



## **Little Improvement in Texas School Holding Power**

### **Texas Public School Attrition Study, 2004-05**

#### **Inside this Issue:**

- ❖ **Annual IDRA attrition study**
- ❖ **Student tells his story**
- ❖ **Helping parents avoid their child's retention**

**by Roy L. Johnson, M.S.**

#### **Methods**

During the fall of each year, school districts are required to report information to the Texas Education Agency via the Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS) for all public school students and grade levels. IDRA's attrition studies involve an analysis of ninth-grade enrollment figures and 12<sup>th</sup>-grade enrollment figures three years later. This period represents the time span during which a student would be enrolled in high school.

IDRA collects and uses high school enrollment data from the Fall Membership Survey of TEA to compute countywide and statewide attrition rates by race-ethnicity and gender. Enrollment data from special school districts (military schools, state schools and charter schools) are excluded from the analyses, because they are likely to have unstable enrollments or lack a tax base for school programs.

Historical statewide attrition rates and numbers of students lost to attrition are categorized by race-ethnicity and by gender (see boxes on Pages 13 and

*Attrition Study – continued on Page 2*

Thirty-six percent of the freshman class of 2001-02 left school prior to graduating from a Texas public high school in the 2004-05 school year. For each of the last 15 years, the statewide attrition rate in Texas has been higher than the initial rate of 33 percent in the Intercultural Development Research Association's landmark 1985-86 study. School holding power in Texas is still less than satisfactory.

The current rate of 36 percent compares to attrition rates of 39 percent in 2001-02, 38 percent in 2002-03, and 36 percent in 2003-04.

Attrition rates are an indicator of a school's holding power or ability to keep students enrolled in school and learning until they graduate. Along with other dropout measures, attrition rates are useful in studying the magnitude of the dropout problem and the success of schools in keeping students in school.

Attrition, in its simplest form, is the rate of shrinkage in size or number. Therefore, an attrition rate is the percent change in grade level enrollment between a base year and an end year.



16). General conclusions from this year's study follow.

### Latest Study Results

The class of 2005 began with 357,331 students. Of those 137,424 were lost from public school enrollment between the 2001-02 and 2004-05 school years. (See table on Page 18.)

Spanning a 20-year period from 1985-86 through 2004-05, the IDRA attrition studies provide time series data on the number and percent of public school students who leave school prior to graduation.

In 1986, IDRA conducted Texas' first comprehensive statewide study of high school dropouts using a high school attrition formula to estimate the number and percent of students who leave school prior to graduation. The study in 1986 was the state's first major effort to assess the school holding power of Texas public schools.

IDRA's inaugural study found that 86,276 students had not graduated from Texas public high schools, costing the state \$17 billion in forgone income,

**“We have lost over 2 million students. That is like losing Austin and Dallas in a decade and a half. The important point is not if our data are better, but that we are losing children from our school system and that loss is persistent and unacknowledged.”**

**– Dr. María “Cuca” Robledo Montecel, July 2005**

lost tax revenues, and increased job training, welfare, unemployment and criminal justice costs (Cárdenas, Robledo and Supik, 1986).

Between the 1985-86 and 2004-05 school years, 2.2 million students have been lost from public school enrollment costing the state of Texas about \$500 billion in forgone income, lost tax revenues, and increased job training, welfare, unemployment and criminal justice costs.

**The overall attrition rate has increased by 9 percent from 1985-86 to 2004-05.** The percentage of students who left high school prior to graduation was 33 percent in 1985-86

compared to 36 percent now. Over the past two decades, attrition rates have fluctuated between a low of 31 percent in 1988-89 and 1989-90 to a high of 43 percent in 1996-97.

Numerically, 137,424 students were lost from public high school enrollment in 2004-05 compared to 86,276 in 1985-86.

**The overall attrition rate was less than 40 percent in 2004-05 for the fourth time in 10 years.** Between 1994-95 and 2000-01, the overall attrition rate ranged from a low of 40 percent to a high of 43 percent. In 2003-04 and 2004-05, the overall attrition rate was 36 percent,

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# “It Made Me Want to do Better in School”

## Former Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program Tutor Shares His Experience

by Pablo López

*Editor’s Note: The Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program, created by IDRA, is an internationally-recognized cross-age tutoring program for dropout prevention. Secondary students who are considered at risk of dropping out of school are placed as tutors of elementary students, enabling the older students to make a difference in the younger students’ lives. The tutors stay and do better in school. Every tutor has a special story. On the occasion of the program’s 20th anniversary, Pablo López shared his.*

I am deeply honored to be here today, and I would like to share how my experience in the Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program made a difference in my life.

I joined the Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program as an eighth grader at Faulker Middle School in Brownsville, Texas. When I joined the program, I just saw it as an opportunity to make money. Money was really tight at home due to my mother raising my brother and me. My father passed away when I was 7 years old. My mother began working to support us. I grew up in a bad neighborhood where there were “easier” ways to make money.

When our teacher coordinator, Mrs. Yolanda Olvera, gave me the opportunity to do something good, I took it. Throughout the program, I had a chance to meet and tutor different kids with different problems – not only to help them with their schoolwork but also to become their friend, someone they could trust. During the course of the school year, the money became less important and meeting with the

children became my number one priority.

I had the opportunity to be a tutor, a role model and a friend to this great group of children. Being a tutor made me feel important because I felt I was finally doing something good. It made me want to do better in school, not only with academics but also my way of seeing things. How could I be a role model to these kids if I myself was a troublemaker at school?

I am not saying I was a perfect student. But then again who is? I was an average student, but when I was in front of these children, I felt way above average. I felt important; I felt I had a purpose. Each day, I looked forward to teaching the children something new. Sometimes I felt I learned more from them than they did from me.

The end of the school year used to be the happiest time for me. That year it became my saddest day. Having to say goodbye to all my tutees was one of the hardest things I have ever had to do. I did not want to cry, but the harder I fought it, the harder it was for me not

to. I was part of something so great, and now I was seeing it end.

I felt depressed because I wished I could somehow continue working with these children because I knew my job wasn’t done. That experience had such an impact on my life that throughout my high school and college years I joined similar programs to keep doing my part in helping children.

In high school I was involved in the PALS program where I was no longer a tutor but a mentor to junior high school kids. Later in college, I joined a program where I worked with the juvenile probation department. I spoke to young people about drugs, gangs and the consequences of making bad decisions – things that I had dealt with as a kid, growing up in the bad part of town.

Through the Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program and the other programs I later joined, I felt I was not only protecting these children but also serving my community. I had the opportunity to change the cycle. A lot

*Former Tutor - continued on Page 4*

Former Tutor - continued from Page 3

of people believe that once you grow up in a bad neighborhood surrounded by bad influences, you will become one yourself. It is hard to break that cycle. If it wasn't for the Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program maybe I would have just become another statistic and not the person you see here today.

When you are that age and you are given that type of responsibility, it makes you yearn for more and it makes you want to become something in life.

Now I am a police officer for the city of McAllen, Texas. The best thing about my job is helping those in need. At the end of the day, the arrests and the traffic citations don't really matter.

Being a police officer means to protect and serve. Helping an old lady cross the street, turning on the vehicle overhead lights for a group of kids who think of you as a superhero. Those are the things that are important. Being there for someone in need and being able to help that person makes my job worthwhile. I strongly believe the Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program is invaluable to the kids and to the community.

Congratulations to IDRA and the Coca-Cola Foundation on your Valued Youth 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary. You made a change in my life, and I strongly believe it will keep making differences in others.

My job today is to protect and serve. And, now that I think about it, that is something I learned about 10 years ago as an eighth grader in the Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program.

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Pablo López was a Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program tutor in Brownsville, Texas, in 1994. He graduated with honors and received an early graduation scholarship. He has attended the University of Texas in Brownsville and plans to earn a bachelor's degree in criminal justice. Today, he is a decorated police officer in McAllen, Texas. In 2003, he received the "Life Saving Award" for heroic acts in the line of duty. Mr. López is a frequent public speaker to students on the importance of education.

## **IDRA Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program – Philosophy**

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- 1. All students can learn.** This means all students: of all colors, of all languages, of all backgrounds, with or without designer clothes. All students can learn.
- 2. The school values all students.** There are no "throw-aways." There are no students who are not important. All students are valuable.
- 3. All students can actively contribute to their own education and to the education of others.** Students are not passive vessels to which we give information. Not only are they active learners but they also can become teachers of others.
- 4. All students, parents and teachers have the right to participate fully in creating and maintaining excellent schools.** We are all partners in this. We all participate.
- 5. Excellence in schools contributes to individual and collective economic growth, stability and advancement.** Our sense, our philosophy is that we are all "at risk" as long as students are "at risk." Different sectors in this country are realizing that. It is not only what happens to me as an individual when I drop out of school, it is what happens to *us*.
- 6. Commitment to educational excellence is created by including students, parents and teachers in setting goals, making decisions, monitoring progress and evaluating outcomes.** Excellence requires involving all of the players in deciding where we are going and how we are getting there and in monitoring how we are doing.
- 7. Students, parents and teachers must be provided extensive, consistent support in ways that allow students to learn, teachers to teach and parents to be involved.** Each of these groups needs each other and must support each other.

**For more information on the Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program, contact IDRA by phone at 210-444-1710, by e-mail at [contact@idra.org](mailto:contact@idra.org) or visit our web site at [www.idra.org](http://www.idra.org).**

# The Promise and Perils of the Texas Student Success Initiative

## Critical School-Parent Action to Promote Student Success

by Adela Solís, Ph.D., and Anna Alicia Romero

It is a Saturday afternoon in August, and neighborhood stores are buzzing as weary parents and excited youngsters shop for the niftiest backpacks and school supplies. It is refreshing to experience first-hand the genuine optimism of children about school.

In the meantime, in schools across Texas, administrators and teachers are examining results of the summer administration of third-grade and fifth-grade Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS). These grade-level outcomes have special significance, most importantly to students, as a result of legislation passed by the 76<sup>th</sup> Legislature in 1999 that enacted the Student Success Initiative and its grade advancement testing requirements.

### What is the Student Success Initiative?

During the last 20 years, the nation has seen increased emphasis on standardized exams tied to increased standards to address the educational malpractice of graduating students who could barely read, write or perform necessary math skills. In that vein, Texas followed suit by updating its state curriculum to what is now the

Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) accompanied by the TAKS. Texas then ratcheted up the stakes, appropriately holding schools accountable for specific results in several categories and inappropriately holding students accountable for performance on a single test.

Briefly, the course of actions that occur during the school year around Student Success Initiative requirements look like this:

- Third-grade students must pass the

*reading* TAKS to be promoted. Fifth-grade students must pass the *math and reading* TAKS to be promoted.

- Students taking the TAKS have three opportunities to pass the exam in the spring and summer of that school year.
- Intensive academic support is available.
- A grade placement committee, which includes the parent(s), is

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### Online Sources

#### Student Success Initiative Web Site

<http://www.tea.state.tx.us/student.assessment/resources/ssi/index.html>

#### Student Guide to Graduation

English: [http://www.tea.state.tx.us/student.assessment/resources/grad/grad\\_broch.pdf](http://www.tea.state.tx.us/student.assessment/resources/grad/grad_broch.pdf)

Spanish: <http://www.tea.state.tx.us/comm/sphsbrochure.pdf>

#### Prepare for Success: A Parent Guide to the Student Success Initiative at Grade 3

English: <http://www.tea.state.tx.us/student.assessment/resources/ssi/Gr3SSI.pdf>

Spanish: <http://www.tea.state.tx.us/student.assessment/resources/ssi/sgr3ssi.pdf>

#### Prepare for Success: A Parent Guide to the Student Success Initiative at Grade 5

English: <http://www.tea.state.tx.us/student.assessment/resources/ssi/Gr5SSI.pdf>

Spanish: <http://www.tea.state.tx.us/student.assessment/resources/ssi/sgr5ssi.pdf>

created for the student after failing a test a second time.

- The grade placement committee creates an instructional plan based on need and offers intensive help after each test.
- After the third failure on one or both tests, the retention option is activated.
- Parents may appeal the retention decision following specific steps within given timelines.
- The grade placement committee must have a unanimous decision to support promotion to the next grade.

The TAKS is available in Spanish for English language learners who are in bilingual programs in the third and eighth grades.

### **Essence of the Initiative is In-grade Retention**

Beginning in 2002-03, third-grade students were required to pass the TAKS reading exam as a condition passing to the fourth grade. Two years later, fifth-grade students were required to pass the TAKS reading and math tests in order to pass to the sixth grade. And in 2007-08, eighth-grade students also will have to pass the TAKS reading and math exams before they can be promoted to the ninth grade.

In passing the law, legislators had academic proficiency and graduation in mind, but by making in-grade retention the centerpiece of the initiative, the chances for student success were weakened rather than strengthened.

### **School Holding Power and In-Grade Retention**

The practice of retention in-grade is particularly detrimental to school completion and graduation. The educational and scientific literature of the past 30 years clearly delineates the negative effects of in-grade retention. IDRA's early studies on retention show that minority students are retained more

## **Key Findings from “Winning the Battle and Losing the War: Examining the Relation between Grade Retention and Dropping Out of High School”**

- Retention in first through third grades was a strong indicator of later dropping out.
- Retention increases the risk of dropping out by 30 percent to 50 percent.
- Poor classroom performance was a determinant of failure to complete school.
- Grade retention during elementary school reduces the likelihood of pursuing post-secondary education by 85 percent.
- Students retained once had a 69 percent dropout rate, those retained twice had a 94 percent dropout rate, compared to a 27 percent dropout rate for those never retained.

Source: Jimerson, S.R., G.E. Anderson and A.D. Whipple. “Winning the Battle and Losing the War: Examining the Relation Between Grade Retention and Dropping Out of High School,” *Psychology Today* (2002). (39) 4, 441-457.

often than White students; that repeating a grade usually does not increase achievement; and that once students have been held back, the achievement gap between them and other students never closes (Supik and Johnson, 1999).

IDRA's work also has shown that a strong correlation exists between in-grade retention and dropping out of school, has documented the emotional and financial costs of requiring children to repeat the same grade, and has enumerated alternatives to in-grade retention (McCollum, et al., 1999; Cárdenas, 1991).

Other investigations have confirmed IDRA's findings and observed additional effects. Specifically, the Texas approach to testing and the consequences have been studied. The pre-cursor to the TAKS, the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS), has been closely examined and analyzed: “There was a sharp upturn in numbers of young

people taking the GED tests in Texas in the mid-1990s to avoid TAAS” (Haney, 2000).

A more recent study on in-grade retention examined specifically the relationship between retention and dropping out of school (Jimerson, et al., 2002). The researchers examined studies from 1972 to 1999 with respect to impact on dropping out. Their findings are summarized in the box above.

Education researchers are joined by other scientists when they assert: “Tests, when used properly, are among the most sound and objective ways to measure student performance. But, when test results are used inappropriately or as a single measure of performance, they can have unintended adverse consequences” (American Psychology Association, 2001).

Nevertheless, what is in the best interest of children is not always incorporated into good teaching



# Looking Back and Moving Forward

## IDRA Equity Assistance Center Continues to Serve Five States

by **Bradley Scott, Ph.D.**

The IDRA South Central Collaborative for Equity has successfully completed a three-year cycle of activity as a federally-funded equity assistance center in Region V (Arkansas, Louisiana, New Mexico, Oklahoma and Texas). What impact has the center had over the three years of its operation? How have students benefited regarding their academic outcomes, civil rights access, and non-discriminatory access to schools and programs? This article will discuss ways in which the South Central Collaborative for Equity has assisted schools to equitably serve all students.

### Three Main Purposes

The center supports three broad purposes through its technical assistance and training. First, it supports the creation of educational equity for all students in public schools, including federally-funded charter and magnet schools. To this end, the center helps schools to implement the Six Goals of Educational Equity to ensure that all students and families receive the full benefit of public education (Scott, 2002).

Second, the center provides assistance to public schools to ensure

that no policies, practices or activities violate the civil rights of students. The *Civil Rights Act of 1964* prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color or national origin, and Title IX of the *Educational Amendments of 1972* prohibits discrimination on the basis of gender. The technical assistance and training provided by the center assists public schools to prevent such violations or to correct such violations when districts, the Office for Civil Rights, or the U.S. Department of Justice identifies them.

Finally, the center assists public schools to address matters of school desegregation, the problems that arise because of desegregation, or to address post-desegregation concerns when districts have achieved unitary status. In this area of technical assistance and training, the center continues to provide guidance to public schools in many areas of their daily operation and policy formation to implement school desegregation plans that they have developed on a voluntary basis or that are the result of action by the federal court or some other entity.

### Examples of Services Provided to Schools

The services of the center support quality teaching and learning and school reform, particularly as such reform is

framed under the *No Child Left Behind Act*. Some selected examples of the center's technical assistance and training demonstrate the impact the center has had over the past three years. The districts received these services at no cost to their local operating budgets.

- The center has worked with at least six districts in Arkansas, Louisiana and Texas to implement IDRA's Focusing on Language and Academic Instructional Renewal (FLAIR) project as a *critical pedagogical intervention* over the past three years. This technical assistance and training has improved teaching quality, transformed classroom instructional practice and increased student academic performance in reading as measured by state assessments. (See [www.idra.org/flair/default.htm](http://www.idra.org/flair/default.htm) for more information.)
- The center provided more than 45 *focused educational assistance* activities to public schools. This is an extended or long-term assistance activity in which the school district is committed to transforming an educational practice or policy-related concern and requests extensive assistance to accomplish this outcome. One district in New Mexico, for example, requested

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practice or even good public policy. Note that, even with evidence of an adverse impact on public school students, Texas’ testing practices were incorporated into the national education plan, *No Child Left Behind*, which was signed into law in 2002.

Furthermore, Texas policymakers have recently considered expanding test-retention policies to include 13 standardized end-of-course exams. In their proposals, regardless of the student’s grade in the subject area, he or she would have to pass the end-of-course test or fail the class (Cortez and Romero, 2005).

### Accessing Information on Student Success Initiative

Though well intentioned, the Student Success Initiative promotes some unsound educational practices. Fortunately, the law does contain provisions that, if applied appropriately, can prevent students from being retained. The plan also strongly recommends building partnerships among schools, parents and community to help implement its requirements.

Thus because of its far-reaching and profound consequences, it is critical that all stakeholders, especially parents of public school children, be well versed about the Student Success Initiative and work hard so that their children do not fall prey to unsound educational practices.

The Texas Education Agency is charged with implementing the Student Success Initiative and plays a role in educating parents. Through a web site, the agency offers information and resources for schools and parents (<http://www.tea.state.tx.us/student.assessment/resources/ssi/index.html>). Some of the material is also in Spanish. Information on the web site includes:

- **Flowcharts of TAKS-taking and decision-making process** for third grade and fifth grade. This area

describes the process and timelines for test taking, related decision making, and parent notification.

- **Grade placement committee manual** that details the specific roles and tasks of the committee, which is convened when a student does not pass a second administration of the test.
- **Sample letters to parents in English and Spanish** that the schools may adapt for local use in which required information about testing, passing/test success, school services and parent options are described. (Parent notification is mandatory.)
- **Brochure for parents in English and Spanish for third grade and**

**fifth grade** that describes what the Student Success Initiative is and delineates steps parents can take to help their children pass the TAKS.

- **Student Success Initiative requirements and process flowcharts for special education** that describe the initiative as it pertains to children in special education.
- **The rules and laws regarding the initiative.**

Although some of the information on the web site is intended for parents, this web-based resource may not be accessible to them. It is then critical for schools to assume a role in helping parents navigate these very important tasks.

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## Student Success Initiative ~ Glossary

**In-grade retention:** a policy requiring students to repeat the same grade a second time in order to master what was not learned. It is commonly known as flunking.

**Grade placement committee:** a committee formed after a student has not passed the second administration of the TAKS exam and consists of the principal, a teacher in the area not mastered and the parent/guardian. The GPC creates an instructional plan for the student based on the student’s needs.

**Social promotion:** refers to the practice of passing students who have not mastered part, or all, of the grade-level curriculum on to the next grade with other students of their age.

**TAKS (Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills):** The TAKS is the statewide mandated standardized exam. It measures the statewide curriculum as follows.

### Grade TAKS Exams

3	reading, mathematics
4	reading, writing, mathematics
5	reading, mathematics, science
6	reading, mathematics
7	reading, writing, mathematics
8	reading, mathematics, social studies
9	reading, mathematics
10	English language arts, mathematics, science, social studies
11	English language arts, mathematics, science, social studies

The Spanish TAKS is administered in the third through sixth grades. Satisfactory performance on the TAKS in the 11th grade is prerequisite to a high school diploma.



## **School Districts' Role in Informing and Working with Parents**

School districts play a key role in helping parents make the best decisions to ensure that children in danger of being retained are treated equitably and given the opportunity to be truly successful in school.

The contents of TEA web site, in fact, are explicitly offered to school districts for them to download, edit and put the information to use at the local level. Thus, it is really in the hands of school districts and schools to integrate parents into the schools' efforts to help students succeed.

**Essentially, parents seem overwhelmed with the volume of information and confused about what is required... Most importantly, they are greatly distressed to observe the effects that test failure and the prospects of retention are having on their children.**

IDRA previously has pointed out that the local schools, teachers and parents best know their students and what academic decisions are best for them. In the context of the Student Success Initiative, schools, parents and community should indeed be working together, not just for TAKS success, but to avoid ineffective retention.

Instead of retention, students having trouble need intensive instruction presented to them in a way that they will understand. But parents will not know how to best support their children and what choices are available if they are uninformed and disenfranchised. Schools should be the bridge between what the state mandates and what parents need to know.

Achieving student success requires working effectively with parents. Further, school action should be based on the broader literature on in-grade retention and should be proactive in helping parents support their

child's learning.

An important part of the law is that it permits the parent to make choices about retention, whether or not the child is successful in the TAKS. To date, this option does not seem to be evident to parents. The key to parents exercising this option is having the right information and guidance. Central to this is the school's role and its approach to working with parents.

After three years of the Student Success Initiative, sufficient interaction has occurred between schools and parents about the initiative to generate some good examples and some bad examples of school-parent involvement in this effort.

As a result of the work that the IDRA South Central Collaborative for Equity has conducted with parents of minority children, some pertinent issues have surfaced around the initiative. Essentially, parents seem overwhelmed with the volume of information and confused about what is required. Some feel inadequate because their English skills limit what they can grasp at meetings. Most importantly, they are greatly distressed to observe the effects that test failure and the prospects of retention are having on their children.

Here are some questions they are asking: "What will I miss if I can't go to that meeting?" "What is in that thick folder?" "My child brings As and Bs in the report card but fails the TAKS. How can that be?" "My boy is sick about the prospects of repeating fifth grade. What can I do?" "Is changing schools the only answer to avoid retention?"

## **The Stakeholder Parent Taking Action**

Parents want what is best for their children. When routinely speaking to parents around the state through the IDRA Parent Information and Resource Center, we repeatedly see that families have a vision for their children that includes academic excellence and abundant career possibilities. We also find that many times parents assume schools will do whatever is necessary for all children to master coursework necessary for graduation.

The key for schools to work in true partnership with parents is, first of all, to realize that parent backgrounds vary and thus using a one-size-fits-all mode of information sharing will not work. Second, it is important that all pertinent information on instructional alternatives and parent options be shared exactly as required by law. And third, the information must be accurately interpreted and summarized for parents. Transparency and honesty in disclosure is critical to an effective partnership of parents and the school.

## **Conclusion**

The goal of the Student Success Initiative is *to ensure that all students receive the instruction and support they need to be academically successful in reading and math*. Yet, it is the student who bears the burden for TAKS success. Worse, the consequence for failure is one of the most damaging of educational practices: in-grade retention. Because much is at stake, it is essential that schools' interactions with parents be true partnerships.

The goal of parent action should be to help with their child's learning. The law calls for retention, but it also provides a way to avoid it by taking specific action. *The goal should be to reject practices that harm kids now,*

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like retention in grade, to decrease the chances of children dropping out in the future.

This approach of working with students and their families for authentic academic success is the best approach. Advocating for children honors that optimism that each student has about school and about learning every new school year.

## Resources

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- Texas Education Agency: Student Assessment Division, Student Success Initiative.

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# Tools for

## School Holding Power

For many years, states across the nation have masked the magnitude of the dropout problem by failing to produce clear-eyed and consistent counts of how many of our students actually graduate with a high school diploma. This year, the National Governor's Association made important inroads into this issue, with a call for high-quality, comparable high school graduation measures, along with indicators of student progress and outcomes and data systems capable of collecting, analyzing and reporting the data. But it will test the will of the nation to ensure both that these counts are carried out and that we take action to keep students in school.

As the action we take will determine our children's future, it is our task to look closely at the causes of student attrition and to address not only the immediate risk for this year's ninth grade students, but long-term changes for all students. With a longstanding commitment to this work, IDRA has undertaken multiple, simultaneous efforts to shine a spotlight on the crisis of school attrition, develop and rigorously test dropout prevention models to help at-risk youth, and work with states, schools and community partners to build school capacity "holding power" to help all students graduate and succeed.

## A Snapshot of What IDRA is Doing

**Conducting Research** – IDRA's annual attrition study, with results published online, provides a consistent, statewide look at attrition trends in Texas. Both the results of this study and the methodology point to a longstanding need for more accurate official counts of dropout rates and new approaches to addressing a problem that should be considered a crisis and central challenge for the state. In IDRA's Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program, secondary school students who are considered at risk of dropping out of school are placed as tutors of elementary school students, enabling the older students to make a difference in the younger students' lives. Since its inception in San Antonio in 1984 through today, the program has kept more than 20,000 students in school, young people who were previously at risk of dropping out. IDRA's annual program evaluations of Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program and campus reports provide critical data on program implementation and outcomes.

**Developing Leaders** – As education leaders within and beyond the classroom, teachers and administrators play important roles in creating schools that engage every student in learning and academic success. IDRA's teacher recruitment and professional development initiatives help schools recruit excellent teachers and help teachers and superintendents take leadership in preventing attrition in Texas and other states.

# Action

**Informing Policy** – IDRA is providing technical assistance and testimony on the broad range of public policies that affect school holding power. IDRA’s policy leadership on school finance presses for the equitable resources all schools need, for example, to recruit and retain certified, qualified teachers, to serve students with special needs and limited English proficiency, to operate quality programs that engage and prepare students academically, and to counsel and mentor students from their freshman year to graduation.

**Engaging Communities** – In partnership with the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC), this fall IDRA is hosting a summit on school holding power that will engage Texas communities in reducing student attrition and strengthening their local public schools. Developments from this event and community-based activities that result will be shared in future issues of the *IDRA Newsletter*.

## What You Can Do

**Get informed** about dropout levels and trends in your community. Texas readers, for example, can find data on your own county at <http://www.idra.org/atchoose.asp>. A list of additional resources and links on attrition can be found at <http://www.idra.org/attrition/schoolhp.htm>. To find out more about the National Governor’s Association’s *Graduation Counts: A Compact on State High School Graduation Data*, see [http://gov.state.nv.us/pr/2005/20050717NGA\\_Graduation.htm](http://gov.state.nv.us/pr/2005/20050717NGA_Graduation.htm). For a copy of *Graduation Counts: A Report of the NGA Task Force on State High School Graduation Data*, you can visit: <http://www.nga.org>.

**Get involved** with other school-community partners to assess the capacity of your own neighborhood public school to hold on to students and help them succeed to graduation.

**Get results** by taking a two-pronged approach to addressing student attrition. First, press for implementation of dropout prevention efforts that provide immediate support and a safety net for at-risk youth. The Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program is one such option. More information on bringing the program to your middle school or high school is online at <http://www.idra.org/ccvyp/started.htm>. Second, adopt a *systems change approach* to promote long-lasting change in student attrition. As a start this can include:

- pressing for quality state-level reporting on student attrition;
- identifying areas in need of targeted improvement, for example, enhancing teaching quality, improving student engagement, and expanding parent and community engagement; and
- developing school-community partnerships to address these critical gaps.

*Attrition Study – continued from Page 2*

representing the lowest rate since 1992-93.

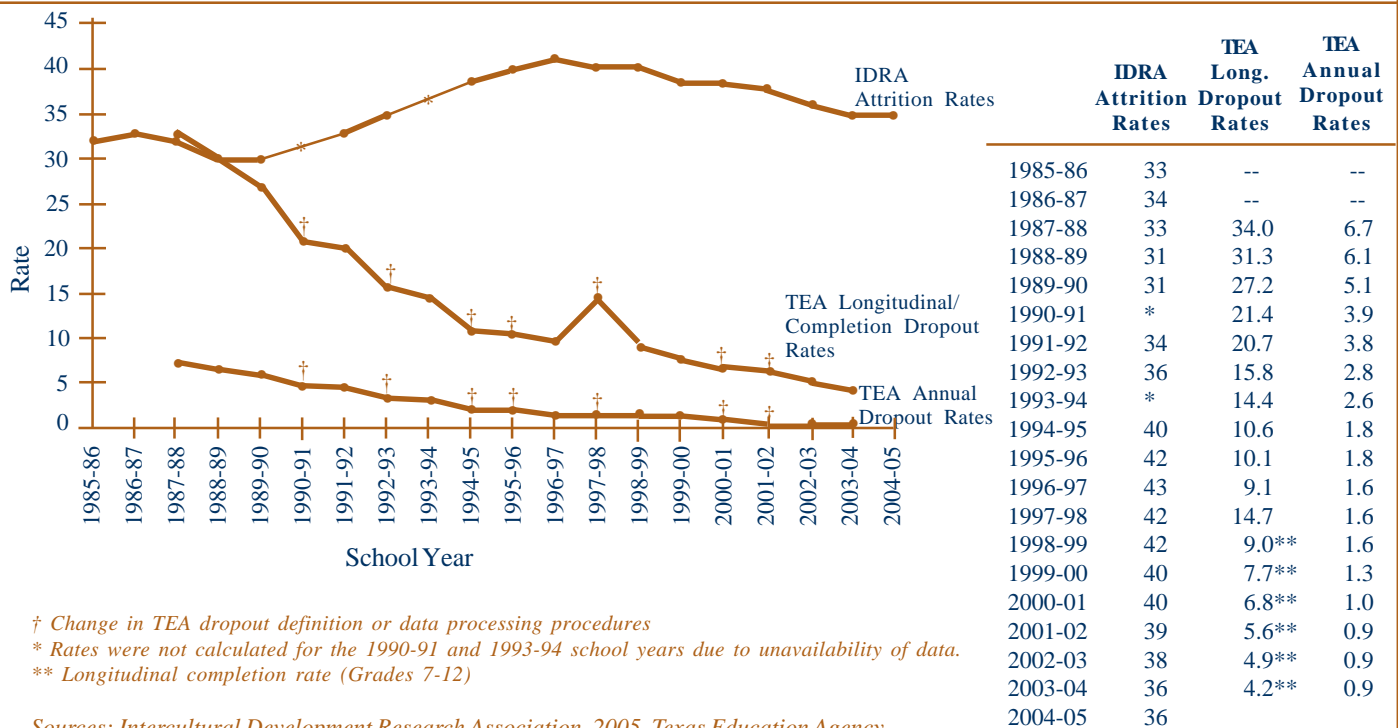
**The gaps between attrition rates of Hispanic students and Black students and those of White students have widened since 1985-86.** Hispanic students and Black students historically have had much higher attrition rates than White students. From 1985-86 to 2004-05, attrition rates of Hispanic students increased by 7 percent (from 45 percent to 48 percent). During this same period, the attrition rates of Black students increased by 26 percent (from 34 percent to 43 percent). Attrition rates of White students declined by 19 percent (from 27 percent to 22 percent). Hispanic students have higher attrition rates than either White students or Black students.

From 1985-86 to 2004-05, Native American students, Asian/Pacific Islander students and White students saw a decline in their attrition rates. Native American students had a decline of 11 percent in their attrition rates (from 45 percent to 40 percent), and Asian/Pacific Islander students had a decline of 48 percent (from 33 percent to 17 percent).

Over the past 20 years, the attrition rates for White students have been considerably lower than the rates for Black students and Hispanic students. White students have experienced a decline in their attrition rates over this period, while Black students and Hispanic students have experienced an increase in their attrition rates. When compared to 1985-86, the attrition rates for White students are 19 percent lower, while the attrition rates for Black students are 26 percent higher and the attrition rates for Hispanic students are 7 percent higher. The attrition rates for Asian/Pacific Islander students are 43 percent lower, and the attrition rates for Native American students are 11 percent lower.

*Attrition Study – continued on Page 12*

## Attrition and Dropout Rates in Texas Over Time



Attrition Study – continued from Page 11

The gap between the attrition rates of White students and Black students has increased from 7 percentage points in 1985-86 to 21 percentage points in 2004-05. Similarly, during this time period, the gap between the attrition rates of White students and Hispanic students has increased from 18 percentage points in 1985-86 to 26 percentage points in 2004-05. The gap between the attrition rates of White students and Native American students has remained constant at 18 percentage points in both 1985-86 and 2004-05.

Asian/Pacific Islander students exhibited the greatest positive trend in the reduction of the gap in attrition rates compared to White students. In fact, rates for Asian/Pacific Islander students were 6 percentage points higher than those of White students but now are 5 percentage points lower than those of White students.

**Historically, the attrition**

**rates for Hispanic students and Black students have been higher than the overall attrition rates.** For the period of 1985-86 to 2004-05, students from ethnic minority groups account for more than two-thirds (68.8 percent) of the estimated 2.2 million students lost from public high school enrollment.

Hispanic students account for 50.1 percent of the students lost to attrition. Black students account for 17.3 percent of all students lost from enrollment due to attrition over the years. White students account for 31.2 percent of students lost from high school enrollment over time. Attrition rates for White students and Asian/Pacific Islander students have been typically lower than the overall attrition rates.

**The attrition rates for males have been higher than those of females.** Between 1985-86 and 2004-05, attrition rates for males have increased by 11 percent (from 35 percent to 39 percent). Attrition rates

for females have remained unchanged at 32 percent in both 1985-86 and 2004-05. Longitudinally, males have accounted for 56.6 percent of students lost from school enrollment, while females have accounted for 43.4 percent.

See the graphic above for rates over time. Also see the map on Page 13 and the table on Pages 14 and 15 for rates by county. To see rates over time by county go online to [www.idra.org](http://www.idra.org).

### Conclusions

Though the overall attrition rate has remained under 40 percent over the last four years, school holding power in the schools across Texas is still abysmal as many schools have failed to keep students in schools through graduation with a high school diploma. Though the overall attrition rate has declined by several percentage points, attrition rates have remained relatively stable.

Attrition Study – continued on Page 13

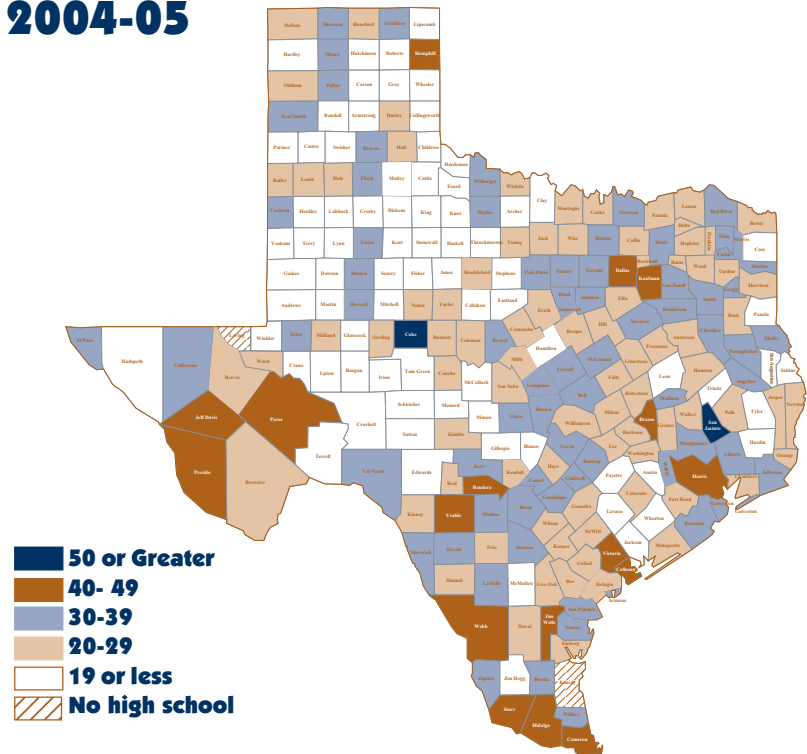
Texas public schools are failing to graduate two out of every five students. Attrition rates as an indicator in a school holding power index show that the attrition rate has remained near 40 percent overall and higher than 40 percent for Black students and Hispanic students.

IDRA attrition analyses show that, since the mid-1980s, the number and percent of students lost from public school enrollment has increased for the state of Texas. TEA paints another picture.

IDRA's studies show that the overall attrition rate has increased from 33 percent in 1985-86 to 36 percent in 2004-05. The annual number of students lost from public school enrollment has increased from 86,276 in 1985-86 to 137,424 in 2004-05.

TEA studies report that the seventh through 12th grade annual dropout rate has declined from 6.7  
Attrition Study – continued on Page 16

## Attrition Rates by Texas County, 2004-05



Source: Intercultural Development Research Association, 2005.

## Longitudinal Attrition Rates in Texas Public High Schools, 1985-86 to 2004-05

Group	1985-86	1986-87	1987-88	1988-89	1989-90	1991-92	1992-93	1994-95	1995-96	1996-97	1997-98	1998-99	1999-00	2000-01	2001-02	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	Percent Change* From 1985-86 to 2004-05
<b>Race-Ethnicity</b>																			
Native American	45	39	37	47	39	40	39	42	44	43	42	25	43	42	29	39	42	40	-11
Asian/Pacific Islander	33	30	28	23	22	21	21	18	18	20	21	19	20	20	14	17	16	17	-48
Black	34	38	39	37	38	39	43	50	51	51	49	48	47	46	46	45	44	43	26
White	27	26	24	20	19	22	25	30	31	32	31	31	28	27	26	24	22	22	-19
Hispanic	45	46	49	48	48	48	49	51	53	54	53	53	52	52	51	50	49	48	7
<b>Gender</b>																			
Male	35	35	35	34	34	37	39	43	45	46	45	45	44	43	43	41	40	39	1
Female	32	32	31	29	29	30	33	37	39	40	38	38	36	36	35	34	33	32	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>9</b>

\* Rounded to nearest whole number.

Figures calculated by IDRA from the Texas Education Agency Fall Membership Survey data.

Rates were not calculated for the 1990-91 and 1993-94 school years due to unavailability of data.

Source: Intercultural Development Research Association, 2005.

# Attrition Rates in Texas Public Schools By Race-Ethnicity, 2004-05

COUNTY NAME ↓	ATTRITION RATES <sup>1</sup>				COUNTY NAME ↓	ATTRITION RATES <sup>1</sup>			
	BLACK ↓	WHITE ↓	HISPANIC ↓	TOTAL ↓		BLACK ↓	WHITE ↓	HISPANIC ↓	TOTAL ↓
ANDERSON	38	21	56	29	DEWITT	45	14	37	26
ANDREWS	**	**	26	13	DICKENS	•	10	55	15
ANGELINA	39	20	48	30	DIMITT	**	34	28	28
ARANSAS	11	28	57	35	DONLEY	11	28	10	23
ARCHER	•	5	30	6	DUVAL	•	16	24	23
ARMSTRONG	•	**	18	**	EASTLAND	26	16	24	17
ATASCOSA	42	20	38	32	ECTOR	38	24	48	39
AUSTIN	20	10	39	18	EDWARDS	•	15	16	15
BAILEY	40	**	39	20	ELLIS	31	23	43	28
BANDERA	77	36	61	43	EL PASO	33	18	38	36
BASTROP	29	29	55	38	ERATH	**	21	51	29
BAYLOR	70	21	46	27	FALLS	42	11	37	29
BEE	36	10	30	24	FANNIN	14	24	42	24
BELL	43	26	45	35	FAYETTE	21	9	38	15
BEXAR	35	21	40	35	FISHER	50	6	21	15
BLANCO	**	12	12	11	FLOYD	17	10	44	32
BORDEN	•	43	**	34	FOARD	•	3	**	**
BOSQUE	12	22	42	26	FORT BEND	30	14	43	26
BOWIE	39	19	41	26	Franklin	20	29	29	29
BRAZORIA	43	31	51	38	FREESTONE	22	18	46	22
BRAZOS	57	21	59	41	FRIO	**	2	26	23
BREWSTER	•	9	39	28	GAINES	**	17	24	19
BRISCOE	•	20	64	39	GALVESTON	40	27	50	33
BROOKS	•	37	34	34	GARZA	66	32	34	34
BROWN	25	27	38	30	GILLESPIE	30	5	34	13
BURLESON	33	21	45	28	GLASSCOCK	•	16	**	8
BURNET	29	26	48	31	GOLIAD	33	12	49	29
CALDWELL	48	23	49	39	GONZALES	6	13	30	21
CALHOUN	36	29	58	45	GRAY	35	4	52	19
CALLAHAN	13	15	45	19	GRAYSON	48	26	45	30
CAMERON	64	27	51	49	GREGG	46	18	58	31
CAMP	24	36	49	36	GRIMES	27	13	41	23
CARSON	•	10	33	13	GUADALUPE	37	23	49	34
CASS	14	13	37	14	HALE	25	5	34	25
CASTRO	0	**	23	15	HALL	47	9	30	22
CHAMBERS	23	25	42	27	HAMILTON	•	15	5	14
CHEROKEE	34	32	51	37	HANSFORD	•	23	28	26
CHILDRESS	**	16	33	19	HARDEMAN	25	**	**	**
CLAY	20	16	33	16	HARDIN	22	18	37	19
COCHRAN	65	11	41	32	HARRIS	48	21	54	42
COKE	80	21	69	53	HARRISON	28	20	47	25
COLEMAN	73	21	18	24	HARTLEY	•	**	78	0
COLLIN	42	22	47	27	HASKELL	42	4	13	8
COLLINGSWORTH	**	12	**	**	HAYS	31	14	31	22
COLORADO	33	11	33	22	HEMPHILL	**	17	66	40
COMAL	43	24	42	30	HENDERSON	33	26	52	30
COMANCHE	•	13	49	25	HIDALGO	40	18	50	49
CONCHO	•	30	26	29	HILL	14	17	37	21
COOKE	16	24	51	28	HOCKLEY	**	5	34	19
CORYELL	39	37	37	38	HOOD	18	29	41	31
COTTLE	**	**	**	**	HOPKINS	7	14	48	20
CRANE	•	**	**	**	HOUSTON	32	22	62	28
CROCKETT	•	2	16	12	HOWARD	24	21	52	34
CROSBY	5	**	28	17	HUDSPETH	•	**	27	16
CULBERSON	•	40	30	30	HUNT	61	23	61	33
DALLAM	**	19	39	24	HUTCHINSON	30	10	38	17
DALLAS	46	17	57	42	IRION	50	**	**	**
DAWSON	42	**	24	13	JACK	**	19	39	21
DEAF SMITH	**	4	43	33	JACKSON	15	6	12	9
DELTA	26	17	36	20	JASPER	24	23	21	23
DENTON	45	28	55	35	JEFF DAVIS	70	48	18	43

<sup>1</sup>Calculated by: (1) dividing the high school enrollment in the end year by the high school enrollment in the base year; (2) multiplying the results from Calculation 1 by the ninth grade enrollment in the base year; (3) subtracting the results from Calculation 2 from the 12th grade enrollment in the end year; and (4) dividing the results of Calculation 3 by the result of Calculation 2. The attrition rate results (percentages) were rounded to the nearest whole number.

\*\* = Attrition rate is less than zero (0).  
\*\*\* = No high school.

• = The necessary data are unavailable to calculate the attrition rate.

# Attrition Rates in Texas Public Schools

## By Race-Ethnicity, 2004-05 (continued)

COUNTY NAME	ATTRITION RATES				COUNTY NAME	ATTRITION RATES			
	BLACK	WHITE	HISPANIC	TOTAL		BLACK	WHITE	HISPANIC	TOTAL
JEFFERSON	42	21	45	34	RAINS	44	21	42	23
JIM HOGG	.	**	6	5	RANDALL	19	17	31	18
JIM WELLS	100	30	42	41	REAGAN	**	**	1	**
JOHNSON	45	32	57	37	REAL	.	31	10	24
JONES	14	2	20	6	RED RIVER	37	26	51	32
KARNES	**	9	33	24	REEVES	58	8	31	29
KAUFMAN	39	35	66	40	REFUGIO	46	18	24	24
KENDALL	50	17	43	23	ROBERTS	.	**	0	**
KENEDY	***	***	***	***	ROBERTSON	34	19	45	29
KENT	.	9	**	6	ROCKWALL	48	24	39	27
KERR	51	20	55	34	RUNNELS	.	1	48	24
KIMBLE	**	8	49	21	RUSK	23	26	54	29
KING	.	10	.	11	SABINE	25	3	0	5
KINNEY	67	14	19	21	SAN AUGUSTINE	1	2	29	5
KLEBERG	37	13	33	29	SAN JACINTO	48	53	53	51
KNOX	33	12	17	17	SAN PATRICIO	49	29	44	38
LAMAR	38	27	12	29	SAN SABA	71	19	27	23
LAMB	62	6	33	26	SCHLEICHER	.	**	20	8
LAMPASAS	53	29	28	30	SCURRY	44	**	38	16
LA SALLE	.	**	35	30	SHACKELFORD	0	23	36	24
LAVACA	18	8	**	8	SHELBY	38	27	46	32
LEE	50	21	31	27	SHERMAN	.	30	50	38
LEON	**	14	51	17	SMITH	35	26	59	35
LIBERTY	27	31	49	34	SOMERVELL	.	26	39	30
LIMESTONE	18	26	40	26	STARR	.	31	42	42
LIPSCOMB	.	**	15	**	STEPHENS	6	13	35	18
LIVE OAK	.	20	25	22	STERLING	.	12	35	20
LLANO	.	31	46	32	STONEWALL	**	27	**	14
LOVING	***	***	***	***	SUTTON	.	**	33	17
LUBBOCK	16	6	28	16	SWISHER	**	**	36	17
LYNN	37	**	23	13	TARRANT	47	25	58	39
MADISON	48	35	35	36	TAYLOR	43	20	44	28
MARION	28	35	83	32	TERRELL	.	**	12	**
MARTIN	**	**	26	10	TERRY	47	13	14	15
MASON	.	4	**	**	THROCKMORTON	.	2	**	**
MATAGORDA	45	29	52	41	TITUS	36	19	56	37
MAVERICK	.	27	36	37	TOM GREEN	16	6	31	17
MCCOLLUCH	27	22	11	18	TRAVIS	40	18	52	36
MCLENNAN	41	23	48	33	TRINITY	14	17	48	18
McMULLEN	.	22	**	8	TYLER	5	16	**	14
MEDINA	39	15	40	30	UPSHUR	25	23	37	24
MENARD	.	**	30	17	UPTON	0	1	15	10
MIDLAND	39	10	46	28	UVALDE	100	14	54	47
MILAM	25	20	40	27	VAL VERDE	48	35	40	39
MILLS	100	18	27	20	VAN ZANDT	25	34	49	35
MITCHELL	13	**	24	9	VICTORIA	49	22	61	47
MONTAGUE	**	19	35	20	WALKER	31	21	42	28
MONTGOMERY	43	30	52	35	WALLER	35	23	48	34
MOORE	42	5	53	38	WARD	43	23	21	23
MORRIS	32	29	49	31	WASHINGTON	45	10	46	25
MOTLEY	33	**	56	0	WEBB	42	16	41	40
NACOGDOCHES	42	17	54	30	WHARTON	20	**	36	17
NAVARRO	42	28	60	38	WHEELER	11	14	27	14
NEWTON	28	31	**	29	WICHITA	42	19	40	25
NOLAN	26	9	38	21	WILBARGER	52	33	43	39
NUECES	25	17	39	32	WILLACY	43	**	33	31
OCHILTREE	.	12	60	37	WILLIAMSON	42	20	46	28
OLDHAM	17	20	46	26	WILSON	34	18	36	26
ORANGE	37	21	37	23	WINKLER	**	0	14	6
PALO PINTO	39	26	54	31	WISE	39	23	51	28
PANOLA	17	12	28	14	WOOD	0	18	45	20
PARKER	56	31	49	33	YOAKUM	43	7	18	14
PARMER	35	**	22	13	YOUNG	29	22	34	25
PECOS	95	15	55	48	ZAPATA	.	**	33	31
POLK	27	21	31	22	ZAVALA	.	41	37	38
POTTER	38	17	49	30					
PRESIDIO	.	**	45	43					
					<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>36</b>

Source: Intercultural Development Research Association, 2005.

percent in 1987-88 to 0.9 percent in 2003-04. And the number of dropouts has declined from 91,307 students to 16,434 students during this same time period.

In August 2005, TEA reported for the 2003-04 school year an annual dropout rate of 0.9 percent for grades seven through 12 and 1.2 percent for grades nine through 12. For the class of 2004, TEA reported a longitudinal dropout rate of 4.2 percent for grades seven through 12 and 3.9 percent for grades nine through 12. For the 2003-04 school year, TEA reported 16,434 dropouts for grades seven through 12 and 15,160 dropouts for grades nine through 12. TEA found that the grade seven through 12 attrition rate in 2004

was 20 percent, while the grade nine through 12 attrition rate was 32.6 percent.

In November 2002, TEA published a dropout study for the 76th Texas Legislature using the national dropout definition of NCES. TEA found that the 1999-00 annual dropout rate for grades nine through 12 using the NCES definition was 5.0 percent compared to 1.8 percent using the TEA definition. When the NCES definition was used, a total of 54,390 students were reported as dropouts compared to 21,439 students using the TEA definition, a difference of 32,951 students. According to TEA, for grades nine through 12, the ratio of NCES dropouts to TEA dropouts was 2.5 to 1. The NCES annual dropout rate for

grades nine through 12 was 2.8 times higher than the TEA annual dropout rate.

For grades seven through 12, the annual dropout rate for Texas was 3.5 percent using the NCES definition compared to 1.3 percent using the TEA definition. The greatest difference in the NCES and TEA dropout counts was between the number of students entering GED programs. There were 11,675 GED recipients included in the NCES counts who were not included in the TEA counts. TEA counts GED students who receive a certificate by March 1 of the next school year, while NCES counts as GED students those who receive certificates before the last Friday in October of the next school

## Number of Students Lost to Attrition in Texas, School Years 1985-86 to 2004-05

School Year	Total	Race-Ethnicity					Gender	
		Native American	Asian/Pacific Islander	Black	White	Hispanic	Male	Female
1985-86	86,276	185	1,523	12,268	38,717	33,583	46,603	39,673
1986-87	90,317	152	1,406	14,416	38,848	35,495	48,912	41,405
1987-88	92,213	159	1,447	15,273	34,889	40,435	50,595	41,618
1988-89	88,538	252	1,189	15,474	28,309	43,314	49,049	39,489
1989-90	86,160	196	1,214	15,423	24,510	44,817	48,665	37,495
1990-91	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
1991-92	91,424	215	1,196	15,016	27,055	47,942	51,937	39,487
1992-93	101,358	248	1,307	17,032	32,611	50,160	57,332	44,026
1993-94	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
1994-95	123,200	296	1,226	22,856	41,648	57,174	68,725	54,475
1995-96	135,438	350	1,303	25,078	45,302	63,405	75,854	59,584
1996-97	147,313	327	1,486	27,004	48,586	69,910	82,442	64,871
1997-98	150,965	352	1,730	26,938	49,135	72,810	85,585	65,380
1998-99	151,779	299	1,680	25,526	48,178	76,096	86,438	65,341
1999-00	146,714	406	1,771	25,097	44,275	75,165	83,976	62,738
2000-01	144,241	413	1,794	24,515	41,734	75,785	82,845	61,396
2001-02	143,175	237	1,244	25,017	39,953	76,724	82,762	60,413
2002-03	143,280	436	1,611	25,066	36,948	79,219	82,621	60,659
2003-04	139,413	495	1,575	24,728	33,104	79,511	80,485	58,928
2004-05	137,424	490	1,789	24,373	31,378	79,394	78,858	58,566
<b>All Years</b>	<b>2,199,228</b>	<b>5,508</b>	<b>26,491</b>	<b>381,100</b>	<b>685,190</b>	<b>1,100,939</b>	<b>1,243,684</b>	<b>955,544</b>

Figures calculated by IDRA from the Texas Education Agency *Fall Membership Survey* data. Rates were not calculated for the 1990-91 and 1993-94 school years due to the unavailability of data. Source: Intercultural Development Research Association, 2005.



year.

Overall, there are five groups of students counted as dropouts using the NCES definition that are not counted as dropouts under the TEA definition: (1) a student who withdraws to enroll in an approved adult education GED preparation program; (2) a senior who

meets all graduation requirements but does not pass the exit-level Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS); (3) a student previously counted as a dropout; (4) a student enrolled in school but not eligible for state Foundation School Program funds; and (5) a dropout for whom the last district of attendance cannot be

determined (Texas Education Agency, 2000).

Beginning in the 2005-06 school year, TEA will routinely calculate dropout and school completion rates using both the NCES and TEA methodologies. NCES and TEA define a dropout as a student who is enrolled

## Comparison of TEA and NCES Dropout Definitions

Texas Education Agency	National Center for Education Statistics
<b>Definition</b>	
TEA and NCES both define a dropout as a student who is enrolled in school at some time during the school year but either: leaves school during the school year without an approved excuse or completes the school year and does not return the following year.	
<b>Leavers not considered dropouts</b>	
A student who leaves school for one of the following reasons is not considered a dropout by TEA or NCES:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• graduates;</li> <li>• transfers to, or withdraws with intent to transfer to, a public or private school;</li> <li>• is being home schooled;</li> <li>• enrolls in college; or</li> <li>• dies.</li> </ul>	
A student who leaves school for one of the following reasons is not considered a dropout by TEA:	A student who leaves school for one of the following reasons is not considered a dropout by NCES:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• receives a General Educational Development (GED) certificate by March 1 the following year;</li> <li>• enrolls in an approved adult education GED preparation program; or</li> <li>• meets all graduation requirements but does not pass the exit-level Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• receives a GED certificate by the last Friday in October the following year.</li> </ul>
<b>Dropouts excluded from the dropout count</b>	
Dropouts excluded from TEA counts include:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• students who were previously counted as dropouts;</li> <li>• students who are not eligible for state funding; and</li> <li>• students who are reported as dropouts by more than one district and whose last district of attendance cannot be determined.</li> </ul>	
<b>Returning students</b>	
Returning students are those who enroll at any time before the next school year.	Except for migrant students, returning students are those enrolled on the last Friday in October or the third week of January of the next school year.
<b>Summer dropouts</b>	
Summer dropouts are added to the counts of the school years and grade levels completed.	Summer dropouts are added to the counts of the school years and grade levels in which they fail to enroll.
<b>Denominator</b>	
Cumulative attendance is used as the denominator in dropout rate calculations.	Fall enrollment is used as the denominator in dropout rate calculations.

Source: Texas Education Agency, *Secondary School Completion and Dropouts in Texas Public Schools: 2003-04*, August 2005

## 2001-02 and 2004-05 Enrollment, 2004-05 Attrition in Texas

Race-Ethnicity and Gender	2001-02 9th Grade Enrollment	2004-05 12th Grade Enrollment	2001-02 9-12th Grade Enrollment	2004-05 9-12th Grade Enrollment	2004-05 Expected 12th Grade Enrollment	Students Lost to Attrition	Attrition Rate
<b>Native American</b>	<b>985</b>	<b>735</b>	<b>3,038</b>	<b>3,780</b>	<b>1,225</b>	<b>490</b>	<b>40</b>
Male	517	372	1,553	1,914	637	265	42
Female	468	363	1,485	1,866	588	225	38
<b>Asian/Pacific Islander</b>	<b>9,141</b>	<b>8,484</b>	<b>33,866</b>	<b>38,056</b>	<b>10,273</b>	<b>1,789</b>	<b>17</b>
Male	4,820	4,340	17,473	19,694	5,433	1,093	20
Female	4,321	4,144	16,393	18,362	4,840	696	14
<b>Black</b>	<b>53,038</b>	<b>32,942</b>	<b>155,259</b>	<b>167,765</b>	<b>57,315</b>	<b>24,373</b>	<b>43</b>
Male	27,820	15,802	78,179	84,630	30,116	14,314	48
Female	25,218	17,140	77,080	83,135	27,199	10,059	37
<b>White</b>	<b>146,884</b>	<b>113,392</b>	<b>516,934</b>	<b>509,474</b>	<b>144,770</b>	<b>31,378</b>	<b>22</b>
Male	76,716	57,652	264,969	261,675	75,762	18,110	24
Female	70,168	55,740	251,965	247,799	69,008	13,268	19
<b>Hispanic</b>	<b>147,283</b>	<b>87,477</b>	<b>414,607</b>	<b>469,810</b>	<b>166,871</b>	<b>79,394</b>	<b>48</b>
Male	78,403	43,460	212,888	240,403	88,536	45,076	51
Female	68,880	44,017	201,719	229,407	78,335	34,318	44
<b>All Groups</b>	<b>357,331</b>	<b>243,030</b>	<b>1,123,704</b>	<b>1,188,885</b>	<b>380,454</b>	<b>137,424</b>	<b>36</b>
Male	188,276	121,626	575,062	608,316	200,484	78,858	39
Female	169,055	121,404	548,642	580,569	179,970	58,566	32

Figures calculated by IDRA from the Texas Education Agency *Fall Membership Survey* data. IDRA's 2004-05 attrition study involved the analysis of enrollment figures for public high school students in the ninth grade during 2001-02 school year and enrollment figures for 12th grade students in 2004-05. This period represents the time span when ninth grade students would be enrolled in school prior to graduation. The enrollment data for special school districts (military schools, state schools, and charter schools) were excluded from the analyses since they are likely to have unstable enrollments and/or lack a tax base to support school programs.

Source: Intercultural Development Research Association, 2005.

### Attrition Study – continued from Page 17

in school at some time during the school year but either leaves school during the year without an approved excuse or completes the school year and does not return the following year.

Using the NCES dropout definition, the Texas annual dropout rate of 5.0 percent for grades nine through 12 ranked 24th out of 37 states including the District of Columbia. The greatest implication of using the NCES dropout definition will be that the dropout rate and number of dropouts will no

doubt increase. IDRA believes that both the NCES and TEA methods of calculating dropouts still undercount the numbers of students lost from public school enrollment prior to graduation with a high school diploma. (The table on Page 17 compares the NCES and TEA dropout definitions and calculations.)

IDRA has dealt with the issue of school dropouts for more than 20 years. Dr. María Robledo Montecel, IDRA executive director, has presented the following seven lessons from Texas:

1. Losing children from our school systems is a persistent, unacknowledged problem.
2. Fraud is a red herring – distracting us from the real problem that is before us. Undercounting is the result of institutional intransigence, not massive fraud.
3. Accountability systems did not create dropouts.
4. High-stakes testing and accountability systems must be uncoupled.

*Attrition Study – continued on Page 19*

*Attrition Study – continued from Page 18*

5. We cannot afford to decide that some kids do not count.
6. Dropout data are not a legitimate reason to give up on public education.
7. It is time to move from dropping out to holding on.

More information about these lessons is available online at <http://www.idra.org/Media/7lessons.pdf> (Robledo Montecel, 2004).

Reducing the dropout rate and increasing the number and percentage of students who complete a high school education are national and state goals. Keeping students in school through graduation and subsequent enrollment in post-secondary education must

continue to be a major focus of the educational agenda in this state and the nation. The call to action to improve school holding power in our nation's schools must be issued, heard and undertaken in every community.

### Resources

Cárdenas, J.A., and M. Robledo, J. Supik. *Texas School Dropout Survey Project: A Summary of Findings* (San Antonio, Texas: Intercultural Development Research Association, 1986).

Robledo Montecel, M. "From Dropping Out to Holding On: Seven Lessons from Texas," Speech to Education Writers Association (San Antonio, Texas: Intercultural Development Research Association, February 2004) <http://www.idra.org/Media/7lessons.pdf>.

Texas Education Agency. *Secondary School Completion and Dropouts in Texas Public Schools: 2002-03* (Austin, Texas: Texas Education Agency, August 2005).

Texas Education Agency, *Secondary School Completion and Dropouts in Texas Public Schools: 1999-00 – National Center for Education Statistics State and District Dropout Counts and Rates* (Austin, Texas: Texas Education Agency, 2000).

U.S. Department of Education, Office of Educational Research and Improvement, National Center for Education Statistics. *Documentation to the NCES Common Core of Data, Local Education Agency Universe Dropout File: School Year 1999-00.*

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## Highlights of Recent IDRA Activities

In August, IDRA worked with **2,880** teachers, administrators, parents and higher education personnel through **29** training and technical assistance activities and **134** program sites in **11** states plus Mexico and Brazil. Topics included:

- ◆ Secondary English Language Learners Instruction in Content Areas
- ◆ Bilingual Education Rules and Regulations
- ◆ Integrating Parent Involvement in Campus Activity
- ◆ Title III Evaluation

Participating agencies and school districts included:

- ◆ Blanchard Public Schools, Oklahoma
- ◆ Cedar Valley College, Texas
- ◆ Education Service Center, Region XVII, Texas
- ◆ Jefferson Parish, Louisiana
- ◆ Pecos Independent School District, Texas

### Activity Snapshot

The Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program has made an extraordinary difference in the lives of more than 20,000 students by keeping 98 percent of them in school. The lives of more than 375,000 children, families and educators have been positively impacted by the program in the United States, Puerto Rico, the United Kingdom and Brazil. In the Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program, created by IDRA, secondary students who are considered to be at-risk of dropping out are placed as tutors of elementary school students, enabling the older students to make a difference in the younger students' lives. With a growing sense of responsibility and pride, the tutors stay and do better in school. The program supports them with positive recognition, instruction and support.

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.*

assistance to create a multicultural framework change in instructional, assessment, leadership and accountability practices to ensure that all students became academically successful. Several school districts in Texas requested extended assistance to implement the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) for English language learners. Several school districts in the region requested assistance to implement the IDRA Math Smart! institute at the middle and high school levels (see August 2005 *IDRA Newsletter* or <http://www.idra.org/Services/mathsmart.htm>).

- The center provided more than 3,600 field service days of training and technical assistance at no direct cost to school systems in topics, such as diversity in the classroom; English as a second language strategies that work; dual language instruction; bilingual education; stopping bullying and teasing; preventing sexual harassment; SIOP and the IDRA SI-Plus training; multicultural

education; assessment and accountability approaches; increasing parent involvement and engagement; parent leadership; and increasing girls' involvement in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics.

The staff of the IDRA South Central Collaborative for Equity have been proud to work with thousands of educators, parents, community members and students during the past three years. The staff have worked closely with state department of education personnel in all five states, other technical assistance providers, and organizational leaders and their members whose interests focus on access and educational opportunity for all students regardless of their race, gender or language. It is good to know that the work of IDRA center will continue.

### Looking Forward to the Next Three Years

IDRA has officially received notice that it has successfully competed for a new three-year cycle of operation for the center. As of September 15,

2005, the center is available to continue its important work in the region. It is critical to continue to move forward in support of all students as local and state agencies implement *NCLB* and work to meet the accountability obligations for adequate yearly progress.

School districts in the five-state area are eligible to receive technical assistance and training support to meet these requirements. The superintendent or his or her designee can complete the needs assessment form online at [www.idra.org/feedback/needs.asp](http://www.idra.org/feedback/needs.asp) or call IDRA at 210-444-1710.

The IDRA South Central Collaborative for Equity stands ready to assist any public local education agency to ensure that schools work for all learners.

### Resources

Scott, B. "Who's Responsible, Who's to Blame?" *IDRA Newsletter* (San Antonio, Texas: Intercultural Development Research Association, May 2002).

Bradley Scott, Ph.D., is director of the IDRA South Central Collaborative for Equity. Comments and questions may be directed to him via e-mail at [comment@idra.org](mailto:comment@idra.org).



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