help** – Denying children access to education will not eliminate illegal immigration. Instead, it ensures the creation of an underclass. Without public education for children, illiteracy rates will increase, and opportunities for workforce and community participation will decrease. Research has proven that for every \$1 spent on the education of children, at least \$9 is returned.
- **Turn public school teachers and officials into INS agents** – Rather than teaching students, school officials could spend their time asking our 48.5 million school children about their citizenship status. States would be forced to spend millions of dollars to do the work of the INS.
- **Promote misinformation** – Incorrect assumptions and inappropriate figures have been used to blame immigrants and their children for economic problems.
- **Support racism and discrimination** – Historically, financially troubled times breed increased racism. Children of undocumented workers should not be the scapegoats.

At IDRA, we are working to create schools that work for all children, families and communities. Help us make this goal a reality for every child; we simply cannot afford the alternatives. Denying children of undocumented workers access to an education is unconstitutional and against the law.

Excerpted in part from: *Lessons Learned, Lessons Shared: Texas Immigrant Education Collaborative* (San Antonio, Texas: Intercultural Development Research Association, December 1998).

Immigrant Students' Rights to Attend Public Schools

The National Coalition of Advocates for Students (NCAS) launched its annual School Opening Alert campaign to reaffirm the legal rights of all children who reside in the United States to attend public schools, regardless of immigration status. These fliers provide information for immigrant parents about the rights of their children to attend local public schools this fall. Though NCAS has closed, IDRA continues to make this alert available. The copy of the alert below and on the following page may be reproduced and distributed as well.

School Opening Alert

In 1982, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in *Plyler vs. Doe* [457 U.S. 202 (1982)] that children of undocumented workers have the same right to attend public primary and secondary schools as do U.S. citizens and permanent residents. Like other students, children of undocumented workers are required under state laws to attend school until they reach a legally mandated age.

As a result of the *Plyler* ruling, public schools may not:

- deny admission to a student during initial enrollment or at any other time on the basis of undocumented status;
- treat a student differently to determine residency;
- engage in any practices to “chill” the right of access to school;
- require students or parents to disclose or document their immigration status;
- make inquiries of students or parents that may expose their undocumented status; or
- require social security numbers from all students, as this may expose undocumented status.

Students without social security numbers should be assigned a number generated by the school. Adults

without social security numbers who are applying for a free lunch and/or breakfast program for a student need only state on the application that they do not have a social security number.

Recent changes in the F-1 (student) Visa Program do not change the *Plyler* rights of undocumented children. These changes apply only to students who apply for a student visa from outside the United States and are currently in the United States on an F-1 visa.

Also, the *Family Education Rights and Privacy Act* prohibits schools from providing any outside agency—including the Immigration and Naturalization Service—with any information from a child’s school file that would expose the student’s undocumented status without first getting permission from the student’s parents. The only exception is if an agency gets a court order (subpoena) that parents can then challenge. Schools should note that even requesting such permission from parents might act to “chill” a student’s *Plyler* rights.

Finally, school personnel—especially building principals and those involved with student intake activities—should be aware that they have no legal obligation to enforce U.S. immigration laws.

For more information or to report incidents of school exclusion or delay, call:

META	Nationwide	(617) 628-2226 (English/Spanish)
META	West Coast	(415) 546-6382 (English)
NY Immigration Hotline	Nationwide	(212) 419-3737 (English/Spanish)
MALDEF – Los Angeles	Southwest/ Southeast	(213) 629-2512 (English/Spanish)
MALDEF – Chicago	Illinois	(312) 782-1422 (English/Spanish)
MALDEF – San Antonio	Southwest	(210) 224-5476 (English/Spanish)
MALDEF – Washington D.C.	Nationwide	(202) 293-2828 (English/Spanish)

Please copy and distribute this flier.

Llamada Urgente al Comienzo del Curso Escolar

En 1982, El Tribunal Supremo de los Estados Unidos dictaminó en el caso *Plyler vs. Doe* [457 U.S. 202] que los niños de padres indocumentados tienen el mismo derecho de asistir a las escuelas públicas primarias y secundarias que tienen sus contrapartes de nacionalidad estadounidense. Al igual que los demás niños, los estudiantes indocumentados están obligados a asistir a la escuela hasta que llegan a la edad exigida por la ley.

A raíz de la decisión *Plyler*, las escuelas públicas no pueden:

- negarle la matrícula a un estudiante basándose en su situación legal y/o inmigratoria, ya sea a principios del curso o durante cualquier otro momento del año escolar;
- tratar a un estudiante en forma desigual para verificar su situación de residencia;
- efectuar prácticas cuyo resultado sea obstruir el derecho de acceso a los servicios escolares;
- requerir que un estudiante o sus padres revelen o documenten su situación inmigratoria;
- hacer interrogatorios a estudiantes o padres que pudieran revelar su situación de indocumentados;
- exigir que un estudiante obtenga un número de seguro social como requisito de admisión a la escuela.

La escuela debe de asignar un número de identificación a los estudiantes que no tienen tarjeta de seguro social. Los adultos sin números de seguro

social quienes están solicitando que a un estudiante lo admitan a un programa de almuerzo y/o desayuno gratis, sólo tienen que indicar que no tienen seguro social en el formulario.

Los últimos cambios del Programa de Visado F-1 (de estudiantes) no cambiarán las obligaciones antedichas en cuanto a los niños indocumentados. Se aplican sólo a los estudiantes que solicitan del extranjero un visado de estudiantes y que están actualmente en los Estados Unidos en un Visado F-1.

Además, el Acta Familiar de Derechos y Privacidad Escolar (*Family Education Rights and Privacy Act*) le prohíbe a las escuelas proveerle a cualquier agencia externa – incluyendo el Servicio de Inmigración y Naturalización (Immigration and Naturalization Service – INS) – cualquier información del archivo personal de un estudiante que pudiera revelar su estado legal sin haber obtenido permiso de los padres del estudiante. La única excepción es si una agencia obtiene una orden judicial – conocida como una citación o subpoena – que los padres pueden retar. Los oficiales escolares deben estar conscientes de que el mero hecho de pedirle tal permiso a los padres podría impedir los derechos *Plyler* de un estudiante.

Finalmente, el personal escolar – especialmente los directores y otros administradores o personal docente – deben saber que no están bajo ninguna obligación legal de poner en vigor las leyes de inmigración de los EEUU.

Para más información, o para denunciar incidentes de exclusión escolar o retraso en la admisión a clases, favor de llamar a:

META	Nacional	(617) 628-2226	(Inglés/Español)
META	Costa Oeste	(415) 546-6382	(Inglés)
NY Línea de Urgencia de Inmigración	Nacional	(212) 419-3737	(Inglés/Español)
MALDEF – Los Angeles	Sudoeste/ Sudeste	(213) 629-2512	(Inglés/Español)
MALDEF – Chicago	Illinois	(312) 782-1422	(Inglés/Español)
MALDEF – San Antonio	Suroeste	(210) 224-5476	(Inglés/Español)
MALDEF – Washington D.C.	Nacional	(202) 293-2828	(Inglés/Español)

Favor de copiar y distribuir esta hoja informativa.

Principal Shares Successes in Parent Involvement

by Rogelio López del Bosque, Ed.D.

Three years ago, I was fortunate to become the principal of Eastwood Academy Charter High School in the Houston Independent School District. Through the collaborative efforts of educators, students, parents, community members and business partners, we provide an innovative and stimulating educational environment. These students are intelligent, hard-working individuals who benefit from the additional guidance and mentoring that the small school environment allows. The academy provides a challenging college preparatory curriculum and emphasis on mathematics, science, technology and the fine arts, along with dual-credit courses through Houston Community College.

The instructional philosophy of the academy focuses on a student-centered environment in which faculty members serve as facilitators and mentors. Schoolwide portfolio assessments and projects involving teachers, students and parents complement project-integrated instruction. Student self-esteem is promoted through leadership opportunities within the classroom, in student organizations and in the community. The foundational beliefs that all children can learn and

that every student is valuable are cornerstones in the instructional philosophy of the academy.

Parents play an integral part in the school. Much of our parent involvement work has evolved from my work with the Intercultural Development Research Association, which is based on both experience and the research literature, and from direct assistance provided by IDRA through the Texas Parent Information and Resource Center, which is funded by the U.S. Department of Education.

Eastwood Academy has a current enrollment of 257 students in grades nine through 12, of which 96.5 percent are Hispanic, 43.6 percent are considered at-risk of dropping out, and 87.2 percent are economically disadvantaged. Although we do not have English as a second language classes, we do have four ESL-certified teachers who work with Eastwood's limited-English-proficient students.

Parent Engagement at Eastwood Academy

In one recent semester, Eastwood's parents contributed 1,195 hours of volunteer work to the school. Parents give volunteer hours by attending meetings, events, celebrations, schoolwide projects, and trainings. The district requires a background check on all parent

volunteers, and more than 80 parents have already been screened and approved to serve.

In 2005, more than 40 parents completed a 120-hour training course on computer technology. Each parent received a certificate of accomplishment from El Tecnológico de Monterrey. They also received a refurbished computer that was provided through a department of the district.

Parents and other community members are enrolled in Eastwood's ESL classes taking place during the day, and others come on a daily basis just to see what they can do to help in the school. Some help in the library, others help monitor lunch, while others help in the front office.

It is critical that parents are aware of the school improvement plan. Eastwood holds an open house in September, and separate grade parent meetings are held in October for parents to learn about the plan, to make recommendations and to set expectations of the students and themselves.

Discussions are held on the impact of the Stanford 10, the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills by grade level and other important testing, such as the PSAT and SAT. Plans for scholarships, college nights and dual credit courses also are discussed along with the schoolwide

Parent Involvement – continued on Page 13

projects and technology opportunities for students as well as parents. Class syllabi are passed out by teachers in two languages as a means of setting expectations.

Methods for Supporting Parent Engagement

It is not necessary to have door prizes or food for parents to participate in school activities and meetings as is suggested by some educators and researchers. The following are some things that are critical.

- Value parents for who they are, what they know and what they bring to the table. Parents are important and must know that their contributions are valued and respected.
- Maintain an open-door policy with parents, but make it meaningful. Some parents are made to feel welcome at the school door but are kept at a distance once inside.
- Make sure your front office staff are prepared to work with visiting parents in a responsible and respectful way.
- Do not leave parents waiting, their time is valuable. If necessary, leave important tasks or meetings to see a parent who has come by to visit.
- Welcome unscheduled visits from parents. School administrators should make the time to see them and to provide as much information as possible without interrupting teachers. If the administrator is not able to provide the information immediately, the parent should be contacted as soon as the information becomes available.
- Maintain constant communication in all the parents' languages.
- Keep parents informed of events and important happenings at the school.
- Send information home by mail and, in many cases, by registered mail.

Family and Community Engagement Survey

This survey can be used by teachers, administrators and parents to assess a school's effectiveness in partnering with families and communities. It is a useful tool for planning strategies that are clustered around four domains: (a) student achievement; (b) access and equity; (c) organizational support; and (d) quality of interaction. The questions and ideas used in the guide are gleaned from the literature on effective partnering with communities and families. (No ISBN; 12 Pages, 2002)



\$5 or free online at www.idra.org. Also available in Spanish.

To order call 210-444-1710.

Developed and distributed by the Intercultural Development Research Association.

Contact IDRA to place an order.

All orders of \$30 or less must be prepaid. Purchase orders are accepted.

- Do not hold sessions on how to be a better parent. This is not a valuing approach to working with parents.
- Do not *instruct* parents to participate. Point out their assets and let them know they can participate in the process in their own ways.
- Explain, in lay terms, the significance of the grades, testing, discipline and the code of student conduct.
- Talk to parents about all the efforts being put into practice in order to make the school a safe place for students where no bullying is allowed, and when it does occur, is handled immediately.
- Let parents know your standards and focus on how they already provide support, such as being available to discuss their child's progress, their willingness to help the school, and their willingness to continue their own growth either through technology classes, ESL or GED. Take the opportunity during their visits to learn what else they would like to see at school.
- Seek parents' talents, as many come with much knowledge and training. One Eastwood parent, who was a teacher in Mexico, has volunteered to teach literacy in Spanish for

parents who have never been to school. This will be done through the *Consulado Mexicano*, and participants can get a certificate for completing primary and secondary levels.

- Provide parents with information on available community services. Through the Communities in Schools programs, parents can get medical, psychological, dental, vision, financial and other assistance. Eastwood also offers the Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program (developed by IDRA), which is an internationally-recognized dropout prevention program.
- Keep community partners informed of the students' and parents' needs. They are a resource for scholarship monies and donations to help schools.

Putting these ideas into practice may not be easy but is well worth the time. Be assured, if parents have a chance, they will support the school and will keep students on task, working toward passing exams, and getting ready for college.

Rogelio López del Bosque, Ed.D., is principal of Eastwood Academy High School in the Houston ISD. He is also a former staff member of IDRA. Comments may be directed to him via e-mail at comment@idra.org.

The Great Texas Tax Swap

Overall, Texas schools were given the leftovers from the property tax reduction frenzy of 2006. While the legislature stated that a recent court ruling required them to cut local school property taxes, the decision in the *West Orange-Cove* case did not actually demand property tax reduction in over 60 pages of its narrative judgment. What was ordered, and the only thing required by the court, was that the state change its funding system to provide local school districts some “meaningful discretion” to enrich local programs beyond the levels required by state-mandated programs.

This could have been accomplished without wasting billions of state dollars.

The misdirection in priorities began when the state political leaders appointed a special commission to focus its efforts exclusively on tax reform, rather than the school funding reforms mandated by the courts. Not surprisingly, most of the tax commission’s substantive recommendations dealt with changes in the state tax code. A few changes in education policy came for the most part as after-thoughts from a few policymakers determined to change practices in a small number of specific areas.

The greatest beneficiaries of

the property tax cuts were businesses whose major assets include taxable property. While the new-and-improved business tax will create some new costs from such businesses, these will be neutralized by property tax reductions. The increased revenue expected from the expanded business tax will be obtained from many Texas businesses that had previously been excluded from the state’s franchise tax.

Texas property taxpayers will see net reductions in local school taxes, though at least some of those savings will be spent to cover increased business taxes that will be passed on to all consumers.

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Highlights of Recent IDRA Activities

In May, IDRA worked with 4,609 teachers, administrators, parents and higher education personnel through 55 training and technical assistance activities and 134 program sites in 11 states plus Brazil. Some topics included:

- ◆ Methods and Pedagogy: Creative Vocabulary Instruction
- ◆ Examination of Critical Stages in the Education Pipeline for African American Males
- ◆ Sharing Research-Based Information for Bilingual Education

Some participating agencies and school districts included:

- ◆ Austin Independent School District, Texas
- ◆ Lakeside School District, Arkansas
- ◆ National Dropout Prevention Center, South Carolina

Activity Snapshot

Many students are not connected to technology. Low-income and minority students are less likely to have access at home and their teachers avoid technology-based assignments. This places them at risk of even greater achievement gaps in the future. In one school district, IDRA set up a network of state-of-the-art computer centers in two high schools and four community-based organizations. The centers were available to students and their families, as well as to others in the community. High school teachers received training on technology integration and also served as supervisors at the centers. Due to this integrating of technology access, technical assistance and training into community- and school-based settings, students built new skills in technology, math and science and learning about college and career options; families were engaged in their children’s learning; and teachers enhanced their instruction with technology.

Regularly, IDRA staff provides services to:

- ◆ public school teachers
- ◆ parents
- ◆ administrators
- ◆ other decision makers in public education

Services include:

- ◆ training and technical assistance
- ◆ evaluation
- ◆ serving as expert witnesses in policy settings and court cases
- ◆ publishing research and professional papers, books, videos and curricula

For information on IDRA services for your school district or other group, contact IDRA at 210-444-1710.

These property tax savings also will be eroded by increased taxes for used car purchases, where the amount of tax paid will be based not on what one paid for the car – but the Blue Book value.

And of course smokers will be asked to dole out an additional dollar a pack for cigarettes.

After backing out those tax increases, one might have enough money left to pay for a month's worth of cable or perhaps a month's cell phone bill for a teenager. Folks who are expecting large property tax reductions that are being touted by a few politicians will be greatly disappointed when their bill arrives.

Wealthy School Systems Get Wealthier

Clear “winners” in the plan are the state's wealthiest school districts, who received the greatest per pupil benefits from the plan that was adopted. For these property wealthy districts, the benefits took the form of reduced contributions in the amounts of recapture funding collected by the state to help fund the overall system. While such districts were allowed to reduce recapture contributions, the state had to increase state funding to the 900+ school districts who used to receive this funding, just to enable them maintain the same level of overall funding they had in the year before. This decrease in recapture is costing the state of Texas \$650 million in 2006-07 alone.

An additional benefit accrued by these privileged systems was the allocation of additional funding in a manner that was not adjusted for local district property wealth, a development that served to increase the level of inequity that is allowed within the Texas funding system.

A hidden benefit to property wealthy schools systems lies in the

Other Measures Passed in the 2006 Texas Special Session

In addition to the measures discussed in detail in this newsletter, the Texas Legislature included a number of other items in its school funding plan.

- Requires student measures of annual improvement toward a *predicted* growth target.
- Allows the commissioner of education to assign technical assistance and intervention teams to schools that are rated as *unacceptable* for two years, as well as the hiring of external professionals to provide technical assistance.
- May require shared service arrangements among school districts.
- Requires the commissioner of education to establish expenditure targets based on best practices.
- Requires public notice if budget targets are being exceeded.
- Provides for mentoring of new teachers.
- Pushes the school year start date to the fourth Monday in August beginning in 2007-08.
- Provides rewards for performance based on improvement, including awards for student achievement and educator excellence.
- Expands sanctions for charter schools not meeting certain criteria.
- Requires efforts to align public school and higher education curricula.
- Requires additional high school course credits for math and science, with no provision for dealing with already-present teacher shortages in those areas.
- Requires school elections to be held at the same time as city, county or state elections.
- Creates new electronic records on all students from kindergarten through college.
- Establishes a best practices clearinghouse.
- Funds three new education research centers.

Source: House Bill 1, 79th Third Called Session of the Texas Legislature (2006).

manner in which property taxes were reduced. Specifically, the reductions in maximum tax rates (from \$1.50 to \$1.33 in 2006-07 and to \$1.00 in 2007-08) mean the state will collect less money from the wealthiest districts. When one divides the reduced recapture amounts by those districts' weighted student counts, the net savings for those systems totals thousands of dollars per pupil.

Examples include Highland Park in Dallas County, where recapture reductions averaged \$2,201

per weighted student, \$1,064 in Deer Park in the Houston area, and \$1,536 in Alamo Heights in the San Antonio area (based on Legislative Budget Board data on the impact of HB1).

If one thinks of reduced recapture as indirect state support (since the monies previously collected from those systems are now paid from taxes paid by everyone else around the state), the amounts provided by recapture reduction average almost twice the amount of revenue per pupil

provided to poor and average wealth districts. Though taxing limits will prevent this wealthiest group from spending all of this former recapture funding for their own programs, at least some of it will be spent using the new enrichment tax level created in the revised system.

Teacher Raise Maintains Salary Gaps

Teachers, librarians and nurses will see an increase of \$2,000 in their salaries and the return of the \$500 cut in health benefits funding experienced in earlier legislative sessions.

But current inequities were maintained by the use of across-the-board funding, where all districts were given the same amount of funding to pay for those salary increases despite great differences in local property wealth, bypassing the way teachers' salaries are normally equalized in state funding formulae.

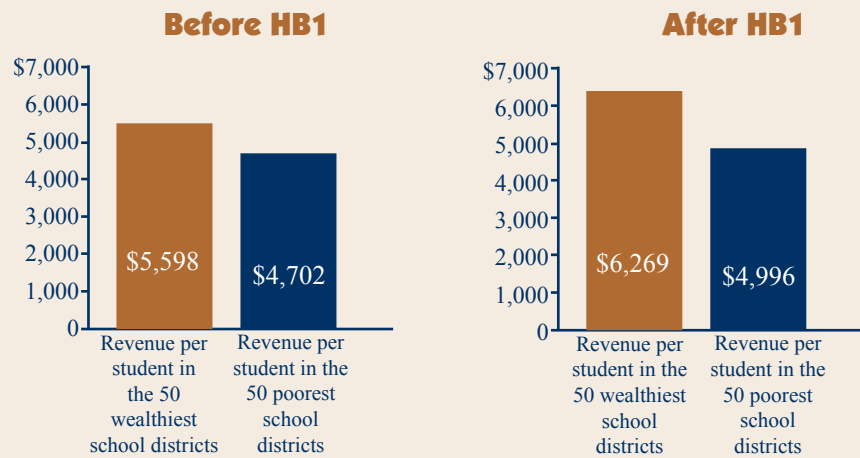
Defenders of the latest plan argue that it is fair because all districts got the same amount of money for those salary increases. But if the payment for those increases had been put through the equalization formula, the salary increases may have been even greater and, more importantly, they could have helped close the un-just gap between teachers who are doing the same jobs (and in some cases under more limited resources) but are being paid less money than others working on the other side of town.

Such salary and benefits disparities create serious problems for school districts trying to retain and recruit teachers, particularly in low wealth systems, rural areas and some major cities.

Non-targeted, Unequalized High School Funding

A similar flaw exists in the new high school allocation that provides

The Gap in Average Per Pupil Expenditures Has Grown*



*This projection includes the 6¢ unequalized enrichment tax revenue.

Data sources: Legislative Budget Board; Intercultural Development Research Association.

\$275 per student (ADA) for grades nine through 12 to help schools reduce dropout rates and increase graduation rates. This allocation also lacks any equalization features.

In the great majority of funding that is usually allocated under the state funding formulae, the state and district portions are adjusted based on the ability of school districts to raise money from available tax property located in the district. When funding is distributed strictly on pupil counts, there is no opportunity for increasing equalization, and thus millions of dollars are spent maintaining the unequal status quo.

In the area of dropout prevention, the across-the-board funds mean that suburban schools with very few dropouts will get as much money as schools where dropout rates are much higher, producing windfalls for some at the expense of inadequate support for others.

Proponents for across-the-board unequalized funding have argued that even affluent communities

need money. For example, even if they do not have high dropout rates, they might increase the numbers of students enrolling in and succeeding in college. In an ideal world, one would not require school districts to choose between increasing graduation rates and increasing college attendance and success rates. But if one had to choose, it seems critical to ensure that students get through the first hurdle.

The Bottom Line – Billions Spent and Equity Reduced

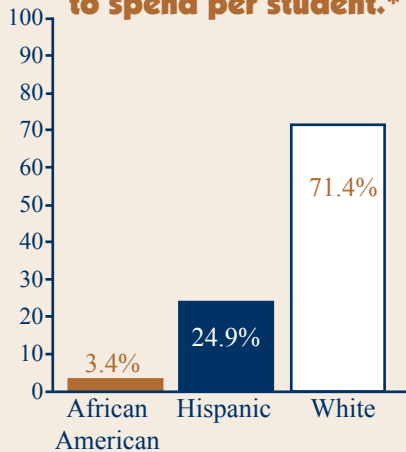
In the many years in which IDRA has tracked school finance equalization, seldom has the state taken such a drastic step backward in equity. How additional monies for less than 5 percent of schools, who enroll less than 6 percent of all students, was considered more important than the quality of education provided to the other 95 percent is a question that should be asked by all Texas citizens.

As a result of the latest actions, 4.1 million children will be in schools

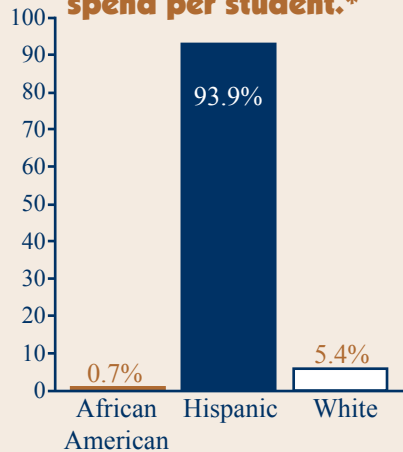
School Funding Plan – continued on Page 17

Student Population by Race-Ethnicity

The 50 wealthiest school districts will have about \$671 more to spend per student.*



The 50 poorest school districts will have about \$294 more to spend per student.*



*If these districts employ the 6¢ unequalized enrichment tax.

Data sources: Legislative Budget Board; Intercultural Development Research Association.

before the so called “reform.”

We will also hear a reference to the notion that districts will be given as much enrichment tax money per penny as that which is produced by a district at the 95th percentile of wealth, and conveniently ignore the fact that a handful of districts will get to spend dramatically more than anyone else.

They will also forget to mention that for the other \$1.33 of taxation in 2007 (or \$1.00 in 2008 and 2009), school districts will be assured only an estimated \$31.95 per penny. (If you thought Texas school finance was complicated before, the new plan requires accountants to just figure out who is on first base.) Unfortunately, the added complexity in the system also will make it easier to misrepresent the facts and make things seem better than they are.

While one might couch the just-ended battle for state funding as a scene where wealthy districts won and property poor districts lost (which is true) and that a few taxpayers won and most others may have at best broken even, the greater truth is that the state of Texas as a whole lost, and lost in a way that may take a long time to unravel.

Taxpayers in fact will lose. Short-term property tax reductions will be followed by creeping increases in property taxes or other state tax increases will be required to improve the quality of Texas public schools and to at least maintain other state services.

The citizens of Texas also will suffer from continuing legal costs to defend an under-funded and more inequitable system. There is little doubt that a challenge to the new funding plan will be initiated perhaps no later than the fall of next year as school districts recognize that the meager increases in funding do not give enough support to provide an

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with severely limited resources for qualified teachers, up-to-date curriculum and basic supplies.

The boxes on Pages 16 and 17 are based on data provided by the state and additional data derived from IDRA estimates of the impact of new enrichment. They reflect the estimated impact of the new funding system on a sub-group of property wealthy and property poor Texas school districts. IDRA’s analysis found that, in looking at the 50 wealthiest school districts and the 50 poorest districts, there is a great disparity in enrollment demographics. In the 50 wealthiest districts, almost three-quarters of the student population is White, one quarter is Hispanic and 3 percent is African American. Compare this with the 50 poorest districts where only 5 percent of the student population is White, 94 percent is Hispanic and 1 percent is African American.

If they employ the 6¢ unequalized enrichment tax, the 50 wealthiest

districts will have about \$671 more to spend per student, while the 50 poorest districts will only have \$294 more. It is clear from the data that the gap in spending between wealthy and poor districts has been increased.

Some education advocates have attempted to put a positive spin on the end results by declaring how greatly the Texas funding system was improved. It is understandable that some might want to put the best face on what they realize is a bad outcome. Others have been a bit more straightforward and noted that while ground was lost, they felt they had done as much as they thought possible in a hostile political climate. For those who want to deceive, perhaps they believe that if one repeats the lie long enough to enough people it will somehow become true.

So the public will continue to hear that revenue will be made more equitable up to the 88th percentile, while ignoring the fact that the gap in spending is actually larger than it was

adequate, let alone a quality, education for all students.

The state of Texas will continue to suffer as it fails to produce high quality graduates from all schools. And even the new money targeted to reduce dropouts, because it is not targeted to those students and schools with the greatest needs, does little to change an unacceptable status quo.

Ultimately the students in the great majority of Texas schools will suffer as a result of a system

that is grossly under-funded and produces schools where the quality of education that a child receives – even more than it has been over the last few years – is based on the wealth of the neighborhood in which he or she happens to live.

To allow such a unique opportunity where the chance for substantive tax reform was wasted to return the state to a level of inequity not seen since the early 1990s is nothing less than shameful. No matter how much rhetoric one hears about

the great strides that were made, the real truth is that we are all going to be the poorer for it over the long run.

Leadership was again needed, and the state's leadership once again failed. Our children, all Texas children, deserved better.

Albert Cortez, Ph.D., is the director of the IDRA Institute for Policy and Leadership. Comments and questions may be directed to him via e-mail at comment@idra.org.

social network (1997). In early work on this observation, Garton suggested that information on social networks and computer-mediated communication must be collected by a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods, including questionnaires, interviews, diaries, observations and computer monitoring.

Computer-mediated communication is changing not only the landscape of learning, but also the ways in which many parents and community members interact with one another and with their schools.

Work by Porto, Norris, Johansson and others proposes that questions about civic engagement, democracy and the Internet require a new, conjoined theory with new definitions, frameworks, measures and terms. Proposed hybridized names for this approach include: “the information society,” “the network society,” “electronic public sphere,” “electronic democracy” or “virtual political system.”

Fisher and Wright suggest that discourse surrounding the Internet can only be evaluated in light of the phenomenon of “cultural lag,” or gap, between the adoption of a new technology and our understanding of its impact (2001). Fisher cautions that

cultural lag tends to engender “extreme and unrealistic interpretations of technology” that can cloud perceptions and research. Quoting Arterton's work, Musso, et al., argue that debates about computer-mediated communication and democratic participation have “advanced little [because] ‘the causal connection between technology and political effects is so nebulous’”

(1999).

Bringing School Reform Online

What can be gleaned from this debate about using new information and communication technology in school reform?

The cyber-optimistic view would suggest that new technologies offer tremendous potential for school reform and we should forge ahead in developing them to serve this end. This view posits that the Internet, even at this early stage, has facilitated precisely the kind of information-gathering, community linkages and action that school reform requires. By proactively developing these communi-

cation tools, communities and educators can share data on how children are doing in their local neighborhood public schools, develop networks that support communication and planning and assess how various reforms are influencing children's achievement.

Cyber-optimism would have us craft new models of interactive technology that put school data directly in the hands of educators, community members, and parents and create online resources to facilitate and support partnerships for reform.

Cyberskepticism might temper a premature or overly-optimistic view about using new communication technologies to support reform. The cyber-skeptical view points out that communication technologies can never be a panacea, that information-sharing is only one facet of engagement, and that school reform efforts that rely solely on web-based communication risk disenfranchising the very communities that are now least well served.

Noting that any kind of communication technology shapes the nature of communication itself, the cyber-skeptical view warns against the risks of trading mouse-clicks for meetings and isolating education stakeholders when they most need to get together in the courthouse,

Casting the Net – continued on Page 19

classroom or school board meeting.

The viewpoint that the “jury is still out” would suggest that we have much more to learn about technology, community engagement and whether and how they impact school reform. This view implies that the use of on-line tools to support school reform might generate new forms of action and interaction, for example, by coalitions of constituents and diverse networks.

This “too-soon-to-tell” position emphasizes the need to measure the impact of multi-faceted, online efforts to ensure that they produce meaningful outcomes, for example, in education policy, school capacity and student outcomes.

Networking for Action

Collective action for school reform extends from a family’s and community’s inherent strengths, relational power, and capacity to strengthen schools, promote accountability and support positive change (Gold, Simon and Brown, 2002).

New communication technologies have tremendous potential to support such action, but only if they are pro-actively designed for this end. Such a design must, at minimum: (1) be a model of inclusion, ensuring that new tools are accessible to and authored by a full spectrum of adult, student, cross-race and cross-sector stakeholders – combining in-person gatherings with online connectivity to expand public access and participation; (2) be a portal to credible, high quality data and information that can focus community-school planning for reform and assessment of outcomes; (3) close communication gaps – rather than create or deepen divides – and join efforts to bridge gaps in access and use, through, for example, community-based technology centers; and (4) serve a civic – not commercial or ideological – vision for schools and

children.

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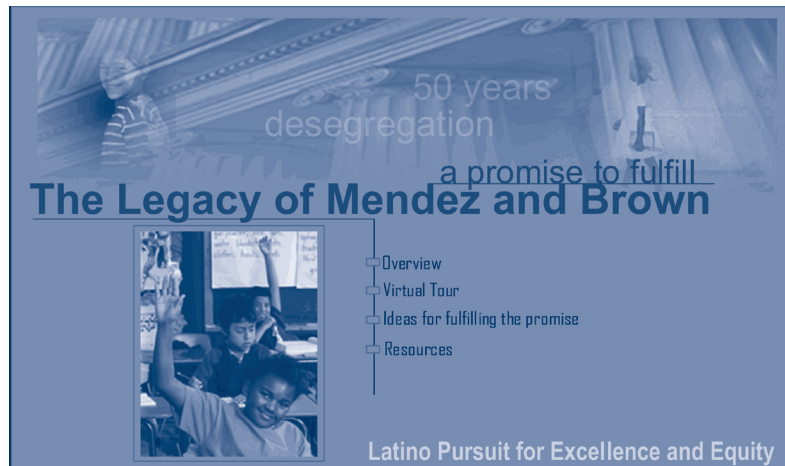
Taking Action – continued from Page 2



achievement of all schools through fair and equitable practices that ensure their success.

5. **Strengthen school holding power** from pre-kindergarten to completion, ensuring that every student is valued, graduates from high school with a diploma, and is prepared for college, work and civic engagement.
6. **Require teaching quality** so that every student benefits from teachers who are certified, teach in their content area(s), and meet or exceed high standards of excellence.
7. **Ensure access and inclusion** so that every child, regardless of race, color, national origin, home language, gender, economic circumstance or disability, attends good schools, has opportunities to learn and has appropriate support to reach his or her highest potential.

The second section presents an action planning process that navigates local participants through vision building, focused planning, local environmental scanning and constructing the actual blueprint for local action. This section provides a detailed



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planning guide that local communities can use to identify issues, plan resolution strategies and construct an action agenda for change.

It also provides the user with a community assessment instrument that, when used as a foundation for discussion and action, generates a clear direction local stakeholders can embrace to bring about real action to fulfill the promise of *Brown* and *Mendez*.

The community action guide is available free online at www.idra.org.

There is probably nothing more important in this era of globalization of politics, economies and cultures

than preparing all of our children for success in every aspect of their lives. This preparation starts at the smallest community level outside the home – which is the school.

To deny children this important and crucial level of preparation is short-sighted and detrimental to the common good of the local, state and national well being. For these reasons and more, community stakeholders need to dialogue, plan and act.

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