



School Board Accountability for School Reform that Supports Educational Equity

by Abelardo Villarreal, Ph.D.

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Thirty or more years of school reform efforts have yielded some positive educational outcomes. But these results have been slow in coming. And they have been accompanied by the same depressing statistics that have consistently described the academic landscape of this country, particularly with respect to American Indians, Hispanics and African Americans. Perhaps attempts to reform and make schools more responsive have been isolated. They have failed to engage, enlighten and develop ownership by those stakeholders most entrusted with the responsibility to provide leadership and support for quality education: the school board.

When was the last time you thought about initiating school reform by influencing school boards to develop an understanding of issues, solutions and policies to prod administrators to make school reform a reality? How many times have you seen school boards – as supreme bodies with responsibility to govern schools – take leadership in setting school reform goals, setting parameters for

school reform, providing flexibility for school administrators to execute school board policies, assigning authority to ensure that school administrators operate research-based implementation and management practices, or establishing self-imposed and mandatory accountability measures that guide expectations and consequences at all levels of the school hierarchy?

It is time for school boards to demonstrate leadership in what happens in the schools that we entrust them with and to become accountable for exerting the necessary leadership to achieve educational success of each and every student entrusted to their custody.

In the research literature, knowledge about school reform efforts is concentrated on research-based practices for school administrators. Focusing on systemic changes by addressing solely school administrators and other personnel ignores the fact that school boards, as representatives of the public who elected them, have “unlimited” power to change the face of education in their communities.

It is time to hold school board members accountable for what they
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have not done to hold on to a greater number of students until they graduate, to provide them with a quality education that prepares them for college, and to close all achievement gaps.

School boards must be careful not to cross the line of administration, but they cannot rely solely on firing and hiring superintendents before they can take any other pro-active action to fend off mediocrity.

Walking a fine line not to cross into school administration entails strategic planning with the superintendent and other community stakeholders for targeted school transformation efforts that lead to strong student holding power and high student achievement. The use of external experts to advise this strategic planning group is essential. In such cases, the school board initiates strategy through its superintendent to plan and become fully engaged in creating a window of opportunity for greater support in the school reform effort.

Educational mediocrity reveals itself through a lack of academic ac-

School boards must wake up and assume their leadership roles more assertively and with greater commitment and dedication as guardians of educational excellence and equity.

complishments that is unacceptable and a threat to our democracy as a model of human dignity and equality. The fact that our academic accomplishments place us below many other nations in the world is reason for concern.

The loss in brainpower, human dignity and economic supremacy is immeasurable, with serious consequences to our social order and world leadership and security. School boards must wake up and assume their leadership roles more assertively and with greater dedication as guardians of educational excellence and equity.

How School Boards Can Become More Involved in School Reform Efforts

The role of school board members in creating systemic changes in our schools cannot be underestimated. For example in Texas, a school board “constitute[s] a body corporate and [has] the exclusive power and duty to govern and oversee the management of the district” (TEA Guidelines).

Its power to govern is enforced through policies that have the force of law. These policies shape the quality of education that a community offers its students. In other words, the quality of education is a reflection of the understanding, commitment and dedication of school boards to excellence and equity.

Five key strategies that can help school boards become more involved in issues that matter to students and

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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, © 2007) 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.

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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 Department of Education, and endorsement by the federal government should not be assumed.

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Graduation for All Students

Dropout Prevention and Student Engagement Strategies and the Reauthorization of the No Child Left Behind Act

by María “Cuca” Robledo Montecel, Ph.D.

Editor’s Note: On April 23, 2007, Dr. María Robledo Montecel, IDRA executive director, presented testimony to the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Education and Labor. Following is the testimony she presented verbally. The longer written version of her testimony that was entered into the record is online at http://www.idra.org/Press_Room/Recent_Speeches_and_Testimony/.

Chairman Miller, Ranking Member McKeon and distinguished members, good afternoon and thank you for the invitation to appear before you.

I am the executive director of the Intercultural Development Research Association in San Antonio, Texas. IDRA is an independent, research and training organization. For 34 years, we have worked closely with schools, school systems, parents and communities across the country.

Our goal is to assure that every child has access to quality education that prepares him or her for a good life and for a productive contribution to this great democracy that are these United States. We have partnered with thousands of educators,

In this country, not so long ago, it seemed unreasonable to think that we would have universal education through primary school. We have that. Now we must have universal education through high school.

administrators, and business, family and community leaders to strengthen public education at national, state and local levels. IDRA designed and leads the award-winning Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program, a model program that has helped schools in the United States and in Brazil succeed in keeping 98 percent of students in school and learning.

In 1986, I served as principal investigator for one of the first state-wide studies of school dropouts. With that study, IDRA developed in Texas an enrollment-based methodology that has become the foundation for dropout counting methods by other researchers across the country, including the Harvard Civil Rights Project and the Urban Institute. That seminal IDRA study also looked at the cost of under-educating our young people. Findings from our annual cost study,

when totaled over 20 years, indicate that \$730 billion have been lost to the state of Texas alone.

With the magnitude of this loss, what is needed is a seismic shift from “dropout prevention” to graduation for all; and “all” must mean “all.” Many dropout prevention efforts fail either because they are too narrow, or piecemeal, or because they blame students, parents or minority communities for the problem. Dropout prevention efforts also fail because all too often schools plan for failure.

Recently, I was talking with a teacher. She had been hired to teach freshman English in a large inner-city high school. When she learned she had 38 students had been assigned to her class, she marched to the principal’s office and told him that she could never do a good job with 38 students in one class. He told her: “Don’t worry. In six weeks, your class will have 24 students.” The other 14, he assured her, will have dropped out within six weeks.

We need to be honest about the fact that right now we plan on one third of students leaving school before they graduate. We plan on children leaving school. This assumption is built into classroom assignments, teacher hiring practices, curriculum purchases and facilities planning.

It is time to plan for success, not

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failure.

To move from dropout prevention to graduation for all, I would offer three primary recommendations focused at the campus, district and systems levels.

At the campus level, strengthen and support school-level change through Local Accountability Teams.

Community oversight is a critical missing ingredient in effective and accountable dropout prevention efforts at the local level.

Local accountability teams would review their local dropout and graduation data, disaggregated by subgroups, as well as data on school factors affecting the graduation rate, such as parent involvement, student engagement, curriculum access and teaching quality. Using these data, the team would develop a comprehensive graduation plan of action to include all students. Funding priorities would be based on campuses with the lowest graduation rates.

Secondly, fund district-wide efforts that focus on elementary-to-middle and middle-to-high school transition points.

Research shows that students drop out at key transition points. Research also shows that there are effective strategies that create safe passage for students.

Targeted school districts would demonstrate use of effective and coordinated practices that align curricula, create cross-level student tracking systems, and that support joint planning and coordinated professional development. Funding priorities would be based on states and school systems with the lowest graduation rates.

New!

Free!

Graduation for All: New E-Letter

Get Informed. Get Connected. Get Results.

Graduation for All is a new bilingual (Spanish/English) IDRA e-letter for people who are concerned about the dropout issue and want to take action.



Each month, Graduation for All will bring you up-to-date information that you can use in your school or community to strengthen school holding power – a school’s capacity to hold onto all students until they graduate. This solution-oriented e-letter is designed to help people poised to make a difference around the country to get informed, get connected and get results that turn the tide on high school attrition.

To subscribe to Graduation for All visit IDRA’s web site
www.idra.org

Thirdly and finally, our recommendation is to fund the *Graduation for All Act* and comprehensive efforts that will address the issue of graduation for all students.

I would also recommend that you designate a minimum of 5 percent of the NCLB allocations within each Title to efforts that graduate all students.

Planning for success obviously requires investment.

Designating 5 percent of Title I to address dropout strategies for disadvantaged students is clearly needed. Every component of NCLB can play a unique role in graduating students from high school. The same would be true for preparing, training and recruiting high quality teachers out of Title II; improving language and instruction for ELL students out

of Title III, and informing parents out of Title V.

If 5 percent of NCLB allocations within each Title were designated for graduation for all efforts, it would cost the equivalent of \$900 for each of the almost 1.3 million students who have dropped out of school. Many schools in our country operate on a 180-instructional-day schedule which means that what is being recommended is a \$5 dollar a day investment.

In this country, not so long ago, it seemed unreasonable to think that we would have universal education through primary school. We have that. Now we must have universal education through high school. Our children deserve it, our democracy demands it, and our economy requires no less.

María “Cuca” Robledo Montecel, Ph.D., is the IDRA executive director. Comments and questions may be directed to her via e-mail at comment@idra.org.



Stop the Merry-go-Round, Children Might Fall Off!

Parents as Stewards of Governance for School Reform that Supports Educational Equity

by **Aurelio M. Montemayor, M.Ed.**

Families and community members can assure the effective governance of a school. But they have to leave the confines of a narrow parent involvement hallway that ushers families into volunteering and corrals them to be a free labor pool mostly for fundraising and chaperoning.

Look from the vantage point of a birds-eye view of an imaginary “Good School Festival” with parents streaming to game booths and rides. Families observe their children’s joy in participating while assuring other children are likewise. If popular rides have long lines, they ask the manager to open more rides. If some look dangerous, the parents make sure the children are protected. If any child gets hurt, or some children are sitting on the side with sad or bored expressions, or some are even sneaking out because nothing interests them, families make sure their needs are addressed. After all, this is a festival for everyone, a carnival of bright ideas, exciting learning and with many excellent options for all children. And no parent needs to hire the festival

workers, manage a ride, run a booth, sell tickets, make snacks or clean up the grounds at night.

School Governance is...

Effective school governance is the capacity of administrators to provide an excellent education to all students, along with the policymaking and pro-active support of a school board to guarantee that every student will graduate.

The Quality Schools Action Framework, developed by Dr. María “Cuca” Robledo Montecel, IDRA’s executive director, shows how we can strengthen public education for all students. The two school system fundamentals are: fair funding and governance efficacy. The four school system indicators are: parent and community engagement, student engagement, teaching quality, and curriculum quality and access.

Families and School Governance

This article connects the dots between the effective school system fundamental of governance efficacy with parent* and community engagement. The idea is not that all parents

become administrators and board members, but that they are ever-vigilant protectors of their children. So, as in the opening analogy, many children are in danger of falling off due to a merry-go-round poor or inappropriate instruction, in-grade retention, exclusion from high-quality curriculum and classes, or non-engagement and isolation. Parents influencing governance can help make the ride safe.

Consider the arenas for engagement in governance as concentric circles, with the central one co-equal with the campus where the family’s children go to school (see Page 7).

In a typical school, a few parents participate on the site-based decision-making (SBDM) committee. The campus improvement plans from the SBDMs are important tools for guiding and governing the improvement of a campus. They echo the Quality Circle programs in the private sector several decades ago.

Quality Circles were private sector approaches for getting frontline input from workers, highlighted in the business world as one reason for

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* Parent refers to the adult(s) who is/are legally and morally responsible for the care, nurturing and rearing of the student.

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the superior production of Japanese plants and factories, brought back to the United States business world and then championed as an effective approach for public education.

Though the idea has merit and some organizational value, it could be self-serving for the adults in the circle to focus on what the educators want and not necessarily on what the children need.

Energetic involvement by parents can remind the school that improving the campus means that children will learn with all deliberate speed, happily and will be well prepared for college and whatever opportunities present themselves. The child is the real focus and the parent potentially the strongest advocate. Parents can be supported to speak for those families that most need compassion and to be heard.

Family-Friendly Governance and Family-Initiated Stewardship

School Level Circle. In the central circle of our diagram, those who govern a school do well to invite input, questions and feedback from the families of the children they serve. Client-satisfaction measures in the private sector are one example of tools in this domain that could effectively be adapted for the families.

Families may investigate what things are happening in the school that support student learning and growth and what things are happening in the school that block student learning and growth.

The force-field is a good qualitative tool that can help parents speak to critical school governance issues. The information gathered in such a force-field analysis provides information that parent leaders and representatives and school personnel can use

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Tools for

Governance Efficacy – Leading At All Levels

Educational excellence and equity happens with great effort and collaboration. To envision and then yield brilliant results, a school system must adapt to the times and the needs of its students. The process necessitates the cooperation and agility of everyone at all levels, and it must be bolstered by education research, effective policy and classroom best practices.

To build governance efficacy, school leaders and community members must take a longitudinal look at their school systems. For example, has the school district improved after the landmark *Brown vs. Board of Education* case of 1954 that desegregated schools based on race and was to create equal opportunities for all students. They also should take a vertical look across all grade levels and determine whether the policies, curricula and teaching quality are congruent and creating a seamless education that is leading all students toward graduation prepared for college. Finally, they should view the system with the eyes of their students, who go to school wishing to learn and be challenged and who need teaching to be relevant to their lives.

A Snapshot of What IDRA is Doing

Developing leaders – Every year in April, IDRA staff facilitates opportunities for classroom leaders and parents to enhance their leadership as advocates for effective teaching and positive student results. At the 14th Annual IDRA *La Semana del Niño* Early Childhood Educators Institute, experienced practitioners shared tools and strategies for making math, science and reading interesting, engaging and understandable to English language learners. Participants learned to expand their expectations of these little learners.

Conducting research – IDRA is implementing a research study of South Texas children in the pre-kindergarten ages (3 to 5). Through funding from the U.S. Department of Education for the Early Reading First program, IDRA is working with selected Head Start preschool centers to create early childhood centers of excellence. Through ongoing classroom-based professional development and by enabling teachers to form an integrated instructional program, Head Start children are better prepared for transition to kindergarten and are encountering greater reading successes when they enter school. The project is showing that reforms at the preschool level can produce very positive results for young learners.

Informing policy – Recently, Texas policymakers debated a policy that for a decade has increased college enrollment among rural and minority students

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Action

in the state. The policy automatically admits students graduating in the top 10 percent of their high school senior class to any Texas public university. Countering erroneous data on the effects of the law, IDRA published a policy brief entitled, *Ten Percent Plan in Texas*, that summarized the success of the Ten Percent Plan and helped re-direct the debate on the issue (see Page 9).

Engaging communities – In January, IDRA convened a community dialogue on issues of race equity in Little Rock, Arkansas. The event gathered African American, Latino and Anglo community, business and education leaders in the area to facilitate a community-based conversation about the public schools in the region and a review local efforts to serve all students. The overall effort will culminate with a local plan of action that will serve as a blueprint for fulfilling the promise of *Brown vs. Board of Education* and *Mendez vs. Westminster* to all of Little Rock’s students.

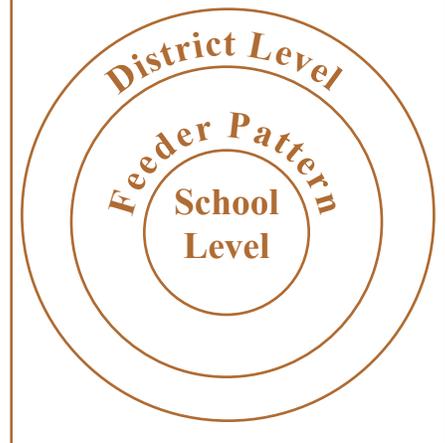
What You Can Do

Get informed. Convene public community forums on attrition to share information on key issues and mobilize action. The article, “Parent-Teacher Participation in the Context of School Governance” by Patricia A. Bauch and Ellen B. Goldring in the *Peabody Journal of Education* (v73 n1 p15-35 1998) examines participation of parents and teachers in school decision making in the context of school governance.

Get involved. Build diverse cross-sector partnerships and coalitions (from local partnerships with schools to local, state and regional networks). The *Journal of Law and Education* article, “Making Local School Councils Work: The Implementation of Local School Councils in Chicago Public Elementary Schools” by S. Raja Krishnamoorthi (v29 n3 p285-314 Jul 2000) discusses reform in Chicago’s public schools that has involved decentralizing decision-making to parent-dominated local school councils.

Get results. Establish partnerships with parents and community members to strengthen school holding power, tying parent and community involvement programs to school reform. Read “Parents Are a School’s Best Friend,” by June Cavarretta in *Educational Leadership* (v55 n8 p12-15 May 1998). This active parent describes how more than 400 parent volunteers in the Carpentersville (Illinois) school district were trained to participate in their children’s education through shared decision making. Each school practices a governance model focusing on trust building, collaboration, shared vision and continuous improvement.

Governance Efficacy with Family and Community



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to discover the why’s and wherefore’s of student underachievement caused within the school rather than blaming students and their families.

Feeder-Pattern Circle. The next circle rippling from the center is a feeder pattern area, where parents from elementary, middle and high schools look at their particular feeder pattern as a pipeline for children to flow easily and successfully to the highest exit point of the system. Parents can communicate across campuses to check if there are any holes or cracks in the pipeline through which the school is losing precious children. Parents can ask campus, area and central office administrators what policies and actions are in place to ensure the pipeline is seamless.

A good case in point is mathematics. It is common to hear high school algebra teachers complain that their students are poorly prepared for high school math. A quick survey of middle school math teachers usually finds inappropriate blaming of the elementary teachers for the problem. In many elementary schools, you might find two camps: the teachers who feel they themselves were never good in math, and those teachers who say that most children really do not have the

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capacity for pre-algebra concepts. “Their little brains just can’t handle those abstract concepts!”

These two widespread teacher opinions (that parents could very easily uncover through a few interviews of students and teachers) provide a rich opportunity to challenge the governance system to produce positive results.

The families-as-stewards-of-governance may ask:

- Can you show me the plan to teach the elementary teachers to be good in math?
- How are you bringing teachers

Parents can communicate across campuses to check if there are any holes or cracks in the pipeline through which the school is losing precious children.

on board who know math, love to teach it and know how to teach it to all students?

- How are the math teachers going to move from one or two traditional ways of teaching that guarantee that most students will not learn, to a dynamic array of approaches that ensure that all students will grasp and apply the principles of advanced mathematics.

So, governance must answer questions about:

- staffing and teacher credentials,
- professional development for those already teaching,
- processes to monitor and be vigilant at the critical transition points, and
- how the schools are demonstrating that, in fact, all students can learn math.

District Level Circle. A third circle is where families and community look at district-wide policies that help or hinder the academic success of all students. This is quite the opposite

of the mythical parent chorus whining for social promotion, in-grade retention and any of the other deficit model institutional responses rooted in low expectations and despair of the children from poor, blue collar, minority or recent immigrant communities.

On the other hand, this article is not encouraging confrontational acts from disgruntled parents at public board meetings. There are many creative, productive ways to help school districts on the one hand develop healthy policies that hold on to the students and encourage their learning and on the other remove damaging, punitive rules that only serve to alien-

ate, discourage and ultimately push out the many students who are not being served well. (IDRA research has found that between the 1985-86 and 2005-06 school years, more than 2.5 million students have been lost from public school enrollment, costing the state of Texas about \$730.1 billion in forgone income, lost tax revenues, and increased job training, welfare, unemployment and criminal justice costs.)

Parents working with decision-makers and elected officials can provide a powerful and rigorous lens to reveal and extend the assets of the schools and the community while also removing what is counter-productive, harmful and not conducive to academic achievement and success for all students.

Parents do not need to understand the intricacies of school policies and regulations. They can judge the overall impact on students and leave it to the educators, wordsmiths and legal eagles to draft tools of gov-

ernance that are benign and beneficial to all students.

IDRA has been promulgating a Parent Leadership Model (see bilingual description online at www.idra.org) centered on valuing of the parent and a collaborative peer leadership approach. Hundreds of parents in Texas have participated in various iterations of the model that parallels the concept that all children can learn with the recognition that all parents want their children to learn and succeed in school.

There are other organizations doing stellar and cutting-edge work. The Center for Parent Leadership at the Pritchard Committee (<http://www.cipl.org>) begun in Kentucky is one. Another is the Parent Institute for Quality Education (PIQUE) (www.pique.org), originally started in California.

Beyond electing school board members, parents, families and communities have many options to question, examine and inform the major decisions schools make, especially if there are clear signs that schools must change if children are to succeed.

Resources

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Cotton, K., and K.R. Wikelund. “#6 Parent Involvement in Education,” *Research You Can Use Close-Up* (Portland, Oregon: Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, 2001) <http://www.nwrel.org/scpd/sirs/3/cu6.html>.

Johnson, R.L. “Texas Public School Attrition Study 2005-06 Gap Continues to Grow,” *IDRA Newsletter* (San Antonio, Texas: Intercultural Development Research Association, October 2006).

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Ten Percent Plan in Texas

IDRA Releases Policy Brief

by María “Cuca” Robledo Montecel, Ph.D., Albert Cortez, Ph.D., and Josie D. Cortez, M.A.

Too many Texans are unable to get into college. Of those who graduate from high school, only one of five enroll in a Texas public university the following fall. Close to one of four enroll in a two-year college, but more than half will not enroll at all.

Among those who do get in, many do not graduate. Thirteen out of 19 public universities in Texas graduate less than half of their students; six graduate less than a third.

In order to be economically competitive, Texas needs more college graduates. The state clearly needs

more graduates from all groups, including low-income students and minority students, who are currently under-represented. They are more likely to face certain obstacles than are wealthier, non-minority students.

While not sufficient on its own, one strategy to increase access for minority students was adopted by the Texas Legislature in 1997 known as the Ten Percent Plan.

Under existing state legislation, any student enrolled in a public or private Texas high school is eligible for automatic admission to the state’s major public universities if the student is in the top 10 percent of his or her senior class. Developed partly in response to the *Hopwood* ruling prohibiting use of race- or ethnicity-based admissions factors, as well as rural legislators

calling for expanded access for small high schools to the state’s elite public universities, the policy has sparked discussions from three major fronts.

The University of Texas at Austin asserts that the required acceptance of all Ten Percent Plan graduates has steadily decreased the number of admission slots that can be offered to other students.

A second set of critics has included a pool of primarily non-minority high schools in affluent areas that have seen the numbers of their students gaining admission to the flagship universities slowly declining over time. The loss of long-standing “unfettered” access and the efforts to regain their disproportionate entrees are claimed by the citing of higher

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Change in the Number of Feeder High Schools to UT-Austin, 1996-2005

	Year											Cumulative Change
	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	
Total Feeder High Schools to UT-Austin	616	659	655	699	759	764	804	788	815	798	853	
Change (Number)		+43	-4	+44	+60	+5	+40	-16	+27	-17	+55	+237
Change (Percent)		+7.0	-0.6	-6.7	-8.6	+0.7	+5.2	-2.0	+3.4	+2.1	+6.7	+38.5

Source: University of Texas at Austin, Office of Admissions, <http://www.utexas.edu/student/admissions/research/feederschools.html>

Number and Percent of Students from High Feeder High Schools to UT-Austin, 1996-2005

	Year							
	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
Total Texas High School Freshmen Enrollees	5,519	6,330	6,014	6,513	7,040	6,641	7,188	6,046
Number of UT-Austin Freshmen Enrollees from Top 50 Texas Feeder High Schools	2,535	2,716	2,650	2,786	2,984	2,643	2,775	2,132
Percent of UT-Austin Freshmen Enrollees from Top 50 Texas Feeder High Schools	45.9%	43.6%	44.1%	42.8%	42.4%	39.8%	38.6%	35.3%

Data Source: University of Texas Office of Admissions, <http://www.utexas.edu/student/admissions/research/feederschools.html>

Percent Minority Enrollment at UT Austin, 1997-2005

Minority First-Time Freshmen	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
UT-Austin	33	35	37	38	39	38	41	43	45

Source: Senator Royce West Presentation, NCLR Policy Forum, Houston, Texas, June 2006

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test scores produced in these mostly affluent suburbs.

A third and smaller set of Ten Percent Plan critics cites studies conducted by the Harvard Civil Rights Project and others who conclude that while some “percent plans” may slightly improve the diversity of entering classes, the impact is not comparable to the access provided by earlier admission’s procedures that were struck down in the *Hopwood* case (but later validated by the recent U.S. Supreme Court ruling in the *Gruder* decision that allowed race to be considered as one factor in a multi-tiered admissions process). A related criticism of the Ten Percent Plan concept is that increases in the number of minority students impacted is too dependent on the existence of segregated high schools that often contribute to the new feeder patterns observed.

Several Texas legislators have

filed plans to either totally eliminate the plan or to limit the number of students that may constitute the major universities’ entering freshmen class. Often, the claims of the effect of the Texas Ten Percent Plan are debated in the absence of objective student and school data, particularly data analyzed by non-university connected groups.

To help inform the debate this spring on the effects of the Texas Ten Percent Plan, IDRA compiled and analyzed available data on the students entering the University of Texas at Austin and all the Texas high schools that contributed graduating seniors to those incoming freshmen classes between the years of 1995 and 2006.

The summary that follows highlights our major findings on the issue. These findings were released on May 1, 2007. Detailed tables that were included in the brief are available online at www.idra.org.

Key Findings and Recommendations

Finding #1: Since the adoption of the Ten Percent Plan, more Texas high schools have had their students enrolling at UT-Austin.

Recommendation: Mend it. Don’t end it. Given that the adoption of Texas’ Ten Percent Plan has contributed to a notable expansion of the number of Texas feeder high schools to UT-Austin, the policy should not be abandoned unless there is evidence of a proven plan that produces equal or greater increases in the number of high schools and students that have access to the university.

What the Data Say: Data obtained from the UT-Austin Office of Admissions indicate that the number of high schools enrolling freshmen at UT-Austin has increased from only 616 in 1996 (prior to adoption of the Ten Percent Plan) to 853 in 2006, a

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net gain of 237 high schools or 38.5 percent in 10 years.

Finding #2: Despite the Ten Percent Plan, a small number of Texas high schools continue to account for a large percentage of freshmen enrolling at UT-Austin.

Finding #3: Texas feeder high schools with the largest number of freshmen enrollees also tend to have fewer numbers of low-income students.

Recommendations: Find out why a small subset of Texas high

schools appear to be more successful at enrolling more students (possibly including more Ten Percent graduates) than most other Texas high schools and apply those lessons to historically underrepresented schools.

Money matters. Increase the number of scholarships and financial aid to low-income students enrolling at Texas universities.

What the Data Say: Analysis of UT-Austin feeder high schools from 1996 to 2003 indicates that a small number of Texas high schools continue to be overrepresented among

Texas high schools enrolling freshmen students at UT-Austin. According to early research conducted by Dr. David Montejano prior to adoption of the Ten Percent Plan, about one half of all freshmen enrollees came from 54 Texas high schools, with 34 percent coming from 500 or more other high schools. In more recent analyses of the top UT-Austin feeder schools, IDRA found that the trend continues where 50 high schools in Texas persistently account for 32 to 45 percent of the Texas high school entering

Ten Percent Plan – continued on Page 12

Undergraduate Enrollment by Racial Ethnic Groups at UT-Austin, 1996-2005

Ethnicity	Year (Fall Enrollment)									
	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
White	23,345	24,219	24,200	24,007	24,341	24,199	24,453	23,254	22,326	21,588
American Indian	156	182	182	166	175	164	175	148	158	162
African American	1,479	1,353	1,311	1,277	1,298	1,335	1,372	1,400	1,405	1,482
Asian American	4,459	4,783	5,104	5,372	5,695	6,124	6,616	6,541	6,399	6,270
Hispanic	5,247	5,234	5,154	5,106	5,152	5,236	5,459	5,505	5,647	5,919
Foreign	1,103	1,090	1,227	1,158	1,364	1,339	1,411	1,362	1,284	1,292
Unknown	--	--	25	73	137	212	175	173	158	165
Totals	35,789	36,861	37,203	37,159	38,162	38,609	39,661	38,383	37,377	36,878

Source: University of Texas at Austin, Office of Institutional Research, Student Characteristics,

Table S 4 A, Fall Enrollment by Level and Ethnicity, P.8, http://www.utexas.edu/academic/oir/statistical_handbook/05-06/pdf/0506students.pdf

Undergraduate Enrollment by Percentage of Racial Ethnic Groups at UT-Austin, 1996-2005

Ethnicity (Percent)	Year (Fall Enrollment)									
	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
White	65.2	65.7	65.0	64.6	63.8	62.7	61.7	60.6	59.7	58.5
American Indian	0.4	0.5	0.5	0.4	0.5	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4
African American	4.1	3.7	3.5	3.4	3.4	3.5	3.5	3.6	3.8	4.0
Asian American	12.5	13.0	13.7	14.5	14.9	15.9	16.7	17.0	17.1	17.0
Hispanic	14.7	14.2	13.9	13.7	13.5	13.6	13.8	14.3	15.1	16.1
Foreign	3.1	3.0	3.3	3.1	3.6	3.5	3.6	3.5	3.4	3.5
Unknown	--	--	0.1	0.2	0.4	0.5	0.4	0.5	0.4	0.4

Source: University of Texas at Austin, Office of Institutional Research, Student Characteristics,

Table S 4 A, Fall Enrollment by Level and Ethnicity, P.8, http://www.utexas.edu/academic/oir/statistical_handbook/05-06/pdf/0506students.pdf

freshmen in any given year between 1996 and 2003. The notable decrease in 2003 in the top 50 Texas feeder high school merits further analyses, but at first glance, may be attributable to overall decreases in the university's freshmen enrollees resulting from the UT-Austin administrator's decision to cap or limit undergraduate enrollment. The decrease in the size of the freshmen class, specifically, then decreased the total feeders among the high schools that contributed the most freshmen enrollees in that year, no doubt more so than any direct impact of the Ten Percent Plan.

IDRA's preliminary review of 2003 feeder high school indicated that (for the most part) the Texas feeder high schools with the largest number of freshmen enrollees tended to have fewer numbers of low-income students (see Attachment A online). This suggests that ability to pay for college has a major impact on who enrolls at the major universities – perhaps neutralizing the potential for enrollment created by the automatic admission provisions in the Ten Percent Plan. This issue of the role of family financial capacity and related financial aid provided to new freshmen enrollees may represent a critical second component of efforts to expand minority enrollment at all Texas major universities.

Finding #4: The Ten Percent Plan increases minority enrollment at UT-Austin.

Recommendation: Before modifying the current Ten Percent Plan, alternative admission procedures must be studied to make sure they yield greater increases in minority enrollments.

What the Data Say: Since the adoption of the Ten Percent Plan, the percentages of minority freshmen enrolling at the state's major public university has grown over time. At UT-Austin, the percentage of first-

time minority freshmen enrollees increased from 33 percent to 45 percent in the same eight-year span.

Finding #5: UT-Austin enrolls as many students from other countries as African American students from Texas.

Finding #6: Hispanic undergraduates have only increased an average of fewer than 75 students per year over nine years.

Recommendation: The Ten Percent Plan is a good start but more is needed. Expand recruitment and financial aid for Ten Percent Plan students in order to increase the enrollment of minority students at UT-Austin.

Though far from perfect, the Ten Percent Plan has increased diversity of students who are admitted and enroll at UT-Austin, and it has increased the number of high schools that send their students to the state's major institution of higher education.

What the Data Say: While the number of minority entering freshmen has improved over time, the university continues to significantly under-serve minority populations in Texas (see Attachment B online). According to data compiled by the UT-Austin Admissions Department, African American students continue to account for less than 4 percent of the university's undergraduate students with little substantive improvement over time. Hispanic students have reflected increased percentages of the undergraduate enrollment but still lag significantly behind the White undergraduate enrollments at UT-Austin.

Conclusions

Following a closer analysis of student family income and related school's economic profile data (as reflected in the percent of students

eligible for the free and reduced-price lunch program), it is also evident that for students from low-income families, the mere opportunity to enroll at this flagship school is insufficient. If the state's major places of higher learning are to reflect all of its resident populations, the state must examine the combined effects of percent merit-based admissions, its student recruitment practices, and the level and types of financial aid offered to students.

Though far from perfect, the Ten Percent Plan as currently structured has increased diversity of students who are admitted and enroll at UT-Austin and diversity in the num-

ber and distribution of high schools that send their students to the state's major institution of higher education. Before any significant changes are entertained, any new plan must demonstrate evidence of comparable or better outcomes as it relates to both minority student and high school feeder diversity.

Postscript: Upon the close of the Texas legislative session in late May 2007, while several changes were proposed and debated, no changes to the 10 Percent Plan were ultimately adopted.

Maria "Cuca" Robledo Montecel, Ph.D., is IDRA's executive director. Albert Cortez, Ph.D., is director of IDRA Policy. Josie D. Cortez, M.A., is a senior education associate. Comments and questions may be directed to them via e-mail at comment@idra.org.

School Board Accountability – continued from Page 2
schools are discussed below.

1. Become better informed of community assets and needs, student characteristics, and implications for a quality educational program. Although most states require that their school board members receive training during their tenure, the training rarely targets knowing their communities (assets, needs, student characteristics) or basic knowledge about a quality education program. How can we entrust the education of our children to persons who are responsible for school policy but who have a limited knowledge of quality education and quality teaching?

Unfortunately, it is not uncommon for school board members to become totally disconnected from their role and the duty that they are elected or appointed to carry out. The community that elected them should demand greater interest, action and leadership from them.

2. Engage in constant dialogue with community leaders and parents to ensure that schools work in partnership with community members and parents to enrich the quality of education to be provided. Successful school boards meaningfully engage their communities in periodic forums, meetings and reflection sessions to check the pulse of schools in graduating students who are ready for college, in ensuring that schools are holding on to students, and in creating school environments that are safe and responsive to the needs of all students.

Building community consensus and support for school transformations based on research and compassion are powerful methods. It also can neutralize the effects of political rivalry and enmity that cause school board paralysis, deadlock and inappropriate action. Too often school boards engage community only during election times.

3. Promote and facilitate partnerships with community members and parents as a powerful way of creating and sustaining educational change. Recently, a leading school superintendent was lamenting the lack of knowledge and commitment of school administrators to value and partner with their communities and parents to create a learning community that works and supports a quality educational program.

Effective school boards are strong advocates of meaningful engagement. They promote and facilitate partnerships with community and

5. Be accountable to the community for excellence and equity in the provision of services and the resultant academic accomplishments. If systemic changes were well-defined, understood and supported by an informed school board, they would be less vulnerable to disruption of educational services to students created by school leadership changes like a new superintendent or new principals. Many times, leadership vacuums left by superintendents' or administrators' sudden departure lead to complete school disarray and dysfunction.

When a school board is informed

By disengaging, board members abdicate the power and responsibility entrusted to them through the democratic process.

parents as a powerful way of creating and sustaining change that leads to student engagement and success. School administrators must realize that total student success will not be achieved until the school partners with all sectors of the community and parents and has the full confidence of students.

4. Become an integral part of a leadership team responsible for designing school reform efforts. Many times, school boards underestimate their contributions as citizens and elected representatives of the general public in school reform efforts. They bring different, essential perspectives into the planning and design phase of school reform. They are in a position to change policies to enable schools to make the necessary changes.

The total disengagement of school board members from school reform efforts can have a detrimental impact on schools' success. By disengaging, board members abdicate the power and responsibility entrusted to them through the democratic process.

and engaged in the educational design process, continuity is sustained, transition can be less troublesome, and the implementation of effective policies and practices will not be disrupted.

In conclusion, the benefits of a more involved school board cannot be underestimated. School boards are at the root of an educational system founded upon democratic principles and promote the tenets of democracy and self government.

There is no doubt that ownership of school reform efforts by a school board can result in greater community support and acceptance, stronger collaboration among schools in a school district, and increased participation of community stakeholders. Our children cannot be the victims of an indifferent and unconscionable system that can be manipulated by self-serving and insensible politics. Our children deserve better.

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Multicultural Education: A Generation of Advocacy

by **José A. Cárdenas, Ed.D.**

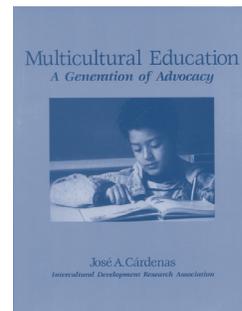
This compilation includes 92 articles on multicultural education published during a 25-year period. Dr. José A. Cárdenas is the founder of IDRA, was its executive director for 20 years and now serves as director emeritus of the organization. The book provides an historical overview of his involvement in the most significant issues in multicultural education as a teacher, administrator and an active advocate of children.

Articles are organized into 10 chapters dealing with each of 10 major issues in multicultural education. Each chapter is accompanied by a bibliography and appropriate discussion questions. The book also contains five cumulative indices of authors, court cases, legislation, organizations and topics.

Multicultural Education is a reading imperative for teachers, administrators, teacher trainers and policy formulators interested in providing equal educational opportunity to all segments of the school population.

Topics Included:

- minority education
- bilingual education
- education of undocumented children
- school dropouts
- retentions in grade
- early childhood education
- science, math and technology
- standardized testing
- school reform
- a new educational paradigm



(ISBN 0-536-58760-4; 1995; 134 pages; hardback; \$38)

Intercultural Development Research Association
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Phone 210/444-1710; Fax 210/444-1714; e-mail: contact@idra.org. It is
IDRA policy that all orders totalling less than \$30 be pre-paid.

Highlights of Recent IDRA Activities

In April, IDRA worked with **4,618** teachers, administrators, parents, and higher education personnel through **31** training and technical assistance activities and **121** program sites in **12** states plus Brazil. Topics included:

- ◆ Detroit Public Schools, Michigan
- ◆ Laredo Independent School District (ISD), Texas
- ◆ Rio Grande City Consolidated ISD, Texas

Participating agencies and school districts included:

- ◆ Annual IDRA *La Semana del Niño* Early Childhood Parent Institute
- ◆ Multicultural Framework Implementation
- ◆ *Plática*: Classroom Management and Student Engagement
- ◆ Technology Assessment
- ◆ TAKS Math Camp

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 two school districts, 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 integration of technology access, technical assistance and training into community- and school-based settings, students built new skills in technology, math and science and learned about college and career options; families were engaged in their children's learning; and teachers enhanced their instruction with technology.

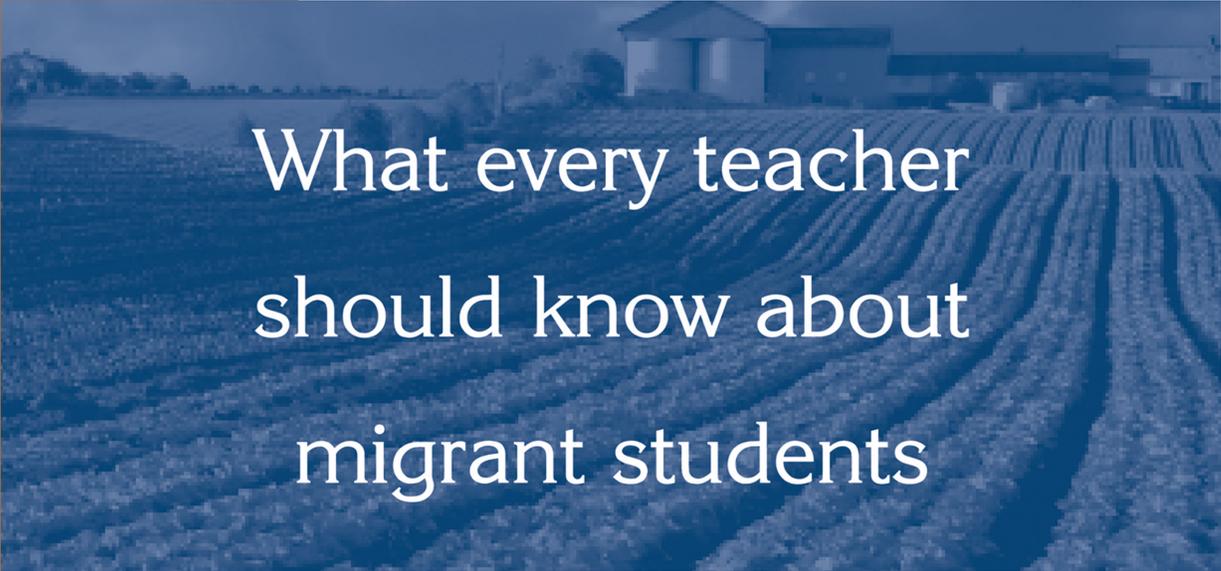
Regularly, IDRA staff provides services to:

- ◆ 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.



What every teacher should know about migrant students

New CD & Resource Guide for Teachers of Migrant Students

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This interactive CD and guide for teachers of migrant students provides insights about migrant students in your classroom and best practices within migrant education programs. Whether you are an experienced teacher or new to teaching migrant students, you will benefit from this resource. This is also a useful tool for administrators and counselors.

Informative and brimming with evocative photographs, poetry, heartfelt narration and resources, this CD features the insights of a migrant student, a teacher and an administrator about effective teaching and learning.

It shares how to build on existing student successes and how to use best practices to provide a rigorous curriculum and meaningful support. Stay up to date with links to web and other resources on migrant program requirements, state standards, and key migrant student initiatives and strategies.

Features: CD has options to either listen to the audio or turn it off for read-only. This CD and accompanying guide may be incorporated into professional development sessions or can be for individual teacher use. The CD and guide are sold together for \$10 plus 10 percent for shipping and handling. Orders must be prepaid. Purchase orders for orders totaling more than \$30 are accepted.

Developed and distributed by the Intercultural Development Research Association.

New!



Free!

IDRA has launched a new podcast series designed to be a tool for public school teachers and administrators as well as to provide insights into key issues in education in the United States.

Online Now



Episode 13: "Access to Higher Levels of Mathematics" IDRA Classnotes Podcast – Kathryn Brown, an IDRA education associate and developer of IDRA's Math Smart! model, discusses how all students should have access to quality instruction in math that ensures success on all assessments, enrollment and completion in higher-level mathematics courses.



Episode 11: "Valuing Families in Children's Education" IDRA Classnotes Podcast – Aurelio Montemayor, M.Ed., illustrates the contrast between the valuing and deficit models of thinking and acting, and he provides examples of schools that are valuing families as partners in children's education.



Episode 12: "Reflections from Early Childhood Institute Attendees" IDRA Classnotes Podcast – Christie Goodman, APR, interviews three participants at the Annual IDRA *La Semana del Niño* Early Childhood Educators Institute about their experience there, what is happening at their schools and what they learned at the institute that will help them.



Episode 10: "Early Childhood Classrooms of Excellence" – José L. Rodríguez, M.A., and Josie Cortez, M.A., share highlights of IDRA's model and transformations that have occurred in classrooms for children, teachers and families.



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